

# TESTS

**W**hen you want your hero to rifle through a desk and locate a specific document, scale a castle wall, negotiate a treaty with a monarch, or undertake any other activity with a chance of failure, you'll need to make a test to determine how successful you are at the task. A test is any power roll that has failure or consequences as an option.

## When to Make a Test

The Director should ask a player to make a test only when the player's hero attempts a task where the consequences of failure are interesting or dramatic, and where failure won't grind the story to a halt. For example, if a hero wants to leap over a waist-high wall while casually walking through a peaceful city neighborhood, the worst case for failure is probably that the hero falls on their butt, takes no damage, and can stand up to either try again or walk around the wall. As such, no test is required. But if the hero were being chased by enemies, failing to leap over the wall means the pursuers can catch them, so the Director might decide to call for a test to determine what happens.

The advancement of a story shouldn't be halted by failing a test. For instance, the heroes might need to know the color of a dwarf king's crown to solve a puzzle, with that puzzle opening the only entrance to a tomb they must enter to stop a world-ending ritual. It could be that a successful Reason test allows the heroes to recall that lore, but the test shouldn't be their only option to get the information. If the test fails, perhaps the heroes need to go to a flying library to do research, or they might be able to delve into a ruin to find the ancient monarch's portrait. A failed test should always result in a story becoming more interesting, not in the action coming to an end.

## It Just Works!

When a hero attempts to solve a task that typically requires a test with clever, outside-the-box thinking, the Director can instead decide that no test is required and the attempt automatically works! For example, if a hero who wants to climb a wall first covers their hands and feet in giant strands of sticky spider webs, the Director might decide that they can climb up the wall without needing to make a test.

That said, such clever ideas often work for free the first time, but the Director could decide they require tests if they are used again.

## How to Make a Test

Each test has the following steps:

The Director decides that a hero's activities call for a test and asks the hero's player to make a power roll using an appropriate characteristic (see [Characteristics and Tests](#) below). The Director then selects a difficulty for the power roll, either secretly or publicly (see [Test Difficulty](#) below).

The player makes the power roll. If the character has a skill that applies to the test (see [Skills](#) later in this chapter), they can ask the Director if the skill applies and justify the use of the skill. If the Director agrees the skill applies, the hero gains a +2 bonus to the roll.

The player reports the total of the roll, and the Director interprets its success or failure.

## Characteristics and Tests

When you describe a task you want your hero to undertake and the Director determines that a test is necessary, they then determine which characteristic the test uses based on the nature of the task. For instance, if you're scaling a wall, the Director could ask for a Might test to determine how far and how quickly you're able to climb. If you're attempting to plead your innocence in court for a murder you didn't commit, the Director might ask for a Presence test if you're attempting to win over the jury with your personality, or a Reason test if you're laying out a logical argument to support your innocence.

Though the Director can decide to call for tests in any circumstances, a number of tasks that heroes routinely undertake are commonly set up as tests.

### MIGHT TESTS

You make a Might test whenever a risky task calls for the use of physical strength. Might tests are most often used for breaking down doors and other structures, hurling heavy objects, pulling your body up a sheer wall, swimming against a mighty current, and other feats of physical power.

### AGILITY TESTS

You make an Agility test whenever a risky task calls for the use of your physical coordination and nimbleness. Agility tests are most often used for tumbling, sneaking quietly, picking locks, and engaging in sleight of hand.

### REASON TESTS

You make a Reason test whenever you attempt a risky task that requires the use of your mental acumen and education, formal or otherwise. Reason tests are most often used to recall lore, deduce information based on clues, complete a puzzle, forge counterfeit items or documents, break a code, convince others of a logical argument, or make an estimation.

### INTUITION TESTS

You make an Intuition test whenever you attempt a risky task that requires the use of your powers of observation and instinct. Intuition tests are most often used to notice hidden creatures or details, discern another person's motivations or honesty, calm and reassure others, and train animals.

### PRESENCE TESTS

You make a Presence test whenever you attempt a risky task that requires the use of your force of personality. Presence tests are most often used to gain trust, project confidence, and influence and lead other creatures.

### Influencing Player Characters With Tests

The things player characters do can't be influenced by any creature making a test, whether a monster, an NPC, or another player character. Many players feel that their agency is taken away if they're compelled to jump into a pile of gold filled with hidden scorpions because an NPC convinced them to do so with a Presence test. For most players, it's not fun to be in control of a hero and lose some of that control.

Instead, Directors should do their level best to have an NPC suggest that a character dive headlong into the gold like a billionaire duck, then let the player decide what their character does. Similarly, a Director might decide that one player character can't make an Intuition test to discern another PC's motivations or honesty.

That said, if everyone in your gaming group decides to lift one or more of these restrictions after talking about it, go for it! There's no wrong way to play as long as everyone is having fun. The MCDM Safety Toolkit (available for download at <https://mcdm.gg/SafetyToolkit>) discusses how to talk about potentially problematic topics such as limiting character agency at your table.

## Test Difficulty

The Director decides how difficult a task that requires a test is: easy, medium, or hard. If a task seems as though it's easier than easy, then no test is necessary. The hero simply accomplishes the task. If the task seems harder than hard, then the Director is free to decide that it's impossible to complete with a test.

On a test-by-test basis, the Director can share the difficulty of a task before the player makes the test, which makes interpreting the outcome faster at the table. The Director can also keep a test's difficulty secret until after the player rolls the test, for dramatic effect.

The Test Difficulty Outcomes table shows all the possible outcomes of the different difficulties of tests. The Director will keep this information handy so as to be able to compare the different difficulties and their outcomes during play.

Whenever the rules talk about obtaining a success on a test, that includes a straight success, a success with a consequence, or a success with a reward. Whenever the rules talk about a failure on a test, that includes a straight failure or a failure with a consequence.

Whenever you make a test whose outcome you don't like, you can spend a hero token to reroll the test. You must use the new roll.

### Test Difficulty Outcomes

Power Roll	Easy Test Outcomes	Medium Test Outcomes	Hard Test Outcomes
≤11	Success with a consequence	Failure	Failure with a consequence
12–16	Success	Success with a consequence	Failure
17+	Success with a reward	Success	Success
Natural 19 or 20	Success with a reward	Success with a reward	Success with a reward

## EASY TESTS

An easy test has some risk of consequence, but most heroes will likely overcome it. The power roll you make for an easy test determines the outcome (see [Test Outcomes](#) below):

- ≤11 You succeed on the task and incur a consequence.
- 12–16 You succeed on the task.
- 17+ You succeed on the task with a reward.

## MEDIUM TESTS

A medium test has some risk of failure that most heroes will likely overcome—but with a cost. The power roll you make for a medium test determines the outcome:

- ≤11 You fail the task.
- 12–16 You succeed on the task and incur a consequence.
- 17+ You succeed on the task.

## HARD TESTS

A hard test has a greater risk of failure, and most heroes are likely to suffer some hardship while trying to overcome the intended task. The power roll you make for a hard test determines the outcome:

- ≤11 You fail the task and incur a consequence.
- 12–16 You fail the task.
- 17+ You succeed on the task.

## NATURAL 19 OR 20: SUCCESS WITH A REWARD

Whenever you get a natural 19 or 20 on the power roll for a test—a total of 19 or 20 before adding your characteristic score or other modifiers—you score a critical success. This critical success automatically lets you succeed on the task with a reward, even if the test has a medium or hard difficulty.

## Test Outcomes

Depending on a test's difficulty and the power roll made to accomplish the task represented by the test, you can obtain one of the following outcomes.

### FAILURE WITH A CONSEQUENCE

If you fail a hard test and incur a consequence, you don't do what you set out to do—in addition to which, you suffer an impactful setback. The Director determines the exact nature of the consequence, which is typically related to the specific task.

For instance, if a hero suffers a consequence while trying to climb a wall, they might make it halfway up the wall and then fall, taking damage and landing prone. A hero trying to sneak by cultists might be spotted by those foes, who immediately attack. If a consequence strikes when a hero attempts to bribe a prison guard, the guard might decide to arrest the hero or lead them into a trap. If a hero suffers a consequence on a Reason test made to recall lore about the king's favorite meal, they might confuse it for a dish to which the monarch is deathly allergic.

Not all consequences need to be immediate or apparent. For example, a hero might fail with a consequence on a test made to cheat at a high-stakes game of cards with a noble. The failure means the cheating is noticed, but the Director decides that the noble doesn't say anything. This consequence isn't made apparent until later in the evening, when the noble has guards surround the hero, intent on taking the cheater down to the dungeon for stacking the deck.

Common consequences for failing a test include the following:

- ◆ Making an NPC so upset that they storm off, or betray, attack, or otherwise attempt to harm you
- ◆ Drawing the attention of a group of foes
- ◆ Triggering a trap or hazard that captures or significantly harms you or an ally
- ◆ Breaking an important piece of equipment that is difficult to replace or repair
- ◆ Thinking you know something that you don't
- ◆ Getting stuck in a situation that must be resolved with a negotiation or a montage test you didn't need to make before

In lieu of other consequences, the Director also has the option to gain 2 additional Malice—a resource that creatures run by the Director use in combat—at the start of the next combat encounter.

## FAILURE

If you fail a test without incurring a consequence, you simply don't do what you set out to do. A hero attempting to climb a wall finds no purchase. A hero trying to recall lore can't remember the desired facts. If a hero attempts to bribe a guard, they don't take the bait.

On a failed test, the Director can decide that there might still be a small penalty for failure, depending on the circumstances of the test. This penalty shouldn't be as harsh as rolling a failure with a consequence, though. For instance, a hero who gets this outcome on an Agility test made to sneak by a group of cultists might draw the attention of one cultist with their failure. Now that cultist is coming to investigate, but they haven't raised the alarm ... yet.

When a hero rolls a failure without a consequence, the Director can offer to let them succeed with a consequence instead. For instance, when a hero rolls a 10 on a medium Might test to break down a locked door, that's a failure and the door stays closed. But the Director could suggest to the player that instead of not breaking down the door, they can break down the door and lose 1d6 Stamina from being injured in the effort.

## SUCCESS WITH A CONSEQUENCE

If you succeed on a test and incur a consequence, you do what you set out to do, but with an added cost. A hero might succeed in climbing up a wall, but the surface of the wall crumbles and becomes unstable as they do, making the climb more difficult for the ally ascending after them. When trying to sneak by a cultist, a hero successfully does so, but leaves footprints or other evidence of trespassing behind. If a hero bribes a guard to be allowed to sneak into a prison, the guard lets them in—but then demands a gemstone the hero needs for an important crafting project before they let the hero out.

Just like failure with a consequence, the consequences accompanying success don't need to be immediately apparent. In lieu of other consequences, the Director has the option to gain 2 additional Malice at the start of the next combat encounter.

When a hero rolls a success with a consequence, the Director might give them a chance to fail instead. For instance, when a hero rolls a 10 on an easy Agility test to pick the lock on a chest, that's a success with a consequence. The Director could suggest that the character has opened the lock but broken their lockpicks in the process (knowing the picks can't be replaced until the hero returns to town), but can also give them the option of failing to pick the lock but keeping their lockpicks intact.

## SUCCESS

If you succeed on a test without consequence or reward, you simply achieve whatever you set out to do. A hero climbs that wall, sneaks by those cultists, or bribes that guard just as they planned. Smooth.

## SUCCESS WITH A REWARD

If you succeed on a test with a reward, you accomplish whatever you set out to do. But you also gain a little something extra, in the form of momentum or luck that makes the immediate future easier for you or your friends.

The Director determines the reward for a success, which is most often related to the task at hand. For instance, if a hero succeeds with a reward while climbing a wall, they might find a ladder at the top they can lower so that any allies climbing up after them can do so without needing to make a test. A hero trying to sneak by cultists who succeeds with a reward might be able to dose the cultists' nearby water barrel with sleeping poison as they pass by unseen. Succeeding with a reward while bribing a prison guard could mean that the guard unlocks a door for the hero in addition to forgetting they were ever there.

As with consequences, the reward that comes with a success doesn't need to be immediate or apparent. For example, a hero succeeds with a reward on an easy test made to cheat at a high-stakes game of cards with a noble. Not only does the hero win the game, but the Director decides that their reward comes from a servant watching the game who's impressed with the character's performance. After the game, the servant approaches the hero, offering magic from the noble's private stash in congratulations and admiration.

Common rewards accompanying success on a test include the following:

- ◆ Automatically accomplishing a related follow-up task that would typically require a test
- ◆ Allowing an ally engaged in the same task to accomplish the task without needing to make the test as well
- ◆ Obtaining a consumable treasure or useful piece of mundane equipment
- ◆ Learning a piece of helpful information
- ◆ Impressing or ingratiating yourself with someone who grants you a small favor
- ◆ Noticing a hidden danger well before it strikes, giving you time to avoid or prepare for it

In lieu of other rewards, the Director can also decide that a hero who succeeds on a test with a reward earns the players a hero token (see [Hero Tokens](#) in [Chapter 1: The Basics](#)).

### Optional Rule: Pitching Consequences and Rewards

Coming up with consequences and rewards for tests can be a big part of the fun for many Directors, but even the best Directors occasionally run low on ideas. That's why the game gives the default option of consequences and rewards in the form of Malice and hero tokens. However, a Director who prefers narrative consequences and rewards can ask the players to pitch different consequences and rewards when they make a test. The Director can reject, add to, or modify the players' ideas as they choose, and will remind the players that they need to pitch real consequences, and not minor rewards disguised as consequences.

## How Long Does It Take?

The amount of time required for a task involving a test is determined by the Director. A task such as recalling lore with a Reason test might take no time at all. Ducking behind a barrel to hide with an Agility test might require a maneuver or a main action, while tracking a band of voiceless talkers through the World Below could take hours or even days.

### TESTS DURING COMBAT

Many (but not all) tests that a hero might make during combat are made as maneuvers. See [Maneuvers](#) in [Chapter 10: Combat](#) for more information.

### Can I Try Again?

In many cases when you fail a test, you can't attempt the test again unless the circumstances of the test change. For instance, if you attempt an Agility test to pick a lock and fail, you can't attempt to pick the lock again unless you get better lockpicks, oil the lock, have someone demonstrate how to pick a similar lock, and so on.

The Director decides when the circumstances have changed enough to allow a new attempt at a test.

