

Collateral Damage

(insert bigass artwork)

Story by Isaac Sher

The dust cleared, and strewn before Team Athena was the flaming wreckage of the Aegis Cargo-Carrier.

As her T-Rex mecha struggled to its feet, Misty could barely focus on her cockpit's viewscreen. "K-Kenjiro? Oh no, please no -- Kenjiro, answer me!"

Layali bit her knuckles, her Wombat mecha's cockpit echoing with her labored breathing. "He blocked the missile swarm with the Aegis, Misty. We would be dead otherwise."

Miho shook her head. "What was he thinking? The Aegis isn't armored at all!" Her badger-mecha's claws scratching at the pavement, matching her rising anger.

Nnedi donned her visor, knocked loose from the last explosion. "He was thinking of us, Miho. He always said he wanted to be more of a help to us." Her oversized Panda mech lumbered to a standing position, surveying the ruins of the city.

From within a somber-hued avian mech, Bee's voice cracked over the radio. "But not like THAT! Damn you, Prince Galkar! You and your blasted Metal-Stalker are going to pay for this!"

The pilots' video screens fizzled, and were suddenly filled with the image of that same prince, his humanoid features resplendent in his purple skin, metallic gold mane of leonine hair, and eight spider-like eyes. "What's that Earth saying? 'Speak the devil's name and he shall appear?' Oh, but Team Athena, I'm here already, as your cowardly Kenjiro learned to his cost." The vain prince ran his six-fingered hand through his thick hair, reveling in the rush of his latest kill. "Luckily for you, I had to expend my entire supply of Swarmers to pull that off, but just sit tight and wait a moment, I'll be coming closer to finish you off, up close and oh-so personal. My newest Metal-Stalker is named 'Apex', and it has this lovely new chainsaw-saber, designed especially for you. I simply can't wait to test the blade's edge against your pathetic armor. GLORY TO THE STORM ARMADA! GLORY TO NEO-XERXES! HA HA HA--"

The pilots' viewscreens shifted suddenly to show Evelyn in Mission Control, adjusting her glasses. "I've jammed Galkar's transmission, team, but he'll be upon you in just a few moments. I have good news and... bad news."

Miho's voice was a snarl. "We just saw your fiancée DIE in front of us, and that's all you have to say? YOU HEARTLESS HARPY!"

Evelyn's jaw clenched. "...Yes. Yes I am. And that's the bad news. Kenjiro's dead. Sensors confirm it. He's gone. He's... gone." She looked up, her cold brown eyes churning with a barely restrained rage, and her voice dropped to a cold and almost mechanical monotone. "The good news is that the Neo-Xerxes missile Charge has cleared the field. There's nothing stopping you from initiating Prime Fusion, because any civilians that might've been endangered from the Fusion Shockwave have already evacuated, or... didn't." As her gaze flickered across the casualty and collateral damage estimates from Galkar's missile Charge, the ice in her voice cracked. "FORM ATHENA PRIME AND MURDER THAT BASTARD. That's an order, pilots!"

Nnedi swallowed loudly. "Omega clearance confirmed, mission control. Athena Prime matrix is initialized. Gold Panda, standing by. We love you, Kenjiro." She yanked back hard on the Fusion Throttle by her side, her clenched fists trembling.

Bee wiped away a tear. "Omega clearance confirmed. Black Phoenix, standing by. We never did get to go to the zoo together, Kenjiro. Damn it all..." Her Fusion Throttle pulled, Bee leaned forward, ready to burst into action.

Layali put her folded photograph, showing Kenjiro cooking at the team's barbeque party, back into her pocket. "Omega clearance confirmed. Red Wombat, standing by. I miss him already." Another Fusion Throttle activated, and the air around the team began to shudder as power built up among the five mecha.

Miho was practically grinding her teeth down to the gums. "Omega clearance confirmed. Blue Badger, standing by, and I'm going to freaking rip out their spines for what they just did to Kenjiro-kun." As her Throttle was pulled back, the whine of rising energy grew louder.

Misty closed her eyes and took a deep breath. "Omega clearance confirmed, Pink T-Rex ready to initiate Fusion Call. Kenjiro, I never got to say I'm sorry. I'm so, so sorry." With her team's eyes upon her, Misty looked up, and threw open the last Fusion Throttle with a savage pull. "ATHENA PRIME IS GO! STRIDE FORWARD, PRINCESS OF WAR! FOR KENJIRO!"

As the Fusion began, Prince Galkar's Apex crested the hill above the battlefield, eagerly awaiting its next command, a sleek blend of cybernetic chrome armor plate and glistening scaled flesh, forever obedient to the steel cockpit embedded in its chest. A malevolent knight of twisted honor, the myriad missile launchers on the Metal-Stalker's back and shoulders still trailed thin wisps of smoke.

Prince Galkar took in the scene from inside his armored cocoon, smiling as he saw the familiar silver-white shockwave burst from where those five mechanical beasts had stood only moments before. "This time will be different, Team Athena. This time, our long war ends at sunset, and I will bury you all with your meddling friend." His fearsome machine drew its gleaming Saw-Saber, and charged down the hill towards its destined enemy. "EN GARDE, ATHENA PRIME! TASTE THE STEEL OF NEO-XERXES!"

The final battle had begun.

SECTION: A New Pilot's Guide to Battle School

(insert bigass artwork)

Welcome to Battle School!

To our bright future pilots, we say: Welcome! This booklet is provided to all new Freshmen cadets of our illustrious academy in order to help you navigate your new life at the school. We know you're all roaring to get out onto the field and fight those aliens, but if you're going to have any hopes of succeeding in battle, you need to learn the basics. With this guide, we aim to get you trained and joined with your Team in the best way possible. You've got the hopes of the human race resting on your young and untrained shoulders, so let's get moving.

The future is in your hands, and in your hearts.

Notes from the Dean

This Game Is Not Simple

Dear Reader: Setting the thematic language aside for a moment, there is something important that I want to make clear before you turn another page. This is story-driven role-playing game, but it is not a simple one. There is an intentional complexity to the layers of strategy involved in its mechanics, strategies which can take multiple plays to really master. You will need to read it once through, from beginning to end, in order to best run it. Do not let the book's size mislead you: **This is not a pick-up-and-play game.**

If that hasn't immediately turned you away, then read on, as some explanation follows.

Throughout the development of *Gattaibushido:Fusion!*, I have struggled with my own internal conflicted design and player tastes. I am a huge fan of simplicity in play, such as the super-light Apocalypse Engine games as well as the myriad classic-inspired retro-clones that have become popular in recent years. I run and play those games quite frequently, and appreciate the ease of approach that they present.

My love for that style of design has weighed heavily on my brain while writing this game, so much that I began second-guessing myself with each and every new tactical decision I put into its core flow. With every new Tech, Chroma concept, and process change, my brain repeatedly nagged at me to not "break simplicity" - whatever the heck that is supposed to mean. Core components that I had initially loved were suddenly being doubted, and many rewrites and triple-takes followed. For a while, the results were a conflicted mess that I was increasingly dismayed with.

So I decided to kill those nags, scrap all the mess, and just "do it my way." In the end, I chose to focus on making a game that leans heavily on both narrative and technical strategy. Simplicity was partially sacrificed in favor of "layered complexity" mechanics that could blossom on their own. There are multiple layers to this system, and there is great opportunity for mastery over time.

Just like this system's predecessor **Motobushido**, you'll find that there is more here to master than meets the eye. I must again urge you to read the book through at least once in order to grasp the concepts. Hopefully I have presented it in a way that makes it both an enjoyable and educational initial read. It isn't a simple game, but with mastery it can be both fast, rewarding, and incredibly fun.

TL;DR: This game is not simple to pick up and play, but it is hopefully fun to learn, and exciting to run, and rewarding to master.

For those of you looking forward to the challenge, I say: *Stride Forward, Princess of War!*

- N. Phillip Cole, 2020

Using this Book

Dear Reader: I wrote this book with an intentional format that favored educating the new reader on the processes of play. Unlike more mainstream RPG texts, this one is designed more as a guide book than as a reference manual. I have already said this twice in the preceding text, but there is still value in repeating: this text will serve you best if you read at least once from beginning to end, then refer back to relevant sections as you need after play begins.

What Almost Wasn't

Gattaibushido began its existence at the end of a very exciting and awesome time in my life. I was riding an inspirational high from *Motobushido*, which I had always planned to branch off into two more companion games. *Gattai* was the first one that I started work on, due in no small part to my deep immersion in team-based mecha anime at that time. The Kickstarter was an uplifting success, and I even got a playtest version out on the same day that Netflix released its new *Voltron* remake. Life was great.

Very soon after, life took some not-great-at-all turns. The details of those turns are not for this space, but suffice it to say that I was fighting my own Big Giant Monsters, and most of them were hellish beasts that no one could see. Life changed drastically for me, and there were a couple of years where I just didn't feel myself at all. But things were finally starting to turn around, with revived excitement and pride in my work once more... and then 2020 happened.

Insert pause. Inhale. Scream. Pause again. Inhale. Exhale. Pause. Okay. Continue.

I write this note now in the final days of this damned year, excited to finally be pushing this game into a tangible format that others can appreciate. Thank you, thank you, thank you to every person who stuck by and kept faith in me, both as a writer and as a friend. You made The Things worth Doing, for me. I want you all to know that you are loved.

-NPC

On Terms and Pronouns

When this text refers to "players" it includes *all* those at the table who are involved in the game, Coach and Pilots alike. For purposes of clarity, when rules are meant to refer only to Coach or the Pilots, they will use those specific terms. The term "Pilot" is often used to reference both the Pilot characters *and* their players, but *never* Coach.

This game welcomes players of all varieties of genders (and lack thereof). For sake of both instructional distinction and non-English translations, specific pronouns have been chosen in the actual game text. These pronouns are used entirely for clarity of text, and the choice of assignment is specifically inspired by several media on the list of inspirations in the section below. The pronouns "she" and "they" are used interchangeably within the text in all cases of reference to the Pilots and their players. The pronoun "he" is used in all references to Coach.

Sources of Inspiration

The following media provided *immense* amounts of inspiration for the conception and further development of this game. Give them a look to help get into the Gattai frame of mind!

- Babymetal (music)
- Chroma Squad (video game)
- Dai-Guard (animation)
- genLOCK (animation)
- Gunbuster (animation)
- The Magnificent Kotobuki (animation)
- Majestic Prince (animation)
- MOSH (music)

- Pacific Rim (movies & animation)
- Perfume (music)
- RWBY (animation, but the music is awesome too)
- She-Ra and the Princesses of Power (animation)
- Steven Universe (animation)
- Vandread (animation)
- Voltron (animation & comics)

Final Note: This is Your World, and Your Story

The setting of this game is intentionally low on details. I want groups to come up with their *own* world stories, and then tell me about them. Much like *Motobushido* had a loosely-implied post-apocalyptic theme, *Gattaibushido* has a basic "Earth vs the Space Monsters!" theme to it that the players are encouraged to take in whatever direction they choose.

The only constants are: Battle School, Chroma-Themed Mecha Pilots, Transforming-and-Combining Robots, and Big Giant Monsters. And heck, even those can be defined however you wish. Maybe your "school" is a corporate proving arena, maybe your "pilots" are sleeve-jacked body-hopping trans-human consciousness clones, maybe your "robots" are violent crystalline manifestations of teenage angst, and maybe your "monsters" are a metaphor for the psychological trauma of a war no one wants to acknowledge. It's all up to you.

School Supplies

Before you start your first day of class, make sure you have the basic supplies!

- **A Team of Cadets** are the focus of this game, so ideally you'll want to recruit four to six more of your friends to enlist alongside you. Smaller groups are always welcome too, so don't despair!
- **Pencils and Paper** are the required core tools of every student in Battle School, and you will make heavy use of them here. Some Freshmen might think they can skate by relying entirely on digital assistants. We acknowledge both the usefulness of having those tools available, and the impact they have had on the advancement of battle technology. But when they eventually suffer a glitch and the Meta-Skein crashes, you'll be glad you learned to use the good ol' tried-and-true "analog" methods first.
- **Playing Cards** are absolutely necessary for play, and every class will need *two* separate decks - one for the Pilots, and one for Coach. While some students may find other "after hours" uses for these cards, Battle School officially does not condone student gambling.
- **Tokens or counters** of different colors will be useful for tracking the fluctuating levels of damage that you and your Team will experience during play.
- **Index cards** can be super useful for placing both Factions and Locations out on the playing table.
- **Pilot Playbooks** should be printed out in advance so you can each easily choose your team roles and first year curriculum (aka "character creation"). Your playbook contains all the important syllabus data to get a new Pilot oriented quickly.
- **Pilot Record Sheets** allow you to keep detailed ongoing notes of your stats, abilities, skills, and class grades. Be careful now, as these are your permanent records. The Battle School faculty enforces harsh punishments upon those who cheat their records, so don't even think about it.
- The **Team Harmony Tracker** is required to keep up-to-date stats on your teammates' harmonic frequencies with each other. Put one of these on the table for everyone to see.

The Seven Rules of School

The rules and restrictions of Battle School life are many and varied (and sometimes, dare say, *unusual*), but underneath and overruling them all are these core tenets, which we call The Seven Rules. Commit them to heart and you will thrive as a student!

1. **If you Play it, you must Say it.** The cards are subordinate to the story. If you Play, Draw, Discard, or otherwise interact with a card in any way, you *must* provide suitable in-game narration of such.
2. **Don't Ask It; Do It.** - If you want your Pilot to do something in the story, don't ask Coach or the other players if you "can" do it. Say what you are going to do, and see if anyone challenges you. Take the initiative, and keep the conversation moving!
3. **There are *no* Take-Backs.** If you put a card down, it's down, regardless of its source and/or facing. Think before you play. Coach is *not* above this rule, either!
4. **Card Ranks beat Card Suits.** A King of Clubs beats a Ten of Hearts beats a Seven of Spades. It pays to keep a variety of ranks in your hand to cover all options.
5. **Card Suits break ties.** Seven of Spades beats a Seven of Clubs. Spades > Hearts > Diamonds > Clubs (Remember: Reverse Alphabetical Order). This is specifically crucial for the *Block* action during conflicts.
6. **One Conflict Per Conflict.** In other words: no cheese-train conflict sequences in this game. If a card-play conflict fails to fully accomplish what you want from the moment, you cannot immediately start a new one to try it again. You must step back, reassess, and come up with a new approach. If that leads to a nearly identical conflict in a follow-up scene, that's fine, but no immediate re-tests should be allowed without a significant change to the story's current environmental and narrative parameters.
7. **Explicit Card-Talk is Prohibited.** Players can not reveal or directly discuss the contents of their Hands with each other, unless in-game mechanics (namely Techs) explicitly state otherwise. You must instead talk strategy in-game, as your characters, and not meta-game the conflicts with cheaty card-talk. See rule #1.

Freshman Orientation: An Overview of Student Tenancy

This section is meant to give you a wide-view look into everything that is expected to happen during your tenancy as a Battle School student. Don't worry if some of the advanced terms aren't familiar to you yet - you can always look those up in specific detail in the Glossary (p. XX) and then come back to keep reading.

On your first day of school lessons, you will get to meet your new "**Coach**". Coach puts all the materials together and leads the proceedings during both your training sessions and your actual battle missions. Coach is responsible for guiding the events and keeping your Team focused on their goals.

The rest of you "**Pilots**" will explore the story and missions as presented by Coach. *You* are responsible for driving the story forward in pursuit of your various agendas, both personal and team-focused. Oftentimes those agendas will clash with one another - since you're all likely very passionate youths, this conflict is entirely expected! Learning to balance your personal life with your devotion to Battle is a strong focus of this School's training. More often still, you will face direct opposition from space monsters and other dangerous threats, the likes of which you must dedicate your lives to fighting in order to safeguard Humanity's future.

Coach

Coach fills the "game master" role. He sets everything up, manages proceedings, and guides the flow of play. Coach is largely (but *not* exclusively) responsible for introducing story components and pushing along the narrative and events in a way that make for an exciting session of play. Coach is in charge of introducing all of the other non-Pilot story characters that populate the world: school faculty, government agents, scared citizens, rival classmates, and so on. Coach also manages the Factions, Threats, and Big Giant Monsters that the players heavily interact with through play.

Coach's role is a lot more complicated than the individual Pilots' roles, so to make things easier he actually has much simpler mechanics to manage. While the Pilots have a tight structure of multi-tiered abilities and stats, most of Coach's mechanics have exactly one solitary stat each, and much simpler arrays of enhancements.

The Pilots

The Pilots are the core focus of every game. This is the story of their lives and times, their dramas and sorrows, their wins and losses. They must balance the stresses of their schooling and social lives while also pulling together to save the world from invading space monsters.

On the Pilot's Record Sheets are a handful of core game components that you should know about. First are the **Commitments**, this game's version of "attributes." Each Pilot has three core Commitments that frequently come into conflict with one another: **to the Team**, **to the Fight**, and **to the Future**. Each of these in turn is divided into two balanced **Stats**, representing dichotomies within the Pilot's life as a heroic mecha jockey. The numerical ratings of these six stats determine the base mechanics for every extended Pilot-facing game component.

Each Pilot also has three special empowering tools at her disposal: her **Chroma**, her **Daisho**, and her personal **Robo**. A Pilot's Chroma both sets the color of her outfit and defines the greater role that she plays in her team. Functioning similarly to a "character class," Chromas provide unique mechanical **Techs** and extended role-playing inspiration. A Pilot's Daisho is that singular awesome tool she is most known for using in combat. Daisho start with a basic form and function (and associated Techs), and can grow mightily over time. A Pilot's Robo is the badass giant mecha that she pilots in the field against the invading monsters. Robos each come in different forms, and give their Pilots even more cool powers to use while in the cockpit. Oh, and they can also merge their Robos together for even more power! More on this in a bit.

Pilots have access to a couple of expendable resources called **Buffers** and **Charges**. Buffers are their reserves of ability to resist the different types of pain, suffering, and damage thrown at them during play. Charges are constantly-fluctuating pools of energy that let them empower the various Techs gifted them by their Chromas, Daisho, and Robos.

Speaking of damage, the world out there is full of many dangerous entities, all of which can bring harm to the Pilots, their allies, and the places they are trying their best to protect! To resolve this, the game uses codified events known as **Subroutines** which activate via **./Triggers** of different natures. A lot of these happen in the background, so for now, just know that it's not going to be an easy fight, and you need to be careful out there!

Over time, as the Pilots experience conflicts, victories, and losses, they will learn from their trials and hone their abilities. By acquiring **Lessons** and subsequently learning from them, they convert those Lessons into **Evolutions** which allow them to both increase their existing powers, and acquire new ones as well.

Additionally, sitting central between all of the Pilots at the table is another gauge called **Harmony** that affects the *whole team* as one unit. Harmony is a 7-step gauge that determines how strong the Pilots' "team spirit" is at any one time. The higher their collective Harmony, the better they will be at pursuing their goals and eventually combining into their **Final Form**. Pilots who stress themselves out can lower this Harmony and damage the team spirit, so you need to make sure and find time for self-care.

The Pilots' Team itself is also a greater unit of play, with its own stats and mechanics. The Team begins play with its own special Base of Operations, which starts with three core **Locations**: the **Barracks**, the **Bunker**, and the **Hangar**. These Locations in turn provide three special **Resources** that the whole Team can draw from, and must manage throughout their adventures: the **Fan Club**, the **Armory**, and the **Pit Crew**. These Resources connect directly to the Pilots' own core Commitments and extended tools, both empowering and limiting them in turns. During the course of their missions, Pilots will frequently visit other Locations too, each with its own unique game-affecting boon that the Pilots can receive while exploring there.

Finally, the team can equip themselves with extended load-outs of **Gear**. These special tools and weapons can give them minor (but sometimes crucial!) boons in the field. As the team gains more experience, they can unlock more equipment options, too!

Time and Immediacy

All of play will take place inside of **Scenes** and **Conflicts**. A "Scene" is essentially defined as "people doing a thing at a place at a time." It's an extremely loose system of narrative structure, and its scope is largely up to Coach's determination. Scenes are often punctuated by "Conflicts" wherein the Pilots' abilities are tested against nature, chance, monsters, or even each other!

It is very important for each mission in the game to be underscored by a growing feeling of "pressing urgency." The enemy is forever marching toward the completion of its nefarious goals, bringing humanity ever closer to the brink of disaster. While there may be many situations in which the Pilots desperately need to lay low and recover, the enemy never waits. Balancing needs of rest with the immediacy of the looming Threat is a major aspect of play. To assist Coach in incorporating this urgency into the ongoing narrative, the game provides a mechanical way to ramp up the tension via the **Crisis** track.

The Cards

All aspects of mechanical concern are resolved by "plays" and "draws" from two separate Decks of playing cards. The Pilots get a single Deck that they collectively play from as a team, and Coach gets another Deck all of his own. Unless explicitly told otherwise, the Pilots *never* touch or play the cards from Coach's Deck, and vice-versa.

Card Conflicts

The players will experience three core types of conflict, each of which involves the playing of cards. **Gambits** are the first and simplest, designed as quick question-resolvers that mainly serve to inspire unexpected outcomes for immediate minor story concerns. **Throwdowns** are the larger fights and dramatic clashes that can involve the entire Team playing complex card combos back and forth across the table. Finally, **Rumbles** are the "end-stage" fights that push Throwdowns even further, where the assembled mega-robotic Final Form goes head-to-head against a horrible space monster!

Number Cards

The number cards serve as the primary tools of action and conflict resolution in the game. Each numbered card has a visible number (aka its "rank") on its front side. Ten (10) is the highest, while Two (2) is the lowest. Playing number cards against each other is how all mechanical conflicts in *Gattaibushido* are ultimately resolved.

Face Cards

The "Face" cards - Jacks, Queens, and Kings - are treated as number cards with ranked values of 11, 12, and 13, respectively. Some additional effects and Techs use Face cards specifically (such as Coach's Threat actions), making them extra important in certain situations.

Aces

Aces are super special ultra-powerful cards with a ranked value of 14 - the highest-value card in the game! While this sounds awesome, they also have one eensy weensy little weakness: Twos. Twos always beat aces!

Jokers

Each Deck includes *two* Joker cards (for a combined total of *four* Jokers at the table), which serve as special Pacing and Crisis intensifiers. Jokers are shuffled into the Deck *face-up*. When a Joker is revealed at the top of the Pilots' or Coach's Deck, they trigger **Omens**. These can favor the Pilots or work against them, depending on how they are used in the story.

Factions, Threats, and BGMs

The Pilots will interact with many "non-player" characters throughout their missions, but the three types that matter most are **Factions**, **Threats**, and **Big Giant Monsters**.

Factions are any kind of neutral or friendly force in the game that has motivation and agency within the scenario's story. Factions are meant to be courted by the Pilots, who can gain favor with them and invest external power in them for later use.

Threats are any forces that primarily exist as a danger or opposition to the Pilots and their goals. These can be school bullies, oppressive military regimes, crazed space cults, infectious zombie parasites, raging void storms, dangerous natural environments, and yes even:

Big Giant Monsters! These are special "advanced" Threats that have the power to destroy great numbers of lives and cause trillions of Space-Dollars worth of destruction. BGMs are so powerful that the best (and only?) hope of defeating them is for the Pilots to get over their interpersonal squabbles and work together in that special way only they can do: Fusion!

(SIDEBAR: Minimum Take-Aways, aka the "Power Three")

If the great download of data in this intro section seems like a lot to take in all at once, don't worry. As mentioned before, I encourage you to read this book in its entirety at least once. This is especially advised if you have a lot of experience with more traditional RPGs before coming to this one, because you will probably already have a lot of prior assumptions of play that need to be recalibrated.

If there is a bare minimum that you need to remember at this point in your reading, it's these three things, which I call the "**Power Three**":

- The cards are the main tools for conflict resolution, and knowing how they interact is crucial. Card rules begin on p. XX.
- Your Pilot's Commitments set the base variables for all aspects of card-play. Commitment rules begin on p. XX.
- Your Team Harmony sets the limits for all aspects of your combined Robos' "Final Form" experience. Harmony rules begin on p. XX.

If the greater whole of the rules feels overwhelming right now, then focus on learning the above three things initially, and in that order. You don't need to rush forward and master them just yet, but just use them as a foundation for learning all the rest that this game system offers.

A Day at the School: Session Flow

Each session of play follows a basic flow:

1. Session Setup
2. Team Salute
3. Briefing
4. Story and Play
5. Debriefing
6. Session Breakdown

(SIDEBAR: The First Contact Session)

For your very first time playing *Gattaibushido:FUSION!*, I **strongly** advise that you initially ignore the session flow here and instead start with the **First Contact** scenario (detailed in Coach's rules, p. XX). Afterward, conclude the session with the full-table character creation process (p. XX). First Contact is designed to serve as both a hands-on tutorial to the game's core mechanics and an interactive "Session Zero" collaborative world-building experience. While not *required* to play the game, it can be invaluable for both new players and new campaigns alike.

1. Session Setup

First create the play space for the session. Procure two decks of standard playing cards - one for Coach to use alone, the other for the Pilots to share. Remove the Jokers for now, then shuffle both decks.

Set out character sheets, the Harmony tracker, and enough pencils and scratch paper for everyone to use. Keep some blank index cards ready at hand, for use as Factions and Locations. If you are so equipped, set out some different-colored tokens where everyone can reach them.

If this is not your first session, then you may likely have some Factions and Locations already active from the last session. Be sure to set those back out so you can continue where you left off. Don't forget about the Barracks, Bunker, and Hangar!

Update Team Resources (New Scenarios Only)

If this session features the start of a new adventure Scenario, you'll need to update the Team's Resources.

If you are kicking off a whole new team of Pilots in a brand new scenario, then their initial Harmony, Armory, Fan Club, and Pit Crew ratings will all be determined by the Team Creation process. Do not apply any of the Playbooks' *recurring* modifiers to the first Scenario.

For the second Scenario and beyond, then the group's prior Resource levels will carry forward, albeit with potential changes based on the passage of time between Scenarios.

Harmony: At the beginning of each new Scenario after the first, Coach may choose to alter your Harmony rank from last time. This may be due to specifications written into the scenario itself, or due to "off screen" events that occur between missions. Additionally, some Playbooks will affect Harmony each time a new Scenario begins.

If the team's Harmony is below Green at the start of a new Scenario, each Pilot must name one thing that the others have recently done to piss her off (the lower the Harmony, the greater the offense). Conversely, if the team's Harmony is somehow *above* Green, each Pilot must state one thing that's super awesome in her life, awesome enough that it could make the others jealous. These can be previous in-game events that she hasn't gotten over, or even whole new off-screen things that happened between sessions, mentioned at the game now for the first time ever. This is a prime moment to sow the seeds for some juicy intra-team conflicts!

Armory, Fan Club, Pit Crew: As with Harmony, some Playbooks have recurring modifiers that may adjust these Resources between missions. Apply them to the running totals *only* at the start of the *first* session of each new Scenario.

In all of the above cases, any initial Scenario reductions that would push a Resource below its minimum (Red for Harmony, or Zero for the others) are ignored.

Draw Starting Hands and Finalize the Decks

Now the Pilots' each draw their starting Hands of cards, as detailed on their Pilot Sheets. Some characters will have special modifiers that increase this, as well. Coach also deals himself a starting Hand equal to the number of Pilot Players present in the game session.

After this is done, both sides shuffle the Jokers back into their Decks, face-up. The Decks are now prepared for play.

2. Team Salute

Kicking off the game with a proper team salute is a crucial part of every session. The typical salute starts with all of the players first standing up around the gaming table. Coach then puts forth his hand, face-down, and the other players then follow suit, stacking their hands atop each other until all are joined up. Then as one, they throw their hands up and yell "Go Team!"

If your team's Harmony is particularly low this session, and you are playing with a group of close friends who really get into a certain extra depth in their shared role-playing experiences, I encourage you to get started role-playing right now by letting that low spirit show in how you salute. Try frowning, scowling, acting out of sync or erratically, or even just plain flipping everyone off. Likewise, if you are particularly high in Harmony, let your Team Spirit show here by leading the cheer and making it extra special!

Each group is encouraged to customize their own salute by changing up the motion, adding a different shout, or trying out some other modification, including an entirely different salute altogether!

3. Briefing

If this is the first of a new scenario, Coach kicks off the story with a quick Briefing, detailing the current state of affairs with the Pilots' lives, and the status of their overall fight against The Enemy.

If this is another session in an ongoing Scenario, then Coach instead recaps the previous session's events, delegating some or all of the recollection to the other players as he sees fit. Role-playing these retellings as your Pilots can really help get everyone deeper into their characters.

4. Story and Play

The majority of actual game play happens during this stage of the session. The Pilots work both separately and together to pursue their agendas in the story, overcoming challenges both personal and grand in scale. The group plays through a continuous sequence of story and action scenes until Coach brings things to a suitable stopping point.

5. Debriefing

Once Coach closes the session's play, it's time to quickly recap the events of the session as a group, so everyone is caught up to the state of the story affairs as they are being left for the time being. All post-session mechanics occur now, including any end-of-session/scenario character analyses, alterations, and evolutions. If this marks the completion of the current scenario as well, then Coach runs the group through an epilogue of the events thus far, and closes out by grading the Team's performance via their "final score."

6. Session Breakdown

Once all play and story wrap-up is complete, pack up all the materials and store them handily for next time.

Factions: If this is an ongoing scenario, keep any existing-and-invested Factions as they are currently, using baggies, paper clips, or other such simple storage to keep their current cards invested. This way, the next time you meet you can put them back into play exactly as they were without having to dig cards out of the Deck.

Choosing Your Courses: Character Creation

Now that you have acquired the requisite school materials and reviewed the courses available, it's time to register for your classes and meet your future teammates! If this is your first meeting with your fellow cohort, then you are likely going to be dedicating an entire evening to the registration and orientation process. We have specifically built our orientation process around rapid acceleration of new cadets to a foundation of efficient realization of potential. When you are ready to begin, open the doors and step into your new future!

The Orientation Process

1. First Contact
2. Catching Up with the World
3. Choosing Playbooks

4. Rounding Out the Team

(SIDEBAR: It's a Whole-Group Process)

The Pilot Creation process works best when the entire group builds everything out cooperatively. Try to play off each other's ideas, and collectively establish what they know about each other. The goal here is for everyone to be involved in *each* character's creation story. When done, your fellow players should know your new Pilot almost as well as you do, and you theirs.

Step 1: The First Contact Scene

Welcome to Orientation, Freshmen! Before we begin with the official proceedings, let's all take a moment to remember those who have come before us, without whose sacrifices we would not be able to carry on the fight today...

If this is a brand new campaign with a brand new team of Pilots, then you should first play through the "First Contact" tutorial and world establishment scene. It is extremely useful not just for teaching new players the core basics of the rules system, but also for setting up extended details on your group's own personalized campaign world-story. The full details on the First Contact scene are detailed in their own chapter in Coach's section of the rules (p. XX).

Step 2: Catching Up with the World

Please sit back and enjoy this interactive educational program, detailing the challenges that our Battle School faces in this modern world. You know about the Enemy, and you clearly wish to fight it. But first, it's crucial that your class understands exactly *why* we are fighting.

This team creation process assumes that the new characters are a group of fresh young Battle School mecha Pilots living as legacy to the events played out in the First Contact scene. Your group's game world may differ somewhat due to the unique parameters set forth in your own First Contact, but the process here should not be that heavily impacted by divergent story origins. Once you play the First Contact to a suitable conclusion, it's time to fill in the gaps between then and the "present" day in which the rest of the extended game will take place.

How Long has Passed?

Discussing as a group, figure out how much time has passed since the First Contact scene's events. Five years? A hundred? Only a few days? Figure out together what has changed in the world since then, and how the "Battle School" fits into the story today.

Along with the passing of time, you should establish how far removed the new Pilots are from the First Contact characters. Are any of those original characters still alive? Are any of them still in the group today, even? Are they teachers and mentors, or pariahs and cautionary stories? Are they nothing more than legends of the distant past, or do they still interact with the group today on a regular basis?

(SIDEBAR: No Battle School?)

In much of the inspirational sources, the idea of a Battle School serves a special purpose in the fiction. The elite military academy, which only trains the most gifted and troublesome of young candidates,

provides an initial educational setting for the the would-be heroes-in-training to come together and learn about their roles in "The War." Throughout their formative training they develop lasting relationships with one another, while the viewing audience discovers the intricacies of the story's world.

But the School isn't a hard requisite in the source material, nor should it be in every game of *Gattaibushido*. It's possible that the idea of an organized "Battle School" might not even make sense in the world you have built. This can happen when your group has really gone "out there" (and wonderfully so!) with the world-building in your First Contact scene.

This is totally fine! In such cases, I recommend that your group takes time during the Team creation process to come up with a suitable alternative for the structure that the "Battle School" provides in the assumed narrative. Just to crib some ideas from other stories that have inspired this game, your world might instead have:

- a conscripted militia where those with "the gift" are forced to fight.
- a mercenary base where discarded child soldiers have a new chance at life.
- an entirely digital online game where the cadets are trained by a harsh yet well-meaning AI.
- a rustic household where the heroes live because there's just no one else like them in the whole world.
- a traveling carnival that takes in "freaks" and trains them to fight the monsters that only they can see.

How are Your Robos Summoned?

If you haven't already established this fact, now is the time to do so. How does the team call their Robos into a fight? Below are some examples from our playtest games:

- The Robos are manually dispatched from their orbital hangar base, and the Pilots must be physically present there to launch them.
- The Robos are delivered along a vast network of underground tunnels, bursting from the ground at their destination when the Pilots call them from the field.
- The Robos are direct physical manifestations of the Pilots' own psyches, and spring forth on the spot from power crystals the Pilots each carry with them.
- The Robos are great bio-organic beasts which accompany the Pilots everywhere, and the Pilots *ride* them.
- The Robos are *actually the Pilots themselves* who grow to gargantuan shapes and sizes when they get angry!

This is primarily a matter of thematic choice, especially if you're wishing to emulate the setup of one of your favorite shows. Either way, everyone can still take part in Rumbles, and the rules regarding those play modes do not change.

Step 3: Choosing and Filling Out the Playbooks

Next, you need to choose which of our predesigned majors is best suited to your individual skillset. Please join the rest of your fellow cadets in this interactive aptitude test, and see what your future holds.

Coach will print out and lay forward the character playbooks for everyone to see and discuss. The group should look them over, read some of their details aloud, and discuss together who is most interested in which. Each Pilot player must choose one Playbook as their own, and no two players are allowed to take the same one.

Your Playbook is a color-themed character booklet that will guide you through a series of choices to make about your Pilot, as well as a few choices that you get to make about the *other* Pilots, and even a few that *they* get to make about *you*. Each is crafted to fill a specific role in the team, with assigned uniform colors inspired by (but not subservient to) genre media from the game's previously-mentioned sources of inspiration.

The core Pilot Playbooks are:

- **Black:** The Wild Card (beloved reaper, abundant void)
- **Blue:** The Brains (strategist, mastermind, all-around smart lady)
- **Green:** The Noob (only direction is up, without limit)
- **Orange:** The Otaku (hyper-focus to the max)
- **Pink:** The Heart of the Team (right there, on the sleeve, for all to see)
- **Purple:** The Rebel (she'll prove you wrong, mark her words)
- **Red:** The Captain (the hero she deserves to be)
- **Yellow:** The Tank (endurance, perseverance, dominance)

There are a number of additional advanced playbooks available as well, but their complexity can be overwhelming for new Battle School students. Ask Coach if these are right for you!

(SIDEBAR: Advanced Pilot Creation)

The playbook choices were curated to create thematically-appropriate Pilots inspired by the fiction of this game's inspirational sources. However, I fully recognize that what I find most appropriate may not match everyone else's expectations. If your Coach is open to the idea and your group is looking for a more customized approach to Team creation, flip over to the Syllabus section starting on p. XX for the extended details on all of the available character options.

The character creation process is the same as described herein. The main difference would be that you will have a lot more choices to consider when building your abilities. You will still use the base Playbooks to choose your initial Chroma and answer the extended Team questions, but your Daisho, Robo, and other mechanical choices can be taken from among the entire catalog, instead of the more targeted offerings in the Playbook.

First Red and Green

However, before you all leap up and grab at them, there are two specific playbooks that should be explained first: Red (the Captain) and Green (the Noob). These playbooks have core story-structure requirements that must be considered before you go further.

Every team needs a Captain. As far as the playbooks are concerned, that job is Red's. Red is a required role for every new game, and the player who chooses the playbook must be prepared *and eager* to try and lead the Team. Red works best when she is guided by a player that really wishes to role-play both the actions and the burdens of command.

Green, on the other hand, is not a required role for a new game, but she does have noteworthy built-in rank-based role-playing requirements. Green is the Noob, the most junior member on the team's roster. The Team will likely assign her the most demeaning of duties, and she'll often end up a scapegoat for the failures of others. Her player must be willing and excited about playing out that complete entry-level experience, because that's what makes her truly excel in the end.

Then Everyone Else

Once a player has chosen the Red playbook, let the others pick as they will. After each Pilot player has chosen a playbook, put the unused ones away. You should now go through the playbooks' instructions step-by-step as a team. Many of them will involve other players at the table, and they work best if everyone moves through them at the same pace.

Everyone should take care to note down all of their derived numbers, like Hand Size, Buffers, Charges, and so on. Instructions on these are included in your playbooks.

(SIDEBAR: Chromas, Daisho, and Robos)

Your playbook gives you a number of creative options for your Pilot, and the three main sources of power on there are your Chroma, your Daisho, and your Robo. Each of these aspects gives you a number of cool in-game abilities, but they do so in very different ways.

Your Pilot's *Chroma* provides the main bulk of your power and versatility. Her Chroma Techs are your core tools for empowerment, both in and out of the mecha cockpits.

Her custom *Daisho* also provides Techs, but they are intended to be minor extensions of ability. These can be used to either enhance your base Chroma Techs, or instead diversify your skills and keep you from being an overly-specialized one-trick pony.

Finally, your *Robo* mainly serves as an extension of your Pilot's core persona. While it provides some minor thematic abilities, it's primary purpose is as a vessel for Rumbles and the Final Form.

Step 4: Rounding Out the Team

With your courses finalized, all you have left to do is sign here, here, and here, confirming your commitment to Battle School. Welcome to the class, cadet!

There are only a few final things required to complete the creation of your Team.

Personal Story Questions

The final steps of the Playbooks reference this table of quick-draw random story questions. You can pick three that you like, or draw from your deck, or mix and match. If you choose to draw, this is the one time in the game that you may want to shuffle the Jokers in face-down.

1. What is the favorite snack you keep inside your cockpit?
2. Where did you grow up? How would you describe your "social origin?"
3. What do you personally feel truly sets you apart from the other Pilots?
4. Why did you defect from the Enemy and join the Pilots to help humanity?
5. What is your mantra for when you "go under" and sync? Maybe an old childhood rhyme or song?

