

Grimdark

Ghost of War

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# CHAPTER 1: BASE SYSTEM

## ATTRIBUTES

Characters in Grimdark have 7 Attributes which define their relevant physical and psychical abilities. Each Attribute is represented as a number from 0 to 100 - or potentially even higher. The higher the Attribute the better. A typical human will have scores in the thirties. Without preternatural aid (like drugs, psychic powers, mutations or cybernetics) humans cannot have attributes greater than 60. All rolls in Grimdark make use of two associated Attributes - thus the attributes of your character are very important!

- **Power:** Measures how powerful your character is - in body and mind.
  - **Sample Uses:** lift heavy things, control automatic weapons, hit hard, intimidate others, break others will.
  - **Archetypes:** Orks, Ogryn, Ganger, Interrogator, Commissar
- **Finesse:** Measures how well your character does delicate work.
  - **Sample Uses:** make a hard target, one shot one kill, move silent, craft or manipulate delicate items, manipulate others
  - **Archetypes:** Eldar, Assassin, Sniper, Mechanicus Magos, Diplomat
- **Toughness:** Measures how much of a beating you can take.
  - **Sample Uses:** endure pain, keep doing strenuous work, resist poison and illness, recover fast
  - **Archetypes:** Orks, Ogryn, Ganger, Soldiers
- **Instinct:** Measures how keen your senses are and how well you react to any given situation
  - **Sample Uses:** read the mood of others, detect danger (traps, ambushes, followers, attacks), react fast
  - **Archetypes:** Eldar, Orks, Ogryn, Space Marines, Inquisitor, Scout
- **Smarts:** Measures how much the character knows.
  - **Sample Uses:** know potential useful tidbits, know what (and what not) to say, do research, treat wounds, handle tech
  - **Archetypes:** Eldar, Adept, Mechanicus Magos
- **Charisma:** Measures how well the character can express himself and work with people.
  - **Sample Uses:** preach, command, talk others

into something, discussions, trading, information gathering, flirting

- **Archetypes:** Eldar, Officer, Quartermaster, Diplomat, Priest, Rogue Trader
- **Will:** Measures the strength of the characters will.
  - **Sample Uses:** keep cool under pressure, resist mental influence, keep going when exhausted, psyker powers
  - **Archetypes:** Eldar, Inquisitor, Space Marine, Commissar, Psyker, Witch

## ATTRIBUTE MODIFIER

Some situations allow a character to add a modifier based on his Attribute to an effect, e.g. when hitting an enemy with a melee weapon you may add your Power Modifier (P-Mod) on top of the damage dealt! Usually, the Attribute Modifier (or simply Mod) is the first digit of the respective attribute - or expressed otherwise, the Mod is the Attribute divided by 10.

Effect that make use of such a Mod, refer to it as X-Mod, where the X is the first letter of the used Attribute. So P-Mod refers to the Power Modifier and W-Mod to your Will Modifier!

*Example: If your character's Strength score is 37, then his S-Mod will be 3.*

## APTITUDES

Where Attributes define the *current* abilities of your character, Aptitudes represent your character's *potential*. Aptitudes define how easy your character can learn new skills, professions and talents associated with the Aptitudes. While every character in Grimdark can learn any skill or talent, a character with the respective Aptitudes will have a much easier time doing so. In game terms, the number of matching Aptitudes determines the XP cost to learn something new.

There are two types of Aptitudes: Attribute and Group Aptitudes.

- Attribute Aptitudes share the name of a Attribute (e.g. Power or Smarts). For each Attribute there is a matching Aptitude. Having an Attribute Aptitude means that your character will find all skills relying on this Attribute easy to master. Some people simple find it easy to learn new things from books (which would be represented by the Smarts Aptitude) while others excell at quickly



training a new combat technique (which would be represented by either a Power or Finesse Aptitude).

- Group Attributes share the name of a Profession Group (see section 3), that is: Physical, Intellectual, Social and Instinctual. A character with a certain Group Attribute, will find all Professions (and thus skills) within this group easy to learn and master.

When learning a new skill or talent, check the Attributes it realies upon and he Profession group it is part of, then compare these to your Aptitudes. If your character has two (or more) matching Aptitudes he will have a very easy time learning it. Do you only have one of them, you will do okay. But if you have neither, your character will find it pretty hard (but nor impossible!) to learn this new ability.

## THE CORE SYSTEM

Grimdark uses a universal roll system. Every check in the game uses the same base system. The following chapter will describe it in detail.

### THE BASE ROLL

Whenever a character uses a skill (in a non-trivial way), the player will roll a skill check. The check uses two d100 dice rolls, one for each attribute linked to the skill in question. If the roll result is equal to or lower than the target number (attribute value plus potential modifiers), it is considered a pass.

### TRINARY OUTCOME

A Base Roll can have three possible outcomes:

- **0 Pass - Failure:** Both rolls are above their target numbers and the check fails and causes a complication.
- **1 Pass - Partial Success (PS):** One of the rolls is above the target number, the other a pass. The check achieved a Partial Success, that is the goal is reached but at a cost. The cost is decided by the GM according to the situation but the group is encouraged to provide input if there is no obvious cost. See the example below for two possible costs.
- **2 Pass - Full Success (FS):** Both rolls are passes. The check achieved a Full Success. The goal is achieved without problem.

### FATE, LUCK & DOOM

Sometimes characters just get lucky, a blindly fired shot into a smoke screen hitting an enemy in the head or unknowingly addressing the weak spot during a discussion. And at other times,

#### EXAMPLE SKILL CHECK

*Sister Aryanna of the Ordo Dialogis attempts to calm down Inquisitors Zu-Lin Yu and Otto Brecht who have come close to open hostility over a debate of how to handle the survivors of an Imperial Guard regiment fighting off a daemonic incursion...*

- **Skill:** Pretty Words
- **Skill Modifier:** +5
- **Attributes:** Fellowship 47, Intelligence 34
- **Target Numbers:** 52 (47+5), 39 (34+5)
- **Rolls:** 64 (no pass), 23 (pass)
- **Result:** Partial Success

The player rolls two d100. The first comes up with a 64 and the second with a 23. This means that the check resulted in a Partial Success, since only one roll was below the target number (the second one). The goal will be achieved (stopping the Inquisitors from starting a internecine war) - but at a cost. For most social skills, a Partial Success will leave the a bad aftertaste with the target of the skill, making it potentially more difficult to interact with in the future. Another common complication of social skills would be the target challenging the character to a debate over the matter, resulting in a second opposed test.

*Sister Aryanna speaks up and argues that executing the soldiers, who are by now very well trained to detect and fight the neverborn, would be massive waste of Imperial assets and simply cannot be tolerated at the current stage of the war. While her temper rose quickly and flamed up brightly over yet another debate between Yu and Brecht, her arguments are sound and not easily squashed even by a hardline puritan like Brecht.*

*Inquisitor Brecht will surely remember her interdiction - but the argument has been settled without bloodshed.*

the entire universe just seem to have met in a murky back room of a shady bar to plot against them.

Grimdark uses the term Fate for this. Fate comes into play when a character rolls a skill (or profession) check and one (or both) dice come up with double-digit results (11, 22, ..., 99). Whether Fate is good or bad, is determined by the overall outcome of the roll - think of it as an catalyst. Good things get better. Bad things get worse. Getting Fate on a Full Success will result in something truly spectacular, while getting Fate on a Fail mean you are in big trouble this time for sure...

Some skills or talents will provide special rules or guidelines for how to treat Fate when it comes up as part of its use. Generally, GM and players should work together to make fateful rolls remarkable and memorial - especially in the case of double Fate (both rolls are double-digits) as those are very, very rare indeed.

### THE OPPOSED ROLL

Many situations in Grimdark are resolved by making an opposed roll between two parties. This is especially true for inherently competitive situations like combat, social manipulation or



contests.

An opposed roll works as follows:

1. The active party chooses the skill first.
2. The passive party chooses a fitting skill in response.
3. Both sides roll their respective checks as normal and get their trinary outcome.
4. The outcomes of both parties is compared to get the result of the opposed test.
5. Apply Fate of the winning party as normal.

The results of an opposed roll is determined by the following table:

#### OPPOSED ROLE OUTCOMES

Active	Passive	Outcome
FS	Fail	CS
FS	PS	FS
FS	FS	Draw
PS	Fail	PS
PS	PS	Draw
PS	FS	Fail
Fail	Fail	Draw
Fail	PS	Fail
Fail	FS	CF

While this might appear complicated at first, there are three easy to remember rules that determine the outcome:

1. When the active party gets more passes than the passive party, the outcome of the active party is the end result.
2. When both parties get the same outcome, there is a draw. If one party has Fate on her roll, the result of that party determines the end result. If Fate does not play a role (or both parties get an equal amount of Fate dice), the outcomes of a draw is determined by the used skill of the active party (see section 3).
3. If one party gets a FS and the other a Fail, a critical effect happens.
  - Critical Success (CS): Happens when the active party gets a FS and the passive party a Fail. Counts as a FS but with enhanced effects determined by the GM.
  - Critical Failure (CF): Happens when the active party gets a Fail and the passive party a FS. Counts as a Fail but with additional or worsened complication(s) determined by the GM.



# CHAPTER 2: CHARACTER CREATION

Grimdark characters are created by establishing the characters Life Path. The process will guide you through a series of steps which mirror certain phases of a characters (early) life. You will pick up Attribute modifications, Aptitudes, Professions and skills along this path, which will define your starting character in addition to giving everyone a good impression about the background of the character. Below you will find a table summarizing the life path steps and what you will get from each.

## LIFE PATH OVERVIEW

Step	Attributes	Skills	Other
Step 1: Birthright	Baseline	-	Limits
Step 2: Homeworld	+3/+3/-3	3	Aptitude 1
Step 3: Childhood	+3	2	1 Profession, Aptitude 2
Step 4: Education	+3/-3	4	2 Professions, Group Aptitude
Step 5: Combat	-	3	-
Step 6: Early Career	+3/+3	3	1 Profession

## CREATION RULES & CONSTRAINTS

Due to the vast amount of possible combinations allowed by the life path system, here are some basic rules and constraints:

- **Free Skill Points:** In some stages, you may gain one or many Free Skill Points. These can be used to raise any Skill you want, which isn't restricted and marked with a \* (see 3).
- **Any X:** This is a shorthand for a long list of options open for you. X may refer to different things depending on the context. Most commonly it will refer to a Profession in the context of Skill selection, which means you can pick any one Skill associated with that Profession.
- **Profession and Skills:** Whenever you gain a Profession, you will also gain a number of skill points to spend within the Profession. You must spend these points on Skills associated with the gained Profession.
- **Duplicate Aptitude:** You can not get the same Aptitude twice. If the step that would give you a duplicate provides a choice, pick another option. Otherwise pick any other Aptitude (not a Group Aptitude).
- **Duplicate Skill:** Increase the skill level to the next higher. No skill can be raised beyond the second level ("Experienced", see: ). Pick another level if you would bump a skill to the third level.
- **Duplicate Profession:** Each Profession you gain during character creation comes with a number of skill points to spent within the Profession. Skill points from duplicated Professions are reduced by one but can otherwise be freely spent in the respective Profession.
- **Attribute Scores:** Attribute scores may not be raised beyond a characters limit. Note that due to the basic resolution mechanic used in Grimdark, raising a single Attribute score while neglecting all others is not a good idea. You should at least try to strike a balance between the two most important Attributes of your character.

## STEP 1: BIRTHRIGHT

Some things are determined at birth. Are you a baseline human or an abhuman? Or even a Xeno or mutant - *someone call the Inquisition!* Your birthright depends your baseline Attributes and also your natural limits, that is the highest your attributes can get with training and experience. Raising them above your limits, will require special unnatural aids, like technology, drugs or even mutations and warp influence.

The baseline Attributes are determined by rolling a number of five-sided dice and adding a fixed value on top of the result. This is denoted by  $x\text{D}5+y$ , where x determines the number of dice rolled and y denotes the fixed value counted on top. X and Y are determined by your birthright. Whether you roll the entire set and assign the results to the Attributes or roll them in order is a matter of preference or your GM's call. The first has a more natural feel to it, while the latter works better if you already have a certain character concept in mind at the start of creation.

Make sure to check in with your GM which Birthrights are available in your campaign before starting - he may after all be unwilling to include abhumans in a game of noble intrigue or wants to run with everyone playing an Ogryn!

## BIRTHRIGHT ATTRIBUTES



Attribute	Baseline Human	Ogryn
Power	4D5+20	4D5+40
Finesse	4D5+20	2D5+10
Toughness	4D5+20	4D5+40
Instinct	4D5+20	4D5+20
Smarts	4D5+20	2D5+10
Will	4D5+20	4D5+20
Charisma	4D5+20	2D5+20

#### ROLL-IN-ORDER VS. ROLL-AND-ASSIGN

You can either roll your Attributes in order of appearance or roll the entire set and then assign the results to your Attributes. The first method has a more natural feel to it and can lead you down character creation when you don't have a clear concept in mind at start. The second variant works better if you have a certain theme or concept in mind for your character. If you want to play a hulking gladiator pit fighter and you roll low for his Power Attribute, your prepared concept might not come out as imagined.

Grimdark does not force one or the other (but your GM may of course). Choose whatever works best for you. As an optional method, groups looking for a more balance Attribute generation may opt to take the average values for the baseline. To do so, simply count each D5 you would normally roll as a three. So 4D5+20 (the baseline human roll) will give a result of 32 ( $4 * 3 = 12 + 20 = 32$ ).

## BASELINE HUMAN

The most common Birthright in the Imperium by far. The vast majority of Imperial citizens will never see an abhuman or mutant in their life's - God Emperor bless their ignorance. Their baseline Attributes all are determined by rolling four five sided dice (4D5) and add 20 to the result. Their Limits are at 50 for Power and Will and 60 for all other Attributes.

## STEP 2: HOMEWORLD

The place of ones birth as a lasting impact on a character - although in a wide variety of ways. After all, a Hive world will leave a very different impact in a highborn, compared to an underhiver.

In this stage, you will get your first Attribute adjustments (+3 to two, -3 to a third), your first Aptitude and three skills. Available Homeworlds are:

- Deathworld (Primitive)
- Deathworld (Civilized)
- Backwater
- Civilized World
- Forge World
- Hive World
- Fortress World
- Agriworld
- Shrine World
- Voidborn

## PRIMITIVE DEATHWORLD

You were born on a primitive deathworld. No technology to Ward the extreme environment. No weaponry more advanced than the crudest of blackpowder weapons to fend off the local wildlife (and population). Anyone surviving this, will be a hardy fellow, able to make the most out of what little he or she is given.

- Aptitude (pick one): Power, Instinct, Toughness
- Attributes:
  - Toughness+3
  - Instinct+3 or Will+3
  - Smarts-3 or Finesse-3
- Skills (pick 3): any Observer, any Ghost, any Believer, any Physical (excluding Gunman skills)

## CIVILIZED DEATHWORLD

You were born on a deathworld, which has the common imperial tech level at its disposal - and yet is still classified a deathworld. Maybe the environment is hideously toxic and life is only possible within shielded domes of steel and energy. Maybe the flora and fauna is putting up such a commendable fight, that colonization of the world has never truly succeeded beyond some hot-spots of human occupation. Life is hard but at least you (probably) had a home with the most basic installations for warmth, water and electricity. Most place like this also tend to instill a rather close-knit bond between its citizens.

- Aptitude (pick one): Toughness, Charisma, Instincts
- Attributes:
  - Charisma+3
  - Instinct+3 or Toughness+3
  - Power-3 or Finesse-3
- Skills:
  - Pick two: Imperium of Man (Loremaster), any Operator, any Technomat
  - One free skill point

## BACKWATER

Being born on a backwater world means facing disregard and disinterest on a planetary-system-wide level. The wider Imperium doesn't really care for the world, let alone its inhabitants. Maybe the world does not have any natural resources (left) or it is simply too far off any (safe) trading routes to attract merchants. Backwater worlds thus usually fall into one of two extremes: either they are places of heightened religious worship trying to make



up their lack of physical wealth with spiritual one or they are crime-ridden, lawless places ruled by shadowy figures using local politicians as their marionettes.

- Aptitude (pick one): Finesse, Charisma, Will
- Attributes:
  - Charisma+3
  - Will+3 or Finesse+3
  - Smarts-3
- Skills:
  - Imperium of Man (Loremaster) or Shadow Organizations (Loremaster)
  - Pick one: Technomat (Tinkerer), Bribe (Trader), Haggle (Trader), any Believer, any Betrayer, any Operator
  - One free skill point

## CIVILIZED WORLD

The most common category of imperial planets - and the most diverse. Planets of this category are mostly self-sufficient and provide a decent tithe to the greater Imperium in the form of produced goods, Imperial Guard regiments and local psykers.

- Aptitude (pick one): Smarts, Finesse, Charisma, Instincts
- Attributes:
  - Any+3
  - Any+3
  - Will-3 or Toughness-3
- Skills:
  - Imperium of Man (Loremaster) or Technomat(Tinkerer) or any Operator
  - Two free skill points

## FORGE WORLD

Being born on the beating, pounding heart of an Adeptus Mechanicus Forge World is being surrounded by servitors, augmented menials and Magi more machine than flesh. You were likely facing intensive schooling or actual hypno-indoctrination by learning machines and early drafting into the working force. Persons with above-average intellect and technical affinity are commonly lead to the training centers to join the ranks of the Cult Mechanicus or its auxilia. Others are worked hard, in precisely timed shifts around the clock, always teetering on the edge of their physical abilities.

- Aptitude (pick one): Smarts, Toughness
- Attributes:
  - Smarts+3
  - Finesse+3 or Toughness+3
  - Will-3 or Charisma-3

- Skills:
  - Gain the Technomat(Tinkerer) or Ways of Mars (Loremaster) skill
  - Pick two: any Rationalist, any Operator, any Believer, any Loremaster

## HIVE WORLD

Born amidst billion upon billion of people, hivers make up the vast majority of the Imperiums total population. Not only are they used to fill the vast ranks of soldiers and naval ratings - they also work the myriad manufactoria of their worlds in never-ending shifts to produce the goods required by the Imperium - from packed ration bars to bullets, lasguns and toilet paper. In a world where everyone can be replaced by a hundred others at any moment, the struggle for survival and keeping ones social standing is all too real and the potential depth of a downfall very deep indeed.

- Aptitude (pick one): Smarts, Toughness
- Attributes:
  - Pick two: Finesse+3, Power+3, Smarts+3, Charisma+3
  - Instinct-3 or Charisma-3 or Will-3 or Toughness-3
- Skills:
  - Imperium of Man (Loremaster) or Shadow Organizations (Loremaster) or Navigate Enclosed (Navigator) or Technomat(Tinkerer)
  - Selfishness(Betrayer), Endure(Athlete) or Scrutiny(Observer)
  - any Operator, any Social

## AGRIWORLD

The corn baskets of the Imperium, producing unbelievable amounts of foodstuff to be exported to feed worlds unable to do themselves, e.g. Hive Worlds and Forgeworlds. Usually these worlds have a low population density in favor of wide ranges of farmland, game forests and fish-filled rivers and oceans. You probably were raised stalking game animal in dense forests, feed the endless herds of farm animal or operate massive field machines cutting down corn - long before learning to write (if you ever did).

- Aptitude (pick one): Power, Instinct
- Attributes:
  - Instinct+3 or Charisma+3
  - Finesse+3 or Power +3
  - Smarts-3
- Skills:
  - Pick three: Sixth Sense(Observer), Ghost Move(Ghost), Navigate Surface(Navigator), any Operate, any Survivalist, any Athlete,



any Tinkerer, any Believer

## SHRINE WORLD

---

Hailing from a holy shrine world, your earliest memory is likely to be some kind of prayer - by your fervent parents or played over present loud haulers. Wherever you go, there were signs of religious fervor: statues of saints, street musicians playing religious anthems, stained glass windows depicting the Emperor or some saint or hero and endless streams of pilgrims. Growing up in such an environment either left you deeply religious or utterly selfish.

- Aptitude (pick one): Will, Charisma
- Attributes:
  - Will+3
  - Charisma+3 or Power+3
  - Smarts-3 or Finesse-3
- Skills:
  - Any Believer or any Betrayer
  - Any Trader, any Spokesman, any Enforcer
  - One free skill point

## FORTRESS WORLD

---

Fortress worlds are dedicated roadblocks to contain, repel, deter or slow down grave (typically Xeno) threats from more vulnerable imperial worlds. Riddled with fortifications and supply depots, its population drilled and equipped for combat - from cradle to crypt - these worlds are hard nuts to crack for any foe and provide the wider Imperium with soldiers who know that in the grim, dark future there is only war...

- Aptitude (pick one): Will or Finesse
- Attributes:
  - Finesse+3
  - Power+3 or Will+3
  - Charisma-3 or Smarts-3
- Skills:
  - Pick two: any Warrior, any Gunman, any Operator, Tactica Imperialis (Loremaster)
  - First Aid (Medic), Calculus(Rationalist), Bookkeeping(Trader), any Tinkerer, any Commander, any Physical

## VOID BORN

---

You were born aboard a void ship or a deep void station and likely never have set foot on a planet for your early life years - or ever! Getting around confusing, same-looking man-made places and dealing with machines is pretty common for you.

- Aptitude (pick one): Finesse, Instinct
- Attributes:

- Instinct+3
- Finesse+3 or Power +3
- Toughness-3 or Charisma-3

- Skills:
  - Technomat(Tinkerer) or Navigate Enclosed (Navigator)
  - Pick two: Endure(Athlete), Jury Rig (Technomat), Calculus (Rationalist), Operate Void (Operator), Operate Aircraft (Operator), Break (Athlete), Cooking (Survivalist), Bookkeeping (Trader), Preach(Believer)

## STEP 3: CHILDHOOD

Tightly coupled with the influence of your homeworld, is the way of your upbringing. Are you noble born? Raised in a familiar manner? Or rather grew up in a tightly knit community? All alone? This will have serious influence on your character.

