

Hazard, Stress and Vim

This is a change to how Traits and Secrets are used. When you “Tap” a Trait or Secret, *do not cross it out*, instead increase a group stat “Stress” or “Vim”. Your Traits and Secrets remain available and you no longer need to mark up your character sheet to do something. This new format is also more transparent and puts a much greater focus on working together as a group.

Summary

Hazard, Stress and **Vim** are three stats shared by all players:

- **Stress** is the group's overall level of effort expended, strain, endurance, fatigue, morale, wear and tear on gear, etc. This encompasses both mental and physical fatigue, as well as strain on your gear such as your clothing and straps of your armor. You can recover Stress by eating, drinking, making camp, cleaning yourself and your gear, and blowing off steam.
- **Vim** is the ambient supernatural power surrounding the players, such as spiritual auras, magical energy, psionics, aetheric instability, “force”, and the like.
- **Hazard** is the level of dramatic tension, danger, and risk in the story. You use Hazard for rolls to determine fumbles vs failures. Also Hazard “floats” so it is never lower than Stress or Vim.

Usage

Hazard, Stress and **Vim** are shared by the group of players; each starts at one (1) and can be “raised” by +1 or “cut” by -1 at a time, typically ranging from 1-10.

- **Raise Stress when you fail a Saving Throw**, such as when you take a hit.
- **Raise Stress when your unit is hit**, such as a formation, ship, castle etc.

- **Raise Stress when you roll EFFORT**. However, if you can roleplay a relevant Trait you may choose to upgrade your result or avoid Raising Stress.
- **Raise Vim when you use a Secret**, unless what you are doing is purely for roleplaying flavor, or the power of your Secret is far below the current Vim (both subject to GM discretion).
- **Raise Vim when you gather supernatural power**. This requires an Action and you should roleplay an appropriate "ritual" of some kind, such as drawing a magic circle, writing runes, reciting a mantra or prayers, making an invocation to a higher being, etc.
- **Raise Hazard when Stress or Vim passes Hazard**. In other words, Hazard "floats" so it is never lower than Stress or Vim.

The GM will frequently **Raise Hazard** as part of describing the story, and may instead **Raise Stress or Vim** if that seems more appropriate. For example, after describing a long march through a swamp, the GM might Raise Stress by describing bug bites and leeches.

When you use an Action to **Cut Hazard**, you can choose to apply that to Stress or Vim instead of Hazard.

- **Cut Stress** - You must take an action which restores the physical body, such as eating, drinking water, resting, mending bruises and cuts, cleaning yourself, etc.
- **Cut Vim** - You must take an action which restores the non-physical or spiritual self, such as dreaming, praying, meditation, music, dancing, carousing, etc. Unless you state otherwise, all maintained magics end when any player Cuts Vