FS3 Storyteller’s Guide

Version 1.0

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# Welcome, Storytellers

As a Storyteller, your primary job will be setting up the specifics of the FS3 system for your game. This guide helps you to customize FS3. A complete sample configuration is given at the end of this guide.

## Copyright and License

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# Abilities

The first thing to do is to customize your ability list.

## Attributes

Attributes can be anything you want, from broad skill spheres (Academic, Technical, Social) to more traditional RPG attributes (Intelligence, Dexterity, etc.)

Things to bear in mind:

* Attributes cannot change with experience, so it might be best to avoid attributes that are malleable, like Strength or Beauty.
* The more attributes you have, the more trouble you’ll have preventing people from min-max-ing points between attributes and skills.

## Action Skills

|  |
| --- |
| **Cardinal rule of FS3:**  Limit the number of action skills. |

One of the hallmarks of FS3 is the distinction between Action Skills, which are relevant to the conflict in the game, and Background Skills, which are fluff skills to promote character depth. Another hallmark is a fast, easy character creation experience because the skill list is limited.

Generally games should have no more than 10-12 action skills. Focus on the things that are likely to come up in conflict situations. Combat skills, Perception checks, Healing rolls and vehicle piloting are pretty standard. But don’t leave out life-or-death skills that might be peculiar to your setting, like Swimming in a nautical game.

If you find yourself needing more than a dozen action skills, consider:

* *Are your skills too narrow?*For instance: Instead of separate skills for Rifles, Pistols, SMGs, etc. consider one over-arching Firearms skill. They’re really not all that different.
* *Are you including skills that really don’t matter?*For instance: Do you really need to have Demolitions as an Action Skill for the 1 or 2 explosives experts you may or may not ever get? Or can that just be handled as a Background profession skill for those people?

## Language Skills

These are easy; just list the available languages.

## Background Skills and Quirks

Players often have a hard time coming up with background skills and quirks. Sometimes the freedom to pick anything can be overwhelming, and having a list for ideas can be a great help.

## Common Knowledge

Consider ahead of time what sorts of things you would consider ‘common knowledge’ that does not require a skill. This will help you guide players who might be putting skill points into silly things just to have them.

## Ruling Attributes

There will never be a perfect 1-1 correspondence between skills and attributes. You will always be able to find situations where different attributes fit the same skill. Just pick the one that fits the majority of situations.

# Character Creation

Once you have an ability list, you can start thinking about how many abilities you want people to have.

## Ability Points

The number of ability points you give in character creation will depend on a number of factors:

* The power level of your game. An ultra heroic game will require more points than a gritty one.
* How many attributes you have. You’ll probably want to give characters enough points to have average in every attribute and above average in a couple.
* How many action skills your typical character will need.
* How many background skills you require. Bear in mind that most background skills will only be at low levels, so they probably won’t need a ton of points.
* Don’t forget to give them enough points for fluency in their native language.

## Ability Limits

To avoid character min/max-ing, you’ll probably want to set some limits on what abilities characters can choose. You can customize:

* How many “high-rating” abilities a character can have. This includes attributes and all kinds of skills. You can customize what rating constitutes a “high- rating” ability.
* The minimum number of background skills a character must have. Requiring more background skills gives more well-rounded characters, but forces people to put more thought into things.
* The maximum number of points they can spend on action skills. Limiting this helps discourage characters from focusing exclusively on action skills.
* The maximum number of points they can spend on attributes. Limiting this prevents characters who are gifted in everything.

## Ability Levels

Players familiar with other systems will tend to highball their ancillary skill ratings when creating FS3 characters. In particular, they will tend to have too many skills in the 4-6 range. This range should be reserved for skills that are truly at a professional level of competence; something a character could make a living at. It would be unusual for someone to have that high of a rating in hobbies or casual interests.

Ironically, people also tend to *lowball* professional skills that they should have in the 7-9 range. This range is absolutely fair for characters with a good many years of experience, or younger characters who are just exceptionally gifted in their area of expertise.

Some Storytellers shy away from or discourage characters with skills in the 10-12 range. This is really not necessary. When you look at the ability roll charts, there’s not *that* much difference between rating 7 and rating 10. It gives an advantage, but not an overpowering one. There’s nothing wrong with wanting to be an expert in something.