## Heroes Make Tests

If a hero attempts to sneak by an enemy guard unnoticed, should the hero make an Agility test to sneak, or should the guard make an Intuition test to catch the hero in the act? If a cultist lies to a hero about the location of a secret temple, does the cultist roll a Presence test to conceal the truth, or does the hero roll an Intuition test to discern the cultist's honesty?

Except in certain scenarios (explored at [NPCs Roll for Deceptive Tasks](#) and [Opposed Power Rolls](#) below), heroes make tests and NPCs do not. Heroes are the stars of the story, and the consequences and rewards of tests have longer-lasting implications for them. There are exceptions to this rule, of course. If a hero travels with an NPC retainer or companion, that NPC will almost certainly make tests from time to time. But for the most part, NPCs and other creatures never need to make tests when what they do opposes what the heroes do.

To quickly assess the difficulty of a task opposed by one or more creatures and the test made to attempt it, the Director can use the following guidelines (though these are not hard and fast rules):

**Easy Test:** A test is easy if only one creature opposes the hero, and that opposed creature would have a lower bonus to their test roll for the task than the hero does. If a hero with an Agility score of 2 attempts to sneak by a guard with an Intuition score of 0, the test is easy.

**Moderate Test:** A test is moderate if multiple creatures oppose the hero and those creatures would have lower bonuses to their test rolls than the hero, or if only one creature opposes the hero and has the same test bonus as the hero.

**Hard Test:** A test is hard if an opposed creature would have a higher bonus to their test roll than the hero, or if multiple creatures with the same test bonus as the hero oppose the hero.

The failure consequences of opposed tasks are some of the easiest to create on the fly. Fail to hide from someone, and they notice you. Fail to lie to someone, and they catch your duplicity. Fail to arm wrestle someone for a free ale, and you're picking up the tab. The consequence is that the opposition bests the hero.



## NPCs Roll for Deceptive Tasks

At times, the Director might choose for an NPC to make a test when engaged in a deceptive task, rather than having characters attempt to note the deception. By having the NPC roll in these scenarios, the Director doesn't tip their hand to the players that subterfuge is afoot.

For example, when an assassin attempts to ambush the heroes while they sit around a campfire, if any player says their hero is on the lookout for danger, that hero would make an Intuition test to notice the danger. But if no one is keeping watch, the assassin makes an Agility test to sneak up on the heroes unnoticed. If the assassin fails the test, the heroes notice immediately as their assailant loudly steps on a twig. If the assassin succeeds, the heroes don't notice until the assailant is right on top of them.

An NPC might also make a Presence test if they lie to the heroes, as long as the heroes have no reason to believe the character would be deceptive. The Director knows if the heroes are wary in that way because the players will ask if they can make a test to discern the NPC's honesty.

As an optional rule, the Director is also free to ask the heroes to make a reactive test to a deceptive NPC instead (see [Reactive Tests](#) below) whenever they choose.

## Opposed Power Rolls

When two creatures are engaged in a particularly dramatic struggle that requires them both to make tests, the Director can have all the creatures involved make a test. The creature with the highest power roll wins. You can't earn a reward as part of these opposed power rolls, and they don't follow the typical difficulty structure or have three different tiers of possible outcomes.

For example, if your hero attempts to sneak by a demon lord, you make an Agility test to move stealthily while the demon makes an Intuition test to notice you. If your hero gets the higher power roll, you sneak by without the demon noticing. If the demon gets the higher roll, they catch you in the act of sneaking. If multiple sneaking heroes attempt to get by multiple demons, then each creature makes a test and all the totals are compared to determine which demons notice which heroes.

In the event of a tie in an opposed test, the state of the scene doesn't change. In the previous example, a tie means that if a demon on guard duty didn't know a sneaking hero was there, the demon remains oblivious. If the demon did know the hero was out there somewhere while trying to avoid being noticed, a tie means the demon still knows the hero is there but hasn't determined their location.

Since opposed power rolls don't use tiers, when you make an opposed power roll, a double edge provides a +4 bonus to the roll, a double bane provides a -4 penalty to the roll, an automatic tier increase counts as a +4 bonus to the roll, and an automatic tier decrease counts as a -4 penalty to the roll.

## Reactive Tests

At certain times when a hero isn't engaged in overcoming a task, the Director might ask the player of the hero to make a test without context, explaining the test only after the power roll is made. This often happens when a hero has a chance of knowing or noticing something of significance that the player doesn't know to look for or ask about.

Reactive tests are typically made in the following circumstances, though the Director can call for them in any appropriate scenario:



**Hidden Environmental Features:** The Director asks for an Intuition test to notice a secret door, a hidden trap, or some other disguised environmental feature.

**Hidden Foes:** The Director calls for an Intuition test to notice a hidden foe (or they could use the rules in [NPCs Roll for Deceptive Tasks](#) above).

**Hidden Motives:** The Director can ask for an Intuition test during a conversation to gauge how well a hero can read an NPC, judging whether they're lying, withholding information, or concealing an emotional response. (The Director could also use the rules in [NPCs Roll for Deceptive Tasks](#).)

**Recall Lore:** The Director might ask a hero to make a Reason test when dealing with a new object, a piece of information, or an event to determine what history or details the hero might already know about it.

**Creature and DTO Tests:** Some creatures and dynamic terrain objects in [Draw Steel: Monsters](#) have features and abilities that require heroes to make reactive tests. These tests can't be modified by skills.

### Optional Rule: Secret Reactive Tests

Some Directors prefer to make the power rolls for reactive tests for the heroes rather than asking the players to do so. This allows the Director to make the rolls when appropriate for hidden objects, creatures, motivations, and information without tipping off the players that there is information to be gained. Having the Director roll requires the Director to have everyone's characteristics and skills recorded (whether physically or digitally) for easy reference.

## Skills

Skills represent the different specializations a hero has outside of attacking, defending, and using their ancestry features, class features, and equipment. Whenever you make a test, having a particular skill associated with the test increases your chance of success.

### Applying Skills

If you have a skill that applies to a test you make, you gain a +2 bonus to the test. For instance, if your hero has the Hide skill, you have a +2 bonus to any test you make that involves hiding yourself. This might include an Agility test to hide behind a barrel, or a Presence test to disappear into a crowd.

The +2 bonus gained for a skill isn't an edge. A player can make a test that has both the +2 bonus for a skill and the +2 bonus for an edge.

You can't apply more than one skill to a test.

### JUSTIFY THE SKILL

It's not the Director's job to know every task potentially covered by the skills in the game, or to know the specific skills your hero has. Instead, the Director asks you to make a test using a characteristic and you tell the Director if you think you have a skill that applies. If it's not obvious why the skill applies, tell the Director how your hero is approaching the task and justify why that approach uses the skill. The Director then decides if you get the +2 bonus the skill represents. If the Director disagrees with you, that's the final word.

Approaching problems creatively while remaining reasonable can help you get the most out of your skills. For example, if you're making a Presence test to impress a noble at a party, using the Brag skill is an obvious choice. But what if you don't have that skill? Maybe you could instead try to impress the noble with a brief but exciting lecture about the nature of the elements, making a Presence test using the Magic skill that you do have!

Sometimes you won't have a skill that applies to a test. That's okay! If your characteristic score is decent, you likely have a good chance of success without a skill.

### MIXING CHARACTERISTICS AND SKILLS

Although certain skills are often paired with one characteristic more than others, a skill can apply to a test made using any characteristic that makes sense. The Director has the final say on which characteristic is used to complete a task, and can call for a different characteristic based on the circumstances.

