Bullet Dice

Alternative Dice Mechanic for Neon Arcana

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# Introduction

Think of each of your dice as a bullet. It will either find its mark or make a lot of noise.

When the die roll matches or exceeds the number you need to hit, it’s a hit. Otherwise it’s a miss.

# Attributes, Skills and Gear

For a starting character, attributes are in 0-4 range, skills are in 0-4 range. They have no upper limit, but they start here.

The average Joe Marino, the plump plumber, is ranked 2 in every attribute and 2 in plumbing. When he’s fixing your sink, his rank is 2 + 2 = 4. When he’s driving to work to fix your sink, his rank is 2, because he has no other skills. Don’t be like Joe, write roleplaying games.

Gear (tools, weapons, vehicles, augmentations) give you bonus dice: the dice improve the speed at which you can get things done. Without them an average person rolls just 1 die to do anything. It’s slow and often painful.

Poor Joe. He thought he could fix this without his tools.

Some things also have a rank, which they use passively when someone’s messing with them. Locks, armor, the leak in the sink that Joe was fixing, the couch you just ducked behind. It was a terrible idea, but here we are.

Some things just can’t be helped.

Boom.

# Rank and Progress Bar

When you have a problem, it has two things going for it: its rank and its progress bar. The rank says how tough it is to fix it, and the progress bar says how long it’ll take a professional (like Joe) to get it done.

A rank is an integer number between 0 (easy) and infinity (nope!). The progress bar is a similar number, but you can visualize as a line of boxes, and every time you roll a die high enough, you check off one or more of them. When all of them are checked off, the problem is solved.

It’s just like shooting a dragon in the face with a bazooka. Sure, a dragon is a big problem. You just have to bring the right tool for the job.

# Rolling Dice

Before you roll the dice to fix a problem, you need to consider its rank vs your rank. The game master will tell you the problem’s rank (it may change slightly based on circumstances and on your approach). Your rank is the sum of the relevant attribute and skill.

Comparing the two numbers, you can figure out what you need to roll on your dice to fill the problem’s progress bar. See the table below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Your rank is… | Hit on |
| three times as high as the problem rank | Fixed! |
| twice as high as the problem rank | @+ |
| greater than the problem rank | #+ |
| equals the problem rank | $+ |
| less than the problem rank | %+ |
| less than half the problem rank | ^+ |
| less than 1/3 of the problem rank | Failed! |

You roll 1 die + bonus dice based on the gear you use. Then you compare what they rolled against your ‘hit on’ number.

A die that matches this exactly is a hit. A die that exceeds it is a double hit, it checks off 2 boxes.

Before the explosion, Joe was fixing your sink. Sink’s leak is a rank 3 problem with 4 boxes. Joe’s Strength + plumbing rank is 4, which is greater than 3, so he needed#+ on his dice to make progress. He only had one die though, because he forgot his tools. He rolled a%, which is a double hit. The leak has two boxes on its progress bar left.

# Glitches

A glitch happens when you barely succeed at the attempted task, getting a single hit and nothing else. When this happens, the game master describes a new complication: like an alarm going off, your weapon running out of ammo or your brain implant overheating.

# Sixes Rule

When you roll a ^, you can roll an extra die. If that die rolls another ^, keep going recursively.

# Ones Rule

When you roll a !, you can spend it to make a special maneuver, like a grappling hold or a head shot, or to activate a tag on your gear. You can also spend it to cancel any of the above being done to you, ! for !.

# Defense Dice

Instead of fixing the real problem, you can allocate one (just one) of your dice to your own protection, choosing it after you roll. The value on that die adds to your defense rating, which is normally just your Strength + Armor. It lasts until your next turn.

# Progress Bar and You

If you are not part of the solution, you’re part of the problem.

You have a progress bar. In other games, they call them hit points. It’s how long it takes them to make you stop whatever it is you do, besides breathing, and that, too.

Add your Strength + Willpower. These are the hitboxes you really care about. There are not a lot of them.

Joe Marino had just 4. He did not see it coming.

# **Initiative**

When the chips are down, roll two dice for every person. One of these dice becomes their Defense Die, the other adds to their Perception + Agility rank to determine initiative order. Which die goes where is up to whoever controls the character. Break ties by rolling another die.

Go in order until they stop twitching.

# On Your Turn

You get one die. You get bonus dice depending on your gear and what you’re trying to do. Hardwired reflex boosters, vehicle interface rigs and full-auto assault rifles can pile on a ton of dice for you to use, but some are only good for specific kinds of actions.

For example, shooting at poor Joe is requires (Agility + Firearms) vs (his Strength + Armor). Hitting him with a baseball bat instead takes (Strength + Close Combat) vs (his Strength + Armor).

You can also move. Movement is free. You can move up to 10m + Agility on your turn. If your chosen action is running like hell, roll your dice (Strength + Athletics) vs (your wounds + your Armor, minimum @+), and each hit increases distance covered by 1m, in addition to 10m + Agility.

# Multitasking

If you want to do more than one thing at a time, you need to have the dice to do so. Compare the dice pools you would use if you made those tasks individually, then roll the dice of the biggest dice pool. Choose which dice count against which task (or target), but don’t assign X highest dice to the task with the smallest dice pool, where X is the difference between the two pools.

# Example Gear Porn

Not an exhaustive list, but just some examples. Gear has tags, some of which are active all the time, others can be activated by spending a !, and some are exclusive modes, only one of which can be active at a time.

## Gear Tags

**Airburst X:** explodes in a radius of X meters.

**Armor-Piercing X**: ignores X armor.

**Augmentation X**: increases your augmentation rank by X. Augmentation can be fractional.

**Burst-Fire**: this mode grants 2 extra dice to shooting.

***Dangerous***: on a glitch, you deal 1d6 damage to an unintended target or targets (game master’s choice).

**Full-Auto**: this mode grants 4 extra dice to shooting, but lowers your Attack rank by 2.

**Hot Sim**: in this mode, it grants 6 dice to use with the connected device, but you are exposed to dangerous biofeedback, which could deal double damage to you.

***Loud***: this weapon makes a lot of noise and can deafen you when used indoors.

**Messy**: when you deal damage, spend a ! to amputate a limb of choice. Spend !! to decapitate.

**Ranges**: can be close, near, far, artillery or worldwide. A device operates at a listed ranges. May experience lag based on distance.

**Reflex Boost X**: this augmentation grants you X dice for physical actions.

***Reliable***: spend a ! to cancel a glitch when using it.

**Semi-Automatic**: this mode grants 1 extra die to shooting and increases your Attack rank by 2.

**Single-Shot**: this mode increases your Attack rank by 4.

**Smartlink**: in this mode, it grants 1 die to actions related to the device you are connected with.

**Direct Neural Interface**: in this mode, it grants 2 dice to use with the connected device, and adds your Augmentation rank to all tasks related to the device, but exposes you to biofeedback.

# Gear

**AK-47 Assault Rifle**: semi-automatic, burst-fire, full-auto, reliable, loud.

**Bazooka**: single-shot, airburst 10, armor-piercing 5, dangerous, messy.

**Datajack**: smartlink, direct neural interface, augmentation 0.2, range: close.

**Cerebral Signal Booster**: hot sim, grants 1 die to any action, augmentation 1, range: close, near.

**Cyberarm**: smartlink, Strength +1, Armor +1, augmentation 1, range: close.

**Hardwired Reflexes X**: reflex boost X, augmentation X. When a person in close range is under attack, you can swap places with them and take the hit.

**Maglock Buster X**: handy device for bypassing magnetic locks, grants X dice for such attempts.

**Mono-line Whip**: messy, dangerous, range: close.

**Vehicle Interface Rig X:** grants X dice for connected vehicle actions, smartlink, ranges: close, near, far, artillery.

# Epilogue

Oh what happened to Joe? He was at the wrong place at the wrong time. The dragon got him. The same fat dragon in spiky body armor that stole you, princess. Damn that useless plumber…