In this step you will gain your second Aptitude, a singular Attribute adjustment and a single Profession with two free skill points to spend in any associated skills. Available upbringings are:

- Noble
- Familiar
- Communal
- Strict
- Neglected
- Loner

## NOBLE

---

*You were born into a noble family. Etiquette, controlled demeanor and careful scheming was expected of you from a young age. Whether you lived up to that expectations or not is your call.*

- Attribute: Finesse+3 or Charisma+3
- Aptitude: Finesse or Charisma
- Profession: Trader, Believer, Betrayer, Commander, Spokesman, Rationalist

## FAMILIAR

---

*You were raised in a more or less loving and intimate family of the middle or even low class of your homeworld. Given just the right amount of love, guidance and freedom, you have grown into a likeable and free-willed person. Lucky you!*

- Attribute: Charisma+3 or Will+3
- Aptitude: Charisma or Will
- Profession: any Social or Intellectual (excluding Technologist)

## COMMUNAL

---

*You were primarily raised by a close-knit, local community. Whether you are an orphan or your*



*parents were working most of every day, the fact remains that you spent most of your early years with members of your local community: be they beggars, elders, gangers, artisans or merchants.*

- Attribute: Will+3 or Finesse+3
- Aptitude: Will or Finesse
- Profession: any Social, Warrior, Athlete, Acrobat, Survivalist

## STRICT

*You had a harsh childhood: strict parents, beating teachers, rough neighborhood, harsh rules and harsher punishments. Only by hard work did you ever managed to get the tiniest bit of recognition. You are like highly focused to reaching goals defined by your superiors no matter the cost and equally ready to punish you subordinates. Or you really have grown to hate just that kind of treatment.*

- Attribute: Toughness+3 or Smarts+3
- Aptitude: Toughness or Smarts
- Profession: Enforcer, Betrayer, any Physical or Intellectual (excluding Technologist)

## NEGLECTED

*You grew up neglected by your parents, family and the majority of the local community. You had to get by mostly alone, trusting in brute strength and instinct above all. At best you (eventually) decided that you'd do your damned best to rise above your origin. At worst, you took to the bad habits and behavior of those around you.*

- Attribute: Power+3 or Instinct+3
- Aptitude: Power or Instinct
- Profession: Survivalist, Enforcer, Betrayer, any Physical

## LONER

*Loneliness my old friend. You grew up with only yourself to rely upon. Whether you were surrounded by indifferent strangers or literally alone in the wild does matter little. You had to learn quickly to listen to your instincts and senses when you wanted to life.*

- Attribute: Instinct+3 or Power+3
- Aptitude: Instinct or Power
- Profession: any Instinctual, any Physical

## STEP 4: EDUCATION

Ones education (in a general sense, not bound to classical classes!) leaves a lasting mark and enables a character to tackle certain areas with greater ease than others.

This steps provides the Profession Group Aptitude, another two Attribute adjustments (one positive, the other negative) and two Professions - each with two free skill points to be spent within them! Available Educations:

- Schola Progenium
- Classic Education
- Mentor
- Self-Taught
- Indoctrinated

## SCHOLA PROGENIUM

*The Ecclesiarchy run Schola Progenium is a galaxy spanning institution to take in the orphans of high ranking Imperial citizens, especially of noble origin or those in the officer cadre of either Imperial Guard or Navy. The orphans receive one of the harshest physical and mental drilling and shaping known in the Imperium to forge them into perfect material for the next generation of stormtroopers, Adeptus Sororitas, Commissariat or Interrogators destined to join the Inquisition.*

- Group Aptitude: Physical or Social
- Attributes:
  - Toughness+3 or Power+3
  - Smarts-3 or Charisma-3
- Professions: (pick two) Athlete, Believer, Commander, Enforcer, Warrior, Loremaster

## CLASSICAL EDUCATION

*You received a year-long and well laid out schooling by (mostly able and sometimes nice) teachers together with many others of your age. The subjects were many and diverse, ranging from mathematics to accounting, biology, chemistry and philosophy. In fact, your young brain was stuffed beyond its capacity and you only recall some of it.*

- Group Aptitude: Intellectual
- Attributes:
  - Smarts+3
  - Power-3 or Finesse-3
- Professions:
  - Loremaster
  - Spokesman, Navigator, Rationalist, Trader

## MENTORED

*You received your education by a personal mentor in intimate sessions, learning from his experience and vast knowledge. Depending on your origin, this Mentor might be a specialized palace Tutor, payed highly by your noble family to teach you the rules of nobility or it might be the elderly shaman teaching the young of your tribal clan the*



*ways of the word and the laws of nature.*

- Group Aptitude: Intellectual or Social
- Attributes:
  - Any+3
  - Any-3
- Professions:
  - Loremaster or Spokesman or Survivalist
  - any Intellectual, any Social, any Instinctual

## SELF-TAUGHT

*You did not have the luxury of any kind of dedicated schooling. Instead you had to learn all the hard lessons of life by yourself. But learning them you did, leaving you (likely) scarred but well able to know your limits and how to accustom to new environments.*

- Group Aptitude: Physical or Instinctual
- Attributes:
  - Instinct+3
  - Finesse-3 or Smarts-3
- Professions:
  - Survivalist, Betrayer, Tinkerer
  - any Instinctual, any Physical

## INDOCTRINATED

*You received extensive psychic indoctrination by the ill-understood tutelage-engines of the dark age of technology or other (potentially more sinister) means. Whatever the means, your mind is filled with knowledge and know-how of things you never truly learned or experienced. You just know them. Sometimes, things just comes to you as you act, without knowing you can actually do or know it beforehand.*

- Group Aptitude: Intellectual or Instinctual
- Attributes:
  - Smarts+3 or Will+3 or Finesse+3
  - Finesse-3 or Will-3
- Professions: (pick two) any Intellectual, any Instinctual

## STEP 5: COMBAT

In a future where there is only war, your character is nearly guaranteed to have encountered fighting before - either real or only simulated.

This step will provide three skill points.

### GANG WAR

You participated in a prolonged, bloody gang war, either as a gang member, militia or local law enforcement. Fighting dirty was the norm and no man or woman a non-combatant.

- Walking Fire (Gunman) or Hammerblow (Warrior)
- Pick two: Bribe (Trader), Endure (Athlete), Warcry (Enforcer), Hide (Ghost), Demolitions (Tinkerer), Wheeled (Operator), Gunner (Operator), Danger Sense (Observer), any Betrayer

## HOSTILE WILDLIFE

You've been to a place with lethal predators. You have learned your lessons from the grisly demise of others who didn't.

- Sniping (Gunman) or Piercing Strike (Warrior) or Brawl (Athlete)
- Pick two: First Aid (Medic), Diagnose (Medic), Silent Move (Ghost), Hide (Ghost), Sixth Sense (Observer), any Survivalist

## PDF TRAINING

You, as countless billion other imperial citizens, have taken the PDF training. Whether as for active service or only as part of auxiliary training programs is irrelevant, as the basic training regime is the same. Physical toughening through harsh exercise, weapon training, basic close quarter drills, life ammunition combat scenarios.

- Center Mass (Gunman) or Walking Fire (Gunman)
- Fencing(Warrior), Brawl (Athlete), Athletics (Athlete), Throw (Athlete), Hard Target (Acrobat)
- Technomat(Tinkerer), Demolition(Tinkerer), Bookkeeping (Trader), First Aid (Medic), Rally (Commander), Pull Rank (Commander), any Operator

## SHOWFIGHTER

Whether you were a famous gladiator on a feudal world, an enslaved prisoner of war forced to fight to entertain your capturers, a boxing champion, or a fighter in an underhive pit: you made a living off fighting flashy, potentially highly choreographed battles for the entertainment of others.

- Fencing (Warrior), Brawl (Athlete), Combat Trick (Warrior) skill
- Hard Target (Acrobat), Jump (Acrobat), Endure (Athlete), Block (Warrior)
- Feint (Betrayer), Maneuver (Acrobat), Break (Athlete), Athletics (Athlete)

## WARZONE

War has come to your home. Maybe your homeworld was invaded by foul Xenos or a



rebellion has broken out. Maybe your void ship was boarded. Either way: you had to learn fast that staying alive is the most urgent thing to do when combat starts.

- Snap Shot (Gunman), Fencing (Warrior)
- Block(Warrior), Endure (Athlete) or Hard Target (Acrobat)
- Any Observer, any Survivalist

## NONE

You are a truly fortunate soul to have never experienced combat (not even simulated) in your life - a true rarity in the Grimdark future! But woe to you when combat eventually finds you...

- Any two Loremaster skills
- Free skill point (combat unrelated)

## STEP 6: EARLY CAREER

Your first "job" left you with a deeper set of skills in a single field of expertise and is a good stepping stone to build upon in the future. Note that your early career does not necessarily reflect your character's current career. This stage provides another two stat adjustments (both positive) and a single Profession with three skill points. Available options:

- Adeptus Mechanicus
- Adeptus Ministorum (Ecclesiarchy)
- Adeptus Arbites
- Adeptus Administratum
- Soldier
- Enlisted Officer
- Criminal
- Outcast
- Civilian

## ADEPTUS MECHANICUS

*You have served as an adept in the marsian cult for several years. Countless hours spent surrounded by whirring, clicking, steaming, pumping and crackling machines, fixing corroded cabling, rusted pipes or replacing parts of degrading servitors while studying the secrets of the machine God in preparation for your next exams to rise up its many, complex ranks.*

- Stats:
  - Smarts+3
  - Will+3 or Finesse+3
- Profession: Technologist

## ADEPTUS MINISTORUM

*You've been sanctioned part of the most holy Ecclesiarchy, trained and educated to be a fine (or threatening) example for the masses to aspire to (or fear). Preaching the divine Emperor's name and bearing his golden lights to the deepest shadows has been your duty for years, leaving you either highly fervent or at the very least very charismatic and accustomed to talking to people of any calling.*

- Stats:
  - Charisma+3
  - Will+3 or Power+3
- Profession: Believer or Spokesman

## ADEPTUS ARBITES

*You have been taken in by the Adeptus Arbites, the imperial law enforcement, tasked to uphold his majesty's law and order. Putting down rioters was as much part of your duty as fighting organized crime and misbehaving officials. It is generally a hard, ill-regarded duty with the potential to make numerous deadly foes quickly.*

- Stats:
  - Instincts+3
  - Any+3
- Profession: Athlete, Enforcer, Observer

## ADEPTUS ADMINISTRATUM

*You have learned and worked in the single largest bureaucracy ever to exist, keeping the Imperium in its quasi-functional status quo. With a single stroke of an autoquill you send armies on their way, condemned billions to their deaths and signed treaties and laws you were certain would be broken before your next shift.*

- Stats:
  - Smarts+3 or Instinct+3
  - Any+3
- Profession: Trader, Loremaster, Rationalist

## SOLDIER

*You have been drafted or chosen to join the massive fighting force of humanity, fighting the never ending wars of the Imperium. A harsh life full of hardship, pain and terror but also camaraderie, honor and wonder.*

- Stats:
  - Toughness+3
  - Power+3 or Finesse+3
- Profession: Warrior, Gunman, Operator



## ENLISTED OFFICER

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*You have gained (a low to medium) officer rank in one of the Imperiums fighting forces. Whether you were elevated from the enlisted troops or went through one of many renowned officer schools is your call.*

- Stats:
  - Smarts+3 or Charisma+3
  - Will+3 or Instinct+3
- Profession: Commander or Enforcer

## CRIMINAL

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*In many places of the Imperium, illicit actions prove to be highly lucrative. From kidnapping and ransoming highborns to trafficking of illegal goods to industrial or social espionage to hired hitmans in service to some wealthy elements seeking to get rid of their contestants.*

- Stats:
  - Finesse+3 or Charisma+3
  - +3 to any except Will
- Profession: Betrayer, Ghost

## OUTCAST

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*Living on or beyond the edge of civilization for several years, you have learned to only depend on yourself. You are highly praised as guide and expert by those having to survive in just such an area with little to no resources - although you will likely stick out like a colorful canine on any social gathering.*

- Stats:
  - Instinct+3
  - Toughness+3 or Power+3
- Profession: Survivalist

## CIVILIAN

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*You have learned and worked an utterly normal, civilian job for some years.*

- Stats:
  - Finesse+3
  - Any+3
- Profession: Trader, Spokesman, Athlete, Acrobat, Operator, Medic, Navigator, Tinkerer, Loremaster
- Note: make sure to note down which was your civilian job and check in with your GM about which Profession is fitting. Examples:
  - Medic: Nurse, Doctor, Veterinary
  - Loremaster: Librarian, Scribe, Secretary
  - Spokesman: Butler, Courtesan, Storyteller

- Operator: trucker, shuttle pilot, cargo train worker



# CHAPTER 3: PROFESSIONS & SPECIALTIES

Grimdark's skill system is divided into so-called Professions, which group associated Specialties together. Raising a certain Specialty will also raise the profession rating, which can be used in place of any Specialty of a Profession. This represents the fact that specialists are also (somewhat) proficient in their general field of expertise.