6. What is the video game that you all play together? Who on the Team is best at it?
7. Where do you and your best friend always meet to make amends after you get into a fight?
8. What was the name of the girl who left basic training before graduation? How were you involved in her departure?
9. What do your parents think of your combat service?
10. What is the most pancakes you've eaten in one sitting?
11. Who first taught you to drive (or swim, pilot, fly, etc)?
12. How does Fusion feel to you? What emotions do you express or feel during the process?
13. Who is your favorite manga hero, and why?
14. What happened the first time you got in trouble with the authorities?
15. When was the last time you gave a heartfelt apology? Why?
16. What childhood nickname do you despise, and do your best to keep secret from the other Pilots?
17. What one dish do you cook better than any others?
18. What is your favorite class at Battle School?
19. When was the last time you wore your favorite formal dress? What was the occasion?
20. What is your favorite three-letter word?
21. What is your favorite seven-letter word?
22. What word do you find yourself over-using?
23. What is your biggest "guilty pleasure?"
24. What is the most impressive combat maneuver you've ever pulled off in your Robo?
25. What is your favorite alien food, if any?
26. What is your deepest (not necessarily darkest) secret? Does anyone else on the Team know it?
27. Which teammate do you secretly look up to the most?
28. What one song can always cheer you up no matter what mood you're in?
29. What is the most back-handed compliment you've ever received?
30. What is your favorite carnival attraction or ride?
31. Which one member of your Fan Club do you just hate being around?
32. Have you ever been in love? What does that mean to you?
33. When was the last time you hugged your Mother?
34. What was the worst sickness you've ever had?
35. What jumpsuit color did you hope to get on the team, and why? Did you get it?
36. What is the biggest fuck-up you've ever caused for the Team?
37. Who is your favorite member of the Pit Crew?
38. What was the most interesting merit badge you acquired back in SpaceKid Scouts?
39. What is your weird stupid party trick that you wish everyone would stop asking you to do?
40. Where is your birthmark, and what does it resemble?
41. What is, to you, the worst thing that the invasion has done to the world?
42. What is a thing that you collect? Why? Does the team know?
43. Which of the others do you secretly have a crush on?
44. What rules are meant to be broken? Under what circumstances?
45. What is your most treasured memento from home?
46. What is your favorite mythological creature and why?
47. What is the worst thing you've ever done in pursuit of a personal victory?
48. Would you consider yourself to be "cool?" In all honesty, would anyone else?
49. What is the worst thing you've ever done in response to a major personal loss?
50. Have you ever died or been near death? Are you really alive now? How can you be sure?

51. What's the quick version of your Five-Year Plan?
52. Of all the classic Star Captains, which one is your favorite?
53. (Joker 1) Who was the last person in the current Team that you kissed on the lips?
54. (Joker 2) Who was the last person in the current Team that you punched in the face?

Team Establishment Questions

Work with the rest of your Team to answer the following questions about your group's identity. For inspirations, use the events of the First Contact, and the story details from your Playbooks.

What unique pre-battle ritual does your team have? As a team you should develop some special ritual that the Pilots engage in right before a fight that they know is coming. Maybe the whole team recites their team code aloud, pigs out on a buffet of fully-loaded space pizza, jams out their favorite songs in That Popular Rock Music Game (TM), or even disobeys school protocol entirely and just gets really trashed together!

If the Pilots all actively make an effort to role-play this ritual each time in-game, Coach may give the team a Harmony boost. Conversely, if they fail to perform their team rituals at crucial moments, Coach may instead trigger a ./Schism subroutine.

What are your weird Team taboos? What odd taboos does your Team adhere to, no matter how obscure or nonsensical they may be? Never leave port without a cat on board? Always accept an offered drink? Never touch another Pilot's Robo? Never start a mission with an unkept bunkroom?

Which of you is known as Coach's pet? Is it true? Who does this bother the most? Who couldn't give a rat's ass either way?

What is your unit's Motto? What slogan or such statement do you frequently say to one another, that's maybe even printed on your jackets? Does anyone in the Team actually care about it?

What do you call your final form? Combo Drive? Ultimate Form Fusion? Mega-Dino-Maximus? ATHENA PRIME!?! You can answer this now, or wait until the fusion first happens during play for a bit more suspense.

Finally: **What is your team name?** Ultra Mega Assault Division? Team Triple Triumph? Loser Legion? The War Warriors?

Starting Resources

In *Gattaibushido*, the Team is almost another character unto itself. Your Team's home base consists of three Locations (the Barracks, the Bunker, and the Hangar), which in turn give you three special Team Resources: Fan Club, Armory, and Pit Crew, respectively. More detail on the Team Locations and Resources can be found starting on p. XX. For now you need to determine the initial levels of your Team's three Resources.

Each of the three Resources begins at a free base amount of 1. As your group goes through the playbooks and creates the Team, each playbook will include instructions that increase these Resources somewhat. Once all of the chosen playbooks have been completed and their starting adjustments applied, the initial Team Resource ratings are finalized.

Starting Harmony

Finally, lay out the team Harmony sheet, and have a handy token or figurine ready to represent their location on it during play. The Team begins a new campaign with a default base Harmony of 4 (Green). Apply any "Starting Harmony" mods from the filled-out playbooks, if applicable. Subtract 1 point for each point of Schism accrued during the First Contact scene - those First Contact actions can really color the tone of the future team! When finished, if the total is less than 1 (Red, the minimum) then raise it to 1. Likewise if the total is greater than 7 (Violet, the maximum) then lower it to 7.

Define Your Salute!

Each team has their own special salute. It could be as simple as "All hands in the middle, then GO TEAM!" Or it could be something hands-off, or more subtle or complex. Define it together, and then starting with the next time your group meets it will open every play session.

With that, the Team is now Complete.

Syllabus

The following pages contain a master guide to all of the courses and offerings currently in the official Battle School educational catalog. Students are advised to familiarize themselves with all that the School has to offer. The future of Humanity depends on your ability to learn, evolve, and excel. Mastery of these materials is not expected, but such devotions will earn you a place in the great Annals of the Alumni.

This section serves as a master reference to the core character components of the game - namely, the Chromas, Daisho, and Robos.

Chromas

Black: The Wild Card (beloved reaper, abundant void)

If there's one thing you can always expect from Black, it's that she never does what's expected. She gains power from the whims of chaos, drawing greater boons from both good fortune *and* the looming threats of disaster. She's not really a rebel - that's Purple - she just flies to music that only she can hear, and to hell with the school's official flight manuals.

Starting Mods: -1 Harmony, +1 Armory, +2 Fan Club, +1 Pit Crew

Recurring Mods: -1 Harmony, +2 Fan Club

Lesson Trigger: Black earns a Lesson when circumstances force her to follow the predictable path.

Schism Trigger: Black often causes Schism when her mysterious aloofness distances her from her teammates.

Gambit Specialties: *All* of Black's Gambits are played-down Blind from the Deck, and count as her Specialty. If the resulting card is Black, ignore its value and use lucky number 13 instead. If the resulting card is Red, ignore its value and "fail" the Gambit. Black can neither help out nor be helped by other Pilots during Gambits.

Primary Tech: "Risk Break!" (Assist) Black can spend up to this Tech's rank in Charges, and then Flip-up the same number of cards from the Deck. If she follows with an immediate Counter or Escalate, she can choose to

Play any one of those cards as if they were in her Hand, discarding the others. If her play strikes Resonant, Black triggers ./Rally. If none are valid plays, or she chooses a different Drive action instead, Discard them all, and Black triggers ./Schism with a value set by the current stage (1-3).

Secondary Tech: "Wild Surge!" (Passive) Black has an extra unique pool of special bonus tokens equal to twice her rank in this Tech. When a Player Joker is revealed, these tokens become Buffers, and when a Coach Joker is revealed, they instead become Charges. In this manner her bonus tokens cycle between the two states constantly during play.

When Black would spend Buffers or Charges during play, she can spend them from these pools instead. When she would restore spent Charges or Buffers, she can likewise choose to restore these. Spending or restoring these tokens is restricted to their current nature, based on whichever Joker was last revealed.

Advice: The best plan for playing Black is to not have a plan at all. Gather a few extra Charge Techs from weapons and Gear, and see what happens. Having a smattering of Techs that use Buffers can be useful too, since you never know which direction the winds of fate will turn your Secondary Tech.

Black can be "fiddly" to play, so you need to be into that. To keep track of Black's special tokens, I recommend getting some black-colored tokens and a single large coin, using Heads or Tails to track which state they're currently in.

Blue: The Brains (strategist, mastermind, all-around smart lady)

Blue is the mastermind, always keeping tabs on the actions of both foe and ally alike. She "leads" from the middle, so to speak, providing crucial insight and counsel both on and off the battlefield. Her preparation for the coming dangers makes her an invaluable strategic advantage on the Team's Missions.

Starting Mods: +1 each to Armory, Fan Club, and Pit Crew

Recurring Mods: +1 to a Resource of your choosing

Lesson Trigger: Blue earns a Lesson when she causes disaster through over-thinking and obsessive planning.

Schism Trigger: Blue often causes Schism when she acts like she's smarter than everyone else. No one likes a know-it-all!

Gambit Specialties: Logistics, project management, economic planning (i.e. "the boring stuff").

Primary Tech: Strategic Foresight! (Assist/Story) Blue can spend up to her Tech Rank in Charges to look at the same number of face-down cards from the top of any one Deck or Faction. Afterwards she must return all them to the top and/or bottom of that Deck or Faction, in any order. She cannot tell anyone else what they are, but she can provide narrative detail and advice. This is the *only* time when a Pilot is allowed to touch Coach's Deck.

Secondary Tech: Strategic Failsafes! (Special) Once per Mission Scenario per rank invested in this Tech, when one of Coach's Jokers is revealed, Blue can choose to immediately send it to the bottom of the Deck, skipping all Joker-related events and effects.

Advice: Blue is a great Chroma for the kind of people who really enjoy writing lists. Blue plays best when you make sure to personally familiarize yourself with the Techs and abilities of all of your fellow Pilots. By knowing

what everyone can do and when, her ability to basically see the future can help you build good short- and long-term play strategies for the Team as a whole.

Green: The Noob (only direction is up, without limit)

Green is the new girl on the Team, the fresh-faced recruit that probably annoys everyone else for some reason or another. Maybe she's a replacement for an early casualty, or maybe she's an officer's kid who got fast-tracked into the program, or something else entirely. But don't let her newness fool you: she's got some surprising tricks up her sleeve that come from being the low gal on the roster!

Starting Mods: +1 Fan Club, +2 Pit Crew

Recurring Mods: +1 Pit Crew

Lesson Trigger: Green earns a lesson when her enthusiastic inexperience gets the entire team into trouble.

Schism Trigger: Green often causes Schism by either complaining about the crap work, or getting overly-enthusiastic about even the smallest of responsibilities.

Gambit Specialties: Everyone else's annoying, demeaning, and back-breaking crap work.

Primary Tech: I've Got This! (Special) Green has more options to keep Pushing against seemingly-unbeatable high cards during Throwdowns. At each rank of this Tech, she gains a new unique empowerment when she plays low cards. Each use costs a single Charge.

1. **Rank 1:** In a Throwdown, Green beats Aces with Twos *and* Threes! (Strike differences of 1 and 2, respectively)
2. **Rank 2:** ...and Fours! (Strike difference of 3)
3. **Rank 3:** ...and she can beat Kings with Twos! (Strike difference of 2)

Secondary Tech: It Was Like That When I Found It! (Special) Green is adept at avoiding the blame for the worst of situations, and preserving the status quo. Once per Mission Scenario per rank invested in this Tech, Green can choose to completely prevent any self-caused ./Schism trigger.

Advice: Green is at the very bottom of the Team's hierarchy, both officially and socially. She's the newest to join, and hasn't had time to make really strong friendships yet. As such, she gets assigned the absolute shit duties that no one else wants, and is sent out on pointless errands whenever they want to get rid of her. If you are interested in starting play as the lowest of the team and taking on this role-playing challenge, then Green is the Pilot for you!

To balance out her heavy role-playing requirements, Green is a fairly easy-to-play character. She excels with a hand full of low cards and a pocket full of Charges. Round her out with some miscellaneous Assists and you'll have a lot of fun playing her both in and out of conflicts.

Orange: The Otaku (hyperfocus to the max)

Orange is the mega-nerd, defined by her obsession with All Things Cool. Orange is constantly acquiring cool new gadgets and weapons for her private collection. She follows all the latest trends in both weaponry and popular media. She can tell you everything there is to know bout the top secret new GDF Scissorhands 16401 prototype, and talk all night about her preferred Gekiganger III anime character shippings.

Starting Mods: +2 Armory, +1 Pit Crew

Recurring Mods: +1 Armory

Lesson Trigger: Orange earns a Lesson when her over-reliance upon Gear and gadgets makes a bad situation even worse.

Schism Trigger: Orange's annoying super-nerd obsession with the latest cool toys can cause Schism when the others are sick of hearing about it.

Gambit Specialties: Anything to do with cool never-before-encountered tech.

Primary Tech: Shiny New Toys! (Special) Orange gains extra versatility with her tertiary equipment. At each rank of this Tech, she acquires more ways that she can use her Gear loadouts.

1. **Rank 1:** (Assist) Orange can spend Charges to re-Activate Gear that was already used in the same Scene/Conflict. Charge Cost = Gear Tier.
2. **Rank 2:** (Passive) Outside of an active conflict, Orange can now freely exchange her Charges for Armory Resources, or vice versa, at a 2:1 Charge:Armory exchange rate.
3. **Rank 3:** During the Outcome stage of a Throwdown, Orange can spend Charges to recover any Gear sacrificed during that Throwdown. Charge cost = 2x Gear Tier.

Secondary Tech: Private Arsenal! (Passive) Orange knows who to talk to to acquire "special" goods. These may or may not be "regulation" per se, so it's a good thing she's also adept at hiding them away until just the right time! At each rank of this Tech, Orange acquires an additional two (2) *universal* Gear slots that can be used for any type. Additionally, she enjoys an Armory discount to all *personal* Gear requisitions, reducing the initial assignment costs by her rank in this Tech, to a minimum cost of 1 per Gear. This cannot be used to acquire Gear for her Teammates.

Advice: Stuff, stuff, stuff! Orange wants all the things, and since she excels at using them, she works best when she *gets* all the things. If Orange interests you, you should read up on the sample Gear in this book, and work with Coach and your group to develop even more.

Pink: The Heart of the Team (right there, on the sleeve, for all to see)

Pink always has your back, even when everyone else has reached their limit. When all seems hopeless, and nothing the Team does seems to work, Pink is there to light a new torch in the dark. Pink will do her best to keep the Team's spirits as high as she can, even if she has to hurt herself in the process.

Starting Mods: +1 Harmony, +2 Fan Club

Recurring Mods: +1 Harmony

Lesson Trigger: Pink earns a Lesson when the rest of the Team lets her down, or vice-versa.

Schism Trigger: Pink can cause Schism by being just too damn cheerful, like seriously, are you a Smile Robot or something? What are you hiding?

Gambit Specialties: Performance, communication, and diplomacy.

Primary Tech: We Can Do This! (Special) Pink has the ability to hold strong against low Harmony by taking on the burdens of the Team. If a ./Schism subroutine would reduce the Team's Harmony level equal to or

below her rank in this Tech, she can choose to prevent it by triggering `./Trauma:Self` with damage equal to *twice* the amount of `./Schism` that would have been inflicted. She can additionally spend her own Charges to soak this damage as if they were Buffers.

Secondary Tech: Friendship is Power!: (Passive) Pink can use more than one Assist action on the Pilots' turn of a Throwdown. Each turn, her Assist limit is equal to 1 plus her rank in this Tech.

Advice: To play Pink, you have to be your own Team's biggest fan. Pink is always there for her friends, even if it hurts her, and you have to be ready to be that emotional sponge that the others need.

Pink works best in play when combined with Techs and Gear that give Charge boosts and additional Assists. The Former can help her soak the damage from her Primary Tech, while the latter makes her Secondary Tech more valuable. With such a focus, she not only makes a solid support Pilot, but can also stand on her own when she needs to.

Purple: The Rebel (she'll prove you wrong, mark her words)

Purple is not bound by anyone's rules and expectations. She does what she wants, in glorious, dangerous, and surprising ways. This doesn't mean she's a complete renegade lone wolf; her ways of doing things are just not always aligned with her leader's. She usually comes through in the end, albeit via unconventional methods. She's a firebrand: those who try to constrain her get burned.

Starting Mods: -1 Harmony, +3 Armory, +1 Pit Crew

Recurring Mods: -1 Harmony, +1 Armory, +1 Pit Crew

Lesson Trigger: Purple earns a Lesson when she does that thing that everyone told her not to do, and catastrophically fails at it.

Schism Trigger: Let's be real here: Purple causes a lot of Schism because she can be a total bitch. She knows it, she owns it, and the others can fucking deal.

Gambit Specialties: The pursuit of any action that the rest of the Team truthfully does not want her to pursue.

Primary Tech: Middle Finger Scream! Purple draws strength when she causes dissonance within the Team. Whenever Purple triggers `./Schism`, she can choose to also trigger either `./Fortify:Self(X)` or `./Chargeup:Self(X)`, with X equal to her Rank in this Tech. If this occurs in the pursuit of a course of action that she was specifically ordered not to follow beforehand, the amount restored is doubled.

Secondary Tech: Hey, that's MY Thing! Purple can use her own Buffers to soak points of Schism accrued by any *other* Pilots present in the same scene or conflict. She must declare her use of this at the time the Schism is accrued. Each Buffer spent soaks up to this Tech's Rank in Schism.

Restrictions: Purple cannot spend her own Buffers to soak any Schism she causes with her own actions.

Advice: Your teammates hate you because your antics deeply frustrate them, but also love you because you make up for all of *their* failings, by eclipsing them with your own. Develop a mentality of "The only person allowed to screw things up is ME, got it?!" Purple's strength is in the management of Schism via her Primary and Secondary Techs: causing her own in order to power up, while soaking her Team's. Build around this - possibly working with Pink - and you will almost fully control the Team's Harmonic levels.

Purple may be the rebel, but that doesn't mean you should antagonize the other Pilots. The fun challenge of this Chroma is balancing your work toward achieving the Team's goals with Purple's constant struggles against the stifling rules of Battle School. Damn the Man, but not your Team.

Red: The Captain (the hero she deserves to be)

Red leads the group from the front, facing the enemy head-on with bravery and conviction. As the Captain of the Team, Red must strive to be excellent at all things, and set an example of strength and reliability for the others. When Red seizes the moment of glory and perfection, her valor spreads into the world around her, changing the very nature of the battle.

Starting Mods: +1 Armory, +2 Fan Club

Recurring Mods: +1 Fan Club

Lesson Trigger: Red earns a Lesson when she gets everyone into greater danger by charging forth blindly.

Schism Trigger: Red causes Schism when she's just so self-righteous that everyone wants to punch her.

Gambit Specialties: Athletics, bullheaded bravado, and just plain showing off.

Primary Tech: Inspiring Strike! (Assist) Use this Tech before Countering or Escalating with a Resonant Strike. To activate, spend a number of Charges equal to the current Throwdown stage (1-3), and then trigger the effects of this Tech, with the variable X equaling the amount of Charges spent. At each Tech Rank, Red gains additional effects, which resolve in order:

1. **At Rank 1:** Red Draws X cards into her Hand
2. **At Rank 2:** ...and triggers ./Chargeup(X) to up to X involved other teammates (excluding Red)
3. **At Rank 3:** ...and inflicts ./Trauma:Choice(X)

Secondary Tech: Hero Power! Red must be able to fill in the gaps between the others' specialties, ensuring the Team is properly balanced. Each time she advances this Tech, she chooses one of the following permanent benefits. Each can be chosen only once.

- Increase base Strike Range by +2
- Increase Max Buffers by +2
- Increase Max Charges by +4
- Increase Max Hand +1
- Increase recurring Scenario Harmony bonus by +1
- Increase recurring Scenario bonus of all three Team Resources by +2

Special Notes: A Red Pilot is required at the start of every new campaign. Especially experienced groups are welcome to ignore this requirement, but for newer groups it is an important role to have in the Team, for both thematic and procedural purposes.

Advice: Players who choose Red must be willing to role-play the group's designated Team Leader. This doesn't mean she must always be center stage or take point in every conflict, only that she take an active role in the Team's command. The player must simply be willing and eager to play a leader, however flawed that leader may be.

Red is a pretty straightforward Chroma, mechanically. You'll benefit from having a versatile spread of additional Techs, especially those that boost your Charge potential. Diversify your abilities, and you'll shine in this role.

Yellow: The Tank (endurance, perseverance, dominance)

Yellow is the Team's Aegis, their last guardian at the gates after all others have fallen. While Pink takes care of the Team's emotional concerns, Yellow is all about the physical defenses that keep them safe. She wears the strongest armor, she stands tall against the toughest foes, and she can take one hell of a punch without so much as a grunt.

Starting Mods: +2 Armory, +1 Pit Crew

Recurring Mods: +1 Armory

Lesson Trigger: Yellow earns a Lesson when she causes loss to the Team by turtling up.

Schism Trigger: Yellow can cause Schism when she tries too hard to interfere with other people's problems. Sometimes she needs to step back and let others fight their own fights.

Gambit Specialties: Any task involving standing her ground and holding the line.

Primary Tech: Fortify! (Passive) Yellow has a much easier time restoring her Buffers. This directly alters the core "Restore Buffer" Tech.

1. When Yellow uses Restore Buffers, the Charges:Value ratio is now 1:1 (the default is 2:1).
2. Yellow's max Buffer pool, including all mods, is now doubled.
3. Yellow's Restore Buffers Tech now has a 1:2 Charges:Value ratio.

Secondary Tech: Shield of Friendship! (Special/Passive) When a teammate is targeted by ./Trauma during a Throwdown in which Yellow is active, Yellow can choose to spend a Charge and redirect that Trauma to herself instead. Additionally at each Tech rank (including 1), pick one of the following powers:

- When Yellow suffers any amount of unmitigated ./Trauma, she triggers ./Fortify:Self(1).
- When Yellow suffers any amount of unmitigated ./Trauma, she inflicts ./Trauma(1) upon the source of the original damage.
- When Yellow spends any amount of Charges to restore her own Buffers, she triggers ./Recover:Self(1).
- When a teammate suffers any amount of unmitigated Trauma during a Throwdown in which Yellow is participating, Yellow triggers ./Chargeup:Self(1).

Advice: Yellow is the Tank Queen of damage control! She works best with players who enjoy guardian support roles in games. If you want to get out there and take a massive amount of damage for the Team, then Yellow is the Chroma for you.

Yellow's Chroma Techs excel when used together and kept at roughly equivalent ranks of evolution. Her Secondary Tech may seem weaker at first due to the invariable output of its triggers; its real worth is not in output, but in versatility and effect-staking. Add in outside Techs that build off of *those* triggers, and Yellow can shine as a combo-driven damage sponge.

Daisho

Your Pilot's *Daisho* is at its core the "power weapon" that your Pilot has chosen, or perhaps even been chosen by. But more than just a physical weapon, it is also representative of her special fighting style, her unique flair in personal combat. As a Gattai Pilot, her *Daisho* is as much a part of her identity as are her Chroma and Robo.

A *Daisho* consists of a base Frame, which is then further modified by additional Qualities. The Frame sets the *Daisho*'s core Tech, and Qualities allow you to then customize it further. Each *Daisho* can be customized with at most three Qualities, which cannot be swapped or removed.

There is no hard limit on the number of individual *Daisho* your Pilot can possess. Since each individual *Daisho* can have at most three Qualities, it can be useful to build different *Daisho* for different occasions. Provided plentiful character Evolutions, you can potentially build out quite an arsenal of them.

Clarifications:

- **Your Pilot's *Daisho* is hers and hers alone**, and cannot be used by any other Pilot. If another Pilot tries to use it, it provides no mechanical bonuses, and its abilities are inaccessible to her. Coach may deem otherwise, but only in extremely rare story moments.
- **No two Pilots can begin play with the same starting *Daisho* frames or core abilities**. For Pilots added later during play, this is up to Coach's discretion.
- **A *Daisho* can have no more than three Quality techs**, but you can build an unlimited number of *Daisho* (provided a bountiful flow of Evolutions).
- **A *Daisho*'s qualities are permanent once applied**. They cannot be removed or swapped, outside of extreme once-in-an-epoch story moments (at Coach's discretion).
- **You can only ever carry and use a single *Daisho***, but if you possess multiple then you can swap out your carried *Daisho* by returning to your Bunker. Only the Techs of your currently-carried *Daisho* are accessible.
- Being a core evolution resource, **your *Daisho* can never be permanently removed from your character**. It may be temporarily removed or disabled during play as a consequence of story, but will always return to your possession at the beginning of a new scenario, if not sooner.

(SIDEBAR: Why *Daisho*?)

The word "*daisho*" has a completely different meaning in antiquity than that which I am applying here. In the history of our own world, it was the term applied to a pair of complementing swords worn at the belt of the famous *samurai* of feudal Japan. Among many other notable affectations, it is today seen as an icon of both that warrior class and that era of Japan's history.

The name "*daisho*" is used here for a couple of reasons. First, I needed a single memorable term to use that would clearly differentiate the importance of the Pilot's core focus weapon from that of common weaponry she can get from her Gear loadout (Gear is explained later, on p. XX). And it needed to fit the "phonetic flow" of the other two core empowerments (Chroma and Robo).

Second, it felt like it could be a nice little play on words. I liked the idea of including another symbolic nod to both the name of this game - Gattai-***bushido*** - as well as the heavy samurai themes of its predecessor, *Motobushido*. Given the iconic status of the real-world *daisho* as a mark of station for the samurai of old, the term fits both those needs quite nicely.

What the term may mean for your own game settings is completely up to you. You can ignore the term entirely if you wish, but I think it's fun to come up with unique ways of incorporating it if possible. After

all, there are seemingly infinite manga and anime out there that have even more unusual (and sometimes downright absurd) word choices for special world components that everyone just accepts and hand-waves. Perhaps your Pilots are indeed directly chosen from Space Samurai breeding, and they use the term as a hand-down from ages before. Or perhaps it's an acronym in your military structure - I suggest **Dynamic Armament Integration System for Human Overdrive!**

Building Your Daisho

Your initial Daisho consists of a base Frame, which bestows a core **Frame Tech**. You then can modify it with a single **Quality**. As you invest evolutions into your weapons, you can power up your Frame Tech rank (up to 3) or add more new Qualities, turning it into a versatile combo-tastic tool.

Daisho Frames

Below is a list of sample base Frames and their accompanying core Techs. Passive Frame Techs apply at all times while the Daisho is carried. Others require specific Throwdown actions (see p. XX).

- **Aegis, Shield:** (Assist) When you Block, spend 1 Charge to trigger ./Fortify:Self with a value = current Throwdown stage (1-3).
- **Axe, Hammer:** (Assist) When your Counter Strikes Resonant, spend a # of Charges = current Throwdown stage (1-3) to trigger ./Trauma:Opponent.
- **Bombs, Cannon:** (Assist) Trigger ./Ruin or spend 3 Charges, then double Strike for next Drive. If location is already Razed, you must spend Charges.
- **Boomerang, Chakrams:** (Special) During Drop/Draw end phase of Throwdown, before the Pile is Discarded, you can spend up to 3 Charges to add as many cards of choice from the Pile to your Hand. If this exceeds your max, you must discard down accordingly.
- **Bow, Rifle:** (Passive) Your base Strike increases by +1.
- **Bulwark, Carapace:** (Passive) Your max Buffers increase by +2.
- **Claws, Knives:** (Passive) Your base Strike decreases by -1, but your max Charges increase by +3.
- **Gauntlet:** (Passive) Your max Hand increases by +1, but your base Strike decreases by -1.
- **Pistols:** (Passive) Your Bonus Draw increases by +1.
- **Gun-Chucks:** (Assist) When you Block, spend a # of Charges = current Throwdown stage (1-3) to trigger ./Trauma:Opponent.
- **Multi-Tool:** (Passive) All of your Gambit plays are at +2 card value.
- **Scythe:** (Passive) Whenever you trigger ./Trauma, also trigger ./Fortify:Self(1).
- **Spear, Sword:** (Passive) Your "Power Strike" Basic Charge Tech only costs 1:1 (default is 2:1).
- **Staff, Whip:** (Passive) When you Block, you can automatically trigger ./Chargeup:Self.

Daisho Qualities

In addition to the core Frame, each Daisho can have up to three empowering Qualities. Many of these give special Assist actions you can use during Throwdowns, while others give minor Passive enhancements. Qualities are best used to make unique power combos that enhance the rest of your Pilot's skills in clever ways.

- **Energy:** (Assist) Spend 1 Charge, trigger ./Chargeup:Choice(1).
- **Experimental:** (Passive) When your Played card is Blocked, you inflict and resolve ./Trauma:Self(1) and then trigger ./Chargeup:Self(2).

- **Friendship:** (Passive) When you trigger ./Schism, you can spend 2 Charges to prevent the trigger.
- **Giga-:** (Passive) When you inflict ./Trauma, you can spend up to 6 Charges to increase it's base value by +1 per 2 Charges spent.
- **Laser:** (Passive) Whenever you are targeted by ./Chargeup, it's base value for you increases by +1.
- **Masochistic:** (Passive) When you are targeted by ./Trauma, also trigger ./Chargeup:Self(1).
- **Nega-:** (Passive) When you would Discard a card, you can spend 2 Charges to instead keep it.
- **Power:** (Assist) Discard a card, then increase your Strike by that card's pip rank.
- **Pseudo-:** (Assist) Spend 2 Charges, then you re-trigger any other Daisho Assist Tech previously used by any Pilot during this Throwdown, at normal cost and effect.
- **Psy-:** (Assist) Spend 1 Charge, look at any one card in any one Hand.
- **Psycho-:** (Assist) Trigger and resolve ./Schism, then trigger ./Trauma:Choice(1) and ./Chargeup:Self(1).
- **Retro-:** (Assist) Spend 1 Charge, then draw the top card of your Trash into your Hand.
- **Sadistic:** (Passive) When you trigger ./Trauma, also trigger ./Chargeup:Self(1).
- **Science:** (Assist) Spend 1 Charge, take 1 random card from any other Pilot's Hand into your own, and then return 1 card from your Hand to that Hand.
- **Sonic:** (Assist) Activate before you Escalate, and trigger ./Chargeup:Self(2).
- **Tactical:** (Assist) Spend 1 Charge, then give 1 card from your Hand to player of choice, who can choose to give you one in return.
- **Thunder:** (Assist) Spend 1 Charge, immediately inflict and resolve ./Trauma:Choice(1), and then trigger either ./Trauma:Self(2) or ./Ruin.
- **Turbo-:** (Assist) Spend 1 Charge, then draw the top card of your Deck into your Hand.
- **Vampire:** (Passive) When you cause any amount of Trauma that is not resisted, you can choose to immediately spend 1 Charge and trigger ./Recover:Self(1).
- **Vibro-:** (Assist) Spend up to 3 Charges when Countering or Escalating, opponent's Strike Range on their next Drive is decreased by an equal amount.
- **Vortex:** (Assist) Spend 2 Charges when Countering or Escalating, then opponent of choice with two or more cards in their Hand discards a random card from their Hand.
- **Xeno-:** (Passive) Your Bonus Draw is reduced by 1 against Threats, but is increased by 2 against other Pilots.

Robos

If your Pilot's Chroma is her purpose, and her Daisho is her power, then her Robo is her Pride. The choice of Robo defines how a Pilot actually, you know, *pilots*. When she summons forth her mighty mecha-steed into battle, it's very appearance brings with it a great shift to the stakes at hand. And when she carries forward that fight from behind its controls, she wields a mighty power that can focus her own skills into a whole new level of excellence.

Clarifications:

- **Robos Require Pit Crew in order to activate.** Each time you bring a Robo into a conflict, it costs 1 Pit Crew, be it at the start or middle of the action. If your Pit Crew is empty, your Robos cannot be used, in any way!
- **Tech Rank:** A number from 1-3 that determines the output of both its Primary and Secondary Techs.
- **Robo Grit:** How much of a beating the Robo can take. A Robo's base Grit = 6, and can be increased by evolutions. A Robo whose Grit is reduced to 0 cannot be used until repaired.

- **Summon Effects:** These only trigger *once* per *Scenario*, and only when summoned during an active Throwdown.
- **Primary & Secondary Techs:** These special powers are only available to you while you are actively piloting the Robo.
- **Trauma-Shifting:** While in a Scene with her Robo, a Pilot can shift any incoming *./Trauma* damage to her Robo, soaking it with the Robo's Grit instead. This transfer is instantaneous and at-will, with a 1:1 Trauma:Grit point cost ratio.

Anthro-Guardian: Stalwart and Dependable

- **Summon Effect:** When the Anthro-Guardian first joins the battle, the Team can restore a number of spent Buffers equal to twice the current stage of the Throwdown (1-3), assigned across the Pilots as you choose.
- **Primary Tech:** Your Anthro-Guardian can automatically prevent *./Ruin* triggers that occur during its Throwdowns and Rumbles. You can do this as many times per scene as its current Tech Rank.
- **Secondary Tech:** When you Trauma-shift to the Anthro-Guardian, each Grit it spends soaks an amount of Trauma = 1 + its Tech Rank.

Eagle: Visionary and Versatile

- **Summon Effect:** As the great hunter, Eagle brings news of the coming storms on the distant horizons. When Eagle is first summoned, if Coach has any Active (face-up) Omens on the table, he must flip one down (without spending it). If Coach does not have any active Omens on the table, you may instead Draw a card from either your Deck or the top of the Trash.
- **Primary Tech:** Eagle's flight bestows supreme combat mobility. During Throwdowns, increase your Strike by its Tech Rank. During Rumbles, instead increase the Rumble Charge pool maximum by the same amount.
- **Secondary Tech:** For an additional ongoing operating cost of 1 Pit Crew per scene, you can temporarily increase your Max Hand by Eagle's Tech rank. If you refuse or fail to pay the cost, you lose the bonus and must immediately discard down to Max.

Lion: Fierce and Fearsome

- **Summon Effect:** Lion always bursts into the scene with an inspiring roar, filling your Team with courage and the enemy with fear. When Lion is first summoned, an opponent of your choice must Discard a number of cards equal to the current Throwdown stage (1-3). This cannot force them to discard their final card.
- **Primary Tech:** Lion's bites rip and tear! Whenever you trigger *./Trauma* while piloting Lion, you can choose to increase its value by Lion's Tech Rank.
- **Secondary Tech:** Counters against your cards reduce their Strike by Lion's Tech Rank, due to the fierceness of Lion's attacks. The opponent can choose to ignore this reduction; if so, you instead inflict *./Trauma:Opponent(TechRank)*.

Panda: Large and Loveable

- **Summon Effect:** Everyone loves the Panda! When first Summoned, she immediately triggers *./Rally*.
- **Special:** Panda is always eating! When you cause Trauma to any target during a conflict while piloting Panda, Panda gains a special Hunger token. These tokens have no limit, but go away at the end of the

conflict during the Discard & Draw phase. These tokens power her Techs.

- **Primary Tech:** (Assist) Panda uses some of the food in her belly to fuel her repair bots. Spend up to her Tech Rank in tokens, and for each token spent, repair her Rank in lost Grit.
- **Secondary Tech:** Panda Belly Smash! When Panda Trauma-shifts during a Throwdown, you can choose to spend one Hunger Token and immediately inflict ./Trauma(Rank) to the enemy that caused the Trauma.

Rhino: Reckless and Ruinous

- **Summon Effect:** Rhino always makes a destructive entrance. When first summoned, Rhino triggers ./Ruin.
- **Special:** Rhino is rough and ready with zero craps to give. When piloting Rhino in a Location that is not Razed, all of your Counters trigger ./Ruin. You can prevent this trigger when Countering by discarding a card from either your Hand or a Faction. If the Location is already Razed, then you can not trigger ./Ruin.
- **Primary Tech:** When you trigger ./Ruin, you also trigger ./Trauma:Choice(Rank).
- **Secondary Tech:** (Assist) Rhino Snorts and Stamps! You gain a special Trample token, of which you have no limit to how many you can accrue. When you next Counter or Escalate, you must spend all of these tokens. For each token spent, your Strike for that play is increased by Rhino's Tech Rank. If your next-played Drive action is not a Counter or Escalate, remove all accrued tokens. All Trample tokens go away at the end of the conflict during the Discard & Draw phase.

Spider: Protective and Secretive

- **Summon Effect:** Spider enters upon a growing network of powerful webs, which can hold together even the most chaotic battlefields. When first summoned, she brings with her a strong webbing that prevents any further ./Ruin effects triggered during the *current* stage of the Throwdown.
- **Primary Tech:** (Assist) Rapidly spinning webs faster than the eye can follow, Spider can patch up other Robos mid-battle. Activate and spend up to Spider's Tech rank from her own Grit, then for each point spent, repair her Tech rank in Grit loss across the *other* present Robos as you see fit.
- **Secondary Tech:** While piloting Spider, you can draw a card into your Hand every time one of your cards is Blocked, because Spider *totally* saw that coming. Her foresight is limited, however: you can only do this if the Stage of the Throwdown (1-3) or Rumble (1-4) is lower than or equal to her Tech Rank.

T-Rex: Hungry and Horrendous

- **Summon Effect:** T-Rex charges into the fray with a hunger for immediate chewy-chewy-chomping action. If you Counter on the same turn in which you summon T-Rex, ignore Strike Range for that Counter, and whatever you play is considered Resonant.
- **Special:** T-Rex has a massive bite but tiny widdle arms. All Charge costs while piloting T-Rex are doubled. This includes Rumble Charges.
- **Primary Tech:** T-Rex's bite is devastatingly fearsome. Any opponent who wishes to Block your Counters or Escalates must discard a number of cards equal to T-Rex's Tech Rank.
- **Secondary Tech:** When you Counter, trigger ./Chargeup:Self(Rank). During Rumbles, this builds Rumble Charges instead of personal.

Wolf: Loyal and Dedicated

- **Summon Effect:** Wolf brings with it the reinforcement of the hunting pack. When first summoned, draw a number of additional cards equal to the current Throwdown stage (1-3).
- **Primary Tech:** Wolf is a mistress of leaps, pins, and pounces, all of which provide openings for her pack. After you Block while piloting Wolf, if your side's next action is a Counter or Escalate played by a different teammate, their Strike for that action is increased by twice (2x) your Tech Rank.
- **Secondary Tech:** As a dedicated member of the pack, when you use an Assist action that targets one or more allies, you trigger ./Chargeup(Rank) to one of those allies of your choosing.

The Final Form

Your Team's **Final Form** is the ultimate all-powerful union of their combined abilities. Only by fusing your Robos together into this terrific machine god, are you able to confront the enemy's Big Giant Monsters on something resembling an "even" playing field. By conquering your personal issues and following the path of Harmony, you can unleash your Final Form's true greatness and defeat those enemies, guaranteeing a better future for your people.