For example, intimidating someone with a purely verbal threat is a Presence test. But if a player describes their character tearing a log in half with their bare hands to intimidate a foe, the Director is likely to call for a Might test instead. The Intimidate skill can apply to both tests. In the same way, scaling the side of a building is covered by a Might test, but if a hero does a series of leaps from one balcony to another to reach a roof, the Director could call for an Agility test instead. The Climb skill applies to both of these tests.

## Many Specific Skills

*Draw Steel* includes a big list of skills, and each is fairly specific. For example, instead of one Athletics skill that covers climbing, jumping, swimming, and lifting heavy objects, your character might use separate Climb, Jump, Lift, and Swim skills. Instead of a Thievery skill that covers picking locks, picking pockets, and disabling traps, the game has three skills: Pick Lock, Pick Pocket, and Sabotage.

Having a wide range of specific skills means you'll frequently make tests that don't use one of your character's skills, simply applying a characteristic. By not having a few broader skills, it means that having a character who covers the spread of every skill is actually impossible. Luckily, the math of the game doesn't require you to have a skill to have a decent chance of success on a test. That means heroes can attempt tasks without the help of a skill just because someone needs to do it, and that's pretty darn heroic!

Since you don't need to worry about your character covering a wide spread of skills, you're free to choose the skills you think fit your hero best and are the most fun to work with. Maybe you're thinking about an elementalist who has a gymnastic background in jumping and tumbling, and who also studied religion and blacksmithing. Having that kind of specific backstory is a big part of cinematic storytelling.

The rules for skills allow for them to be flexibly applied to any test that is appropriate for the skill. This encourages clever thinking. A player can ask the Director, "I want to impress the duke with a story about how I ascended the sheer Cliffs of Azgahnian. Can I use my Climb skill for a +2 bonus to my Presence test?" Getting creative like that is a lot of fun. It paints a visual picture, and it's good tactical thinking! However, if the skills in a game are too broad in the kinds of activities they represent, players inevitably end up applying the same skill over and over again to as many tests as possible. This isn't fun for anyone, and doesn't make a very compelling story.

### Edges on Tests With Specific Skills

Certain features and abilities grant a creature an edge on tests made with a specific skill. A creature making a test where the specific skill would apply gains an edge on the test even if they don't have the skill. For example, the conduit's Blessing of Fortunate Weather can create foggy weather that grants creatures who make tests using the Hide skill an edge on those tests. Any creature who attempts to hide in the fog gains an edge on the test as long as the Hide skill would apply to that test, regardless of whether they have that skill or not.

### Are All Skills Equal?

When choosing skills for your character, deciding which skills will be most useful depends a lot on the campaign. For instance, the Swim skill might be used constantly during a campaign that takes place on the ocean and has heroes exploring underwater ruins, but it won't come up as much in a campaign that takes place entirely in a vast desert. The Psionics skill might come up a lot in a campaign where voiceless talkers are the main foes, and Magic might be more useful in a game where the heroes take on a circle of evil wizards. If you're worried about whether a skill you'd like to take will be useful, discuss your skill list with the Director after you create a hero. And if a skill doesn't work out, you can always trade it for another skill as you wish (see [Changing Character Options](#) in [Chapter 2: Making a Hero](#)).

## Skill Groups

Skills are broken down into five skill groups: crafting, exploration, interpersonal, intrigue, and lore.

### CRAFTING SKILLS

Skills from the crafting skill group are used in the creation and appraisal of goods and for jury-rigging contraptions. They are especially useful during rests and downtime.

Rewards for tests made with crafting skills typically include having leftover rare material used in the creation process, knowing a buyer willing to pay extra for goods or items you're appraising, or making a jury-rigged device so amazing that it lasts for more uses than it should.

Consequences for tests made with crafting skills typically include wasting rare materials used in the creation process, greatly overestimating or underestimating an item's value, and poorly jury-rigging a contraption so that it harms people (or at least the wrong people).

### EXPLORATION SKILLS

Skills from the exploration skill group are used to physically explore the environment around the characters, and to overcome physical obstacles.

Rewards for tests made with exploration skills typically include helping another creature engaging in the same task succeed without needing to also make a test, automatically succeeding on a follow-up test while engaged in the same task, reaching a destination faster than anticipated, and learning about or avoiding an upcoming hazard.

Consequences for tests made with exploration skills include harming yourself, your gear, or your allies; becoming lost; or stumbling headlong into a hazard or a place you were trying to avoid.

### INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Skills from the interpersonal skill group are used to socially interact with other creatures, and are particularly useful during negotiations (see [Chapter 11: Negotiation](#)). Aside from the Handle Animals skill, you can generally only use interpersonal skills when you attempt to influence creatures who have emotions and who can understand you.

Rewards for tests made with interpersonal skills typically include gaining an extra favor, item, or piece of information from the people or creatures you interact with.

Consequences for tests made with interpersonal skills include making the creature you're interacting with angry, sad, embarrassed, offended, or otherwise upset or uncomfortable. This might cause them to ignore you, storm off, spread rumors about you, attack you, betray you, blackmail you, or otherwise attempt to harm you.

### Crafting Skills

Skill	Use
Alchemy	Make bombs and potions
Architecture	Create buildings and vehicles
Blacksmithing	Forge metal armor and weapons
Carpentry	Create items out of wood
Cooking	Create delicious dishes
Fletching	Make ranged weapons and ammunition
Forgery	Create false badges, documents, and other items
Jewelry	Create bracelets, crowns, rings, and other jewelry
Mechanics	Build machines and clockwork items
Tailoring	Craft clothing of cloth or leather

### Exploration Skills

Skill	Use
Climb	Move up vertical surfaces
Drive	Control vehicles
Endurance	Remain engaged in strenuous activity over a long period of time
Gymnastics	Move across unsteady or narrow surfaces; tumble
Heal	Use mundane first aid
Jump	Leap vertical and horizontal distances
Lift	Pick up, carry, and throw heavy objects
Navigate	Read a map and travel without becoming lost
Ride	Ride and control a nonsapient mount, such as a horse
Swim	Move through deep liquid

### Interpersonal Skills

Skill	Use
Brag	Impress others with stories of your deeds
Empathize	Relate to someone on a personal level
Flirt	Attract romantic attention from someone
Gamble	Make bets with others
Handle Animals	Interact with nonsapient animal wildlife
Interrogate	Obtain information from a creature withholding it
Intimidate	Awe or scare a creature
Lead	Inspire people to action
Lie	Convince someone that a falsehood is true
Music	Perform music vocally or with an instrument
Perform	Engage in dance, oratory, acting, or some other physical performance
Persuade	Convince someone to agree with you through use of your charms and grace
Read Person	Read the emotions and body language of other creatures

## INTRIGUE SKILLS

Skills from the intrigue skill group are used in tasks centered around investigation, thievery, and spycraft.

Rewards for tests made with skills from this group typically include helping another creature engaging in the same task succeed without needing to also make a test, automatically succeeding on a follow-up test while engaged in the same task, discovering helpful information in addition to what you set out to learn, and performing an extra bit of clandestine activity in addition to what you set out to do.

Consequences for tests made with intrigue skills include getting caught in the act or failing to notice a detail that places you in danger, such as triggering a trap or walking into an ambush.

## LORE SKILLS

Skills from the lore skill group are used to research and recall specific information. They are especially useful during rests and downtime.

Rewards for tests made with lore skills typically include learning an extra piece of useful information.

Consequences for tests made with lore skills typically include learning an incorrect piece of information that seems useful, but which actually works against your interests or wastes time. (It's fun to roleplay these kinds of moments, so lean in!) Alternatively, the Director can make medium and hard tests with lore group skills for each hero in secret, then let the players know the narrative outcome without revealing the outcome of the power roll (see the [Optional Rule: Secret Reactive Tests](#) sidebar earlier in this chapter).



## ◆ Intrigue Skills ◆

Skill	Use
Alertness	Intuitively sense the details of your surroundings
Conceal Object	Hide an object on your person or in your environment
Disguise	Change your appearance to look like a different person
Eavesdrop	Actively listen to something that is hard to hear, such as a whispered conversation through a door
Escape Artist	Escape from bonds such as rope or manacles
Hide	Conceal yourself from others' observation
Pick Lock	Open a lock without using the key
Pick Pocket	Steal an item that another person wears or carries without them noticing
Sabotage	Disable a mechanical device such as a trap
Search	Actively search an environment for important details and items
Sneak	Move silently
Track	Follow a trail that another creature has left behind

## ◆ Lore Skills ◆

Skill	Use
Criminal Underworld	Knowing about criminal organizations, their crimes, their relationships, and their leaders
Culture	Knowing about a culture's customs, folktales, and taboos
History	Knowing about significant past events
Magic	Knowing about magical places, spells, rituals, items, and phenomena
Monsters	Knowing monster ecology, strengths, and weaknesses
Nature	Knowing about natural flora, fauna, and weather
Psionics	Knowing about psionic places, spells, rituals, items, and phenomena
Religion	Knowing about religious mythology, practices, and rituals
Rumors	Knowing gossip, legends, and uncertain truths
Society	Knowing noble etiquette and the leadership and power dynamics of noble families
Strategy	Knowing about battle tactics and logistics
Timescape	Knowing about the many worlds of the timescape

### For the Director: Make Your Own Skills

Directors should feel free to make their own skills that they feel are relevant and useful to their campaigns and adventures. For instance, the game doesn't have a Brewing skill for brewing ale or a Painting skill for making art because those aren't tasks that typically come up in a game about fighting monsters and saving the world. However, a Director could decide that their campaign involves poisoned barrels of ale and large amounts of counterfeit art, and that adding these two new skills to the game would make it more fun for the players. The Director simply needs to pick a group for these new skills—in this case, crafting makes sense. They then let the players know that they can swap out any crafting skill they have for these new skills.

## Example Tests

In this scenario, a trio of adventurers want to scale the 40-foot-high walls surrounding a castle known as the Star Chamber, hoping to covertly obtain information about their enemy, Lady Morgant.

**Director (Matt):** *The towering walls that surround the Star Chamber stand before you, the single iron gate closed and locked, with a platoon of armed guards outside.*

**James (playing Korvo, a shadow):** *Let's move to the side of the wall opposite the gate and make our ascent there.*

**Grace (playing Val, a conduit):** *Agreed.*

**Director:** *Okay. It'll be a Might test to get up to the top of the wall.*

The Director knows that the walls around the Star Chamber, the headquarters of the evil knights Lady Morgant leads, are smooth and hard to climb, designed to repel invaders. The test's difficulty is hard, but the Director keeps that information a secret for now.

**Alyssa (playing Jorn, a tactician):** *Let me go first. I've got good Might and can throw the others down a rope once I'm up there. And I've got the Climb skill.*

**Director:** *For sure. Okay, roll it up.*

Alyssa rolls 2d10 and gets a 13. She then adds her Might score of 2 and her +2 bonus for having an applicable skill to the roll, for a total of 17.

**Alyssa:** *A 17! That's tier 3, baby!*

The Director checks the Test Difficulty Outcomes table to confirm that a tier 3 outcome is a success on a hard test.

**Director:** *Okay, you're on top of the wall. You notice a few guards patrolling atop the opposite side of the wall in the distance, but they're looking out at the city right now.*

**Alyssa:** *Great! I toss down a rope. Val, you're next.*

**Grace:** *So it's a Might test. Would you let me use Endurance? It's a lot of physical exertion to climb.*

**Director:** *It's not a climb that would take you hours, so I don't think Endurance applies here. But hey, the rope does make this an easier test.*

**Grace:** *Fair. Okay, dice. Let's do this.*

Given the rope, the Director decides that this second climb attempt is an easy test. Grace rolls 2d10 and gets an 11. With her Might score of 2, that's a 13.

**Grace:** *13! That's a tier 2 outcome for Val.*

The Director checks the Test Difficulty Outcomes table once more, confirming that a tier 2 outcome is a success on an easy test.

**Director:** *Good news! You make it to the top of the wall alongside Jorn.*

**James:** *Ah, crap. I have a Might of -1 and no skills to use. Unless I can Intimidate the rope into lifting me up?*

**Director:** *Wishful thinking.*

**Alyssa:** *What if Korvo grabs onto the rope and I lift him up while he just hangs on for the ride?*

**Director:** *Sure. That'll be a Might test if Korvo's down for it.*

**James:** *Nothing risked, nothing saved. Let's do it. Just be careful. Any loud noises could attract those guards.*



**Alyssa:** *Please. I'm a pro. Since I'm lifting this polder off the ground, does the Lift skill apply?*

**Director:** *Yes, it does. Roll it up. That's a medium difficulty test.*

Lifting the diminutive polder, Alyssa rolls 2d10—but gets a 2! With her Might score and Lift skill bonus of +2, the total is 6.

**Alyssa:** *A 6! Oof. That's tier 1.*

**Director:** *Which is a failure, but with no consequence. You realize you just can't lift Korvo off the ground without making a lot of noise.*

The Director then decides to make the failure potentially more interesting, by allowing the players to decide if they want a failure without consequence or a success with a consequence.

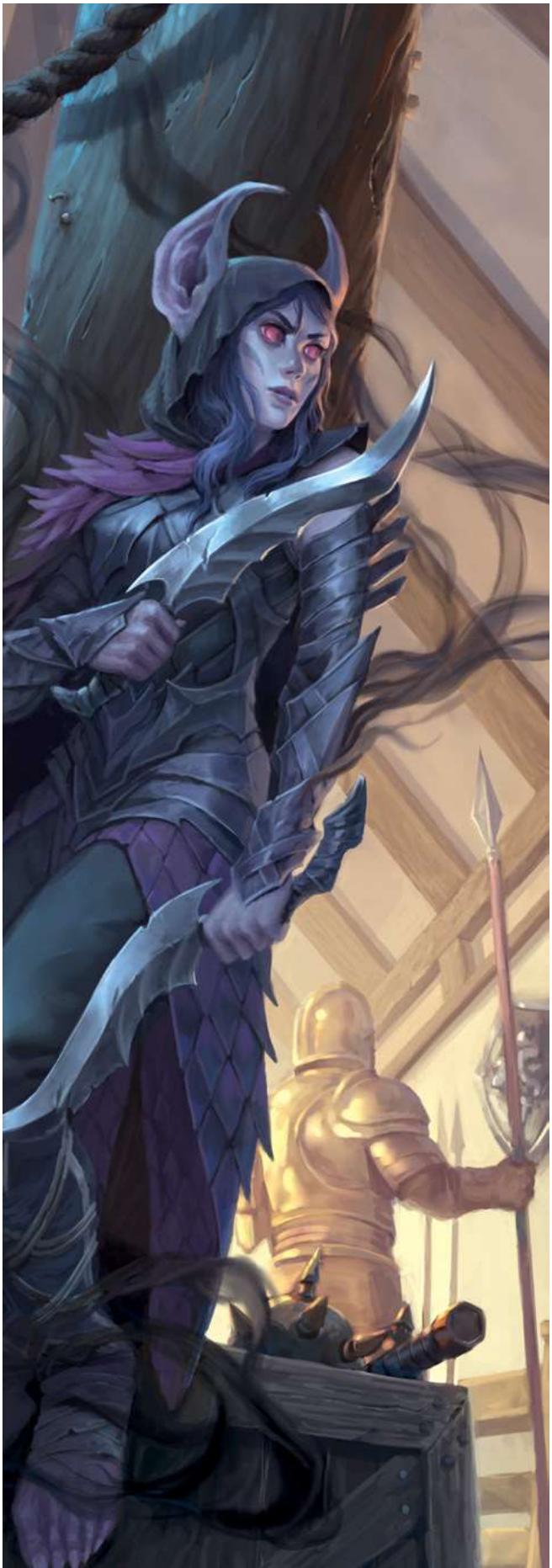
**Director:** *I'll give you a choice, though. You can leave Korvo on the ground, or pull him up and suffer the consequence of making some noise while doing so.*

**Grace:** *Ah, pull the polder up.*

**Alyssa:** *Yeah. We have to face these guards sometime.*

**James:** *Thanks for not leaving me behind!*

**Director:** *As Jorn yanks Korvo off the ground and pulls him up to the top of the wall, a guard turns a bullseye lantern your way, calling out, "Who goes there?"*



## Assist a Test

You can attempt to assist another creature with a test they make, provided you have a skill that applies to the test, the other creature isn't using that same skill on the test, and you can describe how your character helps to the Director's satisfaction. In other words, your attempt to help has to make sense, and you have to bring some useful expertise to the table. Helping another creature sneak by shouting encouragement at them isn't going to make them stealthier.

When you attempt to assist another creature, make a test using the skill you choose, and using a characteristic chosen by the Director based on the activity you use to help. The outcome of that test determines the bonus applied to the test you're assisting:

**≤11** You get in the way or make things worse. The creature takes a bane on their test.

**12-16** Your help grants the other creature an edge on their test.

**17+** Your help gives the other creature a double edge on their test.

For example, when an ally tries to pick a jailer's pocket, you might attempt to assist by using the Flirt skill to distract the jailer. The Director accepts this, and asks you to make a Presence test using Flirt. The outcome of that test determines the bonus you provide to the other hero's Agility test to pick the jailer's pocket—or whether you fumble the distraction and potentially draw attention to the attempt.

## Hide and Sneak

Hiding and sneaking are important tools for heroes and their foes. You might want to avoid another creature's notice to eavesdrop on conversations, steal items, set up an ambush, or avoid a combat encounter.

### Hiding

To hide from a creature, you must have cover or concealment from that creature (see [Chapter 10: Combat](#)), who can't observe you attempting to hide. A creature is observing you if they're aware of your specific location before you attempt to hide. This means they can pinpoint you with their senses and point a finger (or paw or tentacle) at you as if to shout, "There they are!" If you duck behind a barrel to hide from a foe, your attempt to hide has a chance of succeeding only if your foe doesn't notice you doing so. If you're being chased by a hungry dragon, you can hide only if you first move to a location where the dragon can't observe you—for instance, by turning a sharp corner into a tunnel full of giant stalagmites before the dragon does. You then make your hide attempt.

When you use the Hide maneuver to hide during combat while you have cover or concealment from a creature who isn't observing you, you are automatically hidden from them unless the Director deems otherwise. If you hide outside of combat, the Director might ask you to make a test using the Hide skill to determine how well hidden you are.

While you are hidden from another creature, the creature can't target you with abilities that don't have the Area keyword. This benefit ends as soon as you are no longer hidden from that creature.

Additionally, while you are hidden from another creature, you gain an edge on ability rolls made against that creature. This benefit lasts until the end of the turn in which you are no longer hidden. This means you can be hidden from another creature at the start of your turn, move out of cover or concealment toward them and use an ability against them, and still gain an edge on ability rolls made against the creature as long as you use the ability before the end of that turn.



You are no longer hidden from a creature if you don't have cover or concealment from them. If you use an ability, interact with an enemy, move without sneaking, or otherwise make noise or reveal yourself while hidden, you are no longer hidden once the activity that reveals you resolves. For instance, if you are hidden and then make a strike, you resolve the strike first, then are no longer hidden.

### SEARCHING FOR HIDDEN CREATURES

You can search for creatures who are hidden from you as long as those creatures are within 10 squares and you have line of effect to them. To do so, you use a maneuver to make an Intuition test using the Search skill, and any hidden creatures within 10 squares of you each make an opposed Agility test using the Hide skill (see [Opposed Power Rolls](#) earlier in this chapter). At the Director's discretion, different characteristics and skills can be used in this opposed test. For example, your foe might make a Presence test using the Handle Animals skill to hide among a flock of sheep without disturbing them, or you could make a Reason test using the Eavesdrop skill to pick out the breathing of a creature hidden in the dark.

If the total of your test is higher than that of a hidden creature, they are no longer hidden from you. Otherwise, they remain hidden from you. As part of the maneuver used to search for hidden creatures, you can point out any creatures you notice to allies within 10 squares of you, making those creatures no longer hidden from those allies.

If a creature is hidden from your allies but not from you, you can use a maneuver without making a test to point that creature out to your allies.

### What Does It Mean to Be Observed?

Most of the time, if a creature has line of effect to you, they're able to observe you—especially if you're an active threat to them, such as in a combat encounter. However, the game leaves what it means to be observed open to interpretation, because there are circumstances where a creature might have line of effect to you but isn't observing you, giving you a chance to hide. For example, a guard in a crowded marketplace likely isn't able to observe every creature within their line of effect, so slipping away to hide in that situation is probably easier than hiding from them in an otherwise empty street. The Director has the final say on who is observing you, and who you are able to observe.

### Sneaking

While you are hidden from another creature and not in combat, you can attempt to sneak—avoiding the senses of other creatures as you move around them in the open—to remain hidden. While sneaking, your speed is halved. To sneak, you make an Agility test using the Sneak skill with a difficulty set by the Director. If you succeed, you remain hidden during your movement. This test can use another characteristic at the Director's discretion, such as using Presence to blend in with a crowd on a packed city street.



## Group Tests

Whenever two or more heroes attempt to overcome a single, simple task together that calls for them to make the same test, the Director can call for a group test. For example, if several heroes are all attempting to climb the outside of a tower at the same time, giving each other assistance and advice, they could be asked to make a Might group test. If a group of heroes attempt to sneak by a sleeping ogre, they might make an Agility group test.

### Group Test Difficulty

The Director determines the difficulty of a group test the same way they do for individual tests. Group tests can be easy, medium, or hard.

### Making a Group Test

Each hero participating in the group test makes the test individually as usual, but the Director waits until all the tests have been made to interpret the outcome. A hero who is participating in the group test can't assist another hero participating in the test.

## Group Test Outcome

When interpreting the outcome of a group test, the Director first determines if the task succeeded or not before figuring out rewards and consequences. If half or more of the heroes making the group test succeed, then the group test succeeds. Otherwise, the group test fails.

If the heroes succeeded and half or more of them obtained a reward from the test, the Director gives the group a collective reward and ignores any consequences incurred in the test. This collective reward should be equivalent to earning two individual rewards. In fact, it could be two consumable items, juicy pieces of information, or hero tokens. However, it could also be something more tailored to the task. For instance, if the heroes earn a collective reward while sneaking through the camp of an enemy army, the Director might allow them to sabotage a bunch of war engines or steal a few horses on their way out.

If the heroes failed the group test and more than half of them incurred a consequence as a result, the Director gives the group a collective consequence and ignores any earned rewards. This collective consequence should affect everyone. An easy option is for the stress of failing the test to cause each hero to take a bane on their next power roll, or for the Director to gain 2 Malice per hero at the start of the next combat encounter. But the consequence could also be tailored to the task. For instance, if the heroes fail in their attempt to sneak through the camp of an enemy army, they're spotted and the camp immediately goes on alert as waves of enemies attack them.

If fewer than half the heroes incur a consequence or earn a reward on their individual tests, then the group test simply succeeds or fails.

## Montage Tests

When a group of heroes works together over time to accomplish a common goal that requires more than a single characteristic, the Director can call for a montage test. Such tests typically take place over a prolonged period and focus on collective or shared activities. Navigating a vast desert, convincing farmers to rise up against a tyrannical leader, and performing a ritual to open a magically sealed gate can all be accomplished with montage tests.

In a montage test, the players take turns making tests as their characters tackle a task together in a montage test round. Each hero has a chance to make a test (or to assist another hero's test; see [Assist a Test](#) above) intended to influence the outcome of the task.

A hero can also spend their turn using an item, ability, or other option they have available that they believe can help in the montage test. For example, if a group of heroes want to cross an ocean on a sailing ship before a storm begins, one hero might make use of a magic fan that creates wind to keep the sails full day and night. The Director decides that this clever action gives the heroes 2 automatic successes in the montage test, with no individual tests necessary (see [Total Successes and Failures](#) below).

Once a hero makes a test, assists with a test, or uses an ability or other option, they can't do anything else as part of the montage test until each other hero involved in the montage test does so as well. A hero can also choose to do nothing, most often if they have no one to assist and fear that their actions might make the situation worse (see [Montage Test Outcomes](#) below). Once every hero has had a chance to act, the montage test round ends and a new one begins.

## Time and Stakes

As the name suggests, montage tests create a kind of cinematic montage in the action of the game. A montage test can take place over the course of several hours or days, with each individual test or other activity set up as a brief vignette within the montage that stars one of the heroes. Combat encounters, negotiations, and other challenges and scenes can break up a montage test (see [Sample Montage Test](#) below).

The Director should deploy montage tests only when the players are engaged in overcoming a goal that has stakes for the story and some sort of pressure, such as a looming deadline or impending harm. A montage test is great for a race to get to another location before an enemy army does, a chase to escape or catch up to a foe, weathering a hazard, preparing a village for war, or similar activities. Low- or no-stakes activities such as travel through a forest with no time pressure, or training during a respite to use a new kit, can be narrated in montage style, but they don't require a montage test.

## Director Sets the Scene

At the start of a montage test, the Director should describe the scenario underlying the task at hand, and the various challenges the heroes might face as they attempt to collectively accomplish it. For example, if the heroes are chasing down a pickpocket through a crowded market, the Director might talk about the throngs of innocent people blocking the way forward, obscuring the characters' vision, and making noise that complicates attempts to hear the thief's nimble footsteps. There are also traveling carts to dodge, the speed and dexterity of the pursued character to contend with, and a pack of stray dogs who chase after anyone who sprints through the market. Describing these obstacles gives the heroes ideas about what they're trying to overcome as they attempt to achieve their goals.

## Individual Tests in Montage Tests

The difficulty of each individual test in a montage test is set by the Director and can vary from test to test. For instance, if the heroes are preparing the defenses of a village threatened by a band of approaching raiders, the Director might decide that a character who wants to dig a trench around the village needs to make an easy Might test. Another hero wants to train the untested farmers of the village in the ways of war, and the Director decides this is a hard Reason test.

The same rules and guidelines that apply to all individual tests apply in montage tests. If a hero has a clever, out-of-the-box idea that the Director thinks should automatically succeed without rolling dice, it does. If the circumstances of the test should grant an edge or a bane, they do. Individual test outcomes shouldn't halt the story.

The Director should couch each success or failure as it relates to the overall goal of the montage test. If the heroes are trying to reach an ancient temple, failing a Might test to ford a river in their path doesn't mean they don't cross the river and are stuck on the other side. But it could mean that failing to cross the river in a timely manner gives a rival group of villains the chance to beat the party to the temple.

The rewards and consequences of individual tests made during a montage test are handled on an individual basis. The Director can use the default of gaining additional Malice in the next combat encounter for consequences and having the party gain hero tokens for rewards to keep the montage moving.

## Can't Use the Same Skill Twice

An individual character can't use the same skill more than once in a montage test. Though multiple heroes can use the same skill, a test or an assist with a specific skill represents each characters' entire contribution to the montage test with that skill. At the Director's discretion, this restriction can be lifted for prolonged montage tests, or for montage tests that are limited in scope and have only a small number of skills that apply to them.

## New Challenges for Each Test

In general, when a hero makes a test as part of a montage test, they should choose new obstacles to overcome that haven't already been overcome as part of the test. If the heroes are chasing a thief through the marketplace and one of them has already distracted the pack of stray dogs with a deft hand and a piece of meat, additional tests made to distract the animals don't count toward the outcome of the montage test.

When it fits the scenario, the Director can adjust this restriction. If part of a montage test involves searching for people trapped in a burning building, the Director is likely to allow multiple tests to fight or avoid the fire, since this will happen throughout the montage test, not just once.

## INTRODUCING MORE CHALLENGES

During a montage test, a Director can introduce new challenges for the heroes to face. While attempting to run out of a burning building from the top floor, the characters might discover that by the time they reach the second floor, beams are starting to fall and glass windows are exploding as the structure starts to collapse. These new challenges can be incorporated into the tests the heroes subsequently make.

## Total Successes and Failures

The Director or another player will track the total number of successes and failures the heroes earn during a montage test. Every montage test has a success limit and a failure limit. When the number of successful tests equals the success limit, the montage test ends and the heroes achieve total success (see [Montage Test Outcomes](#) below). The montage test can also end when the number of failed tests equals the failure limit, and the heroes suffer total failure.

## Limited Rounds

A montage test should last only 2 montage test rounds. If the heroes don't end the montage test by achieving the success limit or failure limit, the montage test ends when the second montage test round is over. This time limit helps to keep a montage test from becoming a slog, and prevents heroes from simply using their turns to assist the one hero with the best chance of success. This can inspire each hero to be a more active participant in the montage test. That said, the Director can increase the number of rounds a montage test lasts if they wish to create a particularly grueling challenge.

## Montage Test Difficulty

The Director determines the success limit and failure limit of a montage test. They can share this information or keep it secret, depending on what feels the most fun and dramatic for the situation and the players.