# Experience

This section talks about awarding and limiting experience points.

## Awarding XP

The most fair and realistic way to award XP is to base it on the passage of time in the game world. Above all else, learning and practicing skills takes time.

A general guideline of **1 XP per week** will allow advancement at a reasonable rate.

### Immersive Learning

Extra XP should be awarded for people who are in immersive learning environments, such as military basic training or college. The default XP award assumes that your characters are spending most of their time working, hanging out, taking care of their families, etc. When they’re spending most of their time studying, it’s a different story.

One way to do this is to simply give out a bulk XP award that gives them enough points to buy all the skills they would learn in the training program.

### Intense Environments

Also, if your theme involves constant life-or-death struggles, consider doubling the XP award to 2 XP per week. In these situations, it tends to be survival of the fittest, where you learn fast or die.

### OOC Rewards

Of course, XP can also be handed out as OOC rewards for roleplay, completing adventures, etc. This would be at the Storyteller’s discretion, but exercise caution. It’s easy to create XP inflation by doling out XP too freely, creating a disparity between older players and new players just joining the game.

## Limiting XP

In addition to limiting how much XP you hand out, you may want to limit how it’s spent. Otherwise it would be easy for someone to save up a ton of XP and become an expert in something overnight. Two limits are recommended:

* A character can only raise one skill every 3 days.
* A character may only save up a maximum of 16 XP. (This is the cost of raising a skill from 11 to 12, in case they’re saving up for that, plus a few extra.)

There will likely be legitimate exceptions to these rules, so they should be exercised at the Storyteller’s discretion.

# Combat

This section describes the customizations you’ll need for the FS3 combat system.

## Special Abilities

The combat rules require you to determine which abilities are used for the following rolls:

* Toughness (knockout and healing)
* Medicine
* First Aid
* Repair
* Jury-Rig
* Initiative

You could have dedicated abilities for these situations (in other words, a specific ability named “Toughness”) or you can substitute whatever ability makes sense in your theme (for example, using a “BD” or “Constitution” attribute for toughness rolls).

## Weapon list

Creating a weapons list is obviously important for the game. Consider whether you really want to make up different models of weapons (M16 Assault Rifle, AK47 Assault Rifle, etc.) or just lump everything into a generic category (Assault Rifle). It can be tedious creating all the statistics, and having too many weapons to pick from can be overwhelming for players on an online game in particular.

Most of the weapon statistics are pretty self-explanatory, based on the descriptions in the Player’s Guide. A few bear special mention:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Weapon Stat** | **Notes** |
| Defense Skill | For firearms, it is recommended that you use a raw ability level of “3” rather than any specific skill. Otherwise you’ll end up with people missing left and right. There is really no skill involved in dodging bullets, anyway. |
| Lethality | When setting lethality modifiers, bear in mind the damage modifiers from hit location. Vital areas get +15 and critical areas get +30, so any lethality modifier more than +30 is going to be pretty extreme. |
| Penetration | See Penetration and Protection, page 9. |
| Recoil | 20 is a good number for modern rifles. 30 for SMGs or weapons with worse recoil. |
| Effective Range | Remember that this is used as the upper bound for “Medium” range for the weapon. |
| Shrapnel | Anti-vehicle weapons are typically armor piercing and do not do shrapnel damage. Anti-personnel weapons usually have shrapnel. |

## Armor List

Armor statistics are not described in the Player’s Guide, but they are pretty straightforward.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Armor Stat** | **Description** |
| Hit Locations | Describes which hit locations are covered by the armor. For instance, military grade BD armor usually includes a long vest (covering the groin), a collar for the neck, and a helmet. A standard police vest usually covers only the torso. |
| Protection | See Penetration and Protection, page 9. |
| Armor Class | This is just a guide to tell players whether the armor is for vehicles or people. Vehicle armor is treated the same as personal armor, with a list of protected hit locations and a protection value. |