A renown surgeon for cybernetic replacements is certainly also quite capable at first aid treatments after all, and a famous climber is quite likely a dangerous wrestler as well...

## Generalist or Specialist Path?

The number of Specialties featured in Grimdark is quite large (and might even grow in your game!), so it is easy to feel overwhelmed. It is totally acceptable to completely set aside Specialties for your first (or any) character and only use the more general Professions instead! Grimdark calls this the **Generalist** path. Whenever the GameMaster calls for a Specialty check, he should also announce the respective Profession. If you choose to follow the Generalist path, you will just make the respective Profession check and you're good - the GM will apply the respective Modifiers of the Specialty and resolve the action. Should you prefer the delve deeper into Grimdark's skill system and manage each individual Specialty, you are set to follow the **Specialist** path. The Specialist path provides the option to fiddle with every last bit of your character, and can be seen as a tool for advanced players (or those who like a complex system) to tweak and customize their characters even further and make them truly unique.

## PROFESSION EXAMPLE

*Sister Aryanna of the Ordo Dialogis and her death-cult comrade Krill'Ta are attempting to infiltrate a gathering of noblewomen of the Hive World Olrabus, suspecting the machinations of a genestealer cult in its midst. As a distrustful guard is denying them entrance, a hasty debate between the two members of the Inquisitors retinue using Ordo hand signs erupts. Should Aryanna attempt to tell a convoluted (and utterly crafted) story to convince the guard - or should Krill'Ta attempt to seduce the guard with her death world charm? Both would be valid approaches, but seducing the guard may take Krill'Ta out of the next scene and leave the sister alone in the midst of the noblewomen. On the other hand, sister Aryanna isn't particular known for her abilities to lie - an ability which is far from well-perceived by her Ordo after all...*

to tackle any given situation scattered over the different professions that may appear redundant on a purely mechanical take. But each profession has its very own take and spin on "their" solution to a problem, along with certain role-play implications, limitations and situational modifiers. Thus a certain given situation may be much easier to solve by one profession than by another - yet they all have their uses, without forcing someone to break out of character to tackle a certain solution.

On a mechanical level, Professions work (mostly) like Specialties, with the main difference is the fact that you cannot raise Professions directly and use a different modifier. The roll modifier when using a Profession is determined by the current Profession rating (see below).

## PROFESSIONS

A Profession represent the generalist ability of a character in a certain broad area of expertise. Each Profession covers a range of Specialties which are somewhat related. In addition, they provide a fast and loose overview of the character. Is he a brutal underhive ganger with high scores in the Betrayer, Athlete and Warrior professions? Or an ancient tech priest with a more accumulated knowledge in his left (augmented) toe, than a handful of highborn nobles put together, reflected by his Tinkerer, Technologist and Logic professions?

One central decision of Grimdark, contrary to many other game systems, is the fact that it does not assume that player characters or even a group of player characters, cover all or even most professions. There are many different ways

## Design Decision: Professions

- **Facilitate Player Creativity:** If a player has an idea, which is not covered by the existing Specialties, it is usually easy to discern the Profession to which the described action relates. Having the option to roll a Profession check in such a case, allows for great player creativity. GM and Players are encouraged to develop new Specialties for commonly used actions of players that are not foreseen by Grimdark.
- **Make Everyone a Generalist:** In many skill-based game systems, players may end up with specialist characters which are very proficient in skill A but absolutely untrained in skill B, although the two skills are actually quite closely related. This does not make a whole lot of sense, as every specialist is also necessarily a generalist in his field of purview - at least to some degree.



## THE PROFESSION RATING

Each profession has a certain Profession rating, representing the total ability of the character in that Profession. This rating **increases by 2 for each new Specialty level learned** in an associated Specialty.

## THE PROFESSION CHECK

A Profession check works just like a Specialty check with a single difference. Instead of using the respective Specialty modifier, it uses the Profession Rating. Everything else works the same, including the used attributes and situational modifiers of the respective Specialty. With the GM's accord, a character may even attempt a Profession check if he does not have the respective Profession (and thus a Profession rating of 0). In such a case, the player takes a -10 modifier on the roll and he may only achieve a Partial Success - never a Full Success.

### PROFESSION CHECK EXAMPLE

*Inquisitor Otto Brecht has been trapped into a hive corridor with all doors locked. The straight forward Inquisitor decides to try and force open one of the doors with his own strength, hoping to still remain his covert approach that way. If that fails, he can still blast open the doors with a grenade after all ...*

*Brecht is not particularly skilled at breaking things - he relies on the brute Nic'Or for such things - but he is keeping himself in top physical condition and is tough as nail. He should have a good enough chance to break open the doors...*

That is, Brecht does not have the Break Specialty of the Athlete Profession, but he does have two ranks each in the Triathlete and Endure Specialties of that Profession. Thus, his Athlete Profession rating is:  $2 * 4 = 8$ .

- **Specialty / Profession:** Break / Athlete
- **Specialty Modifier:** 0 (untrained => use Profession)
- **Profession Rating:** 8
- **Attributes:** Power 37, Toughness 44
- **Modifiers:** Locked Door (-10)
- **Target Numbers:** 35 (37+8-10), 42 (44+8-10)
- **Rolls:** 77 (no pass), 43 (no pass)
- **Result:** Failure

*But the door won't budge. Going loud it is then. So be it. He never liked sneaking around anyway...*

## SYNERGIES

In many situations, a character may benefit from being good in another Profession beside the one he is currently using. When the player can make a sound argument why in a given situation such a Synergy applies, he may add half the Profession rating of the supporting Profession as a modifier on top of his check. As usual, the GM is the final arbiter whether a Synergy is applicable or not, but he is encouraged to allow most such calls to encourage player creativity.

### SYNERGY EXAMPLE

*Nic'Or the tribal warrior of the backwater planet Or, is currently having a bit of a trouble. He was expected to secure the roof of a hive spire while his Inquisitor was infiltrating it through the air vents. But now, the roof is quickly filling with security personal and he has strict order to not be detected. His only hope of staying hidden, is if he can quickly get off the roof - that is he has to jump to one of the neighboring rooftops. Nic'Or is a strong warrior with a body practically overflowing with muscle - but he is not an acrobat like some of the Inquisitor's other retinue members. Despite being unsure whether he will manage the far leap, he has no other choice. While building momentum, he offers his soul to the Emper'Or and leaps...*

Nic'Or is not skilled in the Acrobat Profession, thus he takes a -10 penalty when using the Leap/Acrobat Specialty. Nic'Or's player does point out however, that the great athletic Nic'Or should benefit from a Synergy from the Athlete Profession, since making a far jump does need quite a bit of strength alongside the right technique and timing after all.

The GM and the other players agree. Nic'Or's player can thus add half of Nic'Or's (considerable) Athlete Profession Rating to the check and now has a far greater chance of succeeding.

## PROFESSIONS OVERVIEW

Grimdark uses 20 Professions grouped into the four categories: Physical, Intellectual, Social, Instinctual.

### • Physical Professions:

- **Acrobat:** covers Specialties that require a high level of body control, tension and swiftness.
- **Athlete:** covers Specialties that require a high level of physical strength and endurance.
- **Gunman:** covers Specialties of ranged weapon fighting.
- **Warrior:** covers Specialties of close-quarter fighting.

### • Intellectual Professions:

- **Loremaster:** covers a wide range of Knowledge Specialties.
- **Medic:** covers Specialties needed to keep others alive.
- **Rationalist:** covers Specialties that require a high level of intelligence and clear thought.
- **Technologist:** covers Specialties that allow the proper use, understanding and even crafting of advanced tech.
- **Tinkerer:** covers Specialties that allow the proper use of common and low tech.

### • Social Professions:

- **Believer:** covers Specialties that require a deep conviction in a belief.
- **Betrayer:** covers Specialties that deceive others or break common law.
- **Commander:** covers Specialties that lead



others by example, pressure or wit.

- **Enforcer:** covers Specialties that cow others into submission or fear.
- **Spokesman:** covers Specialties that rely on communicating with others.
- **Trader:** covers Specialties related to money, property and value.
- **Instinctual Professions:**
  - **Ghost:** covers Specialties that allow the character to stay hidden.
  - **Navigator:** covers Specialties that prevent you from getting lost.
  - **Observer:** covers Specialties that require a high level of alertness and perceptiveness.
  - **Operator:** covers Specialties that allow the operation of vehicles and its functions.
  - **Survivalist:** covers Specialties that allow characters to survive in any environment on their own.

Below follows the entries of the different Professions. All use a common layout, as follows:

- First in italics, a short description of the respective Profession is given, focusing on common appearance and behavior patterns of characters of that Profession. These should not be taken as strict guides but as more as helpful guidelines when creating and playing a character.
- **Aptitudes:** the here listed Aptitudes regulate how difficult it is for a given character to learn this Profession.
- **Common Attributes:** this ordered list provide an overview over the Attributes used by the Specialties associated with the Profession. The further back an Attribute is listed, the fewer Specialties make use of it. This list is intended to be a guide for players following the Generalist path, so they know what attributes their characters will likely need when using the Specialty.
- **Tags:** A list of Common Usage Tags the Specialties of this Profession cover.
- **Specialties:** An alphabetical list of Specialties associated with this Profession. Players following the Generalist Path may use this list as a reference to spark their creativity and problem solving approaches.
- **Synergies:** A list of possible Synergies, that is other Professions that may be commonly used as Synergy candidates for the Profession. Keep in mind that the listed ones are only proposals and even if none is listed, a good argument may still convince the GM to allow a Synergy!
- **Sample Consequences:** a list of examples of what might happen when a character fails or get a partial success with consequences on a

task using this Profession.

- **Common Modifiers:** a list of common modifiers that might situationally apply when using this Profession.