(SIDEBAR: Final Form Restrictions)

As cool as it may sound to just run around in the Final Form all the time, stomping every Threat that comes your way, unfortunately the system does not allow for this to be. Narratively it is usually due to the extreme power requirements for the "handwave drive" or whatever experimental tech powers your ultimate fusion, but different groups often have their own unique explanations for its restriction. Mechanically, the Harmony system keeps it in check, forcing the Team to only call upon the Final Form when all other options have failed them.

This section of the text is meant to serve primarily as a catalog reference of the Positions and their powers. As such, the deeper intricacies on the mechanics that restrict the use of the Final Form are detailed more completely in the "Rumble" rules section (p. XX).

Final Form Positions

The Final Form is ultimately a collection of **Positions** that are chosen and assembled by the Pilots when they enter a Rumble. There are seven unique Positions that can assemble together to create the Final Form. When the Team enters the Rumble stages of a Throwdown, one of them *must* pick the Head, and the others must each pick a different one.

Note: Unless the specifics of your game's story decree otherwise, the Final Form Position assignments do *not* need to be decided upon at the time of character creation. They are intended to be fluid within your Team, allowing the Pilots to take different Positions as needed in each new Rumble. Your group may choose to enforce consistent Position assignments, but I do not recommend this for new players.

Each Position gives a special **Rumble Tech**. Activating a Rumble Tech costs 1 special **Rumble Charge** (based on Harmony). In the descriptions below, the variable "X" is equal to the current stage of the Rumble (1-4) in which the Tech is used - the longer you wait to use your Tech, the greater its potential output! Aside from the Wing, each Tech may be used only once per Rumble, so use them wisely.

The Positions and their associated Techs are:

The Head (required): Each other Pilot in the Final Form may choose to pass you up to X cards from their Hands. You may choose to keep any of those passed to you. You may also choose to pass each of them up to X cards back. The amount they passed you and the amount you pass back do not need to be the same.

The Heart: Each Pilot other than the Heart may choose to draw up to X cards into their Hands.

The Hand: Re-use any one Rumble Tech previously used in this battle.

The Foot: Opponent must randomly discard X cards, down to a minimum Hand size of 1.

The Sword: Apply immediate ./Trauma:Opponent(X)

The Aegis: Restore X lost Robo Grit, or gain X additional buffers

The Wing: Special Tech. You draw 1 card and move the Rumble to a new Location. This Tech may be used once per Stage of the Rumble.

(SIDEBAR: Dramatic Attack Names)

Readers familiar with the inspirational source material are probably used to the special attack names that mecha pilots tend to dramatically scream each time they make a move in a battle. I thought long and hard about assigning default names to these Rumble Techs, but in the end I decided that I didn't want to step on the creativity of future players. For maximum fun, I encourage you to come up with cool or funny names for your special attacks, and then yell them out when you use them! Below are some examples:

- Lightning Kick!
- Volcano Thrust!
- Hell of One Thousand Devils!
- Burning Fury Strike!
- Calibration Matrix Overdrive!
- Steve's Big Fist!
- Domo!

Getting Started at School: Basic Play Concepts

We in the Battle School faculty are thrilled that you have now joined our ranks as a new Pilot cadet. Your path forward will require hard work and dedication if you wish to be among the best of the best that fight for our future. Now, take your first steps toward excellence by mastering the Foundational Courses of this school.

This section of the text will guide you through learning the foundational components of **Gattaibushido**. All of the game's deeper mechanics are rooted in these core play concepts. Understanding these base systems will be crucial to mastery of the conflict rules, which are themselves presented separately in the following chapter of this book (see p. XX).

Your Commitments

Your Pilot's **Commitments** determine the basis for almost all of the character mechanics. There are three core Commitments, each divided into two paired **Stats** (for a total of six Stats). These stats are dualities; within each Commitment, the initial numerical ranks of a new Pilot's Stats always add up to a total of 6.

Each of these stats represents a dichotomy that pulls hard at your Pilot's core self identity. Her very existence as a Gattai Pilot demands a balance of commitment to oft-conflicting agendas - a balance that is tenuous at even the best of times. These balances can shift frequently, sometimes to deleterious effect.

The left-hand-side of each Commitment pair represents the needs of your Pilot's individual core of human identity. The right-hand-side represents the crushing demands placed upon her as a dedicated mecha Pilot in the war to protect humanity. A Pilot whose stats lean too heavily toward the left risks rejecting the ideals of her Commitments, while one who leans too strongly to the right risks being consumed by them.

It is entirely possible to play a character with a 6 in one stat and a 0 in its opposing stat. This simply means that the Pilot gains no mechanical benefit at all from the empty stat. They had best play *very* carefully - or not, because causing your own doom can sometimes make for very fun gaming!

Commitment to the Team: Solo and Sync (Bonus Draws)

Core Stats: Solo (leftward) vs Sync (rightward)

Stat Mechanic: Determines your *Bonus Draws* at the beginning of Throwdowns.

Tied To: Color Chroma

A Pilot with a higher Solo stat tends to be more focused on her own personal goals, often causing strife by putting her needs and desires before those of her Team. A Pilot with a higher Sync stat instead more often puts the needs of the Team first, sometimes to the detriment of her own mental and physical health.

Your ranks in these stats determine how many bonus draws you receive at the beginning of new Throwdowns, based on your motivations within the conflict at hand. If your Pilot is acting primarily in her own self-interests, she draws based on Solo. If she instead fights to push the interests of the Team, then she draws based on Sync.

Commitment to the Fight: Flesh and Steel (Strike Range)

Core Stats: Flesh (leftward) vs Steel (rightward)

Stat Mechanic: Determines base *Strike Ranges* in conflicts.

Tied To: Personal Daisho

A Pilot with a higher Flesh stat tends to go more with the flow of the world around her, starting few fights of her own volition, but fighting harder when the war comes to her. A Pilot with a higher Steel stat instead more often brings the fight on her own terms, taking action with confidence and force, at the cost of diminished adaptability when she is not in direct control of her circumstances.

Your rank in this stat gives you a solid and tangible fighting edge in battle, setting your base Strike Ranges for all card-play during Throwdowns. If the Throwdown was initiated by your opponent, then your base Strike Range is equal to your Flesh stat. If you started the fight, then use your Steel stat instead.

Commitment to the Future: Synapse and Circuit (Buffers and Charges)

Core Stats: Synapse (leftward) vs Circuit (rightward)

Stat Mechanic: Determines the pilot's base *Buffers* and max *Charges*.

Tied To: Personal Robo

A Pilot with a higher Synapse stat has a much closer relation to the deep inborn resiliency that protects humanity in its push to the stars. She excels at weathering all that the war can throw at her, often to the detriment of her own martial power. A Pilot with a higher Circuit stat instead has a greater connection to the weapons and machines that she must employ, sacrificing resilience for a stronger reserve of applied power.

Your rank in this stat determines the balance between your maximum Buffers and Charges. Your base Buffers pool is equal to your Synapse Stat, while your maximum pool of Charges is equal to *twice* (2x) your Circuit stat.

Managing Your Commitments

At the start of a new Pilot's career, the playbooks are designed to give you an initial six-point balance between each of your Pilot's three Commitments. Likewise, this sets the maximum total in each of her three Commitments to an initial score of 6. Through extended play, there are a handful of circumstances in which these stat pairs may shift their balances, as well as a few in which their long-term totals may increase (such as through evolution) or even *decrease* (through repeated closeness to death).

Commitment Shifts

Some game effects may force you to make a shift in one direction or another, raising one Stat and lowering its matched Stat by the same amount. For example, Coach might decree that a decision you made to put the Team at risk in order to save your own life will Shift you one step leftward in your Team Commitment. In that case, you would add 1 point to your Solo, while subtracting 1 point from your Sync.

The balance must be maintained, with both stats of the pair adding up to their parent Commitment's Maximum. No Stat can be dropped lower than Zero, however; if a forced shift would result in such a drop, work with Coach to decide upon an alternate outcome.

Commitment Increases through Evolution

Permanent increases to your Pilot's Commitment maximums are only possible through Evolution. When this happens, it allows you to add a single point to one of her six Stats, permanently increasing the maximum balance within that Commitment by +1. See p. XX for full evolution rules.

Commitment Damage and Loss

If your Pilot suffers Trauma that is not otherwise deflected or absorbed (via Buffers, gear, or other effects), then you must lower her Commitments as a result. For each point of Trauma thus received, you must pick one of her Commitments (your choice) and lower its maximum balance by 1. Then in turn you must pick one of that Commitment's Stats and likewise lower it by 1 (to a minimum of zero).

Fortunately there exist numerous methods in the game that can heal a damaged Commitment track, including Techs, Gear, and Locations. As long as the damage is healed before the end of the scenario (which in most cases means "before the Big Giant Monster is defeated"), then the loss is not permanent. However, if the damage to the balance is *not* recovered by the end of the Scenario, then that Commitment's balance

maximum is *permanently* reduced, and that specific loss cannot be "healed" in any way except via character Evolution (see p. XX).

(SIDEBAR: Permanent Loss is Good for the Story!)

The idea of permanent stat loss in this game may come across as unfair to some players during an initial read. I ask you to accept that this is an *expected* consequence of play, representing the unfortunate burnout of bright young lives who are thrown against great odds in the war to protect humanity from alien destruction. If this happens to your Pilot, I encourage you to welcome it as a new opportunity for role-playing!

Commitment Death

If any one of your Pilot's Commitment maximums is reduced to zero - as in *both* stats for that pair - she's at the precipice of her finality. You have a choice to make in this situation. Your first option - and the one I recommend - is to embrace her departure from the game, and make it awesome.

Depending on the circumstances that brought her here, she could die a glorious death in battle, or mentally break down and be sent off to a hospital for the rest of her days, or even just give up and retire (or desert!) from service. I encourage you to revel in this moment, for loss and transition are crucial components of every tragic space mecha story. Make it an event that everyone at your table will remember fondly for the rest of their gaming careers.

If you don't want her participation in the story to end just yet, then your other choice is to have a chat with Coach. Together you can try to develop an alternate outcome that is more suitable to both your goals as a player, and the story that everyone is working to create. In the end, it is most important that you have a fun and memorable experience.

Narrative Death

Since we're on the subject of death, this is a good place to mention that aside from Commitment Death, there is *one* other way for your Pilot to die in this game. This method is called "narrative death" and it only happens in a very specific situation: **if an opponent states that they make a move to kill you and then initiates a Throwdown on the matter, and you refuse the challenge, then you die according to their narration.**

The terms and scope of the situation must make sense, of course, and Coach is the final arbiter of this. One can not flippantly narrate the deaths of anyone and everyone without there being justifiable cause and capability. Remember: all you have to do is accept the challenge, and then narrative death is no longer an option at that moment.

(SIDEBAR: On Narrative Death)

Narrative death is a mechanic in this game that carries over from *Motobushido*. It is important to me that it be a valid story option. That said, up to the time of this text being published, I've never once seen anyone perform it, or even attempt it. Folks tend to not want to accept death without putting up a fight.

Use this option responsibly.

Your Techs and Charges

As you begin your first classes in Battle School, you will almost immediately be instructed in the use of your Pilot's **Techs**. You will eventually use these special battle techniques in Throwdowns against The Enemy. Often fueled by your personal reserves of powerful **Charges**, your Team's combined array of Techs gives it that extra boost that can make the difference between getting slaughtered and saving the day.

Techs are the unique powers that your Pilots have at their disposal to assist with overcoming the challenges before them. Most Techs will come from your Pilot's choice of Chroma, Daisho, and Robo. How you choose your Tech "build" is up to you: some Pilots craft a perfect suite of abilities focused on effective power combos, while others prefer the safety that comes with versatility.

Many Techs require the expenditure of **Charges**, and as such are called **Charge Techs**. Charges are expendable, fluctuating pools of energy that you get primarily from your Circuit stat, and which can build up through Actions, Gear, Techs, and some Joker effects. Charge Techs almost always require the use of Actions during Throwdowns in order to activate.

Techs that require no charges and apply constant game effects are called **Passive Techs**. These abilities are considered to be "always-on" unless specified otherwise. Using a good mix of complementary Passive and Charge Techs is an important key to excellence.

Tech Tags

Every Tech has one or more **Tags** stating certain meta-attributes applied to that Tech. These mostly serve to identify a Tech's qualification for use within other system rules (such as Throwdown Actions). The most common tags are detailed below:

Assist: The Tech must be activated via an Assist Action during a Throwdown.

Passive: The Tech is Passive and "always-on."

Special: The Tech has special use rules defined in its text.

Your Charge Pool

Your pool of Charges is commonly represented by a pile of tokens that you keep in front of you while you play. Your base maximum is equal to *twice* the value of your **Circuit** stat, derived from your Commitments. This maximum can be increased through a handful of Chroma, Daisho, and Robo Techs, as well as some Evolutions.

As you use your Charge Techs, you will remove Charge tokens from your pool. You can regain spent Charges through the ./Chargeup subroutine, which is most commonly triggered by Resonant Strikes, some special Techs, and the revelation of Jokers from the Pilot Deck. Unless certain Techs specifically state otherwise, the number of Charges in your pool can never exceed your maximum allowance.

Using Charge Techs

The primary purpose of a Charge Tech is to provide a mechanical effect or advantage during a Throwdown. This usually requires the use of an Assist Action, which can only be done on your Team's turn. While each individual Tech will have its own usage rules, in general all you have to do is declare the Action, spend the required Charges, and follow the Tech's instructions.

The more powerful the Tech, the more Charges it costs to activate. For *most* Charge Techs, the default cost to activate the Tech is equal to the power rank at which you are activating it. Unless specified otherwise, you can always choose to activate a known Tech at a lower rank. For example, if you have a Charge Tech at rank 3, you can choose to activate it at rank 1 of ability, and only spend 1 Charge.

Some Charge Techs specify different costs entirely, or instead alter the costs and output of the Core Techs (below). When a Charge Tech specifies its own Charge cost, use that cost instead of the default. In all cases, a specific rule always overrides the general defaults.

Using Techs Outside of Conflicts

Your Pilot is generally assumed to have access to all of her Charge Techs outside of Throwdowns, as well. Those tagged as "Story" Techs can be freely used in Story Mode without need for alteration. While most of the others might not seem to have much mechanical application outside of a fight, you may still be able to make a case for it in the moment, especially if you are aiming to create a really cool story moment with it.

In such cases, Coach has two options. If the main focus of the action is to add awesome narrative flair, he may simply decide that your Tech activates with no cost. When this happens, you're free to narrate something cool and make the moment extra memorable.

Otherwise Coach may decide that the Tech would be advantageous enough that using it will require Charges. In this case, you need to spend a number of Charges equal to the rank at which you are activating the Tech. Then resolve the story and mechanics of the moment (possibly with minor modifications applied by Coach, and then move on.

(SQUARP ADD EXAMPLE OF THIS IN ACTION)

The Core Charge Techs

In addition to their own personal Techs, *every* Pilot has the following basic Charge Techs at their disposal. These are detailed on the standard Pilot Record Sheets as well. Note that one or both of these may be augmented, overridden, or made obsolete by stronger, more powerful Pilot Techs.

- **Power Strike (Assist):** Increase the Strike Range for your Team's next Counter. For every 2 Charges spent, increase next Strike by +1.
- **Restore Buffer (Assist):** Spend Charges to trigger ./Fortify:Choice at a 2:1 value.

Your Buffers

Your Pilot has a handy pool of **Buffers** that starts at a base amount equal to her Synapse stat. Your Buffers will fluctuate wildly throughout play, especially during more combat-heavy sessions with lots of Trauma being inflicted. As such, consider using a bowl of physical tokens to keep track of these - I recommend using blue tokens to separate them from other possible colored tokens that may be in play for other game effects.

You can spend Buffers to soak potential ./Purge, ./Schism, and ./Trauma damage that your Pilot would suffer from or directly cause to herself. You can permanently increase your maximum pool via a few evolution options. Other Techs and Gear can both increase your Buffers and extend their usefulness even further.

Buffers refresh at the beginning of every new Scenario (not session), and can also be restored mid-game as a result of various Techs and Actions during play. Buffers are a limited and valuable resource, so use them

wisely!

Your Strike Range

Your **Strike Range** (also simply called **Strike**) sets the maximum *safe* difference between cards that you can play during Throwdowns without potentially damaging the Team Harmony. Your Strike in any Throwdown is based on your Commitment to the Fight Stats, and can be further modified by Gear, Techs, and more. Like all other character components, it can additionally be increased via multiple evolution options.

Strike Range is such a Throwdown-specific character component that it is better-served being described within the context of the rest of the conflict mechanics. See p. XX in the Throwdown section for extended rules on Strike Ranges.

Your Cards

Every Pilot player carries a set of cards known as a **Hand**, from which you will perform the vast majority of your card-plays during game sessions. Your brand new Pilot begins her first session of play with a maximum carried Hand of **three (3)** cards, drawn from the Pilot Deck. This maximum increases automatically through play, as you Evolve your Pilot. There are a small number of other ways to increase your max Hand, but you'll have to figure those out on your own!

At the beginning of a new Throwdown, you will usually draw one or more **Bonus Draws** into your hand, determined by your Commitment to the Team. However, during Story Mode (while between active conflicts) you can never have more or fewer cards in your Hand than your Pilot's maximum. If you find yourself with more or fewer than your max, you must discard down or draw up, respectively.

For more detailed info on using and managing card Hands, see p. XX.

The Places You Will Go!

During this course you will learn how to identify the strategic value of the many different target sites you will inevitably visit on your missions. Many of these sites will contain key points of local infrastructure, and you will need to take the proper precautions so as to not damage them in your battles against The Enemy. Understanding how to balance mission objectives against acceptable collateral damage is crucial to your success in the field.

Locations are mechanical representations of "places where things happen" in a game of *Gattaibushido*. They most often manifest as the settings for the Team's missions, but they can also take the form of extra off-path places they visit for fun role-playing on the side.

Locations often give valuable **Boons** and abilities to the Pilots, who must do their best to protect them from both the ravages of their enemies, and their own reckless actions. Some Locations also come with terrible **Blights**, however, so Pilots must take caution when exploring dangerous new vistas.

Anatomy of a Location

Names and creative descriptions aside, every Location has the following core components:

- **Boons:** One or more beneficial effects the Pilots can access while at that Location.

- **Blights (Optional):** One or more negative effects that may afflict Pilots who visit that Location.
- **State:** The Location's current state of being. A Location's State can be one of three options: **Standing**, **Damaged**, or **Razed**.

These are further detailed in-line below.

Locations in Play

Introducing a New Location

To build a new Location, first give it a backstory and determine how it will be important to your current tale. It needs to be a place that will either play setting to a Mission, or instead a "side" site that adds both color *and* mechanical appeal for the Team. Not every place the Team goes needs to be fully statted up, after all; some exist only as narrative background flavor, and there's nothing wrong with that.

Give it at least one Boon, using the Boon examples further below as inspiration. The Boon should be something worth the risk of spending a bit of time to activate, but not too powerful without also adding further costs to Resources, etc. If you really can't think of any Boon to give it, then it's probably not actually important enough to warrant adding in as a mechanically-named Location.

The easiest way to represent in-game Locations at the game table is by using Index cards, providing a quick visual reference for the Locations' States. Each time you introduce one, grab a new index card and fold it in half so it stands up like a tent, with the folded edge pointing up. On one side of the tent write the Location's name, and on the other write a quick note about its boon.

Using Location Boons and Blights

Each Location provides a special game effect called a **Boon** to any Pilots who engage with it. As long as the Location isn't completely Razed, its Boon can be used whenever the Pilots are present on site at that location, or otherwise in a capacity to make special remote use of it. Depending on the Locations in play, the Boons may provide crucial assistance to the Team, including healing, regrouping, card management, and more.

Most Boons make use of a special time-based mechanic in order to activate their effects; any Location Boon which requires a Tarry action effectively triggers the **./Tarry** subroutine (detailed on p. XX). Tarrying causes a beat of game time to pass, which allows Coach to push one more step forward toward a Crisis escalation (detailed on p. XX). The Team will often have to decide if the increasing risk of greater danger is a cost worth paying for the Boon's benefits.

Some Locations also provide negative effects called **Blights** to Pilots who visit there, in addition to their Boons. Unlike Boons, most Blights continue to function even if the Location is Razed. A Location's Blight effects usually occur when the Pilots activate that Location's Boon, triggering their negative effects immediately after the Boon's mechanics are resolved. Others may apply to anyone who even visits, or may have unique circumstances altogether. The decision is ultimately Coach's.

Managing Structural States

<SQUARP: IMAGE EXAMPLE>

Each Location exists in one of three states: **Standing** (aka "Up"), **Damaged** (aka "Flipped"), and **Razed** (aka "Torn") - the names referencing both the structural states and their index card representations at the table.

Unless otherwise determined by the story, all Locations enter play in a Standing state - meaning, their cards are introduced to the table face-up, folded and standing like a tent. While in the Up state, the Location is in a fully-functional condition, and its Boons are completely accessible.

A Location that has been damaged by a **./Ruin** subroutine is put into a Damaged or "Flipped" state. When this happens, flip the tent card to its side, so that it now stands perpendicular to the table. While in this state the Location is still functional and its Boon accessible, but it's now just one wrong move away from destruction.

Finally, a location hit with multiple **./Ruin** subroutines can enter an unfortunate final Razed state, representing complete narrative destruction. To represent this, take the tent card and tear it in half, and then take a moment of silence to lament its loss. At this point, the Location can still be visited, but its Boons are unavailable. However, unless specified otherwise, Razed Locations do *not* lose usage of their Blights.

Alternative Damage Options

Some groups may find that the 1-2-3 Location damage system is too simplified for their table preferences. If groups make heavy use of **./Ruin**-triggering game effects, they may quickly find their entire game field completely Razed before the story gets a chance to take off. While the game intentionally uses this as a way to strategically limit certain powerful Techs, there are still some alternate Location damage options you may want to consider.

Instead of sticking fast to the ever-shifting dance between Standing, Damaged, and Razed states, consider applying temporary changes to a Location's Boons and Blights. For example, a BGM using a Ruinous effect on an already-Damaged site could apply a new Blight effect to that site, instead of just Razing it. Or perhaps a Pilot's careless use of their Ruinous Tech might smash the computer that provide's that Location's special info-gathering Boon, temporarily blocking its use without otherwise Damaging the place.

Groups interested in this approach should talk it out as such instances occur in the story. As always, the final call is Coach's.

Repairing Locations

As long as the Location isn't Razed, repairing damage is typically a matter of successful conflicts and the application of Heart cards. The Pilots need only achieve a **./Rebuild** effect from their conflicts in order to restore a Damaged Location to fully Standing. Unless noted otherwise, the **./Rebuild** method of restoration is always instantaneous (how you describe this is up to you).

Rebuilding a Razed Location, however, requires additional story effort to repair. Coach will determine a suitable mission or "quest" that must be completed if the team wishes to rebuild a Razed Location. Once that mission is completed, the Razed "status" is removed, and the Location is immediately restored to either a Damaged or even a fully Standing state (Coach's decision).

The actual mission itself can be as quick or as involved as Coach deems appropriate. Restoring a Razed Location can even be the core focus of an entire new follow-up scenario. Sometimes you have to ask yourself: just *how* important was that destroyed malt shop to your Team, anyway?

Upgrading Locations

Over the course of an extended campaign, the Pilots can work on upgrading Locations that they find particularly useful. Similarly to rebuilding a Razed Location, upgrading a favorite haunt is a good narrative goal for more than just one or two conflicts. In such a situation, Coach will develop a side mission for the Pilots to fulfill, possibly making connections with the right building crew, acquiring special materials and components, and more. Once complete, he may offer the group an option to finally upgrade the chosen Location.

Upgrades might include:

- Increased Occupancy (such as +1 Pilot at the med Bay)
- Increased Boon Effects (such as +2 Buffers restored at the Hot Springs)
- Decreased or even removed Blight effects (such as reduction in per-adventure activations)
- Additional Boons (each usually requiring a separate ./Tarry)
- Built-in damage Buffers (can be spent to prevent future ./Ruin)

Example Locations

Example Location Boons

Barracks, Bunker, and Hangar: These three locations are default to every new team, and described on p. XX. Each provides a Boon in the form of a special Team Resource.

The Barter Barn: Once per session, the group can ./Tarry here to exchange any of their other Resources for Armory points on a 1:1 basis.

CyberDome: An elite technological training center, the group can ./Tarry here to get prepped for coming battles, allowing each Pilot present to discard and draw 1 card per ./Tarry action.

Hope Monument: During any conflict at the Hope Monument, the Team has +2 to its Buffer vs ./Schism only.

Medical Bay: A single Pilot can ./Tarry here to restore 1 point of temporary Commitment damage.

Mega-Bunker Neo-New-Oldtown III: This Location contains a number of other locations within it. It has a special pool of its own three Buffer tokens, which are used to *prevent* ./Ruin subroutines against it or any Locations inside of it.

Mista Blamm's Builders: A Pilot can ./Tarry here to restore and possibly rebuild damaged Locations, at the cost of spending points from the Pit Crew. Restoring Damaged to Standing costs 3 Pit Crew, while rebuilding from Razed to Standing (if even allowed) costs 7 Pit Crew - and probably an extended side quest!

Otaku District: While visiting the Otaku District of the city, the Team can interface directly with their Fan Club as if they were back at Base. Additionally, all Fan Club actions have double the outcome.

Robo Scrapyard: When this Location is in play, place a single token on it every time the Pilots complete a Throwdown in which one or more of their Robos suffered damage. These tokens accrue continually over the course of the entire campaign, and remain even if the location is Razed. During play, the group can ./Tarry here to remove any number of its tokens and restore an equal amount of Grit to their Robos.

Sacred Hot Springs: By ./Tarrying a turn at the Hot Springs, each present Pilot restores 1 spent Buffer.

TacOps Center: If the group ./Tarries here, they can each swap a single card from their Hand with others in the group.

Ultralopolis IV: With all the buildings and human shields, it's easier to avoid getting hurt here. During any conflict here, each Pilot has +1 to their Max Buffer.

Example Location Blights

Alien Infestation: While in play, this Location gives Coach a new TR 1 alien Threat each time an Omen is spent. This Blight is removed from play if the Location is Razed.

Crumbling to Pieces: This Location is on the verge of collapse. Each time the Pilots ./Tarry here, they also trigger ./Ruin if the Tarry flips a face card.

Heritage Site: Damage suffered by this Location can not be repaired.

In the Lava Fields: Spending any time here is deleterious to your health. The Location triggers ./Trauma against every present Pilot and Threat each time either its Boon is used, or when any combatant Escalates during a Throwdown here.

Libertarian Nightmare: The Team must succeed at a Gambit (with a Yes result) each time they wish to use this Location's Boon.

Soul Suck: A Pilot must spend 1 Charge in order to ./Tarry here.

Time Suck: Every ./Tarry that occurs here costs 1 extra flip.

You Gotta Pay: Every use of this Location's Boon costs 1 unit of a Team Resource.

The People You Will Meet!

You are not alone in this fight, students, not by far! There are other groups out there that are also dedicated to assisting our brave Pilots both in and off the field. Some will fight alongside you, others may give you valuable intel, and still more might work their own help from the deep shadows. In this course, you will learn how to identify potential allies, and then use their skills to your advantage in the never-ending fight against The Enemy.

Factions are other helpful groups, parties, individuals, or even esoteric external forces that have narrative agency in a particular scenario - in other words, any non-Pilot force that has both power within the story *and* the potential to assist the Team. These frequently include the types of characters that would be called "non-player" in other role-playing games. Factions that are uncovered during play can be wooed for **Favor**, allowing players to invest cards in them for later use.

The Faction mechanic is primarily a way for the Pilots to increase their future versatility by externalizing their power. By getting more cards out onto the table, they set themselves up to have more options of play during later conflicts. But externalization also brings its own risks, in the form of the potential loss of said power should the Factions turn against the Team!

Anatomy of a Faction

A Faction in play is usually represented by an index card put out in the middle of the table for all involved to see. Unlike Locations, Faction cards should be laid out flat and face-up. During play, stacks of the Pilots' playing cards may build up on these Factions as they invest in them for later use.

Every Faction has the following core components:

- **Agency Rating:** How much relative story power the Faction has (higher = stronger)
- **Favor Cards:** A stack of cards representing power invested in the Faction
- **Offense Tokens:** A pile of tokens that build up as the Pilots upset the Faction
- **./Favor Trigger:** Several ways the Pilots can gain the Faction's favor
- **./Disfavor Trigger:** Several ways the Pilots can piss the Faction off

Agency Rating

Every Faction has a primary numerical rating representing their **Agency** in the story. This number can be as low as 1 for a relatively weak force, or as high as 7 for an extremely powerful and useful force. Agency almost never changes, with certain specific Threat Techs being the primary exception.

A Faction's Agency does two things. For the Pilots, it limits the maximum number of favor cards that can ever be invested in the Faction at one time. For Coach, it also determines that Faction's relevant **Threat Rating** should it ever turn against the Pilots (see Threat details in the Coach section).

Favor Cards

Throughout play the Pilots can earn opportunities to cultivate friendships and alliances with the various Factions in play. Doing so allows the Pilots to invest their own cards into the Factions as **Favor** cards, to be used in later conflicts as external sources of additional power. Favor cards are tracked by stacks of playing cards on top of each of the Factions at the table. See below for more details.

Offense Tokens

As the Pilots piss off the various in-play Factions, tokens are added to those Factions' cards to represent their growing resentment of the Pilots. Each token represents a strike against the heroes - three strikes and you're out! I recommend using Red or White tokens to track Offense.

Factions in Play

./Favor Triggers

./Favor Triggers are narrative ways that the Pilots can get on a Faction's good side. When Coach feels that the Pilots have performed one or more of these deeds, he will allow them to invest Favor as per the ./Favor subroutine (p. XX). Examples of things that might woo a Faction include:

- Giving them money
- Rescuing a missing ally/relative
- Providing them defensive assistance
- Assisting around their Community
- Taking in one of their young as a recruit

See "Courting a Faction" below for more details.

./Disfavor Triggers

Similarly, **./Disfavor Triggers** are Faction-specific ways in which the players can upset that Faction. When any of these happen, a **./Disfavor** subroutine (p. XX) is triggered, adding one or more Offense tokens to the Faction. This can lead to the loss of a Faction's support, and even turn them into new Threats!

Introducing a New Faction

Coach will have a number of Factions pre-written and ready for use as part of his scenario design prep. Whenever the Pilots are made aware of a particular Faction's existence, Coach sets that Faction's detail card out on the table for all to see, noting its Agency on the card. This doesn't need to be an elaborate ritual, but for the purposes of efficient play it is important for the Pilots to know when they've met or otherwise discovered valuable potential allies.

(SIDEBAR: "Predisposed" Factions)

A not-uncommon event in a story is the introduction of a Faction that comes pre-loaded with some amount of Favor. The sudden arrival of a fleet of homeworld allies, the group of kids they rescued five sessions ago, that girl who leads the Official Mecha Pilot Fan Club, and so on. If Coach feels that a newly-introduced Faction is both predisposed to favor the Pilots *and* immediately back them up in a conflict, then he may allow them to immediately invest one or more Favor cards as a group when that Faction is placed out on the table. Note that this does *not* count as a triggering of **./Favor**, it is instead simply a free chance to pre-invest in a new Faction at Coach's whim.

Courting a Faction

To gain power from a Faction, the Pilots must first narratively acquire that Faction's trust. This can be done however the players see fit, really. It's all a matter of role-playing.

Once Coach feels that a Faction has been sufficiently impressed, he may allow the Pilots to invest Favor. Mechanically, this is called a **./Favor Trigger** and may at times be built directly into other situations in advance. Triggering a **./Favor** subroutine allows the Pilots the opportunity to invest cards into the Faction, as detailed below.

Investing Favor

When a Pilot triggers **./Favor**, she takes a card and places it face-up on that Faction. She can use any card from:

- Her current Hand
- Any other existing and invested Faction that is relevant to the situation (allowing her to shift externalized power among different Factions)
- The topmost card of the Deck

If there are already cards on the Faction, flip the topmost card face-down and place the new one face up on top. In this fashion, the stack of cards grows taller with only the topmost card visible.

Investment Limits

A Faction can never have more invested Favor cards than its Agency rating. Players *can* still invest additional cards into maxxed-out Factions, but each card they add over its limit forces the bottom card to be discarded.

Once a Favor card is flipped face-down in its stack, it cannot be looked at until the cards above it have been played (or else by way of some stack-peeping Techs). It is up to the players to remember what cards are invested and where. And don't forget Battle School Rule #7: No Card Talk (p. XX).

Investment Strategy

Since there's no maximum value when investing Favor, it may be tempting to just throw in a high card immediately and bank it for later. However, since only the topmost card is available at any one time, it pays to spread them out and try to remember what face-down cards are where. I recommend starting with a lower card and building up a nice numerically-arranged stack, especially on high-Agency Factions.

Using Favor

Favor cards that are *face-up* on a Faction represent immediately-available power that the Faction can lend the Pilots during conflicts. Face-up Favor cards can be played by a Pilot in any situation where the rules demand that the Pilot play a card, such as in Gambits, Throwdowns, and Rumbles. Playing Favor cards in this fashion requires that the Pilot must also spontaneously narrate aloud how that Faction is assisting her at that moment.

To play a Favor card, take the topmost card from its Faction and play it in front of you, per the rules of the moment that are demanding your play. After resolving the Play, if there is a face-down Favor card beneath the card you just took, flip it and leave it on that Faction for later use. No matter how many cards may be invested in that Faction, you can only ever play the topmost card on its stack.

The narrative assistance can be direct, such as a member of that Faction taking immediate action in the Pilot's stead. It can instead be indirect, such as someone in the Faction having provided the Pilot intel before this conflict. In any case, make it interesting and relevant, or Coach may require you to come up with a better explanation.

Causing Offense to a Faction

When the Pilots narratively distress, offend, or piss off a Faction, this triggers a *./Disfavor* subroutine (p. XX). Whether or not an action causes such an offense is Coach's call. Unless somehow mitigated, *./Disfavor* subroutines result in the accrual of Offense tokens placed on top of the Faction's index card on the table.

Factions follow the standard "three strikes and you're out!" rule of decorum. This means that a Faction can have no more than two Offense tokens on it at any time. If ever it would acquire a third token, it is either removed from play or worse: converted into a new Threat (see sidebar).

(SIDEBAR: Enraged Factions: New Threats!)

At Coach's discretion, any Faction that accrues three Offenses may directly turn against the players, directing its efforts to actively bring them down. This results in the Faction transforming into a new Threat! Rules on this are in Coach's section (see p. XX).

Making Reparations

Offended Factions can be soothed with a little work on the part of the Pilot Team. Removing Offense tokens is an optional alternate effect of the `./Favor` subroutine (p. XX), but only with Coach's approval. Coach may also offer the removal of Offenses as a reward for narrative actions that the Pilots take specifically for the purpose of healing the social wounds they have caused.

Hurting/Destroying Factions

Factions can be hurt by some Threat Techs, which can either reduce their Agency or outright remove them from play. However, this probably won't happen all that often in your games. And if it ever gets to the point that the *Pilots* are trying to take out a Faction, that Faction is probably already a mechanical Threat with its own rules for defeat - and if it isn't, it's probably time to make it one!

Example Factions

Yoshi the Flower Boy (Agency 1)

- **Agency:** 1
- **Favor Triggers:** Buy his flowers, treat him kindly, invite him out
- **Disfavor Triggers:** Insult his profession, humiliate him, spit on his flowers

That adorable kid from the slums who sells flowers and keeps an ear open to the word on the streets.

Belle Bugg Banger's Crew (Agency 3)

- **Agency:** 3
- **Favor Triggers:** Give them intel, help them smuggle, give them a good deal
- **Disfavor Triggers:** Sell them out, renege a deal, be too pushy

A team of local smugglers who have an angle on all local goings-on.

The Salient Witch (Agency 5)

- **Agency:** 5
- **Favor Triggers:** Offer them first salvage rights, compliment captain's outfit, get them drunk
- **Disfavor Triggers:** Fight them, sell them to authorities, be too goody-goody

An infamous spsce cruiser piloted by a notorious void corsair.

The United Galactic Fleet (Agency 7)

- **Agency:** 7
- **Favor Triggers:** Defend earth, respect protocol, assist their crew
- **Disfavor Triggers:** Cause too much destruction, get in their way, suck at your duties

The grand fleet of the Galactic Government, here to enforce the martial will of Earth!

Equipping Yourself for Battle

Your Chroma, Daisho, and Robo combat Techs are certainly your most important weapons in your fight, but they are by no means your only options. When you're out in the field, you will have access to a wide variety of additional supplementary weapons and tools. This course will train new cadets in the basics of using Gear and managing their assigned Loadouts. You will only be cleared for the basic training armaments at first, but if you work hard and make top grades, then you too can one day have Top Tier Authorization!

In addition to cool Techs gained from your main playbook components, you also have access to a wide array of supplementary tools called **Gear**. Gear can take the form of nifty accessories, protective armor, and helpful gadgets and doo-dads. These can be used out in the field to provide bonus effects and enhancements, giving you just the edge you need to get ahead of the enemy and complete your missions!

Gear is normally acquired via the Bunker location. By spending points of the Armory resource while at your team's Bunker, you can "check out" Gear for use on your upcoming mission. Unused (and *undamaged*) Gear at the end of a Mission can be returned to the Armory for a restoration of some of those spent Resource points.

Because looting your fallen opponents of their weapons is always fun, sometimes Coach may even let your team find new pieces of Gear out in the field. This is entirely up to his discretion, though, so don't go out there expecting freebies. It *may* even be possible to bring that Gear back and add it to your Armory for future re-use!

Gear is distributed across four tiers of availability, and only upper classmen are allowed to use the higher-grade stuff. As a Freshman, you're only allowed to handle the Tier 1 stuff. But once you have proven yourself in the field and earned your letters, new ranks will open up to you. Sophomores can get Tier 2 stuff, Juniors Tier 3, and Seniors Tier 4. Rumor has it there are even more powerful gadgets available to Battle School Graduates, but we can neither confirm nor deny the validity of these allegations.

Equipping Gear

All Gear is classified into one of three different types: Accessories, Armor, and Tools. Your Pilot begins her schooling with three available "slots" where she can equip her Gear, one for each of the three types. As you learn your lessons and rise in your Class, you'll get more slots which will allow you to carry more Gear. Some Chromas (such as Orange) will have additional Gear options available to them as well.

You can not equip Gear of a higher Tier than your current Class. In other words, Freshmen can only equip Tier 1 Gear, Sophomores can equip up to Tier 2, and so on. Fortunately, any new *yet-to-be-classified* Gear that you find in the field has no assigned Tier, and is free game to Pilots of all classes!

Acquiring Gear

The normal way to get your hands on new Gear is by requisitioning it from your team's home base. While at your Bunker, you can spend points from your Armory resource to requisition Gear for a Mission. Each item costs a number of resource points equal to its Tier.

Ultimately the availability of any Gear is up to Coach, and may change based on narrative events. Old Gear options may be lost forever if destroyed in the field, while other new selections may appear after periods of research. New Gear found in the field may also be added to the Armory's stock, with Coach's approval (see below).