## Penetration and Protection

The key to selecting penetration and protection values is to keep them balanced with one another. The table below shows some sample values based on the modern world.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Weapon / Armor** | **Penetration /**  **Protection**  **Value** |
| Knife | 1 |
| Interior wall (drywall / plaster) | 1 |
| Solid wood furniture | 2 |
| Anti-Personnel Shrapnel | 3 |
| Light BD armor (undershirt vest) | 3 |
| Light small arms (pistols, SMGs) | 3 |
| Military BD armor (kevlar vest) | 4 |
| Medium small arms (rifles) | 4 |
| Car door | 4 |
| Brick wall | 5 |
| Light Truck | 5 |
| Fighter Jet | 5 |
| Heavy small arms (12.5mm/.50cal) | 8 |
| Cargo aircraft / Bomber | 8 |
| Anti-Aircraft Missile | 10 |
| Light cannon (20mm) | 10 |
| Armored Personnel Carrier (APC) | 15 |
| Medium cannon (40mm) | 20 |
| Light tank | 25 |
| Anti-Tank Missile | 70 |
| Heavy tank | 75 |

The best way to sanity-check your values is to plug the numbers from various scenarios into the armor formula. If, for example, you discover that your heavy machinegun regularly bounces off your fighter jet armor, you know you have a problem.

## Vehicle list

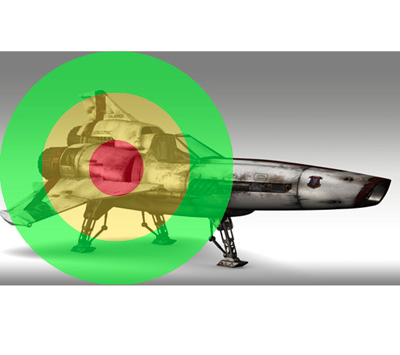
The vehicle statistics are also pretty self-explanatory:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Piloting Skill | The skill used to pilot the vehicle. Has no game effect; it’s just for reference. |
| Toughness | Use the same scale as personal ability levels. |
| Armor | Specify which type of armor (from the armor list) applies to this vehicle. |
| Hit Location Chart | Specify which hit location chart (from the hit location chart list) applies to this vehicle. |
| Weapons | Standard weapons loadout for the vehicle. This is just a guide, not a restriction, since there may legitimately be multiple weapons loadouts. |
| Dodge Bonus | A modifier applied to defense rolls while piloting the vehicle. May be a penalty if negative. |

## Hit Locations

The Player’s Guide gives a hit location chart for people, so you only need to worry about hit locations if you have vehicles or some kind of non-humanoid assailants (bug-eyed monsters with six legs, for instance). In those cases, it is necessary to define a hit location chart for that type of vehicle/creature.

This section will walk through the steps involved in creating a hit location chart, using a Battlestar Galactica Viper space fighter as an example.

1. Determine all available hit locations.  
     
   *Example: For a Viper, there would be: Cockpit, BD, Engine, Right Wing, Left Wing. We could further divide BD up into Nose/Tail if we wanted, or include some secondary targets like Controls, Landing Gear or Weapons, but we’ll choose not to for this example for the sake of brevity.*
2. Determine the default hit location, typically the center of mass.  
     
   *Example: This would be the Viper’s BD.*
3. Determine which hit locations are Vital or Critical.  
     
   *Example: We’ll dub Engine and Cockpit to be Critical and BD to be Vital. The wings aren’t terribly important to a Viper since it normally flies in space.*
4. Determine which hit locations have a higher percentage for crew injuries. In other words, where do the people sit?  
     
   *Example: Vipers don’t have passengers, so the only person is the pilot, sitting in the Cockpit.*
5. For each hit location, imagine a bullseye superimposed over that target point with three bands of color – green / yellow / red. Now choose 5 hit locations in the green zone, 5 in the yellow zone, and 5 in the red zone. Remember that you can use the same hit location more than once to increase its chances of being rolled.   
     
   Arrange the hit locations in order, red first, green last, and you’ve got your hit location chart for that targeted area.  
     
   For the default hit location, all 15 values should represent hits somewhere on the target. For large target areas (like the torso on a human), there should be a fair chance of hitting exactly where you aimed at. For smaller hit locations, the chance of hitting exactly where you aimed should be smaller , and you should have some values on the chart represent a Near Miss.  
     
     
   *Example: Let’s take the Viper’s Body first. The red zone would include the Body and perhaps the Engine. The yellow zone would include the Body, Cockpit, and both Wings. The green zone would include the Body, Wings, Engine.  
     