## ACROBAT

*The character shows a high level of body control and tension. His movements are fluid, every step measured, every gesture a study in precision. He is likely to possess quite some strength without appearing swollen with muscle and may appear lean or even slim without being sunken or weak. The character is likely to be considered handsome or even beautiful depending on the local beauty ideals and other people might react accordingly.*

- **Aptitudes:** Finesse, Subtlety
- **Common Attributes:** Finesse, Power, Toughness, Will
- **Common Usage Tags:** Problem Solving, Physical Defense, SUP
- **Specialties:** Balancing, Contortionist, Dancing, Hard Target, Leap, Maneuvering
- **Synergies:** Athlete
- **Sample Consequences:**
  - Twisted Ankle: Cannot run or charge for the remainder of the scene.
  - Snapped Tendon: -5 on any Finesse based check until healed.
  - Bruise: 2d5 points of Resilience damage.
  - Trip: Fall prone.
  - Wide Open: Enemies gain +10 to attack the character until his next turn.
- **Common Modifiers:**
  - High Gravity: -15
  - Zero Gravity: -10
  - No Armor worn: +15
  - Bulky Weapon: -5
  - Slippery Ground (Water, Ice, Oil): -5 (or worse)

## ATHLETE

*The character is visibly strong and tough. He likely has great muscle mass and little to no fat deposits. Most people will expect the character to be a good warrior - which may influence the way they perceive the character and react to him. He may be physically intimidating to less strong characters even without meaning to.*

- **Aptitudes:** Power OR Toughness, Offense
- **Common Attributes:** Power, Toughness, Will, Weapon Skill,
- **Common Usage Tags:** Physical Attack, Physical Defense, Problem Solving
- **Specialties:** Block, Brawl, Break, Endure, Heave, Throw



- **Synergies:** Acrobat
- **Sample Consequences:**
  - Torn Muscle: Cannot perform any Athlete skill checks until healed.
  - Bruise: 2d5 Resilience damage
  - Fractured Bone: Increases resilience damage taken by 2 until healed. Cumulative.
  - Push-Back: The character is pushed back by 1d5 meters.
  - Contusion: -5 on any Power based check.
- **Common Modifiers:**
  - Solid Ground: +5
  - Unsteady Ground (Pebble, moving Car): -5 (or worse)
  - High Gravity: -15

## BELIEVER

*The character has strong beliefs, usually religious ones, that he is displaying openly. He may openly wear insignia or iconography associated with his beliefs or actively preach about his beliefs to other persons. Swaying the character to a new point of view or convince them to change a set course of action is generally a difficult prospect.*

- **Aptitudes:** Will OR Charisma, Social
- **Common Attributes:** Will, Charisma, Smarts
- **Common Usage Tags:** Mental Attack, Mental Defense, Support, Problem Solving
- **Specialties:** Deny, Inspire, Meditate, Preach, Sanctify, Counsel
- **Synergies:** Spokesman, Loremaster
- **Sample Consequences:**
  - Doubt: A sliver of doubt is enough to crack the firm belief. -5 on Believer checks for the remainder the scene.
  - Shattered: The belief got shattered and makes it all but impossible to call on it for the remainder of the scene.
  - Fanaticism: The Believer loses any sense of reality over the overpowering belief and cannot see reason. He is unable to use Rationalist skills for the remainder of the scene and his actions may overstep many boundaries he normally would not bend.
- **Common Modifiers:**
  - Corruption Points: -1 per CP the character or target has
  - Betrayer Profession Rating: -1 per Betrayer Rating of the target

## VARIOUS BELIEVES

Players should note down what their character's belief actually is - both for themselves as a reminder and the GM to determine whether some use of the Believer skill is plausible or ill fitting.

The basic assumption of Imperial characters with the Believer skill is that they follow some part of the Imperial Creed, which has the following key tenets:

- The God-Emperor: is the one true god of humanity and always was, albeit he once walked among men before his ascension to the golden throne.
- Heresy: it is the divine duty of every faithful to purge the Heretic, beware the psyker and mutant and abhor the xeno.
- Obedience: it is the believers duty to obey the authority of the Imperial government and their superiors, as they speak with the Emperors name.

## BETRAYER

*The character is focused on his own personal benefit in any given situation and values other people only for the benefit he can gain from using them. The word of a Betrayer is worth as much as one might suspect and you better watch your goods when one is around. Of course it is far from easy to see a Betrayer for who he really is through the maze of twisted lies, half-truth and even physical disguises a Betrayer might wear. More often than not, a Betrayer has a likable face, his speech a honey-tinged sweet and his gestures inviting and calming - everything intended to lower suspicions and alertness.*

- **Aptitudes:** Charisma OR Finesse, Social
- **Common Attributes:** Charisma, Finesse, Smarts, WS
- **Common Usage Tags:** Mental Attack, Mental Defense, Problem Solving, Support
- **Specialties:** Deceive, Disguise, Feint, Forgery, Selfishness, Sleight of Hand, Smuggle
- **Synergies:** Spokesman, Ghost, Loremaster
- **Sample Consequences:**
  - Suspicious: Target becomes suspicious of the character. -5 for all future Betrayer checks. Stackable.
  - Caught Red Handed: target knows the target to be a Betrayer. All Betrayer checks fail for the remainder of the scene. May restrict future interactions.
- **Common Modifiers:**
  - Target Believer Rating: +3 per Believer Rating of the target when using the targets Believes against it
  - Distracted Target: +15

## COMMANDER

*The character is an imposing figure - not necessarily in a physical sense - but by the sheer*



*air of authority and determination that is nearly palpable around him. Commanders usually come in three variants: those who are deeply trusted by their comrades, those who are feared by them and those who seriously outsmarts them.*

- **Aptitudes:** Charisma, Leadership
- **Common Attributes:** Charisma, Will, Smarts
- **Common Usage Tags:** Mental Attack, Support
- **Specialties:** Battle Plan, Combat Sense, Pull Rank, Rally, Steel
- **Synergies:** Spokesman, Enforcer, Believer, Betrayer, Rationalist, Loremaster
- **Sample Consequences:**
  - Grudging Obedience: The instruction does not go down well with the troops, lowering morale. -5 to all future Command skill checks for the remainder of the scene.
  - Misinterpreted Command: The instruction was unclear or the receiver decides to misinterpret it. The target does not what it was instructed to do within the bounds of the command and circumstance.
  - Disobedience: The target simply denies the instruction. This is practically mutiny! Cannot use Command Specialties on the target until the issue is resolved.
- **Common Modifiers:**
  - Dangerous Command: -5 (or worse)
  - Simple Command: +5 (or better)
  - Complex Command: -5 (or worse)
  - Target is Superior: -10
  - Target is Subordinate: +10

## ENFORCER

*The character is a hardened man, used to get his way and his orders being followed. He is well used and most likely feared for his scrupulous ways and words let alone the punishment he has ever ready for those that deny him. To stand up to an Enforcer is to face a brutal torturer of mind, body and soul. Most cannot withstand the unforgiving, razor sharp gaze from an Enforcer's cold eyes let alone keep their wits when he starts shouting.*

- **Aptitudes:** Power, Social
- **Common Attributes:** Power, Charisma, Offense, Finesse, Smarts
- **Common Usage Tags:** Mental Attack, Problem Solving, Support
- **Specialties:** Blackmail, Interrogate, Terrify, Torture, Warcry
- **Synergies:** Spokesman, Athlete, Betrayer, Trader, Loremaster
- **Sample Consequences:**
  - Lingering Dislike: The target remembers the threats and actions against him by the

character and will be harder to interact with in the future. -5 on any Spokesman, Commander skill checks until resolved.

- Growing Resolve: The target is growing more resilient against the threats and actions of the Enforcer. -5 on Enforcer checks for the remainder of the scene.
- Empty Threats: The target has drawn the conclusion that the Enforcer's threats are null and empty. Future Enforcer checks fail until resolved.
- **Common Modifiers:**
  - Subject feels inferior: +10
  - Subject feels superior: -10
  - Subject fears worse if he gives in: -15

## GHOST

*The character is easy to oversee and forget. He may have the habit of staying in the back and keeping quiet. Maybe he has an unremarkable face and voice. Or maybe he is just extremely able to blend in with his surrounding, be it a jungle or a crowded street.*

- **Aptitudes:** Finesse, Subtlety
- **Common Attributes:** Finesse, Will, Instinct
- **Common Usage Tags:** Problem Solving
- **Specialties:** Ghost Move, Hide, Shadowing, Vanish
- **Synergies:** Observer, Survivalist, Spokesman, Betrayer, Loremaster
- **Sample Consequences:**
  - What was that?: Target learns the coarse location of the character without knowing details. -5 on Ghost checks until resolved.
  - Spotted: The target has spotted the character and is focused on him. All future Ghost checks fail until resolved (e.g. by using Distract/Spokesman or Maneuvering/Acrobat)
- **Common Modifiers:**
  - Paranoid target: -10
  - Distracted Target: +10

## GUNMAN

*The character is well versed in the usage and basic maintenance of firearms of different kind. It is very likely that he is carrying one or multiple guns - whether openly or covert - and would feel positively naked when not.*

- **Aptitudes:** Finesse, Offense
- **Common Attributes:** Power, Finesse, Instinct, Will
- **Common Usage Tags:** Physical Attack
- **Specialties:** Central Mass, Sniping, Sweeping Fire, Snap Shot, Walking Fire, Trick Shot



- **Synergies:** Rationalist, Observer
- **Sample Consequences:**
  - Glancing Hit: not a miss but also not a direct hit - target take half damage.
  - Malfunction: The weapon has a malfunction - you should take better care of it! Roll on the Malfunction Table.
- **Common Modifiers:**
  - Difficult Weather: -10
  - Target is moving quickly: -10 (or worse)
  - Target Size

## LOREMASTER

*Nothing easier than to recognize a Loremaster. Just make a false statement about some incredible niche tidbit and watch who is getting all twitchy and finally cracks up and starts berating and correcting your false claims for the next hour or five - there: easy.*

### Rule Exception: Using the Loremaster Profession Rating

As an exception to the normal rule, you cannot use your Loremaster Profession Rating instead of Loremaster Specialties, which you did not learn yet. You can still use your Profession Rating instead of the Specialty modifier of a learned Specialty though.

It simply does not make any sense for a learning scribe of the Administratum (who knows a lot about the Imperium of Man) to be an expert in Occult things or Xenology after all...