Returning Gear

If you are holding onto Gear that you no longer need, you can bring it back to the Bunker to return to the Armory. If the gear is undamaged or only lightly used, Coach may allow you to recover some or all of its initial Armory resource cost. This is not a guarantee, however, so be sure to handle your shared Team property with care.

Looted Gear

If you're lucky, you can also acquire new Gear while out on a mission, provided Coach adds it to the scene. He'll let you know if and when this happens, and you'll have the option to add it to your inventory if you have any available slots of its type. Gear acquired in this spontaneous manner is considered "loot," does not have a Tier, and does not cost any initial Armory points when found.

If you find new Gear in the field, and your slots are full, you'll need to either swap an old item out with the new, find another Pilot to carry it, or else leave it behind. While you can't use your Armory to *requisition* Gear of a tier higher than your current Class, you *can* use any new Gear acquired in the field, be it classified or not. Just be careful when using new Gear that is clearly out of your class, as it may have unintended consequences!

It may be possible to bring looted Gear back home to add to your Armory. If Coach allows it, such spoils can be researched, assigned an appropriate Tier, and added to the stock, possibly even increasing the Armory resource in the process. Just make sure to not break it before you can bring it home!

A final important note: once looted gear is officially added to your Armory, it *will* require the standard Resource costs in order to requisition it again on future missions. And no, you can't hide it somewhere off-base to retrieve for free later. Your commanding officers monitor all of your reports and are too smart for that nonsense!

Using Gear

Using Gear in Throwdowns

You will primarily use your Gear during Throwdowns, as part of the "Use Gear" Assist Action (see p. XX). When you perform this action, you must choose to either **Activate** a piece of your Gear for a small bonus, or **Sacrifice** it for a greater bonus. Activating your Gear allows you to hold onto it and use it again in a later conflict, while Sacrificing it destroys the item immediately and entirely.

Most of the example Gear listed in this book will have different effects that happen when Activated or Sacrificed. Some specific Gear can *only* be either Activated or Sacrificed, lacking any option or effect for the other. Outside of those lists, for any "default" or undefined new items you introduce, we recommend the following baseline abilities for basic Tier 1 Gear:

- **Activate:** Immediately Draw one card into your Hand.
- **Sacrifice:** Immediately Draw three cards into your Hand.

Limitations: Regardless of their abilities, each use of Gear requires both a very cleverly-narrated statement of how you wish to make use of the item, and of course Coach's approval that said usage makes sense. You can only use (Activate or Sacrifice) any specific piece of Gear once in any given scene, even if it has multiple abilities or actions associated with it!

Using Gear in Gambits

If you have a piece of Gear that is particularly relevant to a Gambit you just failed, you can activate it to get one re-test, with both parties re-playing with entirely new cards. If that fails, you can sacrifice it for third and final attempt. At most one piece of Gear can be thus used in a particular Gambit.

(SIDEBAR: Narrative use of Gear)

There may come times outside of conflicts when it makes sense for the Story to be affected by one or more pieces of your Pilot's Gear. If you feel that your Gear would make a difference in a story moment, present your ideas to Coach. He may agree, and allow you to use the Gear to add more flair to the moment, possibly even bypassing potentially-risky Gambits entirely. If so, try to make each such moment unique, and remember the "once per scene" usage limit.

Gear Lists

Below is an extended list of sample Gear for you to include in your games, or to inspire the creation of your own. In the descriptions below, the notation "**A:**" denotes a Gear's activation effect, "**S:**" denotes its sacrifice effect, and "**P:**" denotes a Passive (always-active) effect. Not every item has all three options, so read their descriptions closely.

Accessories

- **T1: Friendship Bracelet:** P: If *at least two* are in play, each wearer has +1 Buffer per session vs ./Schism only.
- **T1: Tourist Guidebook:** P: When you Tarry at a Location, Coach flips one fewer card, to a minimum of 1.
- **T2: Tactical Comms:** A: Allow a non-participating Pilot to use an Assist Action in your current Throwdown, provided they also have this Gear.
- **T2: Maverick Shades:** P: When you trigger ./Schism, reduce its value by 1, to a minimum of 1, because you're just that cool-looking.
- **T3: Keys to the Hummer:** P: Having wheels helps you get around a lot quicker. When you use a Location's Boon, you can spend 1 Armory to prevent the ./Tarry trigger, if applicable.
- **T3: Bangles the Bunker Cat** P: Everyone loves the kitty. Once per session, lovingly stroke Bangles in order to prevent *any* ./Schism trigger.
- **T4: Jet Pack!** A: Instantly win a relevant movement-based Gambit, before cards are played, with Coach's approval. Then Flip a card: if it's a face or ace, the Jet Pack is out of fuel and requires refill at base for 1 Armory.
- **T4: Captain's Stripes** A: Instantly win a relevant social-based Gambit, before cards are played, with Coach's approval. Then Flip a card: if it's a face or ace, the Captain's Stripes are removed, and the jig is up.

Armor

- **T1: Basic Training Armor:** P: increase max Buffers by +1. If all personal Buffers are depleted, destroy Armor.
- **T1: Techie Overalls** P: Add +1 to played card value in any repair-based Gambit.
- **T2: Field Armor:** P: increase max Buffers by +2. If all personal Buffers are depleted, destroy Armor.
- **T2: Adaptive Camosuit** Add +2 to played card value in any stealth-based Gambit.
- **T3: Tactical Armor:** P: increase max Buffers by +3. If all personal Buffers are depleted, destroy Armor.

- **T3: Power Loader** P: Add +3 to played card value in any strength-based Gambit.
- **T4: Assault Armor:** P: increase max Buffers by +4. If all personal Buffers are depleted, destroy Armor.
- **T4: Experimental Battlesuit:** A: Alien Battlesuit gives you your choice of the following: +2 to base Strike, +2 to max Buffers, +2 to max Charges, or an immediate bonus Draw. This Gear can be activated multiple times in any conflict, but the wearer cannot choose the same effect twice in a row. S: You die, and Trigger both ./Ruin and ./Trauma:Everyone_Else(7).

Tools

- **T1: First Aid Kit:** A: restore 2 spent Buffers to a Pilot. S: restore 4 spent Buffers to a Pilot
- **T1: Patch Kit:** S: Restore 1 Grit to Robo.
- **T2: Pocket Pistol:** A: Deal immediate ./Trauma to enemy
- **T2: Pocket Rocket:** S: Deal immediate ./Trauma(2) to enemy
- **T3: Memory Lozenge:** A: Look at any single face-down card in any single Faction's Favor stack. S: Look at all the face-down cards in any single Faction's Favor stack. Replace cards precisely after looking.
- **T3: Robo-tool Bag:** A: Restore 1 Grit to Robo.
- **T4: The MacGuffin:** The Pre-Cultural Chamber, the Single Piece, the Dusk Key - whatever you call it, this is the basic plot-crucial item that has no mechanical use, but still requires someone to carry. A MacGuffin can really be of any Tier, suitable to the current needs of the mission.
- **T4: Tape Rewinder:** S: Someone in engineering turned this ancient relic into an experimental time machine! Sacrifice after revealing the cards in a Gambit or Throwdown initiative play, to take back your card and play a different one instead.

Tier 5 Gear

[REDACTED]

Teamwork Makes the Dream Work!

Being an elite Battle School Pilot - the best of the best of humanity's saviors! - is not just about colorful jumpsuits and big robots. More important than any of that is the crucial glue that binds all of your raw talent and hard training together: your Team! As Gattai Pilots you are expected to work together in all things, be it fighting, training, planning, eating, and more. These courses will teach you what you need to get started, but it's up to you and your cohort to dedicate yourselves to mastering these guidelines and truly becoming the strongest Team you can be.

In addition to the individual Pilots, the Team as a whole is practically a character unto itself. This chapter details all of the Team-focused mechanics that the entire Pilot group will have to learn how to manage together. This includes balancing Harmony, navigating your shared Home Base, and managing your combined Team Resources.

Team Harmony

Harmony is a 7-point color-coded gauge that determines how in sync *the entire Team* is with each other. With a high Harmony, you are a tight-knit, top-notch unit, drawing power and inspiration from each other to do your best. With a low Harmony, you are out of sync with your goals, constantly at odds with one another, and acting in ways that are increasingly detrimental to each other's well-being.

Harmony can be threatened by the buildup of **Schism**, which can eventually lower the team's Harmony as they act in ways that piss each other off. It can likewise be restored and boosted by **./Rally** subroutines. Keeping track of this fluctuation in Harmony is a responsibility shared by the whole Team.

The entire team uses the same singular, central Harmony tracker, and each of their own actions can affect it. The Harmony scale follows the classic "Roy G. Biv" color array, assigning a numerical rank to each color. Lower Harmony values (aka "Red-ward" values) indicate massive intra-team conflict, while higher values (aka "Vio-ward" values) indicate increasing strength of coordination and unity.

Harmony Table:

Harmony	Rank
Red	1
Orange	2
Yellow	3
Green	4
Blue	5
Indigo	6
Violet	7

(SQUARP: may look better as a horizontal table)

Fusion: How Harmony Works

Harmony's sole purpose in the game is to simultaneously limit and empower the Team's abilities to fight together as a single unit. This matters most during Throwdowns and their subsequent Final Form Rumbles. The specific mechanics based on Harmony are below:

First: Harmony directly limits Team size in Throwdowns. The numerical rank of the Team Harmony sets a hard limit on how many Pilots can fight together at the start of any new Throwdown. For example, if Harmony is Green (4), then at most 4 of the Pilots can work together when a new Throwdown is declared. This only matters at the *start* of the fight: the Team's lineup is unaffected by mid-Throwdown changes to Harmony.

Second: Harmony directly sets all of the Team's derived modifiers in Rumble Mode. When the Team assembles their Final Form, the Harmony score sets the base for all derived modifiers, including the Final Form's Buffers, Rumble Charges, Strike Ranges, and Bonus Draws. In fact, the only Pilot-facing Rumble mechanics *not* based on Harmony are Rumble Tech outputs (based on the stage of the Rumble) and Robo Grit (based on the individual Robo). In this manner, each successively-higher rank of Harmony is effectively an order of magnitude in power greater than the prior.

That's "it." This may not seem like a lot for all the fuss, but as the core foundation of all of *Gattaibushido's* "Final Form VS the Big Giant Monster" mechanics, it's impact on the game is, well, gigantic. If the only game mechanic you truly master is your Harmony, then you will dominate the Enemy.

(SIDEBAR: Harmony in Smaller Teams)

The Harmony system was designed with the intention of the game being most heavily targeted at groups of five to seven players. Five-person teams are common in much of the game's influences, and aiming at the number 7 was a really good fit for both narrative and mechanical style. However, this may present some oddities when scaling *down* to smaller groups of, say, four or fewer Pilots.

In one noteworthy situation, smaller groups will find that they are not particularly burdened with a pressing need to attain a Harmony greater than 4. Per the normal rules, a group of four Pilots only needs to maintain a Green level in order to ensure they can all fight together. Conversely, they may find that they are crippled by being unable to access all of the Rumble Techs, despite keeping Harmony at Violet.

A proposed solution to this is to set a second "Derived Harmonic" rank equal to one-half the normal rank, rounded up (the results would be 1/1/2/2/3/3/4). Then use this derived rank to limit how many Pilots can fight together, while keeping the normal rank for all of its other normal uses. This preserves Harmony's role as a "teamwork limiter" in its intended spirit, while leaving all of its more technical uses unchanged.

Additionally, in bigger Rumbles, consider allowing some Pilots in smaller groups to take *two* positions each, giving them access to both Rumble Techs. Limit the total involved positions to the normal Harmony rank, split among the Team. For example, for a four-Pilot Team at Harmony Blue (5), all would choose one Position, except for a single Pilot who would choose two.

Schism: Lowering Team Harmony

As the Pilots push themselves too hard and act against the spirit of the Team, they can accrue points of **Schism** on their Harmony tracker. This usually comes as a result of **./Schism** damage subroutines, most often as a result of striking Dissonant during Throwdowns. The **./Schism** subroutine is detailed more completely on p. XX.

Buffer tokens can help mitigate Schism, but only on a limited scale. A Pilot may spend her own Buffers to soak points of Schism that *she herself* caused, at the time that they are accrued. Outside of a few special character Techs, Pilots cannot soak Schism for each other.

Once the Team has accrued 7 or more points of Schism, they must erase 7 points (keeping any excess Schism that may have piled on) and immediately lower the overall Harmony one step toward Red. If that would somehow leave them still holding 7 or more Schism, repeat this process, until fewer than 7 points remain.

In the Red: Self-Destructive Behaviors

The Harmony tracker can never be lower than Red (1). Once it hits Red, if there is any amount of Schism remaining, erase it and then trigger **./Trauma:Team** with a value equal to the amount of Schism erased. Whenever the Team would accrue any additional net Schism points while in the Red, ignore the points and instead trigger **./Trauma:Team** with the same value. This represents your Team's descent into self-destructive behaviors finally taking its toll out directly on their personal well-being.

As being in the Red carries no Schism tally, a single successful **./Rally** is all that is needed to get back up to Orange Harmony.

Restoring Harmony

If your Harmony is lower than you would prefer, do not despair! Harmony can be increased or restored in the following ways:

- Using your Fan Club (p. XX)
- Using certain Gear (p. XX)
- Using certain Techs (p. XX)
- Winning appropriate Gambits (p. XX) and Throwdowns (p. XX), or involvement in other narrative activities*

* Note that not all Throwdowns, Gambits, or other activities will be eligible for Harmony restoration. The situation must make sense, and the conflict needs to be directly related to the improvement of Team Spirit and teamwork, a matter which is ultimately Coach's call. Examples include therapy sessions, team spirit-boosting activities, group interventions, etc.

Your Home Base

Every new Pilot team starts play with a Home Base, which consists of three Locations: Barracks, Bunker, and Hangar. Each base Location supplies the Team with an associated Boon in the form of a special Team Resource. These Locations function like any other Location, meaning they can be damaged and even Razed.

The **Barracks** Location is where the Team rests, relaxes, and lives. The Barracks provides access to the **Fan Club** Team Resource as its Location Boon.

The **Bunker** Location is where the Team trains and keeps their special gear, and where they retreat to when in need of protection. The Bunker provides access to the **Armory** Team Resource as its Location Boon.

The **Hangar** Location is where the Team's Robos are stored and maintained during downtime. The Hangar provides access to the **Pit Crew** Team Resource as its Location Boon.

The Resources are explained in the next section. For more details on Locations, see "The Places You Will Go!" on p. XX.

Team Resources

The Team's Base (see above) provides three special **Team Resources** as Boons to the Base's three core Locations. These Resources add an extended management tool that can empower the Pilots in a number of ways. The Resources are:

- **Fan Club:** the general reputation of the team in the public eye; provided by the Barracks Location.
- **Armory:** how well-stocked the team's Gear reserves are; provided by the Bunker Location.
- **Pit Crew:** the size and skill level of the team's Mecha support crew; provided by the Hangar Location.

Each Resource is represented by a numerical value from 0 and up. The Resources each use these numbers differently. For the most part, the three middle ranks are mainly there for narrative color, while the lowest and the highest have the most direct mechanical effects.

Value	Description
0	Depleted
1-3	Threatened: basic scraps, minimal crew, low rep

Value	Description
4-6	Subsistence: maintenance of standard team ops
7-9	Surplus: lots to spare, high rep, solid support crew
10+	Bountiful! Will be converted to Score at end of Scenario

With a 0 in any of the three Resources, the Pilots are locked out of using one of their core abilities. On the flip side, zero is the absolute lowest a value can go, and any incoming resource loss below zero is ignored.

Any resource that reaches 10 or higher during a scenario is considered to be in a state of great bountiful surplus. If the team doesn't otherwise make use of this bounty by the end of a Scenario, any points in this range are directly converted into final Score.

Resource Conversions: When in a narratively-suitable position, the Team can convert values from one Resource to another with a 2:1 conversion rate. This can represent donating gear or services to their Fans, recruiting new Pit Crew members from their fanbase, sending their crew on shopping runs, or however else they can describe it.

Fan Club (Barracks Location)

The **Fan Club** Resource represents your team's general reputation among the civilian populace. The Fan Club can take any form your game wishes, but by default they are considered to be real people active in your game world. You are encouraged to flesh them out with names and stories, and even involve them directly in your games, possibly as core Scenario plot hooks!

Spending Fan Club: You can spend your Fan Club in two ways. First, you can draw on your Fan Club to help mitigate potential PR disasters, as they rally to defend your good name against nay-sayers. In this function, your Fan Club serves as an expendable Buffer to mitigate ./Disfavor damage.

Second, you can use them for intel. If you have an evening or so of downtime available in the game, you can invoke a **./Tarry** action to spend time socializing with them, maybe via live net chat or even IRL at a local hangout. Doing so allows you to spend 1 point of Fan Club to acquire insights into your current mission, gaining one "clue" into a current mystery - filtered of course through the uncertain credibility of random online fans. Use these sparingly, though, because your fans don't like having to do all your work for you!

Depleting Fan Club: If the Fan Club is depleted, you cannot restore Harmony at all! Any ./Rally subroutines triggered while in this state are ignored. You'll need to find a way to restore your credibility somehow before your Harmony can be improved.

Location: The Fan Club is directly tied to the Pilots' Barracks Location. If that Location is Razed, Fan Club points can not be spent or restored, but they *can* still be affected by Coach's Threats.

Armory (Bunker Location)

The **Armory** represents your Team's collection of stockpiled goods, beyond their Daisho and Robos. This includes extra weapons and other valuable Gear that they can make use of on their missions.

Spending Armory: Your Armory points allow you to check gear out for use in the field. Each piece of Gear costs its tier in Armory points (e.g. Tier 1 gear costs 1 point, Tier 2 costs 2, and so on). The points are spent

immediately, however if the Gear is returned safely the points may be restored. See the Gear section for extended rules (see p. XX).

Pilots can generally acquire Armory Gear at any time their character would be considered to have easy access to their base of operations. If Coach allows it, the pilots can requisition gear in the field for an additional cost per item, at his discretion.

Depleting Armory: If the Armory is ever depleted, you cannot make use of your Daisho' active Techs!

Location: The Armory is directly tied to the Pilots' Bunker Location. If that Location is Razed, Armory points can not be spent or restored, but they *can* still be affected by Coach's Threats.

Pit Crew (Hangar Location)

The **Pit Crew** represents the Team's support crew, the folks who work on their Robos and keep them in optimal operational conditions. Like the Fan Club, the Pit Crew consists of an actual team of additional characters that are there to help the Pilots on the sideline. You are encouraged to give them names, personalities, and back-stories.

Spending Pit Crew: You can spend points of your Pit Crew for two purposes: summoning Robos and repairing them afterward. Each time you involve a Robo in a conflict, you must send 1 point of Pit Crew, representing general wear and tear maintenance.

To repair damaged Robos, it costs 1:2 for Grit repairs while you're back at Home Base in your team's Robo Hangar, 1:1 if you're making repairs in the field, and 2:1 if you're calling on your Pit Crew for urgent assistance in anything that Coach deems to be a "high-risk situation."

Depleting Pit Crew: If the Pit Crew is depleted, you cannot use your Robos at all! You can't Summon them or use their Bonuses, and you won't stand a chance against the BGM!

Location: The Pit Crew is directly tied to the Pilots' Hangar Location. If that Location is Razed, Pit Crew points can not be spent or restored until it is rebuilt, but they *can* still be affected by Coach's Threats.

Advanced Curriculum: Make Your Grades Count!

After you have completed enough missions, and achieved your goals as both a Battle School Pilot *and* a functional human being, you can earn enough credits to rise in your class! As you increase in your grade, you will gain access to greater Techs and higher tiers of mission Gear. But you will also take on greater responsibility, so do not take such advancement lightly!

As your Pilots complete missions and follow their personal hopes and dreams, they learn important **Lessons** which can unlock valuable **Evolutions**, increasing their mechanical prowess and versatility in play. If you are familiar with other popular role-playing games, this is the system by which your character "levels up" in ability.

Lessons

Lessons are the currency of evolution and the core of the character advancement system. As the story plays out, the Pilots can "earn" Lessons from various in-game events. By acquiring and then learning from these Lessons, the Pilots can increase their abilities.

In every scenario, Pilots should have multiple opportunities to earn Lessons. For starters, every Playbook has a built-in suggestion for ways in which that character earns Lessons. Additionally, at the end of every session, Coach will allow players to nominate others for spontaneously earned lessons, based on the events of that session.

When a Lesson is earned, the player writes it down on her Pilot record sheet. These will build up over the course of a scenario, with highly active Pilots potentially able to earn a handful or more. A Pilot can have at most seven (7) Lessons written down on her record sheet at any one time. If she has some lingering for a while, she may want to erase some old moldy entries to make room for new, more promising ones.

The Lesson Votes

At the end of every game scenario (or at key check-points of particularly long scenarios), during the "Debriefing" stage of play Coach will run the Lessons vote. Start with the earned lessons, and then move to nominated lessons. During this time, each Pilot is eligible to potentially earn *up to three (3)* total new Evolutions: 1 from their earned Lessons, 1 from unexpected bonus Lessons, and finally 1 more from being voted MVP.

Earned Lessons (1 Evolution): Going once around the table clockwise from Coach, each player takes turns nominating *one* item on her list of recorded earned lessons. If she believes that her Pilot has learned from that Lesson, then she must pitch her case for this aloud to the rest of the group. If they agree with her, she marks off that Lesson as "learned" and gives herself one new Evolution. Only one earned Lesson at a time is eligible for this; all other lessons remain written down to be revisited later.

Some Lessons might linger for multiple sessions and even scenarios before the group believes they've been learned from. Others will never be Learned from, and can be crossed off the list at any time, without reward. Since your Pilot has a limit of seven active Lessons at any one time, don't hoard the old ones if you're not likely to ever learn from them!

Bonus Lessons (1 Evolution): With that cycle complete, each player (including Coach!) who wishes can then *choose* to nominate one Pilot *other than herself* for a whole new previously-unrecorded lesson she might have unexpectedly learned from during that session of play. Try and call out different Pilots for recognition, as a Pilot called out more than once still only gets the single bonus Evolution.

Think hard on this: did another Pilot show noteworthy character growth in response to any particular story events? If so, call them out on it, and then discuss with the group for a majority approval. Each Pilot thus called out and voted on gets one bonus Evolution, on the spot.

MVP Vote (1 Evolution): Finally, the Pilots must then nominate each other for Most Valuable Pilot of that scenario. Who came through the strongest? Whose idea saved the day? Who carried the rest on their back?

This should be an open discussion, and in the end the group will vote on who they think was the most awesome Pilot in the recent story sessions. If there's a tie, Coach breaks it. The winner gets one more Evolution.

(SIDEBAR: Not Every Lesson is Learned!)

Not every Lesson will (or should!) be Learned from! This works best when you think of your Pilots as *people* and not merely as game tools. Just as in the real world, where we all know people who never

seem to learn from their mistakes, so too are your Pilots meant to be flawed and imperfect people. Do not fret if you can't find a clever way to convert an old Lesson into an Evolution - just erase it and make room for more!

Applying Evolutions

"Evolution happens when the rider and his armor become one." - El Dora Five

When you earn an Evolution, you can spend it to unlock a new character enhancement. Enhancements include acquiring new abilities, increasing the power of current abilities, and adding ranks to your various tertiary bonuses (Strike, Charges, and so on). These advancements progress in a repeating cycle of threes-and-sevens:

1. Tech Evolution
2. Tech Evolution
3. Commitment Evolution
4. Tech Evolution
5. Tech Evolution
6. Commitment Evolution
7. Class Advancement

After the seventh evolution, the cycle begins again from the start, and repeats as such until your character dies or graduates from play.

Tech Evolutions

Tech Evolutions allow you to "level-up" any one Tech within your three power categories (Chroma, Daisho, and Robo), or instead choose and level a Universal Tech. You cannot evolve the same category back to back. So if your previous Tech Evolution was within your Chroma Techs, for example, then for your next Evolution you must instead choose within your Daisho, Robo, or Universal. See below for details on leveling within each category.

Evolving Chromas

Chroma Evolution: When you choose to evolve your Chroma, you can increase the rank of either its Primary or Secondary Tech, each to a maximum rank of 3.

Evolving Daishos

Daisho Evolution: When you choose to evolve a Daisho, you can either add a new Quality to an existing Daisho in your collection, or instead acquire a new base weapon frame to add to your collection, which does not have any Qualities yet. You cannot add more than three Qualities to any single Frame.

Evolving Robos

Robo Evolution: When you choose to evolve your Robo, you can increase either its main Tech Rank (to a maximum rank of 3) or its Grit Rank (unlimited). Increasing the former affects its core Tech abilities, making them more useful in the field. When you increase Grit, its base raises by +2, making it more durable in combat.

As an alternative, you may instead spend an evolution "purchasing" a new Robo altogether. Talk to Coach to see if this is allowed. If so, it's Tech rank starts at 1.

Evolving Universal Techs

There are four special "Universal" Techs that all Pilots have access to, regardless of their Chromas. Whenever you earn a Tech Evolution, you can choose to level up one of the Universal Techs instead. Like all Techs, each of the four Universal Techs has three ranks of evolution. These Techs are detailed below:

Buffer Tech: Evolving this Tech increases your Pilot's maximum Buffer Pool, with the following rewards:

- Rank 1: Increase your Buffer Pool max by +2
- Rank 2: Increase your Buffer Pool max by +3 (for a total of +5)
- Rank 3: Increase your Buffer Pool max by +5 (for a total of +10)

Card Tech: Evolving this Tech gives you more card options in play, with the following rewards:

- Rank 1: Increases your base Bonus Draw by +1
- Rank 2: Increases your base Bonus Draw by +1 (for a total of +2)
- Rank 3: Increases your base Hand Size by +1

Charge Tech: Evolving this Tech increases your Pilot's maximum Charge Pool, with the following rewards:

- Rank 1: Increase your Charge Pool max by +1
- Rank 2: Increase your Charge Pool max by +2 (for a total of +3)
- Rank 3: Increase your Charge Pool max by +4 (for a total of +7)

Strike Tech: Evolving this Tech increases your base Strike Range by +1 per Evolution rank.

Commitment Evolutions

Commitment Evolutions allow you to choose a new descriptive adjective to describe yourself based on your portrayal in the story thus far. Along with this adjective comes a +1 increase to any one of your six core stats - which in turn also increases its associated Commitment's balance maximum. See the Commitment rules on p. XX for more details on maintaining balances.

This increase must narratively fit the nature of the chosen adjective. Talk to your team for suggestions, as they just may know your Pilot better than you do! Additionally, at this time you may *choose* to shift a single point within all three of your Commitments, based on your shifting motivations and goals from current play.

Class Advancement

At every seventh evolution, instead of repeating the three-step process above, you "level up" through what is called a **Class Advancement**, and acquire a new Class Rank at your battle school. All new Pilots begin play as Freshmen, with all the basic abilities established through their core Playbooks. As they move up to Sophomore rank and beyond, they gain more core grounding in play, including increased Hands and access to more and better Gear.

At each Class Advancement, your Pilot acquires the following:

- **Class Rank:** Your Class Rank increases from Freshman to Sophomore, and then Junior, and then Senior, and finally Graduate. These terms are mainly just story flavor, but they also provide an easy gauge of character power.
- **Hand Size:** Your Max Hand increases by **one (1)** card.
- **Gear Slots:** You gain one additional Gear Slot of your choice of type: Armor, Accessory, or Tool.

Class Advancement Reference Table:

Class	Hand	Gear Slots	Gear Tier
Freshman	3	3	1
Sophomore	4	4	2
Junior	5	5	3
Senior	6	6	4
Graduate	7	7	[REDACTED]

Restoring Damaged Commitments

If any of your Pilot's Commitment balances is lower than 6, you can choose to spend a Tech evolution to instead restore a single point to that Commitment (and thus increase one of its Stats). This does not apply a new adjective, nor does it otherwise alter the cycle of evolution.

Loadouts: Switching Chromas, Daisho, and Robos

I am a strong believer that a Pilot's Chroma, style, and chosen mecha deeply echo her own inner nature in an intensely personal way. However, no player should be forced to stick with their initial choices if they feel like trying out other character options over time. While changing your Chroma should be reserved for extremely rare matters of powerful story growth, changing your Daisho and Robo can be as simple as writing them down and swapping them out at the beginning of a new mission.

For these occasions, use the **Alternate Evolution Pilot Sheet**. This allows you to track different Chromas, Daiso, and Robos that you evolve over time. Following the standard Evolution cycle, acquiring a new Role, Daisho, or Robo can be as simple as investing a single Evolution to acquire its first Tech rank.

There is an important restriction here to note: **You can only use the Techs of one Chroma, Daisho, and Robo at a time.** When you change into a different Chroma suit, you *become* that Chroma. When you choose to pilot a certain Robo, you are bonded with that Robo *alone*. And you can only wield a single special Daisho at any one time. Coach may choose to allow you to freely swap between Tech "loadouts" throughout the same Scenario, but you cannot use the Techs of multiple Chromas, Daisho, or Robos on the same mission.

Swapping these out should only be done at the Team's home base, and only at dramatically-relevant times, possibly involving a .Tarry trigger for the whole Team. Also note that this kind of loadout-swapping can result in a non-trivial amount of additional bookkeeping, not to mention uncertainty in storytelling. As such we recommend discussing this heavily with your fellow players at the table before doing this too often.

Veteran-Level Evolution

Since each Tech has at most three ranks of empowerment, there are obvious limits to exactly how far a Pilot can evolve from her base array. There may come a point down the line in your Pilot's career where she has maxed out her entire ability allowances across her original Chroma, Daisho, and Robo. When you reach this point of Evolution, you are referred to as a **Veteran** Pilot. Veterans have a few "advanced" options to choose from.

Graduation

The first option, of course, is **Graduation**. This involves your Pilot leaving the team in some way, but still sticking around in the background of the story. Perhaps she joins the Academy as an instructor, guiding new classes of rookies. Perhaps she joins one of the various crews of the base, lending her arm as a mechanic or taking over as the quartermaster of the armory. Or maybe instead she ventures out with the fleet to take the battle to a new quadrant, carrying on the fight outside of the Team.

Regardless of reasoning, the graduated Pilot leaves play, and you can make a new character from scratch. Keep her old character sheet nearby, however. These stories are full of surprise appearances by old heroes who get back into the action "one last time."

"Locking-in" Techs

If you want to keep playing as the same Pilot, another option at this point is to start "locking in". This allows you to use the Loadouts option above, while also accessing cross-playbook Techs. Using this method, you can spend new Tech Evolutions to "lock in" a single rank of a Tech that you have already fully mastered in any of your current Loadouts, effectively re-purchasing it. That tech then onward is available to you at that locked-in rank, no matter what other loadouts you switch to.

For example, a veteran Green Pilot could spend a Tech Evolution to lock in the first rank of her "I've Got This!" Passive Tech. If she were to then switch to and start developing her skills as a different Chroma, she could still keep using that Green Tech at rank 1. She can then choose to spend more Tech Evolutions to increase the locked-in rank of that Tech, or instead start locking in ranks of her other fully-mastered techs.

SECTION: Space Battle School Tactical Manual: A Young Pilot's Guide to Conflict

(insert bigass artwork)

This official Battle School combat training manual is classified government material. The materials within are authorized only for viewing and use by registered cadets and faculty trainers with GB-07 Combat Readiness security clearance. The strategies and technical data should not be discussed within the observational scope of unauthorized parties. Removal of this manual or its contents from Battle School premises will be punished by expulsion from the program, with possibility of imprisonment.

The Decks: A Primer on Card Usage

The two card Decks are the physical tools for all forms of mechanics resolution in *Gattaibushido:Fusion!* Understanding their interactions is crucial to playing the game. In this Chapter, we break down the basics of

how the cards are used during play.

Card Placements

During the course of play, the cards will cycle between the following physical places in the game's play space:

(SQUARP: include diagram!)

- the two **Decks** (from which you draw, face-down); standard playing card decks of 54 cards each, one for the Pilots and one for Coach.
- the **Pile** (where they are played, face-up); Piles are sent to the Trash after each conflict concludes.
- the **Trash** (where they are discarded, face-up); a Trash is next to each respective Deck.
- your **Hand** (which you hold during play, facing you); this is your personal ongoing and ever-changing array of immediately-accessible playing cards.
- one or more **Factions** (as Favor, stacked face-down with the topmost card face-up); the Pilots use these as external power bases.
- certainly *not* your **Sleeve**, because that's cheating...
- and occasionally the **Floor**, where we all inevitably drop them from time to time!

Hand

Your **Hand** is a collection of cards that you keep to yourself, hidden from the rest of the players. The majority of your Plays will come from this Hand. *All* players carry a Hand, whose size is determined as follows:

- **Pilots:** Your max Hand starts at three (3) cards, and increases through Evolution and a small variety of other options.
- **Coach:** Your max Hand is set at the number of Pilots participating in the session - if there are four Pilots, then your max Hand is 4 cards.

During active conflicts, your current Hand size may fluctuate wildly as cards are drawn, played, and discarded. Between conflicts, if you ever hold either *fewer* or *more* than your max Hand, you must either draw back up or discard back down to max, respectively.

Deck

There are two base **Decks** of 54 standard playing cards, placed face-down in the middle for everyone to see and reach. *All* of the Pilots use one Deck for their actions, while Coach uses a separate Deck of his own. In this text, the term "**The Deck**" is always contextual: if the Pilots are told to draw from The Deck, this refers to the Pilot Deck, and likewise with Coach from his own Deck.

Faction

Factions are represented by index cards placed out upon the table for all to see. Each Faction may have a single associated stack of cards, all face-down except for the topmost card, which is face-up. Only Pilot cards may be placed on Factions, and as such only Pilots may play from Faction stacks.

Complete rules on using Factions start on p. XX.

Pile

During Throwdowns, a **Pile** of cards temporarily exists in the middle of the table. Whenever a participant plays a card, they play it on top of the Pile, face-up. Long Throwdowns with many participants can create huge piles indeed.

Trash

Each Deck has an associated **Trash** heap, which is a stack of face-up cards next to it on the table. When a card is discarded during play, it goes on top of the Trash heap of the relevant Deck, face-up. Trash heaps are not reshuffled into their Decks except at very specific moments (see below).

Card Details

Gattaibushido:Fusion! uses standard playing cards, available just about everywhere. The assumptions are:

- Basic rectangular playing cards, 54 in total
- Each card has a front (or face) with a different rank and suit on it.
- Each card has a back with an identical pattern, making the cards indistinguishable when looked at from behind.

When choosing what cards to use for your game, I always encourage trying to find sets whose backs show images that match the game's themes. Just be sure that the Pilot and Coach Decks have different backs, so as to easily differentiate them on the table.

Face, Faces, and Facing

If you're not used to playing cards, the terms "face" and "facing" and "face cards" can be a bit confusing. Hopefully the following can make some of that easier:

- Every card has a face and a back. The face shows the rank and suit of the card, while the back shows the standard card backing pattern for that Deck.
- Some cards have *literal* Faces on their faces, denoting them as Jacks, Queens, and Kings. While every card in the Deck has a face, these cards are *specifically* called Face Cards (aka Faces). They have number values of 11, 12, and 13, respectively.
- Finally, the term "facing" is used to denote the directional positioning of the card in play. For example, if a card is laying on the table with it's "face" side directed toward the table, then it is noted as "facing down," or simply "face-down."

The Suits

The four card Suits are primarily used to break ties and empower certain actions in Throwdowns. For this game's purposes, the Suit order is Spades (highest), Hearts, Diamonds, and Clubs (lowest) - just remember "descending alphabetical."

Number Cards

The Numbered cards are ranked by value, with Two (2) being the lowest and Ten (10) being the highest. Note that Twos are considered somewhat important in that by default they are the only cards that beat Aces (see below).

Face Cards

Jacks, Queens, and Kings are typically played as if they were number cards with values of 11, 12, and 13, respectively. They are also sometimes used in special Techs and other situations, making them a bit more valuable in the common play. For example, many of Coach's mechanics involve discarding Face cards specifically.

Aces

Aces are the highest-ranked card in the Deck, with a functional rank of 14. However, Aces have a weakness against Twos. In a Gambit, a Two always beats an Ace. In a Throwdown, an Ace on top of the Pile can be Countered by a Two (and only a Two), and similarly cannot be played as a Counter if a Two is on the top of the Pile.

Jokers (and Omens)

Four Joker cards - two in each Deck - are used as a special pacing and empowerment mechanic. The Jokers are always shuffled into their respective Decks *face-up*. When a Joker is revealed (by reaching the top of a Deck), immediately take it and set it out face-up beside its Deck for all to see as what is called an "**Omen**."

Omens represent unforeseen new portents that color the current course of the story's events. When an Omen enters play, you must immediately narrate the nature of this unexpected event to fit the moment in which it was drawn. Some examples of possible Omen narration:

- Your mecha scrapes the side of the Hangar as it is leaving base.
- The lights of the mission location suddenly flicker with a sickening hue.
- When your opponent charges at you, you remember a terrifying moment from your first time seeing the aliens.
- You hear the voice of your dead sister - the one you accidentally killed through your own recklessness - suddenly whispered over the Team's comms channel.

Omens in play exist in two states: **Active** (face-up) and **Spent** (face-down). When revealed, Omens remain Active until used for one of the following purposes, based on their Deck of origin:

Pilot Omens can be Spent at any time by a Pilot to gain additional Charges. The Pilot first flips the Active Omen face-down, and then gets to choose: she can trigger either `./Chargeup:Self(Full)` or `./Chargeup:All(2)`.

Coach Omens can be Spent by Coach to trigger the Scenario's Crisis events (see p. XX).

It is important to note that the buildup of *any* number of Omens can benefit several of Coach's Threats, so Pilots are advised to spend them quickly.

Jokers are *never* sent to Play Piles or the Trash. Once both of a Deck's Jokers have been revealed and Spent, immediately return them face-up to their Deck, then reshuffle that Deck.

"Wild" Cards

Some effects in the game may declare that a card is **Wild** for a time. When a card is played as Wild, it is played face-down, and its player declares it to function as any other standard (non-Joker) card.

Card Terminology

Discard

When the rules call for a card to be **discarded**, you must remove the card in question from its current place in play and place it face-up on top of its Trash, bypassing all other play locations in the transfer. Discards never count toward Play Pile totals.

Draw

When you are told to **draw** a card, take the top card of your Deck and put it in your current active Hand of cards. Sometimes you may be told to "draw and immediately play" - in this case, that card skips your Hand and is played directly to the table. Outside of that specification, when you draw a card, it always goes into your Hand before any subsequent actions or plays follow.

Flip

The mechanics sometimes instruct you to **flip** one or more cards. If it's a single card, just flip it in place so that whichever side was previously facing the table (or "down") is now facing away from the table (or "up"). So if you're told to flip a card that is "face up" on the table, flip it so it is now "face down" in the same place.

If you are told to flip a *stack* of cards, first tidy up the stack in place so that all the cards neatly align, and then flip the entire stack as a single unit, so that the card that was facing towards the table is now facing away from it. Do *not* flip each card individually.

Unless specified otherwise, all Flips are performed using the card(s) at the top of the player's relevant Deck.

Play

When the rules tell you to **play** a card, you take a card from your Hand and place it on the table in front of you. If you see the terms **Play-up** or **Play-down** in the text, the second word specifies the direction that your played card should face when you play it. Unless otherwise stated, all card plays are performed face-up.

If the rules call for a "**blind**" play, you must play that card directly from the top of the Deck. Draw the card and immediately play it.

Shuffle/Reshuffle

Whenever the rules call for a **Shuffle** or **Reshuffle** of a Deck, the Deck's owner picks up both the Deck *and* its Trash and then reshuffles them back together. Unless specific rules state otherwise, the following items are not typically reshuffled into the Deck during common reshuffles: Hands, Factions, Omens, Piles, Zones, etc - in other words, any other card locations that are not specifically the Deck or the Trash.

(SIDEBAR: The Empty Deck)

If a Deck runs out of cards outside of an active conflict, immediately Reshuffle it and then continue with play. If a Deck runs out of cards *during* an active conflict, *do not* reshuffle it until the conflict Outcome has been resolved and it is time to drop and draw.

No Player may Discard, Draw, Flip, or Play cards from an empty Deck; If a game mechanic tells you to do so, ignore that mechanic. If a mechanic *requires* it, prevent that mechanic. If an action or Tech requires it, that action or Tech cannot be performed.

./Triggers: Subroutines

Much of the game is driven by a number of small self-contained mechanical processes called **Subroutines**. Subroutines are implemented as quick scripted "system calls" activated (or "fired") by **./Trigger** notations as consequences of the natural flow of game play. Since these fire-and-forget subroutines are frequently triggered via myriad different game components, all of the subroutines are tagged and collected in this section.

Think of subroutines like quick side mechanics, or small self-contained functions in computer code (also known as, aha, "subroutines"). When fired, each one makes a minor tweak or modification here or there, and then shuts down. While each subroutine is called at various times by other, larger, more complicated game mechanics, they are not solely subservient to or isolated components of those greater processes.

Each subroutine detailed here is likely to be triggered in multiple places throughout the rest of this document. You don't need to memorize them on a first-read - instead, we collect them here for ease of future reference.

Ultimately there are two main categories of subroutines: those that trigger actions, and those that cause "damage" to other components.

./Trigger Notations

Subroutine triggers are always given with the same basic "dot-slash" notation. The full extended format is: **./Triggername:Target(Value)**. The first part declares the subroutine being triggered, the second part states the recipient of that subroutine's effects, and the parenthetical part optionally states a mechanical value of additional output.

Target:

The breakdown of valid targets is as follows:

- **Choice:** apply the value to the instigator's choice of valid recipient.
- **Each:** apply the value individually to every valid target currently in play.
- **Opponent:** apply the value to the instigator's active opponent.
- **Self:** apply the value to the instigator of the subroutine.
- **Team:** apply the value to the entire Team of Pilots, divided as equally among them as possible, starting from Coach's left.
- ...and other obvious contextual choices such as Pilot, Threat, Coach, etc.

If the subroutine is called without the ":Target" suffix, then the target is assumed to be either implicit in the subroutine or simply not applicable.

Value:

Some triggers have an additional numerical notation, such as **./Triggername:Target(2)** or **./Triggername:Target(Full)**. This number indicates the base numerical **Value** of the subroutine's effect, within

the context of its mechanical defaults. For example, **./Chargeup:Self(2)** implies that your Pilot gains two Charges, while **./Chargeup:Self(Full)** implies that your Charge gauge fills to maximum capacity. If no value is given, assume the base minimum effect for the subroutine.

Resolving Subroutines and ./Triggers

When in doubt, use the following flow to execute and resolve all subroutine ./Triggers:

1. Declare the source of the ./Trigger and the subroutine being called.
2. Check scene-present components (Techs, Gear, Threats, Locations, etc) for supplementary effects that may be relevant, and apply them.
3. Check said components for preventative or reductive effects that may interfere, and apply them.
4. If not prevented, resolve the subroutine using the applied modifications, if any.
5. If not soaked, apply the resulting effects of the subroutine.
6. Check for and execute any relevant automatic follow-up subroutines that may occur.

Clarifications

Unless specified in the triggering event or ability, the following subroutine rules are always in effect.

1. **Subroutines fire and resolve one at a time, in the order in which they were triggered.**
2. **Subroutines are resolved immediately upon firing.**
3. **"Prevented" triggers and subroutines do not trigger, do not activate combos, and have no effect. Nothing happens.**
4. **The effects of a subroutine can only be prevented if the subroutine itself is *not* prevented.**
5. **Effects that modify a subroutine's value or targets are calculated and applied in the most reasonable order.**
6. **Any abilities/etc that "soak" damage must be used at the moment the damage is inflicted. The damage still occurs, but is not received by its target.**
7. **Once a subroutine is resolved, it is resolved. If you forgot a modifier, consider it a glitch; move along and try to remember it next time.**

(SIDEBAR: Subroutine List Reference:)

We've listed the Subroutines here for convenient reference. These are all explained in greater detail further below.

Boost-type:

- **./Boost** = activates any other boost-type subroutine
- **./Chargeup** = allows a Pilot to accrue one Charge
- **./Favor** = allows a Pilot to invest one card into a Faction
- **./Fortify** = allows a Pilot to recover one spent Buffer token
- **./Rally** = removes all schism or increases Team Harmony by one level
- **./Restore** = allows a Pilot to recover one point of temporary Stat loss
- **./Replenish** = allows a Pilot to boost a Team Resource by one point

Damage-type:

- **./Damage** = activates any other damage-type subroutine
- **./Disfavor** = adds an Offense token to a Faction
- **./Ruin** = damages a Location by one state
- **./Schism** = adds a Schism token to the team Harmony gauge
- **./Trauma** = reduces a Pilot's Commitment Stats by one point

Special:

- **./Burn** = forces a target to discard their current Hand
- **./Purge** = fully depletes a Pilot's Charge gauge
- **./Rebuild** = allows the Team to repair one Damaged Location
- **./Tarry** = causes a single Deck Discard (Coach) to simulate the passage of time

Boost Subroutines

Boost-type Subroutines are those that involve applying both *variable* and *beneficial* effects to game components.

./Boost

Valid Targets: Contextual

Default Value: Contextual

The **./Boost** subroutine is a placeholder for any other boost-type subroutine from those detailed below. In computing terms, think of it like a "symlink" in action. When triggered, the activating player chooses any other boost-type subroutine and activates it instead, passing any included targets and/or variables to the new subroutine. The chosen subroutine must make contextual sense in the situation in which it is being triggered, of course.

./Chargeup

Valid Targets: Pilots

Default Value: 1 Charge

The **./Chargeup** subroutine allows a Pilot to add points to her Charge gauge. If value is "FULL" then fill the Charge gauge to max. If her Charges are already full, this has no effect.

./Favor

Valid Targets: Factions

Default Value: 1 card (optionally: 1 Offense token)

The **./Favor** subroutine allows the Team to invest cards into a revealed Faction. Alternately, Coach may allow a Pilot to use a **./Favor** subroutine to remove an Offense token from a relevant Faction.

Unless otherwise specified, by default the subroutine allows a single Pilot to affect a single Faction of their choice. See p. XX for full details on Factions and Favor.

./Fortify

Valid Targets: Pilots, Threats

Default Value: 1 Buffer

The **./Fortify** subroutine allows a Pilot or Threat to recover previously-spent Buffer tokens. If value is "FULL" then restore all Buffers. If their Buffer is already at max, then this has no effect.

./Rally

Valid Targets: Pilots

Default Value: All Schism *or* 1 Harmony

The **./Rally** subroutine allows the Pilots to cleanse Schism and raise their Harmony. If the Team has any amount of Schism, a single **./Rally** subroutine will remove all accrued Schism points. If the Team has zero Schism, this subroutine raises the Harmony rating by 1, to a maximum of 7 (Violet). If a **./Rally** subroutine would raise the Harmony above 7, instead leave it at 7 and trigger **./Chargeup:Each** to the entire Team.

./Recover

Valid Targets: Pilots, Threats

Default Value: 1 Stat or Threat point restored

The **./Recover** subroutine allows a Pilot to restore lost points to a temporarily-lowered Commitment Stat. If value is "FULL" then restore all temporary loss to the target Stat(s). If her Commitments are undamaged, this has no effect. This does *not* restore permanent Commitment loss.

If used on a Threat, restore points to lowered Threat Rating instead.

./Replenish

Valid Targets: Team Resources

Default Value: +1 Resource Point

The **./Replenish** subroutine allows the Pilots to add points to their Team Resources. If value is "FULL" then raise target Resource to 10. Any "FULL" effect applied to a Resource that is already at or above 10 instead only applies +1. See p. XX for full details on Team Resources.

Damaging Subroutines

Damage-type Subroutines are those that involve applying both *variable* and *detrimental* effects to game components.

(SIDEBAR: A Note on "Chaining" Damage)

Damage-type subroutines are resolved immediately upon their activation. Unless otherwise noted, multiple simultaneous damage-type subroutines "chain" - in other words, they each activate sequentially. They do **not** "stack" or "combine" into single effects, even when duplicated. When a number of damage triggers (identical or mixed) fire off at once, resolve them one at a time, in the order they were triggered. If there is no clear order, resolve them in the order the Team sees fit.

For example, Blue Pilot is hit by a cascade of Threat attacks at once, triggering ./Trauma(2), ./Schism(1), and ./Trauma(4). She must first resolve the ./Trauma(2) attack completely, then resolve the ./Schism(1) attack, and finally the rather massive ./Trauma(4) attack.

./Damage

Valid Targets: Contextual

Default Value: Contextual

The **./Damage** subroutine is a placeholder for any other damage-type subroutine from those detailed below. In computing terms, think of it like a "symlink" in action. When triggered, the activating player chooses any other damage-type subroutine and activates it instead, passing any included targets and/or variables to the new subroutine. The chosen subroutine must make contextual sense in the situation in which it is being triggered, of course.

./Disfavor

Valid Targets: Factions

Default Value: 1 Offense Token

The **./Disfavor** subroutine targets a revealed Faction, adding Offense tokens to that Faction's card. When a Faction reaches the third Offense, it is either removed from play or converted into a Threat (Coach's choice). See p. XX for full details on Factions and Offenses.

By default, the team can spend points from the Fan Club to mitigate the effects of ./Disfavor subroutines, one token per Offense soaked.

./Ruin

Valid Targets: Non-Razed Locations

Default Value: 1 damage state

The **./Ruin** subroutine targets a Location, and its effect depends on that Location's current state. If the Location is currently Standing, ./Ruin forces it to flip to a Damaged state. If the Location is already Damaged, ./Ruin forces it to a Razed state. If triggered with a value greater than 1, it can Raze a Standing Location in one go - values greater than 2 only matter for purposes of possible damage soaking.

By default, during a Rumble the Final Form can spend its own Buffers to prevent ./Ruin triggers.

./Schism

Valid Targets: Pilots

Default Value: Contextual

The **./Schism** subroutine hurts the Pilots by damaging their central team Harmony. When this subroutine fires, the Team accrues one or more points of Schism, which can be represented by tokens placed on the central Harmony track. The default amount of Schism accrued per trigger is as follows:

- **During Story Mode**, default Schism = 1
- **During an active Throwdown**, default Schism = current Stage of the conflict (1 to 3).
- **During an active Rumble**, do not cause Schism. Instead Damage Robo Grit by a default amount equal to the current stage of the Rumble (1 to 4).

A Pilot can spend her Buffers to mitigate the accrual of Schism that she personally either triggers or is targeted by, for one Buffer per point of Schism soaked. Schism accrued in excess of 7 can directly lower Harmony; see p. XX for complete rules for managing Harmony.

./Trauma

Valid Targets: Pilots, Threats

Default Value: 1 point of Stat loss

The **./Trauma** subroutine is the primary method for applying direct damage to both Pilots and Threats.

Trauma vs Pilots: Trauma damages Pilots by temporarily lowering their six core Stats. Each time a Pilot suffers **./Trauma**, she must temporarily reduce a Stat rank of her choosing by 1 point. A Stat cannot be reduced below Zero (0) ranks. Reducing a stat also reduces the balance maximum of its parent Commitment. For more info on managing Stat and Commitment loss, see p. XX.

Pilots with Robos present at the time of the inflicted Trauma can choose to shift it to their Robo's Grit instead. See the Robos rules for details (p. XX).

Trauma vs Threats: Trauma directly lowers the enemy's Threat Rating. If a Threat's Rating is reduced to Zero (0), it may be defeated and removed from play (see p. XX).

Both Pilots and Threats can spend Buffer tokens to mitigate Trauma that targets or affects them, at a cost of one token per point of damage soaked.

Special Subroutines

These subroutines are those that have mostly non-variable effects. They are more specific and single-purpose, and as such tend to be more rare in their occurrences.

./Burn

Valid Targets: Pilots, Coach

Default Value: 1 entire Hand of cards

The **./Burn** subroutine forces the target to discard their entire current Hand of cards. If this triggers during a conflict, do not redraw afterward. If this triggers between conflicts, immediately redraw to Max Hand afterward.

./Purge

Valid Targets: Pilots

Default Value: All Charges for 1 Pilot

The **./Purge** subroutine targets a Pilot, forcing them to erase their current buildup of Charges.

By default, if targeted by a **./Purge** subroutine, a Pilot can spend 1 of her Buffers to fully soak its effects against her.

./Rebuild

Valid Targets: Damaged Locations Only

Default Value: 1 Location restored to Standing

The **./Rebuild** subroutine allows the team to repair a Damaged location, returning it to a Standing state. This cannot be used on Standing or Razed Locations.

./Tarry

Valid Targets: Pilots

Default Value: # of Cards Flipped equal to current Crisis Tier

The game's time and Crisis mechanics will occasionally call for a **./Tarry** action. This is most commonly triggered when the Pilots make use of certain Location boons, but also occasionally when they waste time arguing and Coach feels it necessary to mechanically nudge them into action.

Tarry is a quick and simple Coach-specific card action. When triggered, Coach takes a number of cards from the top of his Deck equal to the current Crisis tier, and sends them directly to the Trash. This risks bringing his Deck ever closer to the revelation of another Omen (and potential escalation of Crisis!).

Conflict Type Zero: No Conflict ("Story Mode")

You read that right, yes we did just use a contradictory catchy title to grab your attention. That's because we want to make sure all of our new cadets understand something that might not be apparent yet. Specifically: **For the great majority of your play experience, you will not be dealing with any 'conflicts' at all.**

In other words, during most of the game's round-the-table story-jamming between you and your friends, all of you will explore the game world in what we call "Story Mode." During this whole-group back-and-forth discussion, you and your fellow Pilots will talk about your characters with Coach, flowing organically between and through topics of your characters, their goals, and how those affect the world around them. For many groups, especially new ones, this mode of play will dominate the early hours of your initial play sessions.

Eventually something you say will clash with something Coach says, and that's when we actually bring out the more involved mechanics of the game. Maybe you want to try and sneak some contraband into your cockpit for the next mission, or maybe Coach says that some of the upper classmen jump you after school. Or heck, it could just finally be time to go kick some monster butt! In these kinds of situations, it's time to step out of Story Mode and use the game mechanics to resolve the conflict at hand. To do that, read on below about the three modes of conflict, starting with the most important one...

Conflict Type 1: Fiat ("Just say what happens")

Uh-oh, look at that, we got you again. Before we teach you how to use the cards to resolve your problems, we're first going to tell you how to completely ignore them! You see, not every conflict *needs* to involve the cards, Strike Ranges, subroutines, or any other instances of this "math" stuff. If there's a conflict at hand and you think that you can get away with it, make a pitch to just say what happens and move on. You probably won't even need to leave "Story Mode" for it.

This applies to all players, Pilots and Coach alike. If either side feels that an action taken by the other should be contested, then they should say as much and move to bring out the cards. If not, then just keep role-playing and push forward with the scene, no cards required.

In fact, as a Pilot it's a good idea to keep this approach in your mind at all times. Instead of always asking Coach if you *can* do something, just tell him what you're *going to* do, and even how you want it to go down. Heck, that is the entire point of School Rule #2! (p. XX)

In other words, you are *encouraged* to take the initiative and actively push your Pilots' personal and team story agendas. If Coach feels that your actions are contested enough to require card play, then he'll tell you as such. Otherwise he'll probably let you achieve the outcome you were seeking - or he may instead offer you a modified version of that, or creatively negotiate it with you. Try it out - you may be pleased with the results!

Conflict Type 2: Gambits

The **Gambit** is a simple card-based conflict mechanic with two general uses: pushing uncontested feats of the Pilots' abilities, and resolving one-off mini-conflicts in which Coach feels that the Pilot's attempt at action may cause interesting and unforeseen story repercussions. These are typically triggered when a player wants to do something with an uncertain outcome, but Coach feels it is not necessarily worthy of the time or effort involved in a full-blown Throwdown. They are meant to be quick one-and-done style card plays that allow speedy resolutions without stalling play.

Gambit Flow

Gambits use the following quick-play structure:

1. **Initiation:** Coach issues the narrative challenge
2. **Play:** Coach plays-down a card, and the Pilot plays-up or flips a card
3. **Outcome:** Determine narrative outcome by comparing cards

1: Initiation

To initiate a Gambit, Coach states some variant of "that action's going to require a Gambit," or "that's a good question, we should Gambit to find out." This lets the Pilot know that if she pushes forward with her plan, then the cards are going to be involved, so she should consider whether or not it's worth the risk. The choice is *always* the Pilot's - in other words, Coach can never force the play of a Gambit upon a Pilot.

If the Pilot refuses the challenge, skip the cards. The current situation of the story remains unchanged, and the Pilot may need to consider alternate options. If the Pilot accepts the challenge, move to Play.

(SIDEBAR: Gambit-Farming is Not Allowed)

SQUARP: insert angry coach chibi

More mechanics-savvy players may get the notion to start "farming" Gambits with the intention of either cycling their Hands to more desirable cards, or repeatedly triggering the "No, and..." special bonus. If a Pilot player requests a Gambit, remind them of **School Rule #7: No Card-Talk**. Players requesting Gambits technically violates that rule. Therefore, it ain't allowed.

If the Pilots really need to cycle their cards, then they need to narratively push their agendas and get into conflict-heavy situations. Instead of verbally requesting conflicts from Coach, they are encouraged to get out there and start trouble of their own. Push your agendas and seek the story, and I guarantee that challenges and obstacles will arise in response.

2: Play

His challenge accepted, Coach then plays-down a card. This card can be from his own Hand, or can instead be played blind from the top of the Deck. The value of this **Challenge Card** will set the numerical difficulty for the Gambit, but the Pilot does not know what it is before she plays.

The Pilot must then either play-up a card of her choice from her own Hand (or a visible Faction), or instead flip one from the top of the Deck (if she's feeling lucky or doesn't want to waste her cards). Her goal is to exceed the still-unknown Challenge Card's value. Once the Pilot makes her play, Coach reveals the Challenge Card, and the Gambit moves to determine the Outcome.

Helping Out

If multiple Pilots are in the same scene together, they may be able to assist each other during Gambits. This is limited, as usual, by the Team's current Harmony. For every step of Harmony at or above Green, one additional present Pilot can play-down a card of her own to assist, before any are revealed. When the cards are revealed, only the highest card of their mix is used. All involved Pilots may be subject to the terms of the outcome, be they good or bad.

Example: Nnedi is about to Gambit in order to determine what happens when she tries to hack and override an alien security door. Since the Team Harmony is at Blue, up to two additional allies can try to help her out. Bee and Miho are both there, so they decide to join in the effort. All three Pilots play-down a card, and cross their fingers...

3: Outcome

Compare the Pilot's Play to the revealed Challenge, with final results as follows:

If the Pilot's card value is *higher*, (via higher numerical value *or* a numerical tie with a higher suit) then the player achieves a **"Yes, and..."** result. The Pilot succeeds at the intended task, and gets to narrate some additional boon as well!

In any other outcome, the Pilot gets to choose one of the following three options:

- **Yes, but...**
- **No, but...**
- **No, and...** (and trigger ./Chargeup)

Specialty: If a Pilot's Gambit Specialty is applicable, there are additional effects as well. See further below.

In any case, after the outcome is determined, the Gambit is complete. Discard the played cards, and if anyone's Hand has fewer or more cards than their max, draw or discard accordingly. Then return to Story Mode and move on with play.

Narrating Outcomes

As a Pilot, your success or failure in a Gambit will always be accompanied by some kind of additional side effect. In other words, the Pilots never *just* succeed or fail. Dealing with unexpected repercussions to even "minor" actions is all part of being a Pilot, just one more thing that makes them unique in their world.

"Yes, and..."

With a "Yes, and..." result, the Pilot has gone beyond what was needed, and attained unexpected rewards for her gamble with fate. The Pilot's immediate goal is attained, and Coach additionally decides on a bonus "consequence" to the action. This should be some kind of helpful or otherwise positive boon to their situation.

Positive Consequence examples:

- A beneficial narrative effect, such as a new clue, a newly-revealed ally, or the discovery of some new avenue to attain a personal goal.
- The Pilot can trigger `./Boost:Self(1)` or `./Boost:Ally(1)`, provided the choice is relevant to the situation.
- The Pilots actions result in the revelation of a previously-hidden Threat.

"Yes/No, but..."

"Yes, but..." and "No, but..." results represent unforeseen consequences to the Pilot's actions. The former indicates that she attained her goal but suffered some loss in the process. The latter indicates that she failed at her task, but still managed to gain another unexpected positive consequence. Similar to "Yes, and..." results, in either case the bonus consequences should be "lesser" in nature, and not total game-changers.

Examples of positive consequences are above, while some negative consequence examples follow:

- A deleterious narrative effect, such as in-story setbacks to the Pilot's goals, possessions, or immediate safety.
- One of Coach's Threats activates a Wave.
- Coach triggers `./Damage:Choice(1)`.

"No, and..."

The third and final choice of a "failed" Gambit attempt may seem like an unusual one. By choosing a "No, and..." outcome, you not only fail to accomplish the goal at hand, but you *also* suffer some other negative side effect as well (see examples above). This is an *entirely* voluntary choice, letting any player who so chooses suffer double-defeat.

Why in humanity would a Pilot ever choose this option? Well, there is one speck of silver lining in this otherwise dismal cloud of failure: **When you choose the "No, and..." outcome, you also immediately activate `./Chargeup:Self`.** By choosing a deeper failure state, you at least gain some power from it as consolation, so it's not all bad!

Special: When a Pilot who chooses this option also has an applicable Gambit Specialty from her Playbook, she records a new earned Lesson in addition to the ./Chargeup effect. See below.

Involving Playbook Specialties

Each Playbook has her own unique "Gambit Specialty" role-playing trigger. Whenever this specialty is involved in a Gambit, the player always gets *another* "and..." in their outcome, which adds an additional consequential effect of the same type already chosen. This always results in either two positives, or two negatives. It breaks down as follows:

1. "Yes, and (something positive), *and* (something else positive)."
2. "Yes, but (something negative), *and* (something else negative)."
3. "No, but (something positive), *and* (something else positive)."
4. "No, and (something negative), *and* (something else negative)." **Special:** In addition to the bonus ./Chargeup already triggered by this choice, when a Specialty is involved the Pilot *also* earns a new Lesson.

Please take note: *This isn't optional.* If a Pilot's specialty is involved, she *must* include the additional "and..." effect.

(SIDEBAR: No Strike Ranges in Gambits)

SQUARP: insert teacher coach chibi

Strike Range is a mechanic that has been mentioned before but not yet fully introduced as of this point in the book. Greater details on this mechanic are found on p. XX. For now, this note exists only to clarify a major point: Strike Ranges *do not* apply to Gambits. If ever you have any questions about that, refer back to this section for written proof.

(SIDEBAR: PVP Gambits?)

Gambits are meant to provide quick resolution to questions of fate, put forth by Coach to Challenge the Pilots. As such, Gambits do not involve Pilot vs Pilot (PVP) conflicts. If two or more Pilots have beef with each other and feel that cards are required to resolve it, but yet don't feel like it needs to be a full Throwdown, then as far as this game is concerned the issue *doesn't* actually require cards. In PVP situations, either narratively agree on what happens, or take it to a Throwdown.

Conflict Type 3: Throwdowns (and Rumbles)

When fiat won't do, and a quick card-draw still isn't enough to resolve a story conflict, there's only one option left: it's time to *throw down*. In *Gattaibushido:Fusion!*, the **Throwdown** is the big extended mechanic used to resolve all manner of intense and involved multi-character conflicts. After-school fights, galactic space battles, championship debate team bouts, Robo-vs-monster beat-downs, volleyball tournaments and more, all are played out with a Throwdown.

Throwdown Basics

In a Throwdown, two sides of a conflict square off against each other in a multi-round exchange of cards. As the participants play cards, apply narration, and push agendas, the stakes grow ever higher until one side finally concedes - either by choice or by complete lack of any other options.

The end goal of every Throwdown is twofold. First, "winning" a Throwdown gives the victor greater (if not total) control of the narrative outcome of the conflict. There are times when the margin of success is slim, resulting in the loser also getting some say in what happens, but ultimately the resulting story benefits the victor the most.

Second is the mechanical outcome, the more tangible spoils of conflict. Depending on the stakes in play, Throwdowns can cause or heal damage, hurt or restore Team Harmony and Resources, affect Factions or Locations, damage Threats, and more. The seeking of such mechanical stakes is a common cause for the initiation of many such conflicts.

Strike Range: Your Margin of Harmonic Action

The term "**Strike Range**" (or just "Strike") has been used a lot during the previous pages of this text, and now it's time to explain it. Understanding the concept of the Strike Range is crucial to mastering the strategy of Throwdowns. How it is determined and used is different if you are a Pilot vs if you are Coach. In either case, its sole reason for existing is to set a tangible risk factor in Counter and Escalate actions.

(SIDEBAR: Strike Range is Important!)

SQUARP: insert loud coach chibi

I put this note here to emphasize just how important Strike Range is to combat in this game. Read the Strike rules fully, then re-read them again just to make sure you got it. A Team that ignores Strike Range is barely a Team at all, and never rises above the Red in Harmony!

Strike Range for Pilots

When you Counter or Escalate you must play a card of higher numerical rank than either the card currently face-up on top of the Pile (for a Counter) or a value of Zero (for an Escalate). There is technically no limit on how high your card can be, but there is an incentive to keeping the difference low. You see, playing *too* high has the chance of damaging your Team's Harmony. This is represented through your Pilot's **Strike Range**, which is individual to each Pilot and determined anew at the start of every new Throwdown.

Your Strike sets the maximum "safe" difference in ranks by which your played card can exceed your opponent's (which is considered a Zero, in the case of an Escalate). As long as the difference is within this range, your play is **safe** and suffers no innate adverse effect. This is commonly known as "Striking safe" or a "safe play."

If your difference is *exactly one (1) rank higher*, then your play is considered **true**. As above, this is often called "striking true" or a "true play." This is particularly important for a variety of Techs, which can trigger additional effects based on a Strike's true-ness.

Additionally, any plays that are both safe *and* true are considered **Resonant**. Continuing the above trend, this event is commonly known as "Striking Resonant" or a "Resonant play." Resonant Strikes are especially noteworthy because when you perform one, you automatically trigger `./Chargeup:Self`.

For example, if your opponent played a Two (2), and your Strike is 2, then you can safely Counter with a Three (3) or Four (4) without additional consequence. If you play a Four, your play is *safe* and you suffer no schism. If you instead play a Three, your play is also *true* as its difference is exactly 1 rank - and since it's both safe and true then it is considered **Resonant** as well. In this latter case, if you have any Techs that have special effects on true and/or Resonant Strikes, they would all trigger now.

You can choose to play higher than this Range, but doing so risks Harmony loss. Such a play is considered **Dissonant** and your narrative action is "emotionally flawed" in some fashion, as your Pilot pushes herself too far out of sync with her team. As a result, you trigger immediate ./Schism(X), with X equaling the current stage of the Throwdown (1-3; note that Rumbles cause Robo damage instead, see below). Regardless, the play *is* still valid and moves the action onward.

Continuing the above example, if you were to instead play a Five (5) or higher, this would give you a total rank difference of 3 or more. As this is higher than your Strike of 2, your Counter would succeed but you would also trigger ./Schism. If you're in a later stage of the fight, that Schism could hit you pretty hard. Watch out, as this can lower your team Harmony!

As mentioned above, Escalate actions also use Strike Range. When Escalating, you are playing vs an implied card value of Zero. This only matters for purposes of determining Strike true-ness.

Concluding the above examples, let's say you are instead Escalating. Since your Strike is 2, then you can really only *safely* play a Two (2). There are no cards with a lower rank - remember, Aces in this game normally have a rank of 14! You can play any other card you like, but doing so Strikes Dissonant and can hurt your Harmony.

Robo Rumbles: Pilots take note: Your Strike Ranges in the later optional Rumble stages of a Throwdown are based entirely upon your Team Harmony. Additionally, when you strike Dissonant during Rumbles, you directly damage your Robos! See the Rumbles rules below for more information (p. XX).

Strike Range for Coach

Your Strike rules are similar to the Pilots', with the exception that your Strikes are *hard* limits. Unless specified otherwise (by a Threat Tech, for example), you cannot play outside of your calculated Strike. This is intentional: as Coach, you have more overall available power to wield, mitigated by hard limits via a tight mechanical leash.

Scoring Points

Throughout each exchange of the Throwdown, there is a running score of points being counted for both sides. When you Escalate to further stages of the fight, you award your opponent points in exchange for the increasingly-desperate chance to come out on top in the subsequent round. At the end of the Throwdown, when one side Concedes, whoever has the most points ultimately wins the conflict. However, it's *not* all-or-nothing here: losers with enough points in their score have a chance of adding some concessions to the victory.

Escalating Stages and Stakes

As the conflict moves into deeper stages of action, there is an expected escalation of tone, and a buildup of narrative stakes. During the initial **Confrontation** stage of the Throwdown, the stakes are lower, and likewise

the description of your actions should be further down the relative scale of narrative impact. Words exchange, insults pepper the air, initial points of debate lay down, fists clench, hard eyes stare with threatening frowns, and so on. No one is throwing punches *just* yet, literal or otherwise.

As the Throwdown escalates, the players' actions grow more intense, more desperate. During the **Struggle** stage, punches fly, insults bite, monsters stomp, lasers blast, and gun-chucks chuck guns. The battle fully flows, everyone having dispensed with initial posturing now unleashes what they got.

Once things reach the **Final Attack!** stage, everyone is truly going for the kill. Blood sprays, monster limbs litter the battlefield, and arguments cut straight to the marrow of the bone. If you get as far as this stage, chances are someone is not going to leave this conflict alive.

But wait, there's more! If one side isn't satisfied at the end of the third round, they can activate the **Rumble!** This is when the Pilots join up for their Final Form, and when the Big Giant Monsters unleash their full destructive people-eating power.

Rumble mode effectively extends the Throwdown *up to four more stages!* The stakes get even *more* insane during Rumbles. The Final Form summons more glorious attacks and calls upon deeper and more desperate reserves of power. At the same time, the Monster manifests new mutations, transforms to more insidious incarnations, and more. Whole cities can be laid to waste with single actions!

All that having been said, if your table wants to just go all-to-the-wall with every single counter and block, like blowing up entire moons when you're only in the Confrontation stage, feel free to embrace it and make it awesome.

Throwdown Flow

The basic flow of a Throwdown is as follows:

1. **Challenge:** One side initiates a card challenge, the other chooses to accept.
2. **Establishment:** Answer a few opening questions to determine sides, Commanders, Strike Ranges, and bonus draws.
3. **Fight Rounds:** One to three rounds of back-and-forth card-play with increasing stakes.
4. **Rumble Rounds (Optional):** Up to four more rounds of card-play involving the Team's special Final Form, usually against a Big Giant Monster.
5. **Outcome:** Final scores are determined, and both narrative and mechanical results are declared and applied.
6. **Discard and Draw:** All played cards are Discarded, and all sides reset their Hands to max.
7. **Return to Story Mode:** The Throwdown now completed, players return to exploring the larger story in open play.

These steps are further detailed below.

Step 1: Initiating the Challenge

Be you Pilot or Coach, to start a Throwdown you must take a card from your Hand and slam it face-down on the table. Accompany this action with a description of how you are challenging your opponent, such as "I step in and grab the bully's swinging fist before she can hit my friend!" or "The guard swings his gun to point at you, telling you to stand down!" or even the simple but effective "Bring it!"

The challenged opponent must then likewise take a card from their own Hand and place it face-down, similarly narrating their acceptance of the challenge. I recommend really getting into this moment with your character's or Threat's personality. Kicking off a Throwdown with a show of passion gets the action going in a very fun way.

Limitations: Initiative cards can only be played directly from Hands (and not Factions). Neither side may draw a replacement for this card until the Throwdown has been resolved. Strike Range applies.

Coach Special: Your Strike Range functions differently in Initiative. If your card ends up being higher than the Pilot's, and also Strikes Dissonant, the play remains but the Pilot gets a bonus draw. See Throwdown Step 3, below (p. XX).

(SIDEBAR: Initiative Stakes, and Death)

When initiating and accepting challenges, you are effectively setting narrative stakes. If you win the Throwdown or your opponent refuses the challenge, then your stakes are achieved. As such it is important that everyone involved discuss with Coach if their stakes are reasonable, and if not then negotiate and adjust until they are.

One topic of specific importance is that of character "death" - that is, the ultimate and final removal of a character from the rest of the game. While the Commitment rules already allow for this to be a mechanically-achievable conflict result, it's also generally considered a good idea to set your stakes in such a way that clearly implies this is one of your intentions. Then just let the cards - and the conflict score - decide just how badly you hurt your opponent should you win.

Outright mechanics-free Pilot death is a valid option for your stakes - we call this "Narrative Death" (see p. XX) - but there are some limitations. First, in order to straight-up kill a Pilot with narration alone, initiative stakes must be stated in a way where death is *explicitly* included - "I stab you **to death**" is a fine example of this, while "I stab you a hundred times!" is not. Second, all involved parties must agree that the stakes are both clear and acceptable. And third, the death-marked individual must then *refuse* the challenge.

Their refusal is absolutely necessary. If they do so, then they die as part of the narrative stakes. If they accept and fight, even if only for a single card and an instant concession, then narrative death is off the table and their fate must instead be determined by the final score and their adjusted Commitments, if any.

Note that this only applies to Pilots. Factions and Threats have their own systems for removal already in place, and cannot just be narratively written off. And any other inconsequential background characters - meaning "added just for color" characters other than the Pilots, Factions, and Threats - can be killed off at anyone's narrative whim, at any time, without need for any conflicts at all.

(SIDEBAR: Initiative Strategy for the Pilots)

Initiative card choice can be one of the biggest paralyzing decisions for new players entering their first Throwdowns. Because you don't know what your opponent is putting down, your Initiative must be played "half-blind." This creates a number of strategic conundrums; like everything else in *Gattaibushido*, it's really all a matter of how much you're willing to risk.

For one thing, Strike Range rules apply here, meaning that if you win but played too high, you risk triggering ./Schism. Immediately complicating this further is the fact that you don't even know what your exact Strike value will even be - this isn't determined until the second step of the Throwdown process! With a few conflicts under your belt you can usually guess, but even veterans may be surprised at how the establishment questions get answered.

So you want to play high, but not *too* high, because you want to beat your opponent, but not by too big of a margin. Losing the initiative means that not only are you going to have to make the first play once the Rounds begin, but you've also already wasted a card. But, in choosing to play low, there's also a chance you'll get one back if your opponent plays too high.

To recap, aiming to win the initiative means that your card would remain in the lead, but there's a chance you'll damage your Team's Harmony. Conversely, losing the initiative just generally sucks, but if you aim for it then you can maybe make it suck less. And of course playing super low or super high means you won't be able to use those potentially-valuable cards later on in the battle. Decisions, decisions...

For new players, my advice is to aim for "middle of the road" Initiative until you get the hang of the system. Try to pick the card from your Hand that leaves you with the most versatile spread you can hold onto. This is a lot easier to do once you have Techs and Gear that can increase your base Hand size, of course. And when nothing else really seems right, just pick the middle card and see what happens.

(SIDEBAR: Initiative Strategy for Coach)

First, you should make sure to read and understand the strategy advised to the Pilots, above. Then, use that knowledge to mess with them. And if you're up for some wild times, just play a card at random, while keeping your Coach-face in best form.

A fun approach is to "just do what the Threat would do." Consider your Threat's powers, but also consider their story. Figure out if you think this Threat would lean toward the aggressive or conservative, and then push that agenda with your cards as best as possible.

However, the most important thing to remember here is that while you may control the Threats and monsters that fight the Pilots, **You** are not their enemy. Presumably these other players at the table are your friends, and you all want to have a fun time gaming together. Which means that you should ultimately enjoy challenging them, but also try not to get *too* into the idea of making them suffer. To that end, focus less on winning the initiative, and more on providing an exciting challenge to your friends.

Refusing the Challenge

If you refuse the challenge, then you allow your opponent's goals in the moment to go unimpeded. This can be pretty disastrous in high stakes situations, and can even include your character's own death, so I hope you know what you're doing. In such a case, the Challenger returns their Initiative card back to their Hand, unrevealed.

Step 2: Establishment Questions

The challenge has been accepted and the Initiative cards are on the table, but it's not yet time to reveal them. First, you need to go through some quick opening questions that establish themes and agendas, and also set the variable values for several important stats.

Pick Sides and Declare Commanders

There are two sides to every Throwdown, usually Coach vs Pilots but also occasionally Pilots vs Pilots instead. On each side, whoever played the initiative card takes the lead and is called the **Commander** for the duration of this Throwdown. The Commander is ultimately responsible for driving forward her side's agenda during the conflict, and is the only Pilot who gets Bonus Draws at the start.

Any other Pilots who wish to back up the Commander should declare their intentions to do so. There is a hard limit to how many Pilots can act together in a Throwdown, set by the current Team Harmony. For example, if their Harmony is only at Yellow (3), then the Pilots can have at most three active players in the fight, including the Commander. If you want to be a stronger team, you gotta keep your Harmony up!

Trigger-happy Pilots be warned: by backing up a Commander, you also expose yourself to consequences should your side lose! If your side is planning to take this to the limit, then you should all be prepared for the possibility of great shared suffering.

(SIDEBAR: On Commanders)

The role of "Commander" is only a temporary mechanical role, and not related to any actual team hierarchy that may exist within your game's narrative. The "choice" of Commander is really just whoever played the Initiative card, and does not need to be connected to the Team's established social ranks in any way. Red (the default "leader" of the Team) doesn't have to be the Commander of every Throwdown, and in fact the game is more fun if she frequently just assists!

(SIDEBAR: What Happens if Harmony Changes Mid-Throwdown?)

Harmony only matters at two points during a Throwdown: the initial Establishment, and the optional "Initiate Rumble" action. In the former case, Harmony determines how many Pilots can work together on one side of the conflict. Any changes to Harmony during the first three base Throwdown stages have no effect on the group's line-up. Drops in Harmony will not kick anyone out of the fight, nor will increases to Harmony allow them to "tag in" new Teammates.

When someone choose to Initiate Rumble, the Team's Harmony is reassessed. If it has lowered since the start of the fight, then fewer Pilots can join the Final Form. If it has increased, they can then choose to add in new Pilots from their roster, should any have been waiting on the sidelines. Once the Final Form is assembled, as above the line-up is again locked-in, until the Rumble is fully resolved.

Does She Fight for Her Team, or for Herself?

For each Pilot that is Commanding in this Throwdown, Coach should ask every *other* player currently at the table, as a group: "Does this Pilot currently fight for her own goals, or for those of her Team?"

Other players should answer aloud and honestly. The answer both sets crucial tone for the fight, and also determines how many bonus cards that Pilot will draw. If there's a voting tie, Coach breaks it.

Who Started this Fight?

The answer to this question is usually pretty obvious, but it requires acknowledgement, as it determines the Pilots' Strike Range base. If this is ever somehow in question, default to the side that put down the first Initiative card.

Are Your Robos Involved?

Involving your Robos is awesome, both making for a cool story and giving you some additional mechanical advantages. If you are already piloting your Robos when the conflict begins, you must spend 1 point of Pit Crew for each Robo involved. If you start the conflict on your Robos, note that you cannot use the Summon action or activate their Summon Effects this battle.

Determine Draws and Strike Ranges

With the establishment questions answered, it's time to see how they affect your play.

Pilots:

- **Bonus Draw (Pilot Commander Only):** Based on the answer to above questions, the Commander draws bonus cards. If you fight for the Team, your draw equals your Synch stat. If you fight for yourself, your draw equals your Solo stat. Then, all other involved Pilots on her team can choose to give the Commander any number of cards from their own current Hands. Finally, the Commander must then give those Pilots back an equal number of cards (but they don't need to be the same ones).
- **Strike Ranges:** Based on who started the fight. If your team started the action, members each use their own Steel stats. If the fight was brought to them, they use their Flesh stats instead.

Coach:

- **Bonus Draws:** Coach draws the invested cards from the stacks of each of his present-and-involved Threats. Unless an effect states otherwise, he does *not* draw any bonus cards from his Deck.
- **Strike Range:** Coach's Strike Range is equal to the Threat Rating of the highest-rated involved Threat, plus one (+1) for each additional Threat involved.

Step 3: Play Rounds

Now, it's time to play out the fight! The official rounds of the Throwdown start here, moving back and forth across the table through up to three* consecutive stages of escalating action:

1. The Confrontation
2. The Struggle
3. The Final Attack

** or more, if evoking the Final Form! See Rumbles, below (p. XX).*

Each side goes back and forth in exchanges of turns, using Techs, playing cards, and escalating stakes until one side concedes.

Resolving Initiative

Both sides now flip their initiative cards face-up for all to see, and the Higher card (by rank, then suit) wins the initiative.

Check Strike Range: If a Pilot wins with a Dissonant Strike, the Pilot triggers *./Schism*. And if *Coach* wins with a Dissonant Strike, his card remains but the Pilot Commander opponent gets to draw a free card to her Hand.

In the extremely rare case of the cards being identical in both rank *and* suit (i.e. the exact same card), either call the whole thing off, or simultaneously play new initiative cards until someone wins.

In any case, discard all played cards other than the winning card. This winning Initiative Card cannot be Blocked, and is immune to any special game effects that would force it from its current position in play. It is now your opponent's turn, and your played card is winning.

Stages, Turns, and Actions

There are one to three stages to the vast majority of Throwdowns you will play (occasionally this can be extended even further; see **Rumbles**, below). The first stage is **The Confrontation**, which is followed by **The Struggle**, which is in turn followed by (and usually concluded with) **The Final Attack**. As the conflict escalates (via the **Escalate** action), the stakes increase and the narration grows more intense.

Play begins in the Confrontation stage, with the initiative loser taking the first turn. Each side must act according to the rules below:

Pilots: On your side's turn, each involved Pilot can optionally choose to perform a single Assist action per turn, and one and only one Pilot *must* also perform a single Drive action. All Assists must be performed before the chosen Drive. Once the chosen Drive has been completed, the turn concludes per the details of that Drive action.

Coach: On your turn, each of your Threats can perform a single Assist action. To conclude your turn, one of your Threats must also perform a Drive, after which the turn passes onward.

Scoring

When your opponent either Escalates or Concedes, you win that stage of the Throwdown, and score points for that stage based on how many stages have occurred. Including the optional extended Rumble stages, there are potentially seven (7) stages to a Throwdown. Your score is based on which stage you scored, as follows:

- Throwdown Stage 1: 1 point
- Throwdown Stage 2: 2 points
- Throwdown Stage 3: 4 points
- Rumble Stage 1*: 8 points
- Rumble Stage 2*: 16 points
- Rumble Stage 3*: 32 points
- Rumble Stage 4*: 64 points

* = Only possible with Rumbles.

Example 1: Your opponent Escalates in the first stage, giving you **1** point. You then escalate in the second, giving your opponent **2** points. It's now stage 3, and if you can force your opponent to Concede in this stage, you'll score **4** more points, for a final match of **5** against **2**, in your favor.

Example 2: Carrying forward the above example, instead of Conceding in the third state, your opponent chooses to Initiate Rumble! You still score the stage, earning **4** points. Robots and Monsters are now battling! You Escalate on the 4th stage, giving your opponent **8** points, and then your opponent finally Concedes on the 5th stage, giving you **16** points. The final score is **21** against **10**, still in your favor.

Using this scoring system, the final card on the pile is guaranteed to be the winner of conflict. However, if the loser built up a score of their own, they may be eligible for additional concessions to the final outcome.

Drive Actions

Drive Actions are so named because they drive the conflict step by step toward its conclusion. On each side's Turn, someone on that side *must* declare and perform a single Drive action in order to pass the Turn back to their opponent. The available Drive actions are:

- **Counter:** play a card of higher rank than the topmost card on the Pile
- **Block:** play a card of equal rank but higher suit than the topmost card on the Pile
- **Escalate:** push current Pile aside, start new pile with higher stakes
- **Concede:** put cards down, declare opponent the victor. If you cannot Counter, Block, or Escalate, you must Concede.
- **Initiate Rumble:** activate the extended Robo vs giant monster mode!

Counter (Drive; All)

Play a card from any valid source available to you (Hand, Factions, etc), and narrate an accompanying action within the fiction, suitable for the tone of the current Stage. Your card's rank must exceed that of the currently-revealed highest card on the Pile. If your play Strikes Dissonant, you trigger ./Schism with a value equal to the current Stage (1-3). It is now your opponent's turn, and your played card is winning.

Block (Drive; All)

Play a card of both equal rank and equal-or-higher suit than the currently winning card. *Discard* both cards. Narrate how you prevented their last action from winning the momentum. It is now your opponent's turn, and your previous card is winning.

If played against Escalate, discard the escalating card and your blocking card, return the previous Pile to play, and deduct any points scored from that escalation. The battle is de-escalated to the previous stage, it is now your opponent's turn, and your previous card is winning.

Special: You cannot Block an Initiative card. You cannot Block the card that initiates a Rumble. Blocking does not retroactively prevent or soak any subroutines the previous action may have triggered, only removing its scoring card from the Pile.

Escalate (Drive; All)

Narrate how you are "pushing it" to the next level. Push the current Pile aside and place a new card down to initiate the new stage. The rank of this card is subject to Strike Range rules. Your opponent scores this Stage. It is now your opponent's turn, and your played card is winning.

Special: You cannot Escalate during the third Stage (use Initiate Rumble instead) or the seventh Stage (the final Rumble Stage). Using the Escalate action during a Rumble additionally applies *./Ruin* to the current Location, which can be soaked with Robo Buffers.

Concede (Drive; All)

Place your remaining Hand (if any) face-down on the table before you. Your opponent scores this stage and wins the Throwdown. Accept your narrative fate. The Throwdown has now concluded, move to resolve the Outcome.

Special: This action can not be Blocked or otherwise prevented in any way. Once executed, the conflict is over; no further Drive or Assist actions can follow a Concede.

Initiate Rumble (Drive; All)

Similar to an Escalate. Narrate the summoning of your Robos or Big Giant Monster. *Discard* all previous Piles, and play down a new card to initiate the new Rumble stage. The rank of this card is subject to Strike Range rules (note that Final Forms have Strike Ranges based on Team Harmony).

Your opponent scores this stage and all other remaining (i.e. unplayed) Throwdown stages (1-3).

Example: If you choose to Initiate Rumble during the Confrontation stage of a Throwdown (stage 1), then your opponent scores 7 points: 1 for the current stage, then 2 for the Struggle stage, and 4 for the Final Attack stage, both of which are skipped in your move to Rumble.

Move to Rumble mode, initiate the Final Form, and bring out the Big Giant Monster. It is now your opponent's turn, and your played card is winning.

Special: This action requires the use of either a Final Form or a BGM. This action can be used in any of the first three Throwdown stages, but activating it before the third stage gives your opponent the score for any of the remaining pre-Rumble stages. This action can not be played during an already-active Rumble. The played card cannot be Blocked. Coach cannot use this action until certain conditions have been met (see "Crisis and the Big Giant Monster" p. XX).

Assist Actions

On the Pilots' Turns, each involved Pilot can choose to perform a single Assist action, before their side plays its chosen Drive action. On Coach's Turn, he can choose to activate any number of Assists as long as he has the ability to pay for them. In either case, Assist actions are excellent methods of building up mechanical combo effects to enhance your Drives.

The available Assist actions are:

- **Activate Assist Tech:** Use one of your several Assist-tagged Techs.
- **Activate Rumble Tech:** Use one of the special Final Form Rumble Techs (requires Rumble mode).
- **Activate Wave or Storm:** Coach activates one of his special custom Threat actions.
- **Summon Robo:** Call forth your Robo to join the battle.
- **Use Gear:** Activate or sacrifice a single piece of carried Gear.

Activate Assist Tech (Assist; Pilots)

This action allows your Pilot to trigger any one of her Techs that are tagged as "Assist" actions. These are often used to enhance the effects of the Team's planned Drive action. Unless stated otherwise, all Assist action effects are combinative.

Activate Rumble Tech (Assist; Pilots; Rumble Only)

During Rumble stages, an active Pilot in the Final Form can choose to activate their chosen Position's special Rumble Tech as an Assist action. Unless specified otherwise, each Rumble Tech can only be used once during any active Rumble. Using a Rumble Tech spends 1 Rumble Charge, and has an effect set by the current Rumble Stage (1-4).

Timing the use of these Techs is crucial to winning a Rumble. See p. XX for details on the various Rumble Techs.

Activate Wave or Storm (Assist; Coach)

Choose a Threat involved in this Throwdown, and Discard a face or ace card from your Hand. With a face card, the chosen Threat activates a Wave. With an ace card, the chosen Threat activates a Wave *or* a Storm. Coach can perform this as many times as he can afford to, including repeating powers, at his discretion.

Rumble Upgrade: During an active Rumble, a BGM-class Threat can use this Action with a reduced discard cost. Activating a Wave requires *any* card, while activating a Storm requires a Face or an Ace.

Summon Robo (Assist, Pilots)

Call forth your personal Robo to join the Battle! You must spend 1 point from your Pit Crew Resource to use this action. This activates your Robo's Summon Effect (at most once per Scenario) and makes its Techs immediately available to you. If your Robo is already present in the battle, you cannot re-summon it with this action.

Use Gear (Assist; Pilots)

Select a piece of Gear in your Pilot's inventory and choose to use either its Activation effect or its Sacrifice effect. Activating your Gear allows you to hold onto it and use it again in a later conflict, while Sacrificing it destroys the item entirely. You cannot both Activate and Sacrifice the same Gear in the same Throwdown, and any given item can be used at most once per Throwdown. See the Gear section for more information (p. XX).

Step 4: Rumble! (Optional)

When all other options fail...

When the Big Giant Monster comes screaming at you...

When humanity needs a final bastion to defend it against otherworldly annihilation...

...it's time to Rumble!

When the Team decides to call upon the Final Form, it's time to turn this Throwdown into a **Rumble!** Initiated by the "**Initiate Rumble**" Drive action, a Rumble adds up to *four* additional stages to an active Throwdown. These flow very similarly to the previous stages, only with a few new options and particulars.

Once a Rumble begins, the action is taken to a *much* bigger scale. Where the Pilots' previous actions focused on a more personal scope of issues, Rumbles bring out the big toys and the giant monsters. The breadth of stakes increases dramatically in Rumbles, with actions that can easily level entire cities (or more!) in a heartbeat.

Rumble Step 4.1: Regroup and Redraw!

Pilots, with Final Form: Before moving forward, reassess the Team's Harmony, and decide if you will be activating your Final Form. If Harmony increased since the start of the Throwdown, the Team can choose to "tag in" additional Pilots who may have been waiting on the sideline, up to the Harmony limit. Likewise, if Harmony has *lowered* since the start, then one or more involved Pilots may be forced out of the fight, unable to contribute to the Rumble.

With the line-up decided, the Team must decide if they are indeed going to assemble the Final Form. If yes, then each Pilot still involved in the Rumble must now choose a Position in the assembled Final Form. Each position can be chosen once, and one Pilot *must* choose the Head. Take note of the Rumble Techs that each chosen Position provides.

After resolving any potential line-up changes, the Head draws additional cards equal to the current Harmony. She can then choose to distribute any of those cards to her teammates in the Final Form. Take note of new Buffers, Charges, and Strike Range as well (see below).

Pilots, Without Final Form: If the Team cannot or does not wish to assemble the Final Form, you can still Rumble, but at a major disadvantage. Do not select Positions, and do not draw any new cards. You *can* continue to use your own Techs, but cannot use Rumble Techs.

Coach: Reshuffle your Trash into the Deck. Then draw additional cards into your Hand equal to the number of individual non-BGM Threats involved. If your BGM is involved in this Rumble, then also draw a number of cards equal to the current Crisis tier. You are ready to continue.

(SIDEBAR: Lopsided Rumbles)

This system technically allows for the play of lopsided Rumbles, such as Final Form vs weak Threats, or Big Giant Monster over un-assembled Pilots. While possible, such battles almost invariably result in the complete trouncing of the weaker side. Sometimes that's exactly what needs to happen, too.

In any case, it's an all-or-nothing decision for the involved Pilots: either they assemble, or they don't, but there is no allowance for a mixed party. Meaning all the Pilots taking part in the ongoing conflict must commit to the Form (within limits of Harmony), or none of them can.

Take Note of Mechanical Changes

To accommodate the increase in narrative scale, a few mechanical overrides kick in during Rumbles, adjusting those of the base Throwdown. These changes are detailed below, based on which side of the battle you're on:

Pilots in Final Form:

- **Buffers:** Your personal Buffers do not apply during Rumbles. Instead, your Final Form starts with its own shared pool of Buffers equal to the current Team Harmony. Final Form Buffers can be spent to soak ./Trauma and prevent ./Ruin.

- **Charges:** The assembled Final Form has its own special bank of "Rumble Charges" that starts a new Rumble equal to the Team's Harmony, and cannot exceed this amount. These are used to power the special Rumble Techs bestowed by the chosen Positions. Each Rumble Tech costs exactly 1 Charge.
- **Gear:** Gear cannot be used unless it specifically affects Robos or Rumbles.
- **Harmony and ./Schism:** ./Schism subroutines do not damage Harmony during Rumbles - instead they cause direct Grit damage to your Final Form, distributed across Robos as your Head decides. The amount of damage per trigger equals the current stage of the Rumble (1-4). As with the previous stages, changes to Harmony mid-Rumble do not affect the Final Form's line-up.
- **Locations and ./Ruin:** The Location you're fighting in can be damaged by your actions. Each Escalate action during a Rumble has a side effect of triggering ./Ruin on the current Location. This can be soaked with Buffers.
- **Robo Grit:** Your Robos' Grit ranks are especially important during a Rumble. Any ./Trauma or ./Schism the Final Form takes must come out of Robo Grit, assigned across the joined Robos as the Head chooses. If a Robo's Grit is reduced to Zero, it's Pilot can no longer participate in the Rumble until repaired!
- **Strike Range:** Your personal Strike Ranges no longer apply. Instead, your Final Form's actions have a Rumble Strike Range equal to (you guessed it!) the current Team Harmony. This cannot be modified except by effects that explicitly modify Rumble Strike.
- **Techs:** Your Final Form has access to new Rumble Techs based on your chosen Positions. Each of the Rumble Techs can be used at most *once* per fight, and their output is based on the current Rumble Stage (1-4) - the later you wait to use one, the greater its results! Unless otherwise specified, none of your personal Chroma or Daisho Techs can be used during Rumble stages, however your Robo's Techs still apply.

Pilots without Final Form:

If your Team did not assemble, none of the above applies to you. Continue playing as you were before the Rumble, but with the following limitations:

- **Buffers** can not be used to soak any damage inflicted upon the Pilots by BGMs.
- **Charge Techs** cost double the normal Charge cost to activate. Those without clear Charge costs instead do only half (round down) their normal effect.
- **Gear** cannot be used at all at this scale.

Coach:

Your changes are minimal. If a BGM-tagged Threat is already present in the conflict, but not yet in its full BGM form, then it grows to full size now and additionally restores its TR to max.

Remember that BGM Threats have reduced Discard costs for their Waves and Storms during the Rumble. Additionally, all of your Escalations involving a BGM trigger ./Ruin.

Rumble Step 4.2: Describe It!

Now is the time you've all been waiting for: describe your fusion! Tell us what your Final Form looks like, and how all the assembled pieces fit together. Go wild, and don't forget the major increase in scale!

Consider all the story elements you've established up to this point. How does the experience feel to each of you? Do you feel shame, or pride, or joy, or bliss? What thoughts run through your head when you merge

with your Teammates? Is it a purely physical joining of Robos, or is there a sharing of minds and souls involved as well?

Coach must also describe the arrival of the Big Giant Monster, in all its fearsome glory. Coach is encouraged to similarly go wild, evoking all of the senses in terrific ways.

Rumble Step 4.3: Continue the Stages of Battle!

Aside from the variable changes detailed above, the Rumble stages play out identically to the Throwdown flow already established. The same actions are available, only now there are up to four more stages of card-battle action. Each stage scores an increasing value, and both sides have new Techs that only grow stronger as the fight rages onward.

Remember the greater scale of conflict, and always push it further up and outward with your descriptions. For each side of the fight, Escalation represents taking the battle to an even more desperate level. The Final Form manifests never-before-seen last-ditch powers, the Monster evolves to even more hideous and destructive incarnations, and so on.

Also remember the increased mechanical stakes mentioned above. Escalating now causes *./Ruin* to your current Location, and when the Final Form strikes *Dissonant*, it directly damages the Robos!

Play continues as before until one side Concedes. The fourth stage of the Rumble is the penultimate, final act of both the Rumble and the entire Throwdown; there is no escalating beyond the fourth stage.

Step 5: Outcome

The final outcome of a Throwdown (including the optional Rumble) is based on whose card is ultimately face-up on top of the Pile at the end. Due to the scoring system, that player's side is also assured to have the highest score, even if only by one point. Compare the final scores, and then each side gets to apply all qualifying outcome results below.

When applying results, any and all Pilots and Threats that were involved at any stage of the Throwdown are able to be affected, regardless of their participation state at the end. This includes any Pilots in the early stages who couldn't join the Final Form, as well as those that got tagged-in for a Rumble. If the situational feasibility of certain options comes into question, Coach is the final arbiter.

I Won the Throwdown...

"...by beating my opponent's score:" Your side achieves its original stakes. You have earned the right to narrate the final outcome of the Throwdown, possibly working with the loser if they scored any points of their own. Additionally, for each stage of the Throwdown played, you can choose **one (1)** item from the Basic Spoils list.

"...and it was a complete wipe!" In addition to the above, your narration of victory requires no concessions be given to your opponent. You may also choose **one (1)** item from the Ultimate Spoils list.

"...and I won with all 127 points!" You've basically won all of *Gattaibushido* forever. As above, and also choose **two (2)** more items from the Ultimate Spoils list.

I Lost the Throwdown...

"...but still managed to score something: You have gained a story concession of your design, to be included in the final narrative of the Throwdown's outcome. Work with the victor to come to an agreeable conclusion together.

"...and scored over half of my opponent's score:" As above, but your narrative concession is great indeed. When working with the victor to describe the outcome, it is important to emphasize how hard-won a fight it truly was for them. Additionally, choose **one (1)** item from the Basic Spoils, if applicable.

Spoils of Victory

Below are the lists of mechanical boons that can be selected by the winners (and sometimes even the losers) of Throwdowns. Each Spoil may be selected more than once, by any involved participants on that side, with the Commander ultimately deciding who gets what. As always, the chosen spoils *must* make sense within the context of the conflict, and Coach is the final arbiter.

Basic Spoils

- Apply ./Chargeup:Self(Full) or ./Chargeup:Team(1)
- Apply ./Favor(1) or ./Disfavor(1)
- Apply ./Fortify:Self(Full) or ./Fortify:Team(1)
- Apply ./Purge:Choice
- Apply ./Recover:Self(1) or ./Recover:Threat(1)
- Apply ./Replenish:Choice(1)
- Apply ./Schism:Team(1)
- Apply ./Trauma:Pilot(1) or ./Trauma:Threat(1)
- Activate a Wave on an involved Threat
- Add an unexpected beneficial minor narrative effect, such as a new clue, a newly-revealed ally, or the discovery of some new avenue to attain a personal goal.

Ultimate Spoils

- Apply ./Chargeup:Team(Full)
- Apply ./Fortify:Team(Full)
- Apply ./Rally(1)
- Apply ./Rebuild or ./Ruin to current Location
- Apply ./Recover:Self(All) or ./Recover:Threat(All)
- Apply ./Replenish:Choice(Full)
- Activate a Storm on an involved Threat
- Choose a variable number of Basic Spoils instead*

* = The amount is based on the highest Stage of the Throwdown completed: 1 for the Confrontation, 3 for the Struggle, 7 for the Final Attack, and 11 for reaching into any of the Rumble Rounds

Step 6: Discard and Draw

With the outcome applied, it's time to return to Story Mode. Discard any remaining cards in the Pile. Any player with more cards in their Hand than their Max must discard down to Max. Any player with fewer cards in their Hand than their Max must draw up to Max. The Throwdown is now completed.

(SIDEBAR: What if the enemy gets away?)

Oftentimes you simply can't defeat your opponent in a single conflict. This could be for any number of reasons, but the most common is that you just didn't build up enough damage output to take it down. In any case, the conflict is over and the scene must still move on; you'll just have to fight them again another day. Remember Rule 6!

(SIDEBAR: Routing: What if I die mid-Throwdown?)

Due to certain combinations of ./Trauma Techs and effects that can be applied during the flow of action, it is occasionally possible that one side of the conflict may be "taken out" before they get a chance to formally Concede. This situation is known as a **Rout**. A Rout can occur as a result of the following circumstances:

- **Pilots:** the Commander of the Throwdown suffers Commitment Death (i.e. one of their Commitment balances has been reduced to zero), or the Robo in the Head Position of the Final Form is reduced to zero Grit.
- **Coach:** all of Coach's involved Threats have been reduced to rating zero

As soon as either of the above happens during a Throwdown, a Rout occurs, and no further Actions may be taken. The Routed opponent is forced into an immediate Concede action, and play now moves to the Outcome stage.

(SIDEBAR: What if we want to Rumble immediately?)

Sometimes one or both sides may want to just skip the first three stages of a Throwdown and get right to the Final Form Rumble. This is easy enough to do, but be warned that it does not mechanically favor the Pilots:

1. Start the Throwdown as normal, including initiative play and establishment questions. Pilots do not receive bonus draws, but Coach draws cards equal to the involved BGM's current pre-Rumble TR. Do not reveal initiative cards just yet.
2. Immediately execute the Initiate Rumble action mechanics, now including its normal bonus draws, but without any point scoring.
3. Reveal initiative cards. Higher card wins, ./Schism triggers if the Strike is Dissonant, and then lower card is Discarded. No one scores any points, and it is now the initiative loser's turn.

Final Advice from the Alumni

Everything you have read in the preceding pages can be a lot to take in. We are well aware of this: Battle School will challenge even the most dedicated young Pilots! In the hopes of minimizing your worries in the first days of school, our alumni have provided words of encouragement and advice for new recruits. We hope that the wisdom of our past heroes can shape the success of our future legends!

Start Small, and Take Your Time

The rules of this game don't actually have all that many moving parts, but there are a *lot* of ways in which you can move what little parts there are. The First Contact scene is specifically designed to ease new players into the basics in an interactive way. The playbooks are constructed to make the introduction to the extended components easier to process, with role-targeted pieces right up front. Focus on the basics in front of you, and take your time figuring them out.

Coach Is Not Your Enemy

Coach may be in command of all the dangers you face - he put them there! - but he is *not* your adversary. He's just another player at the same table as you, working *with* you to tell the most amazing story your group can create. When he throws dangers at you, it's not because he's trying to defeat you, but instead because he's trying to *challenge* you. Through adversity you grow stronger as a team. Embrace the challenge, thrive on it, and work with Coach to create awesome.

Synergize

This is a game about teamwork. You can't go it alone! Strategize with your fellow Pilots to theorize new combos and field test them in play. Each of you has a strength, and you're best when you integrate your specialties with those of your team. This is not only true of winning fights, but also the whole focus of the underlying Harmony gauge that lets you combine your Robos!

Externalize Your Power

Your Hands of cards are intentionally limited in size. Teamwork of course adds more options during conflicts, but so do Factions. Court the story Factions and gain their favor so you can put cards out there for later use. This gives you a lot more versatility both with your Team and without - and since your whole Team can use Faction cards, they are a great way to help each other out!

Diversify Your Cards

Until you're experienced enough to start building out your own specialized card combos, try to focus on keeping as diverse a spread of cards in your Hand as possible. It may be tempting to hoard nothing but twos and faces, but without a reliable middle range you put yourself at risk of triggering ./Schism. "Do I want to piss off the Team?" is a frequent and very important question that Pilots have to ask themselves when balancing the consequences of a Counter vs a Concede.

Keeping your possible Strike Ranges in mind, try holding onto a collection of lows, mids, and highs that are spaced fairly evenly apart. This makes it more likely that you'll have safe Strikes during upcoming fights. This also applies to Factions - when investing, try to make sure that there is a good spread of options out there for all occasions!

Sometimes You Must Concede in Order to Succeed

New players are almost always tempted to push every Throwdown as far as they can take it, ignorant of the setbacks they may suffer as a result. This is somewhat intentional; part of the First Contact scene's value is in letting players see first hand just how bad an idea that can often be. When you suddenly realize that losing in the third stage of a Throwdown can indeed outright kill your character, it puts everything into a whole new perspective.

In *Gattaibushido* you have to consider not only the cards in your Hand, but also your Pilot's current stats and resources, as well as the greater resources and goals of the Team as a whole. You don't have to keep Countering and Escalating, you don't have to exhaust every card in your hand. It is often wiser to Concede before the stakes get too high, suffering minor setbacks instead of a potentially worse disaster. We call this "Strategic Concession" and it's a crucial part of winning Scenarios.

Expect and Embrace Failure

Your Pilots are the last hope of humanity, but there will be a lot of speed bumps on the road to salvation. You will fail *a lot*, and that's actually pretty awesome. For one, failing in various ways is often a trigger for earning Lessons and advancing your Pilot's abilities. Most of the playbooks are designed to facilitate the creation of flawed people who learn just as much from their weaknesses as they do from their strengths.

But more than that, dramatic failure creates story points for everyone to experience and respond to. Every failure should be seen as an opportunity to role-play. Your own failures can inspire your friends to regroup, recover, and get revenge. Often the most delicious victories are only so tasty because of the long string of setbacks the Team survived while getting there.

SECTION: Coach's Handbook

(insert bigass artwork)

101: An Introduction to Coaching

As Coach, your task is one of managing the affairs of the game world and its various Threats. You must give the Pilots a home, some places to roam, and some people to befriend. Then, you must threaten all of those things with destruction, so that the Pilots are forced to act in order to protect them.

This section is filled with numerous tips which should make your Coaching experience a lot easier.

(SIDEBAR: Coach's Common Tasks)

A quick page reference for how to...

- Build a Big Giant Monster: p. XX
- Check for Faction Disfavor: p. XX
- Create a Threat: p. XX
- Introduce a Faction: p. XX
- Run a First Contact: p. XX
- Run a Gambit: p. XX
- Run a Lessons Vote: p. XX
- Run a Throwdown: p. XX
- Set up a scene: p. XX

Foundational Advice

You Are Not the Enemy!

As Coach, your primary roles are as arbiter (of the rules), narrator (of the world), and challenger (for the opposition). One role that is very specifically excluded from this list is Antagonist. While you may control the forces that oppose the Pilots, your job is not to destroy them, but instead to challenge them. You guide the actions of their enemies, but you must do so fairly, and not take pleasure in the Pilots' defeats or suffering.

Draw Inspiration from the Genre

This game's inspirations are *deeply* rooted in both the gattai-mecha and super-sentai genres of anime. That inspiration is visible everywhere from the team Chromas to the exclamatory power names and more. If you are lacking ideas for your next session, check out the inspirations list and try a new series.

You Don't Have to Fight the Formula...

The source genre is pretty formulaic, but that's okay. In the classic stories, the Pilots go off on side missions, make deals, and get in sword-and-laser fights until the inevitable arrival of the Big Giant Monster of the Week, after which they go all Final Form and kick its butt. This is pretty standard for the genre, and there's nothing wrong with that. The shows keep following that formula because it works, and players of this game will likewise expect it. It's fun, it's comfortable, and it entertains.

You should not feel pressured to avoid the "railroad" style of play in this game. It's practically expected in these stories, and following that flow will make your first few scenarios a lot easier to manage. Stick with the tracks as you learn, they're there to guide you along your journey.

...But Sometimes You've Got to Break Free!

Once you've mastered the formula, feel free to totally break from it when you see a good opportunity to do so. Using the old standards is fun for a while, but if you keep at them every single time the play can get a little stale. While the basic flow usually assumes that the Pilots spend time pursuing personal goals and gathering power before the inevitable BGM shows up, you don't *have* to follow that pattern every single time.

Using your Crisis Paths, you can switch things up from time to time. Have the BGM attack super early-on, plan for it to totally devastate them, and then spend the rest of the scenario focusing on them trying to recover and rebuild. Or instead have multiple successive BGM attacks take place across the story. Keep them working at it, desperately trying to save humanity from destruction!

Your BGM doesn't technically even *have* to be a literal giant monster, either: it's just a game term thematically named after the classic trope. The players will probably expect a horrible space creature... but what if a fleet of alien spaceships shows up instead? Or what if it's actually a planetary defense system they have to defeat, or a sentient black hole, or even a shadow clone of their own Final Form? Maybe the Pilots have gone rogue, and the "BGM" is in fact the assembled Earth Armada trying to destroy them!

An even more unexpected change is to exclude the BGM from your scenario entirely! If the players expect a Big Giant Monster to show up at the end of every story, they'll get comfortable in rote patterns of development. By excluding the BGM from your Crisis path, you can spend a scenario or two focusing instead on completely different aspects of the world. Sometimes the core conflict of a story isn't the monsters, but instead the smaller, more personal battles that the Pilots have to fight (who's dating who, gotta win the volleyball tournament, the annual Space Dance is next week and your rivals are planning a big surprise). Skip the BGM for a game, focus on the personal stories, and you will both surprise the players and also keep the rhythm fresh.

Keep Them on their Toes

Don't let the Team get too comfortable with their synergies! Let them enjoy a solid round-table full-party victory every now and then, but don't let them grow complacent with their killer combos. Put in challenges that split them up, such as multiple fronts of enemies, or simultaneous conflicts that require divided attention.

Similarly, don't let individual Pilots get too cozy with one-trick pony shows. If a Pilot is too specced out on Assists, for example, put her in the hot seat from time to time where she needs to overcome challenges all by her lonesome. Conversely, if a "lone wolf" pilot is too cocky, throw her against an obstacle that requires teamwork.

The **Ripple** mechanic can be useful for keeping the story tense, but it requires you to pay real close attention to what the players say and do, both in and out of character. Listen for moments when the Pilots break their personal and team taboos, when their rituals don't get followed, or when they say things like "what's the worst that could happen?" Use these moments to nonchalantly activate a Ripple and keep the tension high.

When in Doubt, Threaten

If you've hit a wall and can't think of what to do next, consider adding a narrative threat to the Team. Trash their favorite off-campus hangout, infest their rations with space roaches, have school rivals deface their Robos. In other words, make the Pilots' lives a constant struggle. Let them enjoy sporadic moments of satisfaction, but don't let those moments linger too long.

Normally you can't damage their actual Resources without using the mechanics, but in the above examples, no numbers were actually affected. Roach-infested rations are still edible after all, just gross. Defaced Robos work like any other, although they sure do look silly. Setbacks like these raise the story tension and inspire action without actually requiring any mechanical involvement from your Threats.

Use Your Threes and Sevens

If you need a quick number in the story, use threes and sevens. They are common in the source fiction, and great for immediate use in play. The Pilots need to activate three terminals to get inside the secret enemy base underneath the ruins, and seven different dangers await them inside. Seven thuggish rivals jump the lone Pilot when she stays late at the gym to shoot some hoops, and they leave three important items behind in their rush to escape after she whoops their butts. Three groups of seven alien fighter ships block the Team's travel to their mission location: the third planet of a trinary star system seventy-seven light years away.

Once the players are used to your threes and sevens, throw them for a spin with an occasional two or eight!

Other Non-Player Characters

In *Gattaibushido*, the only characters that have game mechanics are the Pilots, the Factions, and the Threats. But there are many other characters and creatures in the universe that don't need to fall into these categories. While the vast majority of these exist as little more than narrative color, sometimes you can use them as the components of other game mechanics.

The easiest way to bring in non-mechanics characters is as narrative power behind a Gambit. For example, if a Pilot has offended the locals of a backwoods colony and they are trying to lynch her, instead of statting them out you can just use them as the crux of a Gambit. Can she talk them out of their furor? Can she run away? Can she call on her friends' help in time? Play out a quick Gambit and find out!

Or instead, you can just "say what happens" and move on. Don't bring numbers and mechanics into play unless it's important to the greater story. For example, if a Pilot is out on a shopping trip in the Enzirian Bazaar and wants to find something interesting, role-play her interactions with the locals, and describe the fancy new scarf she gets from a pleasant off-world trader. Keep it simple and card-free, and just enjoy the scenery for a while.

Similarly, you can use this same method to build up the feeling of danger in a purely descriptive way. For example, while the Pilots are making their way through monstrous caves on an alien planet, suddenly you describe how a young larval centipede-*thing* attacks them! Instead of throwing down a card, though, see how they respond, and just play it out with words. Let them blast it to smithereens and kick its carcass down a deep pit and move on. Bring more and more of these things into the scene, until you eventually reach a point where you finally feel that it's Throwdown time.

Coach's Basic Mechanics

As Coach, you have a number of responsibilities and mechanics you must consider. This section details the basic tasks you are expected to manage, and also explains some of the differences between your mechanics and those of the Pilots.

Coach's Differences

Coach plays the game very differently than the Pilots. Below are the major mechanical process changes that apply to your role in *Gattaibushido*.

Coach's Hand: Your Max Hand is set equal to the number of Pilot Players in the current game session.

Coach's Techs: Just as the Pilots can have a myriad assortment of Techs at their disposal, You likewise have your own special powers. These all fall into three groups: Ripples, Waves, and Storms.

Coach's Buffers: Your individual Threats each have their own Buffer pools, set by their Threat Ratings.

Coach's Charges: You doesn't spend Charges to empower your own Techs during Throwdowns. Instead, you *Discard* from your Hand in order to activate these options (Faces for Waves, Aces for Storms). Otherwise, they are automatically triggered at various stages of Crisis.

Coach's Strike Ranges: Unlike the Pilots, who can play outside of Strike by risking team stress, by default your Threats' Strike Ranges (set by Threat Ratings) are hard limits. Some custom Threats may have special exemptions to this.

Factions: Coach does not have Factions under his control - at least not initially. Factions can be corrupted through Disfavor, and this can result in them becoming new Threats under your control. In either case, you never invest cards into Factions.

Locations: Coach does not make use of Locations except for the purpose of destroying them.

Keeping Time Moving

Time and Urgency of the Mission are important aspects of play. The Pilots can choose to go off and do whatever they ultimately want, but if they linger inactive for too long, the enemy grows more powerful as the heroes idle. Occasionally if you feel like the Pilots are screwing around too much with unimportant stuff, or just overly turtling up, subtly remind them that danger is always near, and steer them toward action.

If they still don't get the hint, you can just invoke the **./Tarry** trigger, to subtly let them know that the clock is ticking. This is called a **Ripple** and is detailed just a bit further below.

Omens and Jokers

The Jokers and Omens are integral to your control of the story's pacing. They're also a key source of your Threats' powers. The Pilots will balance between using theirs for immediate power and saving them for later, while you must balance between keeping yours out (to empower your Threats) and spending them to push the story along.

By keeping your eyes on the number of Omens in play, you can gauge how dangerous your Threats will be when conflicts arise. I recommend aiming to keep at least one in play at all times, if you can manage it, either from the Pilots' Deck or your own. For more on Jokers and Omens, see the basic cards rules on p. XX

Ripples

As the Pilots explore the story, their actions and intentions can have unintended consequences that aren't always worthy of playing Gambits and Throwdowns. Even still, you may still want some of these actions to carry *some* minor mechanical impact on the game, and that's where **Ripples** come in handy. Whenever an entirely story-driven portent arises during play, you can choose to visibly Discard a card from your Deck.

The following in-game event examples would each be Ripple-worthy:

- A Team taboo is broken inadvertently
- A teammate or ally insults a Pilot's dead father.
- A character rolls three sevens in a game of dice at the barracks.
- Coach manages to Block three times in a row.
- A Pilot unknowingly takes a course of action that helps out the enemy.

The triggers for Ripples are entirely spontaneous, and there is no hard science to bringing them into play. Just be on the lookout for strange coincidences and unintentionally dark moments of story that may arise, and remember your Threes and Sevens. In this fashion, Ripples allow such portentous moments to help bring forth new Omens more rapidly.

Ripples and Omens have similar thematic feel, but there is a distinct mechanical difference in how they enter play. Ripples are mechanical reactions to "ominous" events and narrations that occur spontaneously during play - they are not reliant upon Jokers, instead merely helping cycle them closer to the top of Coach's Deck. Omens, in turn, are the mechanics triggered by the revelation of those Jokers.

Waves and Storms: Your Techs

Waves and **Storms** are Coach's special Techs, which tend to have greater scopes than those used by the Pilots'. Waves have smaller and/or more direct and localized effects. Storms are much more heinous, and frequently broad-reaching.

Waves and Storms come directly from the Threats in any particular scenario. High- and Multi-Threat scenarios will have multiple Wave and Storm options. Additionally, there are three default options that are available in every scenario, detailed on p. XX and also on your Coach record sheets.

When the rules call for a Wave or Storm, you can only trigger *one* of those available to you, unless the rules specifically say otherwise. When the rules call for a Storm, however, you can usually choose to trigger a Wave instead. Crisis events can activate any Wave or Storm present in your Scenario, while individual Threats can only access their own specific Techs and the afore-mentioned defaults.

Regardless of the mechanics, every Wave and Storm *must* have a suitable narrative description. Coach can't just say "Okay, I do a Wave, so Jannyse takes 1 damage." You must describe what exactly is happening in the story that is causing this damage. By keeping aware of your Omens and your Threats' abilities, you should be able to come up with some ideas.

Course Prep: The First Session

If you've made it this far, you've probably figured out that *Gattaibushido* has a somewhat different approach to a lot of the same tasks as other RPGs. The biggest hurdle for new players tends to be figuring out the expected flow of process, even more so if they're veterans of other more popular RPGs. Hopefully this section can help you get over those bumps and smooth out the play experience.

Campaigns work best if the group spends the entire first meetup session just talking about the game they want to play, and the story they want to tell. Popular gaming culture tends to refer to this as a "Session Zero" event, but with *Gattaibushido* it is actually an integrated process built into the first session. During that process, the group should ideally run through the **First Contact** tutorial scene, and then afterward make their characters together as a group.

Start with a Blank Slate

This means story *and* rules! Don't pre-write the world details, and likewise don't front-load the rules! Trust in the First Contact scene to kickstart both story and rules knowledge, and you'll be good to go.

Run the First Contact

The First Contact kicks off the game and the grander story. It is both tutorial and world-building session. Every game should begin with one *before* the actual player character Pilots are discussed in any detail.

The First Contact scenario serves two crucial purposes for new campaigns. First, it provides a learn-as-you-go tutorial for the game's fundamental mechanics. A well-run First Contact scene should introduce the players to the flow of the cards, the role of the Decks in play, and the basics of full-team conflict resolution. There are a good number of extended mechanics that don't get play in this scene, but that's okay for now - we don't want to overwhelm them.

Second, the scene establishes the groundwork of your new campaign's world-story. At points during the process, the players themselves will discuss and establish narrative facts about the game world. This creates great variation in player stories and experiences, resulting in no two games of *Gattaibushido:Fusion!* being identical.

The core conflict of the First Contact defines the legacy that the "current age" Pilots inherit (i.e. the future team that will be created afterward and played onward). The actions of the players during this introduction will permanently shape the future of the campaign. One or more of the future Pilots could be descended from the people in this encounter, if not having actually been present!

How are these team founders remembered? Do the future Pilots inherit a legacy of honor, duty, and sacrifice? Or do they instead have to live under the shadow of their predecessors' shame and failures? Are they expected to fill the gigantic shoes of martyr heroes? This scene will decide that, and more.

First Contact Advice

Three is the Magic Number

For all mechanics in this scene, use a simple base value of three (3). Each player carries a max Hand of three cards. At the beginning of a Throwdown, each player draws three more into their Hand. Each player has three Buffers, and a single stat value of 3 for the purpose of taking ./Trauma. All Strike Ranges are 3, and no one gains or uses Charges. The final Threat is TR 3. If there's a need for a mechanical number, use 3.

Focus on the Core Stuff

It's important to establish how Gambits and Throwdowns work during this scene. Give each player an opportunity to be involved in a number of things, so that they can directly experience how the real basic mechanics work. The players' characters don't have any powers or Techs to use, so there aren't many options to confuse them or complicate things.

Emphasize that for now, they should not worry about the numbers. Explain mechanics as they come up, but don't pre-load everything, or give away too much of the strategy just yet. They are *supposed* to make mistakes, and ideally go into play without any understanding of what the numbers do. That will lead to unintentionally bad character decisions, which in this case you actually want so as to make the scene more interesting!

Schism Follows the Team!

Chances are the new players won't know much at all about Harmony and ./Schism, and that's perfect. Just keep count of each time that the players trigger ./Schism. Don't apply any of its actual subroutine effects; simply count how many times it happens, and keep that count handy to reference again when it comes time for actual Team creation.

The actions of this group will color the tone of the team that eventually follows their footsteps in the future. The eventual team of Pilots may start the "game proper" with a lower Harmony as a result. This isn't a punishment: it simply makes for an interesting first actual play session, while letting them experience first-hand the extended consequences of playing beyond Strike Range.

Modifying the Scene Components

It's likely that the background particulars of the world that your group creates will necessitate making changes to the core components of this scenario. Sometimes it would make sense for the characters to all be military-only, for example, and other times you might need to change the overall narrative of the moment to fit a completely different take on the Alien Attack that this document did not foresee. Just use the same basic approach to create a more appropriate set of internal and external conflicts, and modify the variables as makes sense to your setup.

First Contact Flow

The First Contact scenario has the following flow of play:

1. Quick Explanation
2. Establishment Questions
3. Character Creation
4. Draw Hands and Create the Decks
5. Set the Stage
6. PLAY!
7. ...and bring to a Conclusion

Quick Explanation

Read aloud or paraphrase:

"Before we begin to play the "actual" game, we're going to play out a short Prologue to the greater story that will follow. We'll kick this off with a bit of collective world-building, to better set the stage for the greater in-game story to take place. This introductory scene takes place in a special off-world colony, where super secret weapons are being developed..."

Establishment Questions

Now ask the group to start establishing aspects of the setting. Read Aloud:

Let's talk about your game world. So we already know there are alien invaders, and we know that we will at least eventually have combining giant robots and a battle school. Now I want each of you to come up with *at least* one other interesting fact about this setting that makes it different from our own world.

What else is interesting about the timeline for your awesome Giant Robot Space Future? How far in the future are we? What cool advances in technology have happened? What is new, strange, or different about humanity? And the aliens - what makes them so dangerous and unstoppable?

Take a moment and think about the timeline, the changes to the world and universe, the distant colony itself, and the alien menace that is about to attack it. Each of you try and come up with at least one fact about the setting, and you're welcome to add even more than that, too. When you got something, share it!

Try and get each player to contribute at least one fact. Facts include things such as: Steam-powered Starships, Alien Allies, No More Children, Everyone has Green Skin, Still Haven't Mastered Gravity Tech, Planet-Destroying Weapons, and so on. Try to build out some cool sci-fi elements of your group's game world, and offer suggestions to make things awesome and unique.

During this flow, you need to try and answer the following questions. Some of them may be answered through the players own volunteered ideas, while others you may end up just having to directly ask:

- How far in the future is this?
- Where is this colony? What is its name?
- What is the nature of the secret weapons being developed at this colony? Who is behind their development?
- What is known about The Enemy?

- What was it about The Enemy that made them so unstoppable?

(SIDEBAR: Worlds of Opportunity)

To give you some idea of the kinds of worlds that the First Contact process can create, I'm including a few examples from my home and playtest sessions:

- It all starts on a normal high school class field trip, in which the students go to some safari-like experience on a frontier planet. Five of them get separated during an alien attack, fall into an antimatter reactor, and emerge with what they call "Laser Magic!"
- The conflict is rooted in humanity's own hubris. Humans found a new infinite power source, pulling from another dimension. But one day the occupants of that dimension came through the portal, and now aliens keep appearing in the world, using that same power against us. Only the "old school fusion" force can fight them!
- The setting is entirely online! Aliens have completely infested the worldwide power network. The pilots have personas within the TerMiNET that runs throughout everything. Their "sysop" level of access gives them robot powers, but they still have to play by the rules or everything falls apart.
- The Pilots are teenagers that were genetically modified to resist an alien phage. They must take missions into the ever-growing Contamination Zone, recovering useful tech and cleansing the world of the sickness so that humans can reclaim their lost lands.
- The Pilots are hot-rodding, thrill-seeking rebel teenagers in a distant future where humans no longer feel emotions. They draw power from crystal parasites that drilled into their hearts, transforming their entire bodies into gigantic emotion-fueled "Crystal Harmony Turbo-Golems!"

Create the Characters

Read Aloud:

As mentioned before, this scene takes place during a war some time ago, on a special off-world colony of Earth. We're going to play out the moment when The Enemy first appeared and made its disastrously violent First Contact with humanity.

Now that we've established the facts of the situation, let's figure out who you are playing during this flashback. The protagonists of this scene are all people who are - for whatever reason - at this remote colony during that initial Enemy attack. Maybe you're military soldiers, assigned to the Colonial Defense Force. Maybe you're licensed workers here, contracted by the administration. Or maybe you're just visiting civilians stuck in the wrong place at the wrong time!

Remember: this is just a flashback - all of this has already happened! These characters are *not* intended to be your heroes for the rest of the game, and will likely not see any play after this prologue scenario concludes. Instead, the history of your eventual Battle Team will be rooted in this very moment, with survivors becoming legends known by the Mecha pilots for many years to come.

Each player (except you) needs to figure out who their character for this scene is. There are three important components to this: **Who they are, Why they are here, and What they seek to accomplish.** Throw some ideas around, and encourage everyone to eventually state all three things for their character.

Who are you? Examples:

- Military: LT, Sarge, Engineer, Front Liner, Sniper, Espionage, Conscript
- Commercial: Administrator, Researcher, Scientist, Medtech, Ops Tech, Builder
- Civilian: Student, Intern, Military Spouse, Prisoner, Someone's Kid

Why are you there? Examples:

- I serve in the Colonial Defense Force, protecting the residents.
- I am working on a secret weapon.
- My dad works here and I'm just a kid.

What is your immediate goal? Keep it simple and straightforward, and easy enough to accomplish in this short flashback. Examples:

- I've got to protect the Governor!
- I've got to find my kid brother!
- I've got to destroy the secret documents!

Set Initial Stats

Players can write these down if they like, but it's probably not necessary. As mentioned before, everything is a 3:

- **Hand:** 3 cards
- **Health Stat:** 3
- **Buffer Tokens:** 3
- **Strike Range:** 3

Draw Hands & Prepare the Decks

Each side removes the Jokers - they are not used during First Contact - and then shuffles their Decks. Each would-be Pilot player draws three cards to set her initial personal Hand. You draw your own Hand with a number of cards equal to the number of players in this scenario.

Set the Stage

Time to finally set the scene and get the action started. You will need to prepare three new Factions based on the world-building establishment from a few minutes ago. Then narrate the setting of the scene, explaining where the players are, how they ended up there, and what immediate problems they must overcome if they want to live. It makes an impact if you place each Faction down on the table as you mention it during the intro, adding a bit of physical punctuation to your setup speech.

The following canned text assumes an example setting of alien hordes attacking a weapon research base on a Jovian moon, about 100 years in the future. It's just an example of what you'll need to do; use it if you want, or edit it to fit your world-story. The **bold-faced** bits are Factions that you put out on the table; change these to your own.

By the time the sensors picked up **The Enemy**, it was too late. They swarmed from the dark of space, rushing in like the lightning and leaving a swath of devastation, allowing no survivors and taking no prisoners. None of the base's defenses were prepared to deal with a threat this alien, and this overwhelming!

Somehow, each of you wound up together here, in a cramped tertiary monitoring station in the security wing of the bunker. Alarms blast throughout the space, and you must shout to be heard. Emergency power has so far kept the backup lights on, but it's only a matter of time before those are gone and the darkness takes you all.

On the flickering comms screens before you, you watch as more of the space-*things* overrun the few remaining pockets of the **Special Defense Forces** that desperately try to hold them off. An evacuation alert scrolls across each screen, but you all know that chances of escape are slim. If you work together, you might be able to escape - maybe one of the lifeships can make it through, and warn the people back home?

But as you ponder this, you notice one more screen, showing a video feed of a dim room deeper in the bunker. In that room, beyond that camera, under a single flickering light, is **The Weapon**. It lies unused, abandoned, waiting to be claimed...

Each of the named cards I just laid down is a "Faction" which you can use for potential added power later in this scene. If you would like, you each have the *option* to invest any *one* of your cards in any of the Factions you choose, face-up, and then draw another into your Hand to replace it. If your group places more than one card on a faction, only one of them is face-up. *Any* of you can play these cards from the Factions later on, but for now it's up to you if you want to invest.

Now with that set up... what do you do?

Play! The Three-Part Conflict

This now becomes a mix of Open Play and instructional mechanics, played out as a short and improvisational three-act scenario. Your objective as Coach is to first allow them a little bit of role-playing exploration with these (probably) throw-away characters. Then you want to start the action with a few Gambits, establishing new scene components through their resolution. After a bit more exploration, you should lead play towards their first Throwdown, setting the characters' goals in direct conflict with one another. Once that plays through, you lead the scene to an ultimate conclusion with a second and final Throwdown against the enemy!

This creates a three-part structure to the actual play of this scene, based on the nature of the conflict presented:

1. Immediate: Players vs Environment (2-4 Gambits)
2. Internal: Players vs Players (1 PVP Throwdown)
3. Invasion: Players vs Threats (1 PVT Throwdown)

1. Immediate Conflict (PVE)

With the scene set, the players can now start exploring the scene. Encourage them to push hard on the characters they have created, and more or less "drive 'em like ya stole 'em" as they say. They should ask questions about the scene, and in turn you should improvise components and details. Let them run with the scene, and see where they want to take it.

Look for opportunities to steer them toward simple one-off challenges, and use those moments to bring out the Gambit rules (see p. XX). If they want to use the failing equipment, for example, make it a Gambit. Other Gambit examples:

- Q: "Do we have any personal weapons?" A: "I dunno, do you?"
- Q: "Can we use the terminals to control the security system?" A: "Let's find out!"
- Q: "Can we sneak to the Experimental Weapon Bay unnoticed?" A: "I think that's challenging enough to require the cards..."

When involving the positive outcomes of these Gambits, try introducing some of the Subroutines. Since there are already Factions on the table, the *./Favor* subroutine in particular can be beneficial for demonstrating mid-game investment to new players here. Allow them each one or more turns to see the Gambit rules in play, then look for greater conflict opportunities.

2. Internal Conflict (PVP)

As you play, look for ways to pit the character's built-in goals against each other. The scene should build up to a conflict that puts major character objectives at stake. Hopefully this should occur on its own, but you may need to creatively improvise some catalysts for direct player-vs-player conflict.

Make sure they all know that if they ever want to "stop talking and just use the cards," then they need to throw the proverbial gauntlet. To do this they must take a card from their Hand and slam it face-down on the table, challenging their opponent to a Throwdown. Then, break out the Throwdown rules (see p. XX).

Encourage them to take sides and back each other up. Press the conflict, reinforce the desperation of their situation. If they start to "go there" with their narration, let it ride and even push it further! Use those emotions to color this scene: the more intense it gets, the more awesome the rest of the campaign will be.

The first Throwdown will likely require a frequent amount of rules explanation as you move through it, so re-read the Throwdown mechanics first. You're not using advanced Techs or Charges, so just keep to the cards, moving as fast as you can manage. Remind them that this is where those Faction cards from earlier can be used.

When dealing with the Outcome, introduce the *./Trauma* Subroutines. Any damage they take comes out of a simple health "Stat" of 3. They also have 3 Buffers each, so now would be the time to use them.

Let them push themselves to card exhaustion, so they experience the full results (and consequences) of their success. When a character's health Stat is gone, they're out. The sudden death of a character as a result of pushing a PVP Throwdown too far can be eye-opening to new players, and that's entirely expected.

3. Invasion! (PVT)

After one or two PVP matches, it's time to look for opportunities to give them a chance to actually fight against an external threat. Your goal here is to guide things to a place where you can actually bring in the alien menace that has so far only been a background component. Move to set up one last Throwdown, pitting the whole (remaining) team against their first real Threat.

The Threat: TR 3. Powers: Attacker (W); Attacker (S); Heavy-Hitter. See p. XX for Threat Techs.

You won't use all the extended Throwdown mechanics due to the simplicity of this tutorial. When resolving the outcome, we recommend saying what *would have* happened were the greater mechanics applied, and then simply using the score totals to provide narrative color to the conclusion of the First Contact Scene.

It's *totally okay* if the players don't win! Let them experience that kind of complete loss, so it becomes part of their future team's backstory. Teams with tragic histories create some of the most inspiring and memorable moments of play!

EXAMPLE: We Got to the Secret Weapon!

In this sample final PVT conflict, the players pushed into the hangar with the Secret Weapon, so now what?

- **First, can they activate it?** If one of them is specifically a test pilot, then yes. Otherwise turn it into a Gambit for the others.
- **Does it even work?** If it's never been tested before, that *might* mean another Gambit for actually getting it to do what it's supposed to do in the first place.
- **We got it working!** Let them each invest one more card into the Weapon's Faction, same as before.
- **How do we get it out of here?** Maybe they have to Gambit to find an exit, or maybe they just blast out. Maybe instead the enemy takes that moment to blast *in* and attack!

If they rush out to fight the enemy, they're effectively initiating a Throwdown. Otherwise describe how the enemy comes to them, and kick things off with a Throwdown challenge of your own.

Bring it to a Close

Look for opportunities to bring things to a suitable close. This should be fairly organic and obvious, with the big PVT Throwdown usually being enough to provide resolution. It's okay if there are dangling plot threads - these can provide inspirational fodder for the players to grab onto during Team Creation!

Run the Team Creation Sequence

After concluding the First Contact, run the Team Creation process (see p. XX). Coach's involvement with this will largely be one of mechanical guidance and "story wrangling," as you ask questions of the group and encourage them to add more details to the world.

Keep in mind that the default game intends for the characters to all be young Pilots freshly-recruited to Battle School. If this is a brand new group of *Gattaibushido* players, I encourage everyone to play young neophytes, so they can all experience the new developments together. However, if you have some veteran players, you might consider letting them play more established Pilots - possibly even aged First Contact survivors!

End the Session There

With the First Contact scene and the subsequent team creation complete, you should now have the foundation of an exciting new game world, and a promising new team of Pilots to explore it. I recommend concluding the first session at this point, so you have time to plan out the first game scenario before next time.

Missions and Campaigns: Sessions 2 and Beyond

You should now have a fresh new Team of Pilots with a unique history, ready to hop into their Robos and fly into the half-painted galaxy of your collective design. This section will help you prepare your own Mission Scenarios for the Pilots to experience.

Introducing Extended Rules Systems

When returning to play after the First Contact, the mechanics will still be pretty fresh to everyone. As with before, take your time with the extended components. Introduce a Faction or two, detail the Home Base Locations and Resources, and try a few Gambits. As you explore the early story bits, let the Pilots get used to all of the core things before pushing them into any more Throwdowns.

In a first Scenario with new players, I find it helpful to explain aloud the decisions behind every action I take as Coach. If you've ever played any popular tournament-style collectible card games, you may be familiar with this idea. Using this approach, whenever you touch, play, or in any way interact with a card, verbally explain what triggers it, and what its implications are.

You are allowed to give the Pilots a hand and explain to them immediately-visible ways that they can beat your plays and Threats. Remind them when useful Faction Favor cards can give them a win, or when they don't realize that they have a really awesome Tech combo ready to use. Don't worry too much about giving away some of your precious story secrets, just make sure the players increase their understanding of how all the parts intersect. **Remember: You Are Not the Enemy**; you're allowed to help them win if it leads to a great time.

Structuring Scenes

(SQUARP: Insert Campfire Art)

To use cliché, a Scene is the "basic building block" of narrative flow in this game. It's a simple term which means "A Thing at a Place at a Time, where *Something Interesting* happens." Think of this game like any of the TV shows that inspired it, and imagine how those stories move along from scene to scene, focusing only on the interesting things relevant to the story. Gattaibushido's use of Scenes is exactly like that.

There's no real need to be super formal with the introduction or conclusion of scenes. Just open it up like a TV show would, by telling the players **where** and **when** the action is happening (a game Location), **who's** there (the Pilots, other background characters, maybe some Threats, etc), and **what** is immediately happening to focus their attention (sneaking along, going shopping, training montage, etc). Then ask the Pilots to describe their actions, and let the rest happen organically from there.

Likely a Conflict will be called for, and it will probably be pretty obvious when it's that time. But basically, the guidelines are:

- If a Pilot has a question about "Hey, can I do this?" or "What happens if I do that?" and you think something interesting might happen, play out a **Gambit** (p. XX)
- If an argument, fight, or other major clash of interests breaks out, use a **Throwdown** (p. XX)
- If a Big Giant Monster attacks, and/or the Pilots plan to go Final Form and fuse together, start with a Throwdown that leads into a **Rumble** (p. XX)

But not every Scene needs to be focused on a conflict. Some Scenes are entirely built on role-playing and storytelling. If the players want some time to role-play their characters telling stories around a campfire, or enjoying a picture show while on shore leave, you don't need to bring any cards into it. Just enjoy a rare moment of relaxing social fun with your friends.

In any scene, be it conflict or no, always try to ask questions, answer questions, build out the world, and create a memorable experience. Remember, someone started this Scene for a reason, so at some point you need to

either **Get To The Damn Point** or close it and move on. If you can't think of *Something Interesting* to happen, then it's a lousy Scene and not worth wasting valuable play time on.

Per-Scene Mechanics

You might encounter a handful of effects that have "per scene" limitations. Think of Conflicts as entities contained within Scenes. If an ability says it can only be used "once per scene," and it has already been used once during the scene, starting a conflict within that scene does not reset that counter. Likewise, using such an ability during a conflict precludes it from further use within the same Scene.

Building Scenarios

A "Scenario" in *Gattaibushido* is an extended adventure or mission during which the Pilots attempt to attain specific goals and defeat relevant Threats. If you are familiar with other popular games, Scenarios are similar in function and packaging to "modules." Scenarios involve numerous scenes, are typically played out across two or more sessions. This section guides you through the process of building new custom Scenarios of your own.

(SIDEBAR: One-Shot Games)

This game is primarily balanced for "campaign" play, meaning that you are expecting to play this story for multiple sessions. I've found that 13 sessions or so tends to make for a good story arc. With proper adjudication of Lessons and Evolution votes, this can see the original Pilots grow into very capable characters - provided they live that long, of course.

However, one-shot and convention games are always a lot of fun, and in fact comprised a hefty amount of initial playtesting. With some specific tweaking of the base components, this game can easily be adapted to fit the confines of such a single-serving gaming experience. For more information on this, check out the Appendix on p. XX.

Step 1: Set the Story Variables

The first thing you need is a premise, an idea of what you want to happen in this adventure. This usually (but not always) manifests as a new Mission that the Pilots are given by their teacher or commanding officer. When developing a new mission, consider the questions in the sub sections below.

What's the Mission Objective(s)?

What is the objective of the new Team mission? This needs to be something they can reasonably expect to achieve within a handful of play sessions, although they will definitely have to work for it. Some examples are below:

- The Aliens have developed an ultra-weapon that needs to be captured or destroyed, at any cost, and by any means necessary.
- The Enemy has infiltrated Space Command, and only the Pilots can be trusted to root them out! This is a social-heavy mission, focused on lots of investigation.
- The organic enemy ships always dissolve upon defeat. You are ordered to find a way to capture one for study.
- Escort a prima donna reporter and her crew to a danger zone so she can get the real scoop on the war.

- Rescue a captured team of soldiers and their vehicles. The Pilots are not told that the soldiers are another class of pilots with experimental new super-tech - tech which would have replaced the players had it not gone haywire!
- Combat training! Be it in the field or online, the Pilots are playing a training game with dummy weapons when the Enemy suddenly attacks!
- The Hot Springs Vacation episode! All of the Pilot teams are here for a class trip to ease the stress. Unfortunately it's not all fun and games because tensions between teams take this moment to explode, when the Coach is away!
- The Team starts trapped in a dangerous place, cut off from their Robos. They need to survive in a hostile environment and explore the story to find out how to get their Robos back and save the day.

What're the limiting parameters?

Often times the Pilot will be forced to work under strict or unusual operating parameters. What restrictions apply to this particular mission?

- The Team is tasked with escort and protection of an extremely annoying or even reprehensible person.
- One or more Threats need to be captured and brought back safely, without extensive bodily harm.
- The target Location is ancient and invaluable: any damage to the Location will forfeit the mission!
- The mission location is too small or far away to bring their Robos.
- This mission is for recon only. You are NOT to engage the enemy. Repeat: DO NOT ENGAGE.
- The mission target is on the Awful No-Good Inside-Out Death Planet.
- The objective is deep under a flooded area, but you need to get down there without causing further damage.

Where is the Mission taking them?

With an objective and some limitations established, it's time to write up a handful of Locations for the Pilots to visit. Chances are you already have some in mind based on the above variables. Don't forget to give them Boons and, if applicable, Blights. If you need some more ideas, see the sample Locations, Boons, and Blights starting on p. XX.

Who are the Team's allies?

Every Scenario needs a few outside Factions to possibly assist the Pilots on their missions. Write down a list of people or groups that might have an interest in the objective, or be connected to one or more of the Locations. Maybe some of them are already poised to help the Pilots, and maybe some having mutually exclusive opposing goals of their own.

As with Locations, chances are you already have some that you are starting to mentally flesh out. Prepare a card for each Faction involved in the scenario, to be placed on the table when it is discovered by the Pilots. Note down its Agency and associated triggers, as detailed in the Faction rules on p. XX. It can be a good idea to also prepare Threat stats for any Faction that you think may potentially become a Threat to the players.

What're the Pilots individual goals?

In addition to the main mission objectives, most of the Pilots should have personal goals connected to the Scenario as well. These are most interesting when they have the potential to clash with those of their

teammates, possibly even jeopardizing the mission itself. Below are some examples of personal scenario goals that can be given to the Pilot players.

- You need to rescue your brother from the alien dungeon!
- You secretly knows that the enemies are led by your former mentor, turned rogue - you have to find out why!
- You need to break into the boy's dorm to steal back some embarrassing personal things, before everyone else finds out!
- Another teammate humiliated you on your recent qualification testing scores. You've got to make her pay!
- You promised senpai that you'd bring back a mission souvenir, but Coach said that was strictly forbidden!
- Your weird favorite uncle lives alone in the target mission area. He's a stubborn old coot but you have to get him to leave before the monsters attack!
- Your pet space-cat, Mister Kittypants, is sick, and the only treatment is an illegal procedure involving alien blood. You have to sneak some out of the lab without getting caught!

What are the latest Intra-Team Conflicts?

It's always fun to find ways to pit the Pilots against each other in every new Scenario. The Harmony system works best when they have reason to bicker and squabble, forcing them to confront and deal with their inner turmoil to forge a better Team. Team unity is broken or diminished in some way, and must be healed before they can hope to defeat the Evil of the Week.

The previous Scenario creation questions should already inspire multiple such points of conflict. Look back at the events of your previous sessions too, even as far back as First Contact and Team Creation. Look through the notes on the Pilots' own record sheets to see who is already set up to cause a new squabble. Otherwise, use some of the simple base conflict templates below for inspiration:

- Who broke who's heart/nose/arm?
- Who broke/stole whose favorite/sentimental possession?
- Who (un)fairly beat who in what event/game/contest/challenge?
- Who (un)intentionally snubbed/insulted/offended/humiliated who, and how?
- Who lied to who, and about what?
- Who broke what promise to who?
- Who told whose dark/embarrassing secret?

What are the failure states?

When setting your objectives and connecting the variables to them, you should always make sure to at least briefly write down two potential "worst-case scenario" outcomes. The first should be a description of what will happen if the mission simply fails. This could be because no one bothered completing it, or maybe because the Pilots just didn't move fast enough to acquire the McGuffin in time.

The second should take it further and describe what might happen if the Pilots not just fail, but fail so astoundingly that the situation is officially FUBAR. These outcomes almost always eclipse mere failure, requiring truly disastrous actions by the Pilots.

Step 2: Establish the Threats

Threats provide the Pilots' primary obstacles and antagonists during a Scenario. Every Scenario should have a "Total Threat Rating" which is an "X/Y/Z" number. X = total number of Threats, Y = Average Threat Rating of those Threats (round up), and Z = number of Threats designated as BGMs. So a Scenario with 7 Threats, with an average TR of 3, and a single BGM, would have a Total Threat Rating of 7/3/1. This can be used to quickly eyeball the Scenario's mechanical challenge.

Threats are the main source of your Wave and Storm actions. As you add Threats to your Scenario, write down their Waves and Storms on your main sheet for quick reference during play. Threats and their design are more fully explained in the next chapter (p. XX).

Step 3: Build the Crisis Path

The Crisis Path is a pre-scripted series of event triggers that make the game more dangerous (and interesting!) for the Pilots. Every time you spend an Omen (Joker) from your Deck, you escalate to the next Crisis Tier and trigger its associated event. As the game play moves further down this sequence, the events grow in intensity, until the Scenario's end game and ultimate resolution.

Building the Path

You must build out your Crisis Path while designing a new Scenario. The default path is thirteen steps, alternating initially between your pre-scripted Story Events and your Threats' Waves and Storms, and increasing in intensity over time until the inevitable attack of the Big Giant Monster.

Below is the "standard" default Crisis Path setup. Each "stanza" of four events gets steadily more intense, pushing the drama pretty hard toward the end. Use this as an inspiration when designing your own Crisis Paths.

Omens Spent	Event
1	Story Event
2	Wave
3	Story Event
4	Storm
5	Story Event + Wave
6	Wave
7	Story Event + Wave
8	Storm
9	Story Event + Wave
10	Storm
11	Story Event + Storm
12	Wave
13	BGM ATTACKS!

Triggering the First Event

The first item on the Path should usually be a Story Event that connects to the main conflict of the Scenario. Like all Crisis Path events, you'll need to spend one of your Omens in order to activate it. But this is a good thing, because it gives the group a bit of time to explore the pre-Mission setting of the story a bit before the action starts.

Note that since the `./Tarry` subroutine is based on the current Crisis level, you will probably want to get it raised to level 1 before the Pilots get the idea to start using any Location benefits for free. However, if they are starting off at low resources or otherwise in dire straits, you may instead wish to let them have a few freebies and relax a bit while they set their own stories in motion.

Moving Along the Path

As standard card-play turns Jokers into Omens, the owners of their respective Decks can Spend their Active Omens to perform special actions. For the Pilots' Omens rules see p. XX; for yours, read on.

At any point outside of an active conflict, you can Spend one or both of your Active Omens by flipping them face-down. Doing so triggers the next one or two events on the Crisis Path. Only once they are *both* Spent do you get to return them to your Deck and Reshuffle.

This builds into the game a rough structure for pacing, while also giving Coach a bit of control on how to time these events for maximum impact. It is technically possible to sit on unspent Omens for as long as you want, but I recommend spending them whenever you can, so as to create more action and move the story along.

Once you've reached the end of the path, that *usually* means the Big Monster finally attacks, but that doesn't mean that the Omens stop! If the game keeps going, then keep cycling your Deck and Jokers as normal. From that point forward, all of your spent Omens trigger either Waves (by spending one) or Storms (by spending two).

Skipping Ahead: Some mechanics may direct you to "skip" ahead along the path. When this happens, immediately move the current Crisis Tier to the designated event. Ignore all intervening events: any untriggered events before the new Tier are skipped entirely.

Crisis and the Big Giant Monster

The current Crisis has a direct impact on the power of the Big Giant Monster, whenever it is eventually encountered, as its Hand is directly increased in size by the Crisis level.

The BGM-assigned Threat cannot *initiate* a Rumble until the "BGM ATTACKS!" level of the Crisis has been reached. If you want to whip out the BGM sooner, then you need to either push its event earlier up the Crisis Path, or power through your Omens as fast as possible. However, there are **two very specific instances** in which the BGM can be "fully summoned" before this point.

First, if the Pilots are in a Throwdown against the BGM-tagged Threat and *they* choose to Initiate Rumble, then the BGM will also go "full beast mode" and evolve to its more powerful form alongside the Pilots, with fully-restored TR. Coach only draws bonus cards according to the current Crisis Tier at time of Rumble.

Second, if the Pilots are in a Throwdown against a non-evolved BGM and somehow defeat it before the Throwdown ends (usually with mid-conflict applications of `./Trauma`), on Coach's next turn the BGM

immediately activates its beast mode and uses Initiate Rumble, with a fully-restored TR. As above, Coach only draws bonus cards according to the current Crisis Tier at time of Rumble.

This means that the Pilots may gain great mechanical benefit by seeking out and attacking the BGM as early as possible. If you want to make this more of a challenge for them, then you'll need to make sure they have to work hard to find out who, what, and where the BGM is, so that the Crisis Tier is suitably high by the time that occurs. In any event, after either of the above situations comes to pass, you will likely need to reassess your Scenario's still-pending Story Events.

Step 4: Finalize Waves and Storms

Every Scenario comes default with three basic actions which can be used during Crisis Path triggers:

- **Basic Wave: Attack*!** trigger ./Trauma:Choice.
- **Basic Storm: Attack*!** trigger ./Trauma:Each.
- **Alternate Storm:** activate two Waves instead.

**These are a reprint of the universal default "Attack" Threat Power, reprinted here for ease of reference. See p. XX for more detail.*

Any Threat can activate these in place of one of their own, when triggered by game rules. They are on the blank Scenario Sheets, for ease of reference. Beneath them you should take note of the rest of your Threats' individual Waves and Storms, to keep handy for future Crisis events.

Step 5: Calculate Passing Scores

At the end of every scenario, the Pilots will be graded on their overall performance during the story via a set of "final score" calculations (see p. XX). When putting the final touches on your new scenario design, you should calculate what is considered a "passing" score. For each step on the Crisis Path numbered 1 through 10, add 10 points to the score minimum. For each step numbered 11 and higher, add 20 points. The total result is the minimum score that the Pilots must earn during play if they wish to be considered as having performed adequately or better.

Example: Your newly-written scenario uses a standard 13-step Crisis Path. The first 10 steps each add 10 points to the passing score total, and steps 11-13 each add 20 points, resulting in a total passing score minimum of 160.

Running Scenarios

With a freshly-inked game scenario in hand and ready to run, it's time to make the magic happen real-time at the table!

Putting it All to Work

There is not much to add here that has not already been stated previously in this text. If you've read the book this far, then you hopefully have a good idea in your head about how everything should play out once you have your friends at the table and ready to go. To recap the important bits, review the following linked sections below:

- A Day at the School: Session Flow (p. XX)

- 101: An Introduction to Coaching (p. XX)
- The Decks: A Primer on Card Usage (p. XX)

Of course, the rest of the book is full of useful tidbits, especially in the various sidebars. However if you are in need of a quick refresher, I think those three above should be the most immediate re-reads.

Seek Outside Inspiration

When in need of ideas for how your scenario should play out, pull out an episode of your favorite mecha anime or comic and absorb the flow. Let the silly tropes permeate your brain anew, and give yourself over to the unique logic that their fiction is built upon. Remind yourself to not think too hard on explanations for things, and to let the flow of the moment take you where it wants to go.

This advice is not only limited to the scope of the game's core inspirational media, either.

Gattaibushido:Fusion! was written in an era during which the tabletop RPG hobby experienced a massive explosion of popularity. The internet is now veritably flooded with seemingly-endless hours of informational, educational, and entertaining RPG-related media. This game itself may be new, but it shares much in common with many of the other "indie" and "non-traditional" RPGs that came before it, and indeed paved the way for its existence. While the vast majority of the content out at the time of this writing is geared toward the one or two most popular games on the market, there is a lot of universal advice out there that extends to many games beyond.

Concluding a Scenario: The Final Score

When running the final session that concludes a scenario, after wrapping up all other events and story threads, be sure to close the night out by calculating the Pilot Team's "final score." As a group, go through the list below together:

- **Basic Completion:** for the first ten Crisis levels completed, add 10 points each. For levels 11 and beyond add 20 points each. This is the same calculation used to determine a scenario's minimum passing score.
- **Grand Slam Bonus:** if the Pilots achieved a complete 127-point Rumble wipe, add 127 points.
- **Wipeout:** if the Pilots *suffered* a complete 127-point Rumble wipe at the hands of an enemy, subtract 127 points.
- **Bountiful Rewards:** if the Pilots end with any surplus Team Resources over 9 points, reduce each to 9 and add the removed points to the final score.
- **Spoils:** for each checked-out Gear item returned safely intact, add 1 point. For each item of special Gear acquired in the field and brought back to the Armory, add 2 points.
- **Diversified Assets:** add 2 points for every unused favor card still on a Faction.
- **True Colors:** after the final battle, if Team Harmony is blue, add 25 points. For indigo, add 50, and for violet add 100. However if Harmony is yellow, orange, or red, subtract 13, 25, and 50 points, respectively.
- **Ultimate Sacrifice:** for each Pilot killed through intentional heroic and selfless sacrifice, add 50 points.
- **KiA:** for each Pilot otherwise killed, subtract 77 points.
- **Collateral Damage:** for every Location in a Razed state, subtract 33 points. If *all* Locations are Razed (including Team bases), subtract another 33 on top.
- **Befouled Cereal:** for every Faction destroyed, subtract its Agency x2.

- **Befouled Cereal:** for every Faction turned against them, subtract its Agency². These do count as Threats for the following items, as well.
- **Confirmed Kills:** for each threat the Pilots defeated and removed from play, add its TR x2, or TR² if it was a BGM.
- **Next Time, Doohickey:** as above, but *subtract* an equivalent amount for each Threat remaining in play, including those undiscovered.
- **Finally, did they actually complete their mission?** If yes, calculate final score as-is and move on. If no, subtract the scenario's required passing score from the current total. If higher than passing, reduce to one point below passing, then move on.

Once the total score is calculated, compare the result against the scenario's built-in passing score (see p. XX), and use the table below to determine the Team's final grade for the mission.

Score (round normal)	Grade	Detail
3x Passing and up	S	Stylish!
2x Passing	A	Excellent
1.5x Passing	B	Good
Passing	C	Pass
Down to 1/2 Passing	F	Fail
Below 1/2 Passing	R	Fail with Reprimand

(SIDEBAR: This is Just for Funsies)

The Final Score system is included as a fun nod to many anime action video games which use a similar system at the end of their stages. Its results are solely meant to provide more opportunities to add immersive color to your group's role-playing experience. There is no real tangible mechanic connected to it unless you specifically want to add one.

If you have players who get a little stressed out by or are otherwise uncomfortable with such static numerical grading systems, by all means ignore the final scoring system. Excluding it from your game entirely will have no mechanical bearing whatsoever. Conversely if you have players who really like it, then feel free to add more emphasis to it, by maybe connecting evolution rewards to it, or by giving high-scoring teams initial bonuses when starting a follow-up scenario. In either case, do whatever is most fun for you and your fellow players.

Extended Campaigns

Gattaibushido was primarily designed to simulate the narrative structure of the anime series that inspired it. I encourage invested groups to play through multiple consecutive Scenarios, chained together into what is classically called a **Campaign**. Over many such sessions of play, the Pilots will be given the chance to truly grow into their roles as saviors of the universe.

