

# Crunch Dial

Alternative Dice Mechanic for Neon Arcana

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## Dice Pool = Attribute + Skill

When you are solving a problem that is time sensitive, important and dramatic, the game master may call for a dice roll.

You assemble the dice pool by adding the appropriate attribute (such as Strength, Agility, Perception, Charisma or Willpower – *list to be decided later*) and the relevant skill. For starting characters both attributes and skills are in 0-4 range, but may go higher, with the average of 2.

But before you roll the dice, the **difficulty** and the **progress bar** of the task must be established. A task is declared as two numbers, such as 'two fives' or 'one three', where the first number is the progress bar and the second number is the difficulty.

## Task Difficulty

Task difficulty can be narrative or modular. Both can be used in the same game, based on the situation. These are two alternative ways to determine how difficult the task should be.

### Narrative Difficulty (Low Crunch)

For a narrative difficulty, the game master eyeballs your chances holistically, without looking into a detailed modifier breakdown.

You...	Difficulty
... are taking candy from a baby	1+
... are dominating this challenge	2+
... have the upper hand	3+
... brought the right tool for a tough job	4+
... are punching above your weight	5+
... are hopelessly outgunned	6+
... have no chance at all	Failed!

When using narrative difficulty, the game master may start the difficulty at 1+ and then adjust it up or down by one pip for each relevant circumstance (advantage or disadvantage).

### Modular Difficulty (High Crunch)

Modular difficulty allows you to factor in your gear, position, preparation and other advantages to the mission's objective and other situational modifiers to determine how difficult the task is for you.

1. Calculate your **performance rank**: your gear + augmentations + all the positive things you have going for you that apply.
2. Calculate your **task rank**: opponent's gear + environment + visibility + cover + alarm level + all the things that are going against you that apply.
3. Compare the two numbers.

Your performance rank is...	Difficulty
triple the task rank or more	1+
double the task rank or more	2+
greater than the task rank	3+
equals the task rank	4+
less than the task rank	5+
half the task rank or less	6+
one third of the task rank or less	Failed!

In most cases it will be simply the rank of the tool you're using (a bug scanner, a burner phone, a gun's lethality) vs the rank of whatever you're using it on (a hidden device, a call tracer, body armor). The default rank for someone who has no tools to deal with the situation is 2.

*You are returning fire at a couple of goons. They're wearing some body armor under their coats, as it turns out, so at this short range the lethality of your trusted sidearm and their vests' warranties are the only factors. Your gun's rank is 5, their vests are ranked 3 on the cheap armor scale. 5 > 3, but not twice over, so you will hit those guys on a 3+ (pronounced three plus, or three or higher). If the goons wore no armor, their rank would have been 2, and you would hit and deal damage on a 1+, since 5 > 2 twice over.*

## Progress Bar

Progress bar is like a bunch of hit points or check boxes. Each die that meets the difficulty of the task is called a hit, because it marks off a box. Once they're all filled, the problem is solved. If you don't complete the whole bar in one go, you need more time, but you don't (usually) fail outright.

*You are being chased along the rooftops and need to make a daring jump across a wide alley. You roll Strength + Athletics (6 dice), and you need 4 fives, per game master's eyeball. You roll and the dice come up 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6: you rolled only two. You caught onto the ledge and are now dangling from it, but at least you didn't fall. Climbing back up will cost you precious time, with two more fives to go.*

When assigning a difficulty and a progress bar to a task, the game master may consider how risky the task is and how many points of failure it has. Each point of failure would be represented by a hit box on the progress bar, while risk raises the stakes and increases the difficulty. The player's approach may factor in these considerations.

*Instead of jumping over the alley like you did, your pursuer decides to look for a safer way across, such as a plank or a fire escape. The game master decides that this makes her waste more time looking, but she finds a rusty looking ladder someone forgot on the roof. Placing it between buildings and then running across will be less dangerous, but slower than a running leap. Now she needs 6 fours instead of 4 fives, while you're getting away.*

## Sixes Rule

When you roll a 6, you can roll an extra die. If that die rolls another 6, roll another die, repeating until you get something other than a 6. This doesn't let you get a die higher than a six, but extra hits are nice when your odds aren't impossible.

## Ones Rule

When you roll a 1, you can spend it to make a fancy maneuver, like a grappling hold, a dramatic entrance or a head shot, or to activate a tag on your gear. Some maneuvers require you to also hit your target.

You can also spend it to cancel any of the above being done to you, 1 for 1. When you spend a 1, remove it from the dice pool (you get all your dice back at the beginning of your next turn).

## Glitches

If you roll no hits, you can spend a 1 to avoid a **glitch**.

A glitch is a complication that makes further progress unlikely or outright impossible. A glitch complicates the overall story, but pushes it forward: you might have to find another way to get what you want. The details of how sideways things get are up to the game master.

## Chases and Tug of War

Sometimes two or more characters are at direct odds with one another. It can be a race to the finish line, where the first one to complete their task is the victor, or it can be a situation where making progress also undermines your opponent, resetting their progress, playing dirty, cutting them off or tiring them out. In this latter case the game master may allow you to spend 1's to uncheck the hit boxes on the enemy's progress bar, 1 for 1.

## Stances

*Included for the big picture perspective*

You can assume one of four stances, and by default are in neutral stance. You can switch to a new stance when you roll initiative or on your turn, before you make any dice rolls.

**Neutral stance:** you have no bonuses or penalties.

**Defensive stance:** you have advantage 1 on defense and disadvantage 1 on everything else.

**Aggressive stance:** you have advantage 1 on attacks and disadvantage 1 on everything else.

**Focus stance:** you have advantage 1 on tasks with a specific skill and disadvantage 1 on everything else.