- **Aptitudes:** Smarts, Knowledge
- **Common Attributes:** Smarts, Instinct, Will
- **Common Usage Tags:** Problem Solving, Support
- **Specialties:** Classic Education, Imperium of Man, Occult, Shadow Organizations, Tactica Imperialis, Ways of Mars, Xenology
- **Synergies:** Rationalist (Classic Education), Psyker (Occult), Commander (Tactica Imperialis), Technologist (Ways of Mars), ...
- **Sample Consequences:**
  - Wrong Recollection: The character recalls a false information and is convinced of its truth until convinced or proven otherwise.
  - Partial Recollection: The character recalls most of the wanted data, but for some (potentially critical) bit.
  - It was the other Way Round! The character mixed two things up. 43 becomes 34. Left corridor becomes right corridor. Red cable becomes the green.
- **Common Modifiers:**
  - Common Lore: +10
  - Uncommon Lore: -5
  - Forbidden Lore: -15

## MEDIC

*The character is likely lean and may have rings under his eyes from working countless over-hours in a hospital of sorts. Most Medics have delicate and dexterous fingers coupled with sharp eyes and a bright mind. More often than not, a Medic is quick to act for hesitation is ill at place when lives are at stake. And then there is that aura of competence and calm around them, that marks them out more than any of the above.*

- **Aptitudes:** Smarts OR Finesse, Fieldcraft
- **Common Attributes:** Smarts, Finesse, Instinct, Charisma
- **Common Usage Tags:** Problem Solving, Support
- **Specialties:** Diagnose, First Aid, Medical Crafting, Rehabilitate, Surgery
- **Synergies:** Rationalist, Loremaster, Spokesman
- **Sample Consequences:**
  - Clipped Nerve: target suffers -5 on all Finesse tests for the remainder of the scene
  - Bleeding: target suffers from a light bleeding
  - Arterial Spray: the character is hit by a spray of arterial blood from his patient and must pass an Endure check or suffer a strong immune reaction during the next scene, which causes a -10 penalty to all tests
  - Non-Sterile Treatment: the patient must pass an Endure check or succumb to an infection in the next scene, which cause a -10 penalty on all checks. If not treated, this may prove fatal.
  - Finger Cut: character cuts himself during treatment and suffers from a light bleeding.
- **Common Modifiers:**
  - Unknown/Altered biology: -30
  - Struggling Patient: -15
  - Lack of Assistance: -5
  - Medical trained Assistant: +5
  - Well-Equipped Hospital: +15
  - Non-sterile environment: -10

## NAVIGATOR

*Knowing your way around places others would call labyrinthine is the characters second nature.*

- **Aptitudes:** Smarts, Fieldcraft
- **Common Attributes:** Smarts, Instinct, Will
- **Common Usage Tags:** Problem Solving, Support
- **Specialties:** Enclosed, Surface, Void, Warp
- **Synergies:** Rationalist, Observer, Loremaster
- **Sample Consequences:**
  - Detour: The character does not find the best possible path, causing the voyage to take



some additional time

- **Dangerous Path:** The character follows a dangerous path. There might be environmental hazard ahead or maybe an unfriendly encounter.
- **Difficult Path:** The route the character leads to, has a couple of difficulties, which may require additional checks fitting to the environment.
- **Lost:** The character has completely lost orientation and may end in a totally different location than he wanted to.
- **Common Modifiers:**
  - Alien Environment: -15
  - Familiar Environment: +10
  - Difficult Weather: -10
  - Lack of a Map: -10
  - Coarse Map: +5
  - Good Map: +15

## OBSERVER

*An old saying goes as follow: it takes a good Observer to notice an Observer. Keen senses, long experience and good instincts come together to form an Observer. You may notice that first thing he does when walking into a room is looking around with practiced eye movements or that small smirk on his face when he sees through one of your bluffs - that is if you're lucky and he is not good at hiding those minute movements.*

- **Aptitudes:** Instincts, Subtlety
- **Common Attributes:** Instincts, Smarts, Finesse
- **Common Usage Tags:** Mental Defense, Problem Solving, Support
- **Specialties:** Lip Reading, Sixth Sense, Search, Scrutiny
- **Synergies:** Loremaster, Rationalist
- **Sample Consequences:**
  - False Negative: you have gotten accustomed to a sound or sight you better not have. -5 Observer skills while in this environment.
  - False Positive: you thought to have notices something and, following your instincts, act accordingly.
- **Common Modifiers:**
  - Intense Combat: -5
  - Alien Environment/Opponent: -15
  - Familiar Environment/Opponent: +10

## OPERATOR

*Daring and skilled drivers, pilots and helmsman more often than not have a tendency for bragging, swearing and partying. Often enough they regularly bend the rules and expectations set for them by their organizations - but the really good*

*ones are those that are allowed such debauchery for their immense skill is most valuable indeed.*

- **Aptitudes:** Finesse OR Instinct, Offense OR Tech
- **Common Attributes:** Finesse, Instinct, Will
- **Common Usage Tags:** Problem Solving, Support
- **Specialties:** Aircraft, Personal, Tracked, Walker, Wheeled, Void, Xeno
- **Synergies:** Technologist, Tinkerer, Loremaster
- **Sample Consequences:**
  - Scratched the Paint: the character calculated to generous and the vehicle is having a light very light crash with whatever the character tried to avoid. The craft must pass a Structural Integrity test or one of its external components gets damaged.
  - Safety Protocols Activated: Now the character has gone too far and tasked the vehicle a bit too much. Some safety feature has activated to prevent permanent damage and is reducing some of its features for the time being. -5 to future Operator skills for the duration of the scene.
  - Lost Control: the character momentarily loses control over his vehicle. Depending on the situation this might cause anything from a short moment of panic all the way up to a (dangerous) crash.
  - Crash: the character did not manage to evade a potential crash and the vehicle is hitting an obstacle at speed. Oh-Oh...
- **Common Modifiers:**
  - Alien Craft: -20
  - Familiar Craft: +5
  - Personalized Craft: +10
  - Difficult Environment: -5 (or worse)
  - Easy environment: +5 (or better)
  - Crammed Surrounding: -10 (or worse)

## RATIONALIST

*True Rationalists are a rare breed in the grimdark future but yet they exist and try their utmost to unravel the mysteries of the universe with but their sharp minds, pointed questions and clever methods. More often than not, a Rationalist will show great interest in the "why" of any given situation. Others love to berate these around them and take any chance to share their knowledge and understandings of literally anything they might encounter.*

- **Aptitudes:** Smarts, Knowledge
- **Common Attributes:** Smarts, Instinct, Will
- **Common Usage Tags:** Mental Defense, Problem Solving, Support
- **Specialties:** Calculus, Cipher, Linguistic,



Rationality

- **Synergies:** Loremaster
- **Sample Consequences:**
  - Miscalculation: The predictions are wrong (probably due to mistaken assumptions). Yet, the character is dead set on its truthfulness and will act accordingly.
  - Confused: The character does not manage to explain the problem with his knowledge and the methods of rationality. He will continue to think about the matter and will thus be distracted. -5 on any Smarts or Instinct based checks for the remainder of the scene.
- **Common Modifiers:**
  - Unnatural Influence: -20
  - Requiring Obscure Knowledge: -10

## SPOKESMAN

*Every word coming from your mouth is well balanced, well pronounced ... and it just feels right. Often enough, the smooth talk is coupled with a spotless appearing starting with a nice and well fitting dress or suite, creating an utterly respectable combination most people are more than ready to listen to and accept prompts, hints, recommendations or even well-meaning criticism.*

- **Aptitudes:** Charisma, Social
- **Common Attributes:** Charisma, Instinct, Smarts
- **Common Usage Tags:** Mental Attack, Mental Defense, Problem Solving, Support
- **Specialties:** Distract, Inquiry, Pretty Words, Quarrel, Seduce
- **Synergies:** Loremaster
- **Sample Consequences:**
  - Gone too Far: the character has overstepped one of the many invisible borders that riddle the social environment. The target will likely cancel the interaction in a fitting way - which may range from a politely end of the small talk all the way to flying fists.
  - Ill Chosen Word: Well that was not all that nice, was it? -5 for Spokesman checks for the duration of the scene.
  - Ignored: The target is done with the character and does not care for his words any more, regardless how pretty they may be. All Spokesman checks fail for the rest of the scene.
  - Suspicious: The target doubts that the motivation of the character are in his favor. -10 on Spokesman, Betrayer and Believer checks for the remainder of the scene.
- **Common Modifiers:**
  - Target is Attracted: +5 (or more)
  - Target is bored: +5

- Target is hostile: -15
- Target is busy: -5

## SURVIVALIST

*Noticing a Survivalist in a civilized environment is not easy. Maybe he has the habit of checking his surrounding nearly as careful as an Observer or has the habit of carrying around lots of baggage - just in case. But once you are in a desolate place, far from the benefits of civilization, there is no denying the aura of calm and competence of a true Survivalist. While you may worry about the dangers of the wilderness (which may also apply to what is left in the ruins of a civilized place), including thirst, hunger and wild animals, the Survivalist just seems ... home at last.*

- **Aptitudes:** Instinct, Fieldcraft
- **Common Attributes:** Instinct, Finesse, Smarts, Will
- **Common Usage Tags:** Problem Solving, Support
- **Specialties:** Cooking, Foraging, Primitive Crafting, Taming, Zoology
- **Synergies:** Ghost, Observer, Rationalist, Loremaster
- **Sample Consequences:**
  - Polluted Food/Water: the character was not careful enough and foraged or cooked something that he would better not. Everyone who ate or drank from it must pass and Endure/Athlete check or get sick.
- **Common Modifiers:**
  - Alien Environment: -15
  - Familiar Environment: +10
  - Basic Tools: +5
  - Lack of Tools: -10

## TECHNOLOGIST

*The marvel of Technology are beyond the grasp of the vast majority of humanity. But not for a Technologist. His is the task of maintaining, repairing and even creating the advanced technology without which humanity would be all but doomed in the grimdark future. Many feel such a deep connection to technology, that they surround themselves with it permanently - in the shape of mechanical augmentations and a flurry of gadgets, some hardwired to their body some only a swift grip away.*

- **Aptitudes:** Smarts, Tech
- **Common Attributes:** Smarts, Finesse, Instinct, Will
- **Common Usage Tags:** Problem Solving
- **Specialties:** Advanced Crafting, Communion, Hacking, Rites of Activation, Rites of



Maintenance

- **Synergies:** Rationalist, Tinkerer, Loremaster
- **Sample Consequences:**
  - Angered Machine Spirits: The careless action of the character angered the machine spirit. In addition to potential acts of unrest, every Technologist or Tinkerer actions with the target suffers a -10 penalty for the remainder of the scene.
  - Never Fix a Running System: The target is now (partially) broken and in a worse state than before. Its functions are limited until repaired - properly this time. If the character attempts that repair, he suffers a -10 penalty.
  - How does this even work: The character is confused by the inner workings of the target. He may use it (unless it's broken) but he cannot attempt modifications or repairs until he figures it out, usually by passing a Calculus/Rationalist check.
- **Common Modifiers:**
  - Alien Tech: -15
  - Archeotech: -15
  - Common Tech: +10
  - Complex Tech: -5
  - Friendly Spirits: +5 (or better)
  - Unfriendly Spirits: -5 (or worse)

## TINKERER

*Lacking thorough understanding of technology did never hinder people from using it. A Tinkerer is just one of those - he may use tech on a daily basis, maybe even some rather advanced tech, but all he knows is how to use it, in the way he was once taught to - or even figured it all by out himself. Many Tinkerers proudly show off their skills, hoping to impress more careful people around them. And despite this being close to (or even definite) tech heresy, many Tinkerers fiddle around with common day or even advanced tech in their free time.*

- **Aptitudes:** Finesse, Fieldcraft
- **Common Attributes:** Finesse, Smarts, Instinct, Will
- **Common Usage Tags:** Physical Attack, Problem Solving
- **Specialties:** Common Crafting, Demolition, Lockpicking, Technomat
- **Synergies:** Rationalist, Loremaster
- **Sample Consequences:**
  - Angered Machine Spirits: The careless action of the character angered the machine spirit. In addition to potential acts of unrest, every Technologist or Tinkerer actions with the target suffers a -10 penalty for the

remainder of the scene.