   Thus the final 15 values for BD could be:  
   Left Wing Right Wing Engine Engine Body Left Wing Right Wing Body Body Cockpit Engine Engine Body Body Body*  
   We repeat that process for all the other hit locations.  
     
   

# Sample Configuration

Below is a sample FS3 configuration from a Battlestar Galactica game.

## Skills

### Attributes

* Academic - Book learning and scientific pursuits.
* Creative - Artistic and creative endeavors.
* Technical - Working with gizmos.
* Athletic - Running, jumping, and the like.
* Reactive - Things involving good reaction and hand/eye coordination, like driving, piloting, shooting, etc.
* Social - Dealing with people.

### Action Skills

* Firearms
* Melee
* Alertness
* Stealth
* Viper Piloting
* Raptor Piloting
* ECM (for Raptor ECOs)
* Gunnery
* Repair
* First Aid
* Medicine

Notice that although there are separate action skills for piloting Vipers and Raptors, piloting anything else would be considered a background skill because it’s not particularly relevant to the action in the game.

### Background Skills

* A science - astronomy, biology, chemistry, geology, mathematics, physics, etc.
* A humanity - history, literature, psychology, philosophy, poetry, etc.
* A profession or trade - cook, waitress, bartender, accountant, programmer, carpenter, brewer, blacksmith, etc.
* A game - chess, roleplaying, poker, etc.
* An art - sculpting, painting, sketching, photography, etc.
* A form of expression - acting, singing, dancing, playing an instrument, writing
* A sport - baseball, football, gymnastics, etc.
* A craft or hobby - gardening, basketweaving, knitting, etc.
* An unusual interest - detective novels, game show hosts, etc.

### Character Creation

Each character receives 80 points for abilities.

Ability limits:

* No more than 4 abilities at rating 7 or higher.
* No more than 32 points in attributes.
* No more than 32 points in action skills.
* 1-4 Quirks
* Minimum of 2 Background Skills

## Experience

2 XP / week (Battlestar Galactica is an intense war/survival environment)

Maximum of 16 XP may be saved up at any given time

One skill raise every 3 days

## Combat

Special Abilities:

* Initiative = Reactive
* Tougness = Athletic
* First Aid = First Aid
* Medicine = Medicine
* Repair = Repair
* Jury Rig = Repair

### Weapons List

| **Weapon Description** | **Attack**  **Skill** | **Defense**  **Skill** | **Lethality** | **Penetration** | **Type** | **Class** | **Full Auto** | **Ammo** | **Recoil** | **Range**  **(m)** | **Blast**  **Radius**  **(m)** | **Damage**  **Type** | **Accuracy** | **Shrapnel** | **Reloadable** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Fragmentation Hand Grenade | Athletic | Reactive | 0 | 7 | Explosive | Personal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 15 | Physical | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Flashbang Hand Grenade which blinds/deafens human targets for 5 secs. No effect on Centurions. | Athletic | Reactive | -75 | 7 | Explosive | Personal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 10 | Stun | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Pistol | Firearms | 3 | 0 | 3 | Ranged | Personal | 0 | 10 | 0 | 50 | 0 | Physical | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Pistol with armor piercing rounds | Firearms | 3 | -10 | 5 | Ranged | Personal | 0 | 10 | 0 | 50 | 0 | Physical | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Sub-machinegun | Firearms | 3 | 0 | 3 | Ranged | Personal | 1 | 30 | 25 | 150 | 0 | Physical | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Assault Rifle | Firearms | 3 | 0 | 4 | Ranged | Personal | 1 | 20 | 20 | 500 | 0 | Physical | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Assault Rifle with armor piercing rounds. | Firearms | 3 | -10 | 6 | Ranged | Personal | 1 | 20 | 20 | 500 | 0 | Physical | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Light machinegun/SAW | Firearms | 3 | 0 | 4 | Ranged | Personal | 1 | 100 | 30 | 1000 | 0 | Physical | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Light machinegun/SAW with armor piercing rounds | Firearms | 3 | -10 | 6 | Ranged | Personal | 1 | 100 | 30 | 1000 | 0 | Physical | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Shrapnel | 3 | 3 | 0 | 3 | Ranged | Personal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 5 | Physical | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Unarmed | Melee | Melee | 0 | 0 | Melee | Personal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Stun | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Unarmed Sparring | Melee | Melee | -25 | 0 | Melee | Personal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Stun | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mace/club/baton | Melee | Melee | -10 | 0 | Melee | Personal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Physical | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Knife | Melee | Melee | -5 | 0 | Melee | Personal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Physical | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Stun gun | Firearms | Melee | 70 | 0 | Ranged | Personal | 0 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 0 | Stun | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| KEW Assault Cannon | Gunnery | Piloting | 0 | 20 | Ranged | Vehicle | 0 | 0 | 0 | 500 | 0 | Physical | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Anti-Aircraft Missile | Gunnery | ECM | 75 | 20 | Ranged | Vehicle | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10000 | 0 | Physical | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Armor Piercing Anti-Tank Missile | Gunnery | Piloting | 75 | 70 | Ranged | Vehicle | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5000 | 0 | Physical | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Heavy machinegun. Assumes tripod. | Firearms | Piloting | -10 | 8 | Ranged | Vehicle | 1 | 100 | 10 | 2000 | 0 | Physical | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| ECM Package | ECM | ECM | 0 | 0 | Defensive | Vehicle | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10000 | 0 | Physical | 0 | 0 | 0 |

### Armor List

| **Armor Description** | **Hit Locations Protected** | **Protection**  **Value** | **Class** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Military-Grade Kevlar Vest and Helmet | Head Neck Chest Abdomen Groin | 4 | Personal |
| Police-Grade Kevlar Vest and Helmet | Head Neck Chest Abdomen | 3 | Personal |
| Cylon Centurion Armor | Head, Neck, Chest, Abdomen, Left Arm, Right Arm, Left Foot, Right Foot, Left Hand, Right Hand, Left Leg, Right Leg | 5 | Personal |
| Viper Vehicle Armor | Body, Controls Engine, Right Wing, Left Wing, Tail Nose | 10 | Vehicle |
| Cylon Raider Vehicle Armor | Controls, Body, Engine, Right Wing, Left Wing | 5 | Vehicle |
| Raptor Vehicle Armor | Controls, Body, Engine, Right Wing, Left Wing, Cabin | 15 | Vehicle |

### Vehicle List

| **Vehicle**  **Description** | **Piloting Skill** | **Toughness** | **Armor Type** | **Hit Location Type** | **Weapons** | **Dodge Bonus** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Viper space fighter | Piloting | 5 | Viper | Viper | KEW | 0 |
| Cylon Raider space fighter | Piloting | 2 | Raider | Raider | KEW  AA Missile | 0 |
| Raptor space command and control | Piloting | 7 | Raptor | Raptor | ECM  AP Missile | 0 |

### Hit Locations

***Viper Hit Location Chart***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Hit Location** | **1 or less** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** | **11** | **12** | **13** | **14** | **15 or more** |
| Cockpit  (CP)  *\*Critical\** | -- | -- | -- | -- | BD | RW | LW | WP | N | N | CP | CP | CP | CP | CP |
| Controls  (CT)  *\*Critical\** | -- | -- | -- | -- | BD | RW | LW | N | CP | N | CT | CT | CT | CT | CT |
| Body  (BD)  *\*Vital\** | E | T | T | RW | LW | WP | N | N | CP | CT | BD | BD | BD | BD | BD |
| Engine  (EN)  *\*Vital\** | -- | -- | CP | BD | BD | RW | LW | CT | T | T | EN | EN | EN | EN | EN |
| Right Wing  (RW) | -- | -- | -- | EN | T | T | BD | BD | WP | N | RW | RW | RW | RW | RW |
| Left Wing  (LW) | -- | -- | -- | EN | T | T | BD | BD | WP | N | LW | LW | LW | LW | LW |
| Tail  (T) | -- | -- | CP | BD | BD | RW | LW | CT | EN | EN | T | T | T | T | T |
| Weapon  (WP) | -- | -- | -- | -- | RW | LW | N | N | BD | BD | WP | WP | WP | WP | WP |
| Nose  (N) | -- | -- | CP | BD | WP | RW | LW | CT | BD | CP | N | N | N | N | N |

The other hit location charts are omitted for brevity. If you want to see them, consult the FS3 MUSH code archive and examine the vehicle configuration in the code.