With the escalation and evolution mechanics timed as they are, a group can safely expect to run an extended campaign arc of about 13 play sessions (i.e. "episodes") or so. If you're running 3-to-4-hour sessions on

average, with a 5-Pilot group, and sticking with standard 13-point Crisis Paths, then you can usually get about 3-5 Scenarios done in that span.

Of course no plan survives contact with the enemy, so these numbers may not apply to your groups at all. It should go without saying that every group is different, and there are any number of additional factors that can accelerate or impede play.

Threats: Creating and Managing Adversity

Your **Threats** provide the main opposition in the game. Monsters, bullies, mean teachers, natural obstacles, and even Big Giant Space Monsters, all are implemented as Threats. Threats can actively participate in Throwdowns against the Pilots, or work from the background, activating their Waves and Storms as the Crisis events trigger.

These entities are by nature very different than Pilots, and as such use different mechanics. First and most important, whereas Pilots have many stats and numbers, Threats have only one: their **Threat Rating**. This magnitudinal stat has multiple applications, and greatly increases a Threat's power with each increment.

Every Threat has the following core components, each detailed in the further in this chapter:

- **Threat Rating (TR):** A numerical rating from 1 to 7
- **Threat Color:** An associated Color Code based on the Rating (Violet to Red)
- **Threat Techs:** One or more special Techs it can use in conflicts and Crisis events
- **Agendas:** A short description detailing what this Threat is doing in your Scenario
- **Defeat Conditions (DCs):** One or more methods for the Pilots to remove the Threat from play

Threat Design

The Threat design system is intended to be fairly straightforward and modular.

1. Develop a Concept
2. Give it a Threat Rating
3. Give it the required # of Defeat Conditions
4. Give it some Threat Techs

Step 1: Develop a Concept

What does it look like? Does it drip with poisonous slime, or fly on wings of scabrous feathers? Do its seven heads scream the heavy metal song that will unbind all of creation? Is it a crystal tardigrade that slips in and out of shadows, bringing with it the nightmares of the children of demons?

What does it want? Is it a reincarnated angel of shadows eternally committed to the destruction of the plague that is humanity? Is it a race of infecting alien body-stealers who see humans as the ultimate drug? Is it just a very hungry dragon pissed off that someone woke it?

Formulate a general concept for your Threat, and tweak it as you go through the rest of the process of creating it.

Step 2: Assign a Threat Rating

With the new Threat's concept in place, it's time to give it a Threat Rating. This singular number determines all other aspects of the Threat. Each increase in Threat Rating is essentially a magnitude in power greater than the prior; the higher the rating the more difficult a time the Pilots will have defeating it. A Threat's TR does the following:

- Determines Coach's Bonus Draws at the start of a Throwdown involving this Threat;
- Determines the Threat's base Buffers pool for resisting damage;
- Determines how many Threat Techs can be attached to it;
- Sets the Threat's hard Strike Range in Throwdowns;
- and Serves as an overall gauge of that enemy's power within the scenario.

The table below shows how these are determined by the Threat Rating.

- **Color:** The Color of the Threat, for narrative classification.
- **TR:** The Color's associated Threat Level. This determines # of Powers, Buffers, and More.
- **Class:** The recommended minimum Class Rank that most of the team should have acquired for this to be considered a "normal" challenge for players.
- **DCs:** The base number of defeat conditions that must be determined when designing this Threat. More DCs = more difficult to defeat.

Threat Color	TR	Class	DCs
Violet*	1	Freshman	1
Indigo	2	Freshman	1
Blue	3	Sophomore	1
Green	4	Sophomore	2
Yellow	5	Junior	2
Orange	6	Junior	2
Red**	7	Senior	3

* Weakest, basic enemy, a standard starting challenge
** World-shaking threat, greatest non-BGM enemy mecha

With multiple increases in power tied into this stat, each rank of a Threat's TR is an order of magnitude more powerful than the previous. This means that rating 2 threats are *significantly* more powerful than rating 1, and so on.

Note that Threat colors are the reverse of the Pilots' Harmonic scale, for a reason. Red represents the *worst* for the Pilots, and Violet the best. Thus a Violet Threat is small beans for them, while a "Code Red!" Threat is earth-shattering doom. During play, Coach should try to keep on-theme by referring to Threats by their colors instead of their numbers.

Threats Above 7

The game rules assume that TR 7 is the highest rating a Threat can ever have. This may seem like a low amount, but with each successive TR being an order of magnitude greater than the previous, even a one-

point raise can have a huge impact on power balance. As such, I recommend using the following rule to keep your Threats from exploding with too much power:

Threats Above 7: Threat Ratings cannot exceed a maximum of 7. If a game mechanic would boost a Threat's TR above TR7 by any amount, cap its TR at 7, and send the rest to boost its Buffers.

However, if you think your game can handle it, then you are welcome to strike that rule and remove the cap. If you do this, be sure to also take your color coding to the next level, such as "Triple Red Magnus!" and "Gamma Crimson Black!" and the like. I hope your Pilots are ready for it, and may the gods have mercy on your soul.

Threat Rating Damage

A Threat's TR can be damaged by Trauma from Throwdowns. When TR is reduced, it likewise reduces all of the Threat's available options (Cards, Buffers, Powers, etc), determined as you choose when applicable. This TR reduction remains in play until somehow restored. If the Threat has "Violence" as one of its Defeat Conditions, reducing its TR to Zero can remove it from play entirely.

Not all of your Threats need to have that as an option, however. Threats without the Violence defeat condition may be temporarily harmed by Trauma, but reducing them to zero TR will only remove them from play for the current Scene. Such Threats automatically restore to a minimum base TR of 1 between scenes.

Step 3: Give it an Agenda

Every Threat needs to have a reason for existing in your story. This is often just assumed or overlooked, but it's important to take the time and actually think about why this villain is here in the first place. Just write down a sentence or two; it doesn't have to be super complex. Examples:

- Destroy the Battle School!
- Defend the Alien Queen!
- Spread Chaos throughout the Colonies!
- Kidnap the Team's Boyfriends!
- Protect the Secret Lair!

Step 4: Set Defeat Conditions

Each Threat must have at least one pre-scripted narrative **Defeat Condition (DC)**. Regardless of it's colorful descriptions, a Threat cannot be ultimately removed from the Scenario until all of its DCs have been fulfilled. At TRs 1 through 3, a Threat only requires one pre-determined DC. At TRs 4 and 7, the minimum number of required defeat conditions increases by +1, making higher-tier Threats even more terrifying, because *each* DC must be met in order to defeat it. On top of that, one of the Threat powers allows adding even more DCs, regardless of the Threat's Rating.

Single DCs can be as simple as "Kill it with Fire" or "Feed it to the Black Hole" or "Pull the 'Destroy Bad Guy' lever in room 414B of the secret complex." It's when you add more DCs that things can get pretty complicated, which in this case is another word for "interesting." With a stack of DCs you can have such complexities as solving a complicated intergalactic puzzle involving a prophecy, a sunken temple, seven British grandmothers, and the letter Q. The Pilots will need to use applied creativity and narrative exploration if they hope to win the day.

Defeat Conditions should be discoverable by the Pilots through a mix of action, investigation, and open play. They might not know that the Squidballoon cannot be hurt by their weapons until they first attack it. Intel on these conditions can be made available as they uncover clues about the identity and powers of their enemies.

Defeat Condition Examples - Most of these are purely narrative examples which you are encouraged to use as inspiration for your own creations:

- **Violence (Default):** Beat it up until it dies! (See below)
- **Survival:** Simply wait it out! "All" you have to do is reach the end game without dying, and you're done.
- **MacGuffin Delivery:** Acquire the McThingy and bring it to the sacred shrine at the moment of the trinary sun conjunction.
- **Heroic Sacrifice:** Give it the life of a friend, or one of the Pilots!
- **Special Defeat:** When paired with a Violence DC, the Pilots must defeat each of its three incarnations at three different Locations, in less than three days.
- **Special Weapon:** As another good match with a Violence DC, the Threat only suffers Trauma if the Pilots have found and subsequently equipped their Robos with the secret new Hand-Wave Weapons!

Default: Defeat by Violence

Threats that have this defeat condition can be taken out by the simple application of .Trauma. They do not regenerate any lost TR points between scenes, and require use of the Healer and/or Regenerator Threat Techs if they wish to recover. You can assume that all basic Threats have this DC unless you specifically choose otherwise.

Of course, while it may be the old standby, is not ultimately required. You are free to use a different DC on a Threat if you think that just stabbing it to death doesn't really make sense, or instead you want to mess with the Pilots' expectations. Threats lacking this DC cannot be *defeated* by trauma alone. In fact, Trauma technically has no affect on them at all, although they can certainly *appear* to be damaged if that's the con you want to run. They may suffer what *looks* like damage during Throwdowns, and the Pilots may win a bout and then wipe their hands afterward thinking they're all done, mission over, time to celebrate. But the Trauma isn't actually applied on your end, and the Threat will always come back sooner or later without any signs of the previous damage.

This DC can be made more interesting by pairing it with one or more other special requirements, such as requiring a specific relic sword, or luring it to a special location, or other such classic tropes. And if you *really* want to make things difficult, give it the Regenerator power, so that even once they have achieved all of the requirements to hurt it, it will still keep healing until they scatter its component atoms across the multiverse.

Alternate Defeat Conditions

When creating your new Threat you can choose to give it an *alternate* condition for defeat, as in some method outside of those already proscribed by its current stack of DCs. This is meant to provide secret secondary defeat methods for the Pilots to discover, but which are sometimes even more difficult than the main approach.

When you choose to do this, you get to give your Threat one extra Threat Power in exchange. You can only do this once, as adding more would really just make things too overly complicated in play. You can even immediately spend that free extra Power to buy another DC (via the Unkillable power) to add on top of the new alternate option, if you wish to make it a bit more complicated.

Step 5: Choose Threat Techs

All Threats, regardless of rating, have access to the free default Attack power. Additionally, you can give your new Threat even more powers, one more for each point of its TR. Powers give your Threats access to new Waves, Storms, and Passive (i.e. always-active) enhancements.

Powers marked "**Dual**" have two separate versions, making them effectively two different powers. These are usually damage-based powers that have separate Wave and Storm mechanics. These versions must be purchased separately as individual powers with TR allowances. You do not need to purchase either version in order to acquire the other. Nothing is stopping you from buying all Storm powers, but doing so will limit your ability to provide adversity early in the game.

Powers marked **Multi** may be selected multiple times, stacking their effects.

In all the Power descriptions, the variable **Ω** represents the total number of Omens currently on the table, from any Deck, in any state. This results in a value from zero (0) to four (4).

We recommend you build a good balance of Waves and Storms across your Threats, for better availability of options in Throwdowns and Crisis Events.

List of Powers

- **Attack (Default, Dual):** Inflict immediate Trauma; Free to every Threat
- **Big Giant Monster / BGM (Passive):** Designate the Threat as a BGM
- **Corrupt (Dual):** Inflict Disfavor upon Factions, possibly converting them to Threats
- **Corrosive (Passive):** Robo Grit damage suffered vs Threat is twice as hard to repair
- **Debilitate (Dual):** Force the Pilots of Discard
- **Demolish (Dual):** Lay Ruin down upon Locations
- **Dire (Passive):** Increase Strike Range by Omens
- **Empower (Dual):** Draw additional cards mid-conflict
- **Enforcer (Passive):** Can use Buffers to ignore Strike Range
- **Fortify (Dual):** Restore spent Buffers to existing Threats
- **Harbinger (Passive):** Countering and Escalating forces discards from your Deck
- **Heal (Dual):** Threat restores lost TR to self or other Threats
- **Heavy-Hitter (Passive):** Threat deals Trauma when Countering
- **Indomitable (Passive):** Gambits related to this Threat are more difficult
- **Infiltrate (Dual):** Reduce the Pilots' current stocks of Faction Favor
- **Lair-Maker (Passive):** Threat gains great power during Throwdowns at a particular Location
- **Pretender (Passive):** Threat pretends to be a Faction, using the Pilots' Favor against them
- **Regenerator (Passive):** Threat recovers lost TR whenever Coach's Deck reshuffles
- **Reinforce (Dual):** Increase TR of existing Threats
- **Sap (Dual):** Burn through the Team's Resources
- **Seer (Passive):** Draw more cards at the start of a Conflict
- **Summon (Dual):** Add new threats to the scenario
- **Tough (Passive, Multi):** Increase the Threat's base Buffers Pool
- **Unkillable (Passive, Multi):** Assign the Threat another Defeat Condition

Attack (Default, Dual)

Wave: Inflict ./Trauma(Ω) to a single Pilot of your choice.

Storm: Inflict ./Trauma(Ω) to each Pilot.

This is the core default power built into every Threat. It is free and automatically available to every Threat, and as such is included on Coach's printable worksheet. It is only included here for ease of reference.

Big Giant Monster / BGM (Passive)

This Power designates the Threat as this scenario's Big Giant Monster (or BGM), one of the primary dangers of the entire game. See further below for details (p. XX)

Corrosive (Passive)

When fighting against a Threat with this power, any Grit damage their Robos suffer. Any Grit damage suffered against this Threat can only be repaired at 1/2 the normal effectiveness, rounded down. This *includes* any Grit loss from voluntary Trauma-shifting (see p. XX).

Corrupt (Dual)

Wave: Inflict ./Disfavor upon a revealed Faction of choice.

Storm: Inflict ./Disfavor upon each revealed Faction in play.

In either use, Factions pushed to three (3) Offenses as a result of either form of this Power convert to Threats.

Debilitate (Dual)

Wave: A Pilot of your choice Discards a card from her Hand.

Storm: Each Pilot discards a card from their Hand, *or* a single Pilot Discards her entire Hand. In either version, the Pilot(s) immediately redraws unless in the middle of an active Throwdown, in which case she only redraws after the Throwdown concludes.

Demolish (Dual)

Wave: Inflict ./Ruin upon a revealed Location of choice.

Storm: Inflict ./Ruin upon each revealed Location in play.

Dire (Passive)

Coach's Strike Range in Throwdowns using this Threat are increased by Ω .

Empower (Dual)

Wave: Draw Ω cards into your Hand.

Storm: Draw 3Ω cards into your Hand.

Enforcer (Passive)

This Threat can spend its Buffers to ignore Strike Ranges in Throwdowns. Each Buffer spent allows the Threat to ignore the Strike Range for a single Counter or Escalate Action.

Fortify (Passive)

Wave: Restore up to Ω spent Buffers to a single revealed Threat.

Storm: Restore all spent Buffers to all revealed Threats.

Harbinger (Passive)

This Threat pushes toward Crisis with each action it takes. Whenever it Counters or Escalates in a Throwdown, you Discard Ω number of cards from your Deck.

Heal (Dual)

Healer Threats can restore lost TR points to previously-damaged Threats. If activated during Story Mode, any Threat can be targeted. If during an active conflict, only present and involved Threats can be targeted.

Wave: Trigger `./Recover:Threat(Ω)`

Storm: Trigger `./Recover:Threat(3Ω)` once, or instead trigger `./Recover:Threat(Ω)` three times.

Heavy-Hitter (Passive)

Each time this Threat Counters in a Throwdown, it deals `./Trauma:Choice(1)`.

Indomitable (Passive)

When a Pilot attempts a Gambit that involves or opposes this Threat, Coach flips Ω additional cards, taking the highest value of the array.

Infiltrate (Dual)

Wave: Discard up to Ω Favor cards from a Faction in play.

Storm: Discard the entire Favor stack from any one Faction in play.

Lair-Maker (Passive)

This Threat lays claim to one specific game Location, and draws great power from it. It is immune to all of the Blight effects at its chosen lair. During Throwdowns against the Threat at its chosen lair, it draws a bonus card into Coach's hand whenever either it Blocks or its opponent Escalates.

Attacking a Threat in its Lair can be quite difficult. To mitigate this, I recommend that you add into your Scenario ways for the Pilots to bypass this power. Don't make them obvious though, they need to research and work hard for their successes!

Pretender (Passive)

This Threat is a wolf in sheep's clothing, pretending to be a helpful Faction while gathering intel on the Pilots to use against them. When it enters play, set it out as a Faction with an Agency equal to its TR. It functions as a normal Faction in every way while in this state.

During a Crisis Path Story Event of your choosing, the Threat reveals its true colors. Convert it to a Faction per normal rules (p. XX). Additionally, for each player-invested Favor card that gets discarded during this conversion, trigger *./Damage:Choice(1)* as the depths of its treachery are finally revealed.

Regenerator (Passive)

A Threat with this power automatically recovers from damage as the game moves along. Whenever the Coach desk is reshuffled, this Threat restores Ω lost points of TR.

Reinforce (Dual)

This power increases the TR of existing Threats in play. When designing a Threat with this Power, you should make sure that every planned Threat in your scenario has a predetermined "upgrade path" in place. This will save time during play, letting you quickly decide what new Threat Techs to add to each such reinforced Threat.

Wave: Increase TR of any scenario threat by +1.

Storm: Increase TR of any scenario threat by $+\Omega$, OR Increase TR of up to Ω scenario threats by +1.

Sap (Dual)

Wave: Reduce one Team Resource by Ω .

Storm: Choose a Team Resource and deplete it entirely.

Seer (Passive)

This Threat draws Ω additional bonus cards at the beginning of a Throwdown. If this Threat is involved in a Rumble, it again draws Ω at the start of the Rumble.

Summon (Dual)

This Tech brings new individual Threats into a Scenario, even during an active conflict. If used mid-Throwdown, the new Threat adds cards to Coach's Hand, and can act immediately. When building a Threat with this power, it's easier in play to predefine the new Threat that will be summoned when this activates.

Wave: The new Threat's TR is $1/2$ (round up) of Ω .

Storm: The new Threat's TR is the same as the Summoning Threat or Ω , whichever is higher.

Tough (Passive, Multi)

Each time this Power is selected, the Threat's base Buffers Pool is increased by +2.

Unkillable (Passive, Multi)

Well, nearly so, at least. Each time this Power is selected, give the Threat one more Defeat Condition, which can be added to its main or alternate defeat stack as desired.

(SIDEBAR: Crafting New Threat Techs)

To craft new ones, use these basic guidelines. Waves can do a minor effect only. A minor effect can do something small to one player, and have a lesser narrative effect.

Storms can do a Major effect. A major effect can do something heavy to one player, or something small to all players, and have a drastic story-changing narrative effect.

Passive effect Techs should be roughly on-par with the other Passives in usefulness. Make sure you don't end up with broken "must-take" or "why bother?" powers.

Big Giant Monsters! (BGMs)

You may have been expecting a larger section here, but in truth a BGM is little more than a Threat with the BGM Power, which gives it a few extra options when it comes to Throwdowns and Rumbles.

BGMs are technically base Threats, so you can include them in the main scenario as opposing forces, possibly even in a much smaller physical form. This is a common trope in the super-sentai style of shows, where the end boss doesn't actually grow to full BGM size until the end of the episode, and then only after the heroes have beat its weaker form into near submission. You can also just leave them entirely unrevealed until they show up to destroy the heroes at the end.

The BGM has only a small handful of special rules exceptions, but they're important.

Rule 1. The BGM Cannot Initiate a Rumble Until the Assigned Crisis Stage

The BGM Threat cannot *initiate* full-size Rumble combat until the proper Crisis point has been reached. However, if the Pilots seek out and encounter the BGM much sooner, they might start a Rumble on their own. In such a case, your BGM is able to return the favor in kind. More details are found in the Crisis Path section above, p. XX.

Rule 2. The BGM Cannot Be Killed by Regular Throwdowns or Gambits

This base Threat functions like any other Threat until its true nature is revealed. If the Pilots somehow manage to defeat it before its assigned ATTACK stage on the Crisis Path, it instead grows to full size and immediately Rumbles. See the previous rule and page reference for details.

Rule 3. The BGM's Threat Rating Fully Replenishes when it Rumbles

No matter how badly the Threat has been beaten already, whenever it is in a Throwdown that moves into a Rumble, the BGM's TR immediately replenishes to max, restoring an equal amount of lost Buffers, if any. This does not give it any bonus draws, however.

Rule 4. The BGM Has Reduced Costs of Waves and Storms During Rumbles

During Rumble stages, the BGM can activate its own Waves and Storms at a lower discard cost (*any* card for Waves, or Faces and Aces for Storms). This includes the default Scenario Techs, as well. Other involved Threats

must still use standard costs.

Threats and Factions

There may likely be some confusion over the difference between Factions and Threats in play. This is understandable, as they both represent external forces within the scenario. Think of them as completely different realms of mechanical sway: Factions are for the Pilots, while Threats are for Coach.

Every Faction has the potential to become a Threat if the Pilots invoke its anger. As such, it helps to consider having a "Threat conversion" worked up in advance on each of your scenario Factions. When Disfavor turns a Faction into a Threat, its Agency at the time of conversion becomes its new Threat Rating. Like any other Threat, you can then use that TR to assign it Threat Techs to use against the players. If that Faction had any invested Favor cards, immediately discard them.

Threats and Player Awareness

The Pilots and their players *should not* know anything about the Threats' mechanics prior to a Scenario (other than maybe the Scenario's X/Y/Z rating, and usually only during con games and demos). This means they normally have no way of knowing in advance if enemies are weak, powerful, mortal, or otherwise. They must discover this through play, either by direct confrontation or through the exploration of the story. Revealing things like Threat Ratings and powers can be rewards for well-played investigation and recon efforts. Even then, however, you are encouraged to stick to narrative descriptions of abilities and traits, and avoid revealing actual mechanics. If they do good research on the Threat's strength, tell them it's a "Code Red - and that's bad!" instead of "TR 7."

Example Threats

Each of the following was built using the Threat Creation process on the previous pages. Use these freely in your own games, or as inspirations for your own Threats. They are ordered by TR from lowest to highest.

SkunkBoi88 (TR1)

There is no one in all of the current crop of humanity more despicably pathetic than the internet armchair commando who calls himself SkunkBoi88. He and his army of sock puppets and mindless clones troll the Pilots' media profiles with derision, vulgarity, and even (empty) death threats. They have no purpose in existence other than smudging the Pilots' public personas with WeakSauce(TM) offal.

Description: Ugh, no thanks, I'd never get the smell out of my eyeballs.

TR Violet/1

Agenda: Trollinz for the lollinz, u mad?

Defeat Conditions: SkunkBoi88 cannot be defeated through violence - they may beat him up, but another worthless sub-human piece of crap troll will just take his place. The only way the Pilots can defeat him is through the overwhelming force of their own awesome fandom. If they can raise their Fan Club resource to 13 points or higher, SkunkBoi88 chokes on his own complete lack of worth and is removed from the game.

Threat Powers (1): Sap(W)

Romog the Hunter (TR2)

Despite her low TR, Romog is a very skilled hunter of humans. With cloaking stealth tech that makes her invisible and intangible, and a natural ability to regenerate from all but fatal wounds, she can assail the Pilots relentlessly until they learn how to counter her advantages. Her species is small, but capable of feats of strength and prowess far greater than their diminutive stature would imply.

Description: With her cloaking implants active, she is only visible as a slightly blurry blotch of air. When she drops her cloak, she is a three-foot-something bipedal humanoid completely encased in a silvery armored bodysuit, with no visible eyes or other facial features.

TR Indigo/2

Agenda: Hunt the Pilots one by one, capture them, and ritually execute them for personal trophies.

Defeat Conditions (x2): Trauma will not affect Romog until the Pilots figure out how to disable her intangibility cloak. Once they discover how to beat that tech, some good ol' robo-smashin' will win the day.

Threat Powers (2): Regenerator, Unkillable

The Scarred Burrows Council (TR3)

The Team has arrived to investigate strange occurrences in a back woods colony, only to be hampered at every possible angle by the grumpy leaders of the depressing colony. Unknown to all, those leaders have been infected by brain parasites from a local alien, and very badly want for the Pilots to leave. But if the heroes get too close to the truth, well, the locals will have to make them "disappear" just like the others whose bodies now feed the growing underground larva nursery.

Description: Just a collection of your typical back woods spacers, maybe a bit on the uppity side, and eyes that are clearly hiding something...

TR Blue/3

Agenda: Keep the Pilots from finding out the truth, and turn the populace against them. Protect the secret of the BrainMaggot Queen's existence at any cost.

Defeat Conditions (x1,Ax1): The Pilots certainly *could* go right up and beat these guys up, if they so desire. But doing so would most assuredly turn the entire civilian region against them (triggering massive amounts of ./Disfavor). A better approach (i.e. alternate DC) would be to defeat the nearby-hiding BrainMaggot Queen (TR5, BGM), whose larvae has rooted in the Council members' brains. Killing the Queen will kill the children, saving the day for all.

Threat Powers (4): Demolish(W), Corrupt(W), Infiltrate(W), Sap(W)

Hugh Monty / The Hue Manatee (TR4, BGM)

Based on designs contributed by Kickstarter backer Stephen Slaby!

In an unfortunate early venture, while dumping various unknown chemical concoctions into the ocean, shady businessman Hugh Monty fell into his own chemical sludge. Hugh unexpectedly merged with the local wildlife and transformed into the monstrous Hue Manatee. The transformation was temporary, but he discovered that not only could he repeat the transformation if he ingested a flask of the polluted water, but he also could create multiple mindless temporary replicas of himself that followed his every command.

Using his new discovery, Hugh set out to make it rich. As far as the public can tell Hugh is a businessman with the absolute worst luck. His repeat attempts to build vast luxury getaway spots (at waterfront locations with breathtaking views and beaches - the envy of the elite!) seem to always fall prey to massive - some might say

monstrous - destruction. Hugh covers his tracks well: all anyone ever notices is that he is compensated handsomely for the devastation through vast insurance payouts.

Description: a monstrous amalgam of cuttlefish, nautilus and manatee, capable of nearly undetectable camouflage. Rising a massive 40 stories tall, its front flippers are replaced with tendrils interwoven into massive arms, a nautilus like shell covers its back and head, and large tusks protrude from its lower jaw.

TR: Green/4

Agenda: Make insane amounts of money through insurance scams and wholesale stompy destruction.

Defeat Conditions (x2,Ax1): In order to finish him off, one must defeat *all* of Hue Manatees, both original and replicas. If even one survives, it regenerates into the full creature within three days. As an alternative, if the heroes can locate and destroy his secret limited cache of the last remaining sludge serum, the Manatee can never return again.

Threat Powers (6*): BGM, Demolish(W), Pretender (Hugh Monty, helpful local businessman), Regenerator*, Summon(WS*), Special Limitations*

*Hugh's Regenerator and Summon powers are limited by a direct connection with each other. First off, there can never be more than four (4) total replicas in play (this includes the original). Regenerator will only activate if two or more Hue Manatees exist. If so, they begin to steadily degrade as their strongest is healed, until only one is left standing. Whenever Regeneration activates, first reduce the collective TR pool of the weakest extras by the normal amount, then restore up to that same amount to the strongest. This cannot exceed his max TR, but occurs regardless of it being full, slowly dissolving the extras until only one remains.

The Force of Nature (TR5, BGM)

Based on designs contributed by Kickstarter backer MidnightBlue!

Corrupted by alien powers, the Force of Nature is the Team's direct antithesis in almost every way. Where the Pilots use Techs and Robos inspired by ancient mythology of the old world, the Force of nature *is* that ancient mythology made manifest with full force and twisted purpose.

This Threat consists of five elementally-inspired individual Threats which can/must be fought individually, and can later combine to take the form of this greater Threat:

- Wood = The Azure Dragon (T3)
- Fire = The Vermillion Bird (T3)
- Earth = The Yellow Dragon (T3)
- Metal = The White Tiger (T3)
- Water = The Black Tortoise (T3)

Description: A giant humanoid collage of all of its component parts, partially-mirroring those of the heroes. Where the Pilots fight with metal and energy, the Force of Nature fights with the mystic power of the natural world.

TR Yellow/5

Agenda: The Pilots have committed the ultimate sin of mimicry against the earth, and they must be destroyed for their hubris.

Defeat Conditions (x2,Ax1): The greater combined Force of Nature can be defeated in a Rumble, but it will not be possible to fight it until after the Pilots have initially defeated its five component Threats. There is an alternate option, but it requires the Pilots to voluntarily destroy their Robos by dropping them in a volcano,

appeasing the natural world and saving the day.

Threat Powers (6): BGM, Demolish(WS), Dire, Regenerator, Seer

The Swarm (TR6, BGM)

Based on designs contributed by Kickstarter backer Killgruve!

The Swarm is a unique bio-mechanical alien infestation from beyond the known galaxy. Once arriving on our colonies, it moves from location to location, acquiring "building materials" to continue its never-ending increase in size and power. At its most basic component, it is nothing more than lots of tiny spider-like nano-bots which surge over anything metallic they encounter. Electronics, vehicles, even Robos can be corrupted by its legion of nanites, all adding to the swarming mass of consumption.

Description: Anything infected by the Swarm looks like a grossly mutated version of its original form, with powerful globulous "fleshy" joints and innards, and an unnerving zombie-like quality in patterns and movement.

TR Orange/6

Agenda: Consume and grow, consume and grow, consume and grow

Defeat Conditions (x2,Ax1): Encounters with the Swarm can be overcome through simple force, but ultimately it is immune to long-term Trauma until the molecular nano-bonds are weakened. Fortunately they are almost entirely corroded by direct exposure to salt water, but the Pilots won't know this at first. An alternate option is to develop their own counter-Swarm nullifier nano-bots, but that's easier said than done...

Threat Powers (7): BGM, Corrosive*, Demolish(WS*), Regenerator**, Reinforce(W**), Special: Power Linking*

*The Swarm's Corrosive and Demolish powers are directly connected to its others. When Robo Grit is damaged in a fight against it, it Regenerates by the same amount. When it triggers ./Ruin, it Regenerates 1 point, unless it is already at its Max TR, in which case it instead activates Reinforce(W). If the Swarm Razes a Location, it yet again activates Reinforce(W).

**The Swarm's special versions of Regenerator and Reinforce cannot be triggered manually, instead triggering off of other effects.

Cro'Ni'Nu the World-Eater (TR7, BGM)

Unstoppable, inevitable, and almost incomprehensible, Cro'Ni'Nu is coming. Slowly, steadily he approaches Earth, his endless trek of galaxy consumption crossing path with our only home planet. The skies scream, the oceans boil, and the earth quakes as waves of primal doom precede him, cascading throughout the solar system.

Description: Does it really matter? By the time you can see Cro'Ni'Nu, it's already too late. Accept that you will soon be processed by his star-crushing gullet, along with the rest of your planet.

TR: Red/7

Agenda: "I must devour the universe."

Defeat Conditions (x8) The pilots must track down and reassemble the six pieces of the ancient Starslayer relic, which are scattered across the galaxy. Then they have to find the lost Archive of Tyr Cebron, where is kept the only knowledge of how to activate the weapon. Then, with weapon assembled and active, they must go forth and kick Cro'Ni'Nu's ass.

Threat Powers (7): BGM, Demolish(S), Unkillable x5

The Vaarmokk Imperial Conquest Agenda (TR7)

No one mind or being stands behind their devastating fleets, rampaging Nek-Ro-Brutes, and hordes of fanatical warriors. No, in this seemingly unwinnable war, the truth of the enemy's nature is far more terrifying: it is nothing but a *bureaucratic agenda*.

Description: Can something as sinister as an undying, uncontrollable, intangible *concept* truly have a physical description? Once there may have been rulers who constructed this terrible force of power, but today its only manifestation is as the overwhelming dogma inside the hearts and minds of every Vaarmokkian that throws itself savagely against the forces of humanity.

TR Red/7

Agenda: Complete eradication of all non-Vaarmokkian sentient life in the universe.

Defeat Conditions (x3): Only by overwhelming, undermining, or otherwise defeating the Vaarmokk Legion (TR5), Vaarmokk Fleet (TR5), and Vaarmokk Nek-Ro-Brute (TR6, BGM) will the Agenda be removed from play.

Threat Powers (7): Empower(W), Healer(W), Indomitable, Infiltrate(W), Regenerator, Reinforce(W), Summon(W)

Design Note: The Agenda is included here to serve as an example that not every top-tier Threat needs to be a BGM, or even attackable in the first place. Including powerful Threats whose sole purpose is to bolster your others is a devious way to challenge the Pilots.

Description:

TR x/y

Agenda:

Defeat Conditions (x2):

Threat Powers:

Description:

TR x/y

Agenda:

Defeat Conditions (x2):

Threat Powers:

Description:

TR x/y

Agenda:

Defeat Conditions (x2):

Threat Powers:

Description:

TR x/y

Agenda:

Defeat Conditions (x2):

Threat Powers:

SECTION: Yearbook: The Core Playbooks

(where all the playbooks are collected)

Appendix: "One-Shot" Format Modifications

One-Shot Crisis Paths

We've presented an alternate shorter 7-step version for Coaches who want to run a much quicker story. It's meant for a standard single-session game, such as a pick-up game or a convention session. If you have new players, you might event want to reduce this to 5 or 6 steps, while experienced players who push through the Deck quickly might instead warrant extending it to 8, 9, or even 10.

A standard one-shot Path is:

Omens	Event
1	Wave
2	Wave
3	Storm
4	Wave
5	Wave
6	Storm
7	BGM Attacks!

A "Steady and Hard" more difficult path is:

Omens	Event
1	Wave
2	Wave
3	Storm
4	Storm
5	Storm + Wave
6	Storm + Storm
7	BGM Attacks!

To provide suitable challenge for one-shot Robo Rumbles, add the BGM's Threat rating to Coach's Hand Limit and Draw on each round.

Glossary+Index

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Armory: a Team Resource that gives the Pilots sweet gear. See p. XX

Blight: a negative effect applied to Pilots at certain Locations. See p. XX

Boon: a beneficial effect Pilots enjoy at most Locations. See p. XX

Boost: a category of subroutines which have positive effects for characters. See p. XX

./Boost: a boost subroutine. See p. XX

./Burn: a special damaging subroutine. See p. XX

Buffer: a pool of tokens that a Pilot can use to soak damage. See p. XX

Hand: the hand of cards that a player holds, their personal array of play options. See p. XX

Class Rank: the Pilot or Team's current "grade level" in Battle School (Freshman, Sophomore, etc). See p. XX

Chroma: the Pilot's chosen team role and associated uniform color, from which she draws the majority of her power. See p. XX

Commander: the active Pilot of the current Throwdown. See p. XX

Commitment: one of three core character components, each split into two balanced stats that determine the base for all game mechanics. See p. XX

Conflict: one of the core game play modes wherein the cards determine the outcome of in-story events. See p. XX

Crisis Path: a predetermined series of increasingly-dangerous events that unfold as Omens are revealed. See p. XX

Crisis Level: the current place on the Crisis Path that the game has advanced to, through the revelation of Omens. See p. XX

Daisho: the special customizable "power weapon" every Pilot carries. See p. XX

Damage: an effect which diminishes an in-game resource's overall mechanical usefulness. See p. XX

./Damage: a damaging subroutine. See p. XX

DC: "Defeat Conditions" by which a Threat can be removed from a Scenario for good. See p. XX

Deck: where all cards are drawn from; two of these exist, one for Coach and one for the Pilots. See p. XX

Discard: the act of putting a card into its relevant trash. See p. XX

./Disfavor: a damaging subroutine. See p. XX

Dissonant Play: a card play whose difference is outside a safe Strike Range. See p. XX

Drive Action: one of the core actions that advance the flow of a Throwdown. See p. XX

Fan Club: a Team Resource that helps them recover Harmony. See p. XX

Favor: one or more cards the Pilots invest into a Faction for later use. See p. XX

/Favor: a boost subroutine. See p. XX

/Fortify: a boost subroutine. See p. XX

Gambit: a quick mechanic for resolution of minor conflicts. See p. XX

Grit: the durability and damage capacity of a Pilot's Robo. See p. XX

Harmony: a seven-point scale representing the strength of your team's spirit. See p. XX

Locations: a place in the game where events happen, with mechanics that modify those events. See p. XX

Omens: when a Joker reaches the top of a Deck, it becomes an Active Omen on the table. Omens can be Spent for in-game effects and Crisis escalation. See p. XX

Pile: the stack of all played cards during an active Throwdown. See p. XX

Pit Crew: a Team Resource that keeps their Robos in working order. See p. XX

Play: the act of taking a card from your Hand and introducing it to the table, activating one or more mechanics. See p. XX

Positions: the different locations in the final form where the Robos slot in. See p. XX

prevent: to cancel a subroutine, stopping it from triggering entirely. See p. XX

./Purge: a special damaging subroutine

Push: the core action of a Throwdown, in which a card is played to beat the last-played card. See p. XX

/Rally: a boost subroutine. See p. XX

Razed: a Location that has been Razed cannot be used in play, and must be rebuilt. See p. XX

./Rebuild: a special subroutine

/Recover: a boost subroutine. See p. XX

/Replenish: a boost subroutine. See p. XX

Resonant Play: any card play whose differences are both Safe (within Strike) and True (exactly 1). See p. XX

Round: one of three stages of robot-vs-monster action during Robo Rumbles. See p. XX

Rout: a special victory condition in which an opponent is mechanically defeated before the end of a Throwdown. See p. XX

./Ruin: a damaging subroutine. See p. XX

Rumble: the full-on Final Form vs Big Giant Monster battle system. See p. XX

Safe Play: any card play whose difference is within Strike Range. See p. XX

Scene: the loose structure block of this game's story-telling; an event at a place at a time. See p. XX

Schism: a buildup of points that can damage Team Harmony. See p. XX

./Schism: a damaging subroutine. See p. XX

soak: to mitigate or absorb the effects of subroutines, but not stop them from triggering. See p. XX

Stat: one of six numerical descriptors spread across three balanced Commitment pairs, forming the foundation of all core Pilot mechanics. See p. XX

Storm: one of Coach's two primary scripted Threat actions against the Pilots (the more heinous one). See p. XX

Story Mode: the main mode of game play involving discussion and debate interspersed between conflicts. See p. XX

Strike Range: the "safe" difference in card ranks when you play a Counter action. See p. XX

subroutines: codified mechanical processes that are often triggered by the course of play. See p. XX

Suit: the category of pip on the playing cards (Spades, Hearts, Diamonds, and Clubs). See p. XX

./Tarry: a special Coach-focused subroutine. See p. XX

Tech: short for "Technique," Techs are special powers you can trigger during Throwdowns and some other game situations. See p. XX

Throwdown: the standard full-team conflict resolution system. See p. XX

Trash: a face-up stack of cards next to each Deck; discarded cards from a Deck are sent here. See p. XX

./Trauma: a damaging subroutine. See p. XX

Trauma-Shifting: the act of a Pilot shifting her personal damage to her Robo's Grit. See p. XX

./(Trigger): the base notation for any mechanical event which fires a Subroutine. See p. XX

True Play: any card play whose difference is exactly 1 rank. See p. XX

Wave: one of Coach's two primary scripted Threat actions against the Pilots (the less heinous one). See p. XX