- Never Fix a Running System: The target is now (partially) broken and in a worse state than before. Its functions are limited until repaired - properly this time. If the character attempts that repair, he suffers a -10 penalty.
- This is some serious Tech: The character has no idea how to use the target piece of technology. He cannot use his Tinkerer ability to handle this machine until he is shown or learns how to do so.
- **Common Modifiers:**
  - Alien Tech: -20
  - Archeotech: -20
  - Common Tech: +10
  - Simple Tech: +15
  - Complex Tech: -10
  - Friendly Spirits: +5 (or better)
  - Unfriendly Spirits: -5 (or worse)

## TRADER

*For a Trader, everything is about money, influence, debt, credit and power. Usually he will show off his wealth by wearing expensive clothing and jewelry. When he has visitors, he will ensure they are led through rooms filled with art, expensive items and other luxuries.*

- **Aptitudes:** Smarts, Knowledge OR Social
- **Common Attributes:** Smarts, Instinct, Charisma, Power
- **Common Usage Tags:** Mental Attack, Problem Solving
- **Specialties:** Bookkeeping, Bribe, Estimate, Haggle
- **Synergies:** Spokesman, Betrayer, Rationalist, Loremaster
- **Sample Consequences:**
  - Underestimated: The character judged the price of an item or service too low. He may sell something too cheap or may have a hard time buying it for the assumed price.
  - Overestimated: The character judged the price of an item or service too high. He may struggle to find someone to sell it to or spend too much when buying something.
- **Common Modifiers:**
  - Alien Economy: -15
  - Foreign Economy: -5
  - Familiar Economy: +5

## WARRIOR

*As a master of close-combat fighting, Warriors have a very real sense of danger around them. Whether they are fast and lean or brutally strong fighters does matter little, their posture tell the*



same story: I am ready to kill you with a spoon, so do not mess with me.

- **Aptitudes:** Power, Offense
- **Common Attributes:** Power, Instinct, Finesse
- **Common Usage Tags:** Physical Attack
- **Specialties:** Cleave, Combat Trick, Fencing, Hammerblow, Lightning Strike, Piercing Strike
- **Synergies:** Athlete, Observer
- **Sample Consequences:**
  - Glancing Hit: While the attack does connect with the target, it is a close call and the character just cannot bring his full power to bear. Target suffers half damage.
  - Overbalance: The character timed his swing in a bad way and now struggles to keep his balance, making himself an easier target until he can recover. +5 to attack the Character for one turn.
- **Common Modifiers:**
  - Difficult Terrain: -5 (or worse)
  - Target Size

## SPECIALTIES

Specialties represent a tightly defined action and are the central resolution mechanic used in Grimdark. Every Specialty is associated with a Profession. Thus, Specialties are usually written like this: Pretty Words (Spokesman). That is the name of a skill is followed by the respective Profession in parenthesis.

### COMMON USAGE TAGS

Specialty descriptions make use of so called Common Usage Tags - or simply Tags. These are marker words, that match a Specialty to a certain kind of common usage. As mentioned before, in Grimdark a single goal can be achieved by different Specialties scattered over different Professions. Each may have its own preconditions, limitations, situational modifier or special rules, but in the end, Specialties with the same Tag can resolve a common situation - one way or another.

- **Physical Attack (PA):** A physical attack is used to inflict physical harm or stress on a target. The target of a Physical Attack typically gets the chance to use a Specialty with the Physical Defense Tag (see below) to prevent or reduce the inflicted harm.
  - Examples: Brawl(Athlete), Throw(Athlete), all Gunman, all Warrior
- **Physical Attack (PD):** Any kind of physical defense is used to protect the character from harm inflicted by others using a Specialty marked with the Physical Attack Tag.

- Examples: Hard Target(Acrobat), Endure(Athlete), Parry/Block(Athlete)
- **Mental Attack (MA):** A mental attack is used to either inflict mental harm to the target or influence the target to do the characters bidding. The target of a Mental Attack typically gets the chance to resist by using a Specialty marked with Mental Defense (see below).
  - Examples: Seduce(Spokesman), Deceive(Betrayer), Preach(Believer), Pull Rank(Commander), Terrify(Enforcer), Bribe(Trader)
- **Mental Defense (MD):** With a Specialty of the mental defense group, a character can attempt to protect himself from being influenced or mentally harmed by others using a Specialty marked with the Mental Attack Tag.
  - Examples: Deny(Believer), Selfishness(Betrayer), Rationality(Rationalist), Scrutiny(Observer)
- **Recovery (REC):** Specialties marked with the Recovery Tag can be used to recover from damage, certain conditions or wounds taken. Some only work for the character while others work for allies as well.
  - Examples: First Aid(Medic), Endure(Athlete), Rally(Commander), Meditate(Believer)
- **Support (SUP):** Specialties marked with the Support Tag are used to aid allied characters in some way.
  - Examples: Combat Sense(Command), Rally(Command), Inspire(Believer), Steel(Command), Distract(Spokesman), Feint(Betrayer), Maneuvering(Acrobat), Preach(Believer), Calculus(Rationalist)
- **Problem Solving (SOL):** Specialties marked with the Problem Solving Tag can be used to solve some kind of obstacle the character may face, which is not related to either physical or mental combat, like a locked door, an encrypted data pad or a guarded area.
  - Examples: Silent Move(Ghost), Sixth Sense(Observer), Hacking(Technologist), Cipher(Rationalist), Triathlete(Athlete), Leap(Acrobat), Forgery(Betrayer), Heave(Athlete)



#### RECOMMENDATION: CHARACTER HAS ACCESS TO TAGS

It is recommended for each character to have access (that is he either has a fitting Specialty or its Profession) to at least one Specialty from each Tag. This way, he will have the potential to participate in nearly any situation.

In addition, it is highly recommended for each character to have access to at least one Specialty of each Physical and Mental Defense category. Otherwise, players might find their characters very helpless in the face of physical or mental combat, which may end with regular death, insanity, corruption or manipulation by opponents - which may get frustrating quickly.

GMs should make sure to review new characters before play and talk to players should their character violates these recommendations and make sure they are aware of the issue and are ready to face the consequences or have a (good) plan to tackle such situations.

## SPECIALTY LEVEL

Specialties can have one of five levels. The level of a specialty directly determines the Modifier of the Specialty check. With each level, this modifier increases by 5 to a maximum of +20. Should a character have a Profession rating that is higher than is specialist modifier, he may instead use his Profession rating.

- **Untrained:** This is the base of all Specialties. The character is completely untrained in this specific task and thus takes a Penalty of -10.
- **Trained:** The character has some training in this Specialty and thus gets a +5 bonus on the task.
- **Experienced:** The character is competent in this Specialty and has a good chance to succeed at most tasks. He gets a +10 bonus.
- **Veteran:** The character has faced this task countless times and only few others are their better. He gets a +15 bonus.
- **Master:** The character has mastered this Specialty and there are virtually none more competent at it. He gets a +20 bonus.

## SUBTLE AND BLATANT SPECIALTIES

Grimdark uses two different type of Specialties: Subtle and Blatant.

- **Subtle:** These Specialties are (somewhat) covert or low-profile in manner and draw considerable less attention than Blatant Specialties. Subtle Specialties produce less severe effects on a failure or partial success but in turn are slightly less likely to succeed and loose a Draw during an opposed test. Examples: Pretty Words (Spokesman), Disguise (Betrayal), Balancing (Acrobat), Snap-Shot (Gunner), Fencing (Warrior)
- **Blatant:** These Specialties are flashy, loud,

extreme or all of them (and more) at once. Using a blatant Specialty is nearly guaranteed to draw (potentially unwanted) attention. A Blatant Specialty will cause considerable effects on failure or partial success but has a higher chance to succeed and always win a Draw during an opposed test.

Examples: Quarrel (Spokesman), Rally (Commander), Break (Athlete), Walking Fire (Gunner), Hammerblow (Warrior)

Some Specialties may be used in both Subtle or Blatant way, e.g. the Demolition (Tinkerer) skill. Discretely placing a bomb can be done in a subtle way, but using a charge to blow open a door and shake those within certainly can only be considered blatant. The GM is the final arbiter when it comes to deciding whether a skill is used in a Blatant or Subtle way.



## SPECIALTIES OVERVIEW TABLE

Note that Skills marked with an \* are restricted. They cannot be replaced with a Profession roll and cannot be picked with a Free Skill point during character creation.

Specialty	Profession	Roll	Blatant	Tags
Aircraft	Operator	Finesse+Instinct	SOL, SUP	vary
Balancing	Acrobat	Finesse+Instinct	PD, SOL	S
Battle Plan	Commander	Instinct+Smarts	SOL, SUP	S
Blackmail	Enforcer	Smarts+Power	MA	vary
Block	Athlete	Power+Toughness	PD	B
Bookkeeping	Trader	Smarts+Instinct	SOL	S
Brawl	Athlete	Power+Finesse	PA	vary
Break	Athlete	Power+Toughness	SOL	B
Bribe	Trader	Charisma+Smarts	MA	S
Calculus	Rationalist	Smarts+Will	SOL, SUP	S
Central Mass	Gunman	Finesse+Instinct	PA	B
Cipher*	Rationalist	Smarts+Instinct	SOL	S
Classic Education	Loremaster	Smarts+Will	SOL	S
Cleave	Warrior	Power+Toughness	PA	B
Combat Sense	Commander	Instinct+Smarts	PD, SUP	S
Combat Trick	Warrior	Power+Finesse	PA, SUP	S
Communion*	Technologist	Will+Smarts	SOL	S
Contortionist	Acrobat	Finesse+Toughness	SOL	S
Cooking	Survivalist	Finesse+Instinct	SUP	B
Counsel	Believer	Charisma+Will	SUP, REC	S
Craft*	Technologist	Smarts+Finesse	SOL	B
Dancing	Acrobat	Finesse+Charisma	SOL	S
Danger Sense	Survivalist	Instinct+Smarts	PD, MD, SOL	S
Deceive	Betrayer	Charisma+Instinct	MA	S
Demolition*	Tinkerer	Finesse+Will	PA, SOL	vary
Deny	Believer	Will+Toughness	MD	B
Diagnose	Medic	Instinct+Smarts	SOL, SUP	S
Disguise	Betrayer	Finesse+Charisma	SOL	S
Distract	Spokesman	Charisma+Instinct	MA, MD, SOL, SUP	S
Enclosed	Navigator	Instinct+Smarts	SOL	S
Endure	Athlete	Toughness+Will	PD, REC	B
Estimate	Trader	Instinct+Smarts	SOL	S
Feint	Betrayer	Finesse+Will	MA, SUP	S
Fencing	Warrior	Finesse+Toughness	PA	S
First Aid	Medic	Finesse+Smarts	REC, SUP	B
Foraging	Survivalist	Instinct+Toughness	SOL	B
Forgery	Betrayer	Finesse+Smarts	SOL	S
Ghost Move	Ghost	Finesse+Instinct	SOL	S
Gunner	Operator	Smarts+Instinct	PA	B
Haggle	Trader	Charisma+Power	SOL	B
Hammerblow	Warrior	Power+Toughness	PA	B
Hard Target	Acrobat	Instinct+Finesse	PD	B
Hide	Ghost	Finesse+Will	SOL	S
Imperium of Man	Loremaster	Smarts+Will	SOL	S
Improvise	Survivalist	Smarts+Finesse	SOL	B
Inquiry	Spokesman	Charisma+Instinct	SOL	vary
Inspire	Believer	Charisma+Smarts	SUP, SOL	vary
Interrogate	Enforcer	Finesse+Charisma	MA, SOL	vary
Jury-Rig	Tinkerer	Instinct+Finesse	REC, SUP, SOL	B
Leap	Acrobat	Finesse+Power	PD, SOL	vary
Lightning Strike	Warrior	Power+Finesse	PA	B
Linguistic	Rationalist	Smarts+Instinct	SOL	vary



Specialty	Profession	Roll	Blatant	Tags
Lip Reading	Observer	Instinct+Smarts	SOL	S
Lockpicking	Tinkerer	Finesse+Instinct	SOL	S
Maneuvering	Acrobat	Finesse+Instinct	SUP	S
Meditate	Believer	Will+Toughness	REC	S
Occult*	Loremaster	Will+Instinct	SOL	S
Override*	Technologist	Smarts+Will	SOL	S
Personal*	Operator	Finesse+Instinct	SOL	vary
Piercing Strike	Warrior	Finesse+Instinct	PA	S
Preach	Believer	Charisma+Will	MA, REC, SUP, SOL	B
Pretty Words	Spokesman	Charisma+Smarts	MA	S
Pull Rank	Commander	Charisma+Power	MA, SOL	B
Quarrel	Spokesman	Charisma+Smarts	MA, SOL	B
Rally	Commander	Charisma+Will	MD, REC, SUP	B
Rationality	Rationalist	Smarts+Will	MD, REC, SUP, SOL	S
Rehabilitate	Medic	Charisma+Smarts	REC, SUP	B
Rites of Activation*	Technologist	Smarts+Will	SOL	B
Rites of Maintenance	Technologist	Smarts+Finesse	REC, SOL	B
Sanctify*	Believer	Will+Power	MA, SUP, SOL	B
Scrutiny	Observer	Instinct+Will	MD, SOL	S
Search	Observer	Instinct+Will	SOL	B
Seduce	Spokesman	Charisma+Power	SOL	vary
Selfishness	Betrayer	Will+Toughness	MD	S
Shadow Organizations*	Loremaster	Smarts+Instinct	SOL	S
Shadowing	Ghost	Finesse+Instinct	SOL	S
Sixth Sense	Observer	Instinct+Finesse	PD, SOL	S
Sleight of Hand	Betrayer	Finesse+Will	SOL	S
Smuggle	Betrayer	Smarts+Finesse	SOL	S
Snap Shot	Gunman	Finesse+Instinct	PA	S
Sniping	Gunman	Finesse+Will	PA	S
Steel	Commander	Charisma+Power	MD, SUP	vary
Surface	Navigator	Instinct+Smarts	SUP, SOL	S
Surgery	Medic	Finesse+Smarts	REC, SUP, SOL	B
Sweeping Fire	Gunman	Power+Instinct	PA	B
Tactica Imperialis	Loremaster	Smarts+Instinct	SUP, SOL	S
Taming	Survivalist	Instinct+Charisma	SUP, SOL	vary
Technomat	Tinkerer	Instinct+Smarts	REC, SUP, SOL	vary
Terrify	Enforcer	Power+Charisma	MA, SUP	B
Throw	Athlete	Power+Finesse	PA, SOL	vary
Torture	Enforcer	Finesse+Power	MA, SOL	B
Tracked	Operator	Finesse+Instinct	SOL	vary
Trick Shot	Gunman	Finesse+Instinct	PA, SOL	S
Vanish	Ghost	Finesse+Smarts	SOL	S
Void Nav	Navigator	Smarts+Instinct	SOL, SUP	B
Void	Operator	Finesse+Smarts	SOL	B
Walker	Operator	Finesse+Will	SOL	B
Walking Fire	Gunman	Power+Finesse	PA	B
Warcry	Enforcer	Power+Will	MA, SUP	B
Warp*	Navigator	Will+Instinct	SUP, SOL	S
Ways of Mars*	Loremaster	Smarts+Will	SUP, SOL	S
Wheeled	Operator	Finesse+Instinct	SUP, SOL	B
Xeno*	Operator	Instinct+Smarts	SUP, SOL	B
Xenology*	Loremaster	Smarts+Instinct	SUP, SOL	S



# CHAPTER 4: COMBAT

*In the far future there is only war.*

While there are many situations that can be solved without fighting, practically any kind of situations can really, really quickly spiral out of control and bloodshed ensues. This chapter will introduce the important rules that govern combat in Grimdark, especially the interactions between various combat oriented Specialties, how damage and wounds are handled and common situational modifiers.

## LIFE, DEATH & INJURY

Characters in Grimdark face many different ways in which they can come to harm. Enemies might shoot them, debris might crash on them or cruel foes might play mind tricks on them. There are three major concepts that make up Grimdark's system of handling harm:

- **Resilience & Stress:** Common physical injury and mental trauma are combined into a Stress value which rises and falls throughout a scene. A character's Resilience determine how much he is able to withstand.
- **Stress Level:** When the Stress value of a character rises above his Resilience, his Stress level increases by one and his Stress value and he takes a Snap (see below). The higher a character's stress level, the more severe the Snaps he will suffer.
- **Snap:** When Stress gets too much for a character's Resilience, he gains a Snap. This is a status effect or conditions applied by whatever caused the Stress to overflow. Usually, a Snap is only temporary but Snaps gained on higher Stress levels may be long-lasting or even permanent. Snaps can also be gained from weapons overcoming a character's armor.

## RESILIENCE

Every character has an innate tolerance for mental and physical trauma. Grimdark calls this tolerance **Resilience**.

A character's Resilience is the sum of a his Toughness and Will modifier.

### RESILIENCE

**Resilience = W-Mod + T-Mod**

*Example: Noc'Or has a Toughness score of 47 and a Will score of 33 - so his T-Mod is 4 and W-Mod is 3. The sum of those two is 7, which means Noc'Or has a Resilience of 7.*

## STRESS

When a character takes damage, regardless of its type, his Stress value increases. Whenever this value increases above his Resilience three things happen:

1. He takes a Snap determined by the source of the damage.
2. His Stress Level increases by one.
3. His Stress Value decreases by the character's Resilience. Should the new value still be above the character's Resilience, go to the first step.

### EXAMPLE: STRESS

*Sister Aryanna is fighting mutant rats invading her apothecarium through the cellar. She is squashing them one after the other the stock of her bolter, not wanting to waste precious bolt shells on such low creatures. Both her legs are already bloody from the scratching and gnawing rodents.*

Aryanna has a Resilience of 6 and her current Stress is at 4 after taking several minute scratches and bites from the rats.

*Then, out of nowhere, a particular disgusting one jumps on her back and sink its teeth into her neck! She feels her strength leave her body along with the droplets of blood from the wound...*

The surprise attack deals 4 damage, bringing Aryanna up to 8, which is more than her Resilience. Thus the following happens:

1. Aryanna take a Snap. The GM informs her player that Aryanna is now poisoned by the dirty fangs of the mutant rat. For now, the poison is only reducing her Power by 5 for the remainder of the scene.
2. Her Stress Level increases by one. It is now 1.
3. She reduces her stress value by her Resilience. This means her new Stress Value is: 8-6=2.

## STRESS LEVEL

The current Stress Level of a character provides the player and GM a simple way of seeing how exhausted a character is. It also presents a "danger meter" to the player, since the Snaps a character suffers gets progressively worse the higher his stress level goes. The sample Snaps presented in various places throughout the book covers up to three Stress Level.

Grimdark does not use a strict limit for the amount of Stress Levels a character may accumulate. GMs might allow players to "go beyond" those three levels, representing their characters pushing themselves beyond the safety margins erected by body and mind. It is recommended that whenever a character reaches a new stress level beyond the third, he



GM should request a Endure(Athlete) (or other fitting) check, to represent the character struggling to keep up the fight. This decision is left to the individual GM and he may even decide to keep it situational - e.g. by allowing players a longer breath during climatic encounters than during common scenes.

## SNAPS

Whenever a character reaches a new stress level, that is his current stress is greater than his Resilience, he takes a Snap. Characters may also take (or inflict!) Snaps by a successful critical hit (see section 4). Taking a snap represents some part of a characters mind or body giving in under the pressure put on it. The Snap is determined by the source of the stress which made the character reach a new Stress Level. This also determines whether the Snap is a physical or mental Snap. This distinction is important to note down, for the sake of later treatment, since recovering specialties are limited in what type of Snaps they can treat (e.g. First Aid (Medic) can only treat physical Snaps, while Counsel(Spokesman) can only treat mental Snaps).

When taking a Snap, note down the following informations:

- Name: The name of the Snap. Short description of the Snap to easily remember what ails your character.
- Stress Level: The Stress Level of your character. E.g. "1" for the first Snap you suffer.
- Type: Physical (P) or Mental (M). The type of attack inflicting the Snap. E.g. a gunshot would be P while a terrifying Warcy would be M.

### SNAP EXAMPLE

In the above example, Sister Aryanna took a Snap inflicted by a filthy mutant rat biting her neck and poisoned her! Aryanna's player would thus note down the following on a piece of paper (e.g. a post-it):

- Poisoned!
- 1st Level
- Physical

A possible shorthand that can be used is the following: Poisoned (1P).

Snaps are a great way for players and the gamemaster to get creative and come up with situational effects to spice up tense scenes. The various example Snaps provided throughout the book should be considered in the following and certainly not as a exhaustive list:

- As an inspiration to come up with your own

Snaps.

- As a fall-back / default option to pick when you are out of ideas.
- As a guideline to decide what Stress Level would be appropriate to a supposed Snap.

### QUICK GUIDE: SNAPS & STRESS LEVEL

The severity of a Snap is determined by the characters Stress Level. The higher his Level, the worse the effects of a Snap. Use the following as a quick guide to decide whether a Snap is appropriate for a given level.

1. First level Snaps should be minor inconveniences or very short lived. It may restrict the available actions of the character but should not prevent him from making any action in his turn.
  - Good: Knocked Prone, Knock-back, Suppressed, Disarmed, Shaken, Disoriented
  - Inappropriate: Stunned, pushed into dangerous area, Feared
2. A second level Snap is troublesome. It may add some serious penalties for a short duration (no more than a scene) or medium penalties for a longer duration. Snaps of this category may require specific external action to resolve and may take the character out of the fight for a short duration.
  - Good: Stunned (1), Feared(d5), Damaged Limb, Breathless, knock into danger zone
  - Inappropriate: Permanent injury, knocked into lethal zone
3. Taking a third level Snap is bad news. These might be serious penalties, restrict actions and may be either long lasting or even permanent injuries.
  - Good: Mutilated limb, knocked into lethal zone, Broken Will, Feared(Scene)
  - Inappropriate: not going nuts

## ATTACKING & DEFENDING

In Grimdark, physical and mental combat follow the same basic principle:

1. Attacker declares an attack and the used Specialty and rolls the respective check.
2. Defender declares which Specialty he uses to defend himself and rolls the respective check.
3. The results are compared to determine the outcome according to the Opposed Roll chart (see 1).
4. If the attack was a success, the Defender takes Stress damage as specified by the Attackers Specialty (which may result in a Snap).
5. On a Full or Critical Success, some attack Specialties may also trigger some special effects.



### PLAYER FACING ROLLS

It is highly recommended to provide all relevant information to the players, such that they can resolve their own attack all by themselves. This does not only lighten the burden of the GM (and thus speed up combat), it will also allow players to describe their actions as it plays out in great detail. Just have a bunch of post-its ready with the relevant stats on them and hand them out around as necessary. Bonus points if the player who puts down a NPC is allowed to tear apart the post it!

For important enemies, GMs may decide to keep the statistics hidden from the players to increase tension and uncertainty.

Sample NPC statistic:

- Name: Ork Boy
- PD: Endure(Athlete) [63, 37]
- MD: Selfishness(Betrayer) [32, 58]
- Resilience: 9

### SAMPLE ATTACK