In general, the higher the success limit, the harder and more complicated it is for the heroes to overcome the montage test, since a hero can't make the same test twice. The Montage Test Difficulty table gives a recommended success limit and failure limit for easy, moderate, and hard montage tests for groups with five heroes.

### Montage Test Difficulty

Difficulty	Success Limit	Failure Limit
Easy	5	5
Moderate	6	4
Hard	7	3

For larger or smaller groups, the Director can make the following adjustments to keep montage tests achievable but challenging:

- For four or fewer heroes, decrease the success limit and failure limits by 1 (to a minimum of 2) for every hero fewer than five. For example, if a group has only three heroes, an easy montage test has a success limit and failure limit of 3.
- For six or more heroes, increase the success and failure limits by 1 for every hero more than five.

## Montage Test Outcomes

A montage test can have three different outcomes:

- If the heroes hit the success limit before hitting the failure limit or before the time runs out for the test, they achieve total success.
- If the heroes hit the failure limit or time runs out, and if they've achieved at least two more successes than failures, they achieve a partial success.
- If the heroes hit the failure limit or time runs out, and if they don't have at least two more successes than failures, they suffer total failure.

## TOTAL SUCCESS

If the heroes earn a total success, they achieve what they set out to do without complication. For instance, if the heroes engaged in a montage test to cross a desert and reach a city before a tyrant's army arrives there and levels the place, a total success sees them arrive at the city gates with plenty of time to warn people of the impending assault.

The heroes earn 1 Victory when they achieve total success on an easy or moderate montage test, and 2 Victories on a hard montage test.

## PARTIAL SUCCESS

If the heroes earn a partial success, they succeed at what they set out to do, but there is a complication or a cost involved. For instance, when crossing the desert to reach and warn the city of the tyrant's army, a mixed success sees the characters arrive at the city gates with the enemy forces just behind them. Alternatively, the Director might allow the heroes to arrive well before the army, but they don't cover their movements well enough. The tyrant realizes the city has been warned and decides to call in a favor to have a powerful dragon join the siege.

The heroes earn 1 Victory when they achieve partial success on a hard or moderate montage test.

## TOTAL FAILURE

If the heroes suffer total failure, they don't achieve what they set out to do. Just as with standard tests, failure on a group test shouldn't bring a story to a halt. Total failure should make things more interesting and challenging! With a total failure in a montage test to cross the desert and warn the city, the characters arrive at the city to find it already under siege by the tyrant.

## Sample Montage Test

Four heroes must cross the vast and inhospitable Infinite Desert to warn the city of Ahset that the tyrannical Empress Vardo is coming to conquer them. If the characters arrive in time, they can organize the defenses of the city, giving its people a greater chance of defeating the tyrant.

The Director determines that crossing the desert is a montage test of hard difficulty. With four heroes involved, the success limit is 6 and the failure limit is 2 as the montage test begins.

### MONTAGE TEST ROUND 1

When the test begins, the Director sets the scene. They tell the players that the desert has extreme temperatures, sudden sandstorms, high dunes to cross, deep sand, chasms, and quicksand lakes. The Director decides that the challenges of dunes, deep sand, and quicksand can be tackled multiple times in the test, since the Infinite Desert is filled with these hazards.

Urdoncara, a fury, starts things off by asking to make an Intuition test using the Nature skill to predict the best times of day to travel and rest. She wants the party to avoid the worst of the desert's extreme temperatures and any sandstorms or other weather phenomena, so that the journey is quickened. The Director decides this is an easy test. Urdoncara makes the test and gets a total of 12, earning 1 success for the montage test.

Jorn, a tactician, wants to make a Reason test using the Climb skill to lead the party over dunes and other hazards with minimal effort. The Director allows the attempt, but says that knowing what makes one dune easier to climb than another is tricky, setting the difficulty at hard. Jorn gets a 9 on the test and fails with a consequence, which the Director decides will cause him to take a bane on his next power roll due to the exertion. The montage test has 1 success and 1 failure.

Karrel, an elementalist, thinks the group might cross the desert faster if they have specially modified sandshoes that distribute their weight and prevent their feet from sinking into the sand. The Director loves the idea, and decides that making four pairs of the shoes while traveling the desert is a medium Reason test. Karrel gets to use their Tailoring skill and winds up with a total of 13—a success with a consequence. The Director decides to gain an additional 2 Malice at the start of the next combat encounter as a consequence, but the group now has 2 successes and 1 failure on the montage test.

Val, a conduit, offers to scout ahead for the group with an Intuition test, using the Navigate skill to find the best path forward and avoid hazards such as chasms and quicksand. The Director thinks that acting as lookout in a vast desert is an easy task. Val smashes it with a 21—a success with a reward—and the Director decides to get creative. Val's lookout skills grant the next hero to act in the montage test an edge on their test. At the end of the first montage test round, the heroes have 3 successes and 1 failure.

## INTERLUDE

Before the next montage test round, the Director pauses the montage test to run a battle with a kingfissure worm, who attacks the heroes as they cross over an ancient ruin partially buried in the sand. After the heroes defeat the kingfissure worm, the test continues.

## MONTAGE TEST ROUND 2

Urdoncara wants to make a Might test using the Lift skill to carry most of the group's equipment as they cross the desert, allowing her allies to move more quickly while she keeps up with her superior fortitude. The Director thinks this arduous task has a hard difficulty. Urdoncara gets a 17 on the test thanks to the edge from Val's earlier success. The montage test has 4 successes and 1 failure.

Jorn, eager to prove himself after his last failure, asks to make a Might test using the Lead skill, representing tying a rope around his waist to drag his weaker friends over the tallest dunes. The Director likes the idea but doesn't think the Lead skill applies to the task. They tell Jorn that Lift is more appropriate, since the tactician is using his physical skill to aid his friends and not really doing anything interpersonal. Jorn agrees, and the Director sets the test at medium difficulty. Making the test with a bane because of his previous failure, the tactician rolls a 15, which is a success with a consequence. The montage test has 5 successes and 1 failure, but the consequence gives the Director another 2 Malice at the start of the next combat encounter.

Since the group needs only one more success to achieve total success, Karrel says she'd like to assist Val in whatever task she decides to take on. Val wants to recall lore about the Khem-hor—the inhabitants of the Infinite Desert—to remember their time-honored travel techniques using the History skill. Karrel has the Culture skill, which she can use to assist by providing information about the lives and society of the Khem-hor. She makes a Reason test to assist and gets a 16, granting Val an edge on her upcoming test.

Val attempts to recall lore about the Khem-hor, wanting to know if she can remember any of their travel from her studies of the history of the region. The Director has her make a hard Reason test with an edge, thanks to Karrel's input on the current state of Khem-hor culture. Val gets a 17, and the Director decides that the conduit recalls a shortcut through a canyon tunnel that leads directly to Ahset, avoiding a vast lake of quicksand. The heroes get their sixth success in the montage test, achieving total success, and earn 2 Victories.



## OTHER OPTIONS

The heroes could have attempted other tests during their travels, such as an Agility test using the Sneak skill to lead the group through dangerous shortcuts in the desert without being seen or waylaid by predators, a Reason test using the Nature skill to find enough food and water to keep the group hydrated and fed, or a Presence test using the Music skill to inspire allies to travel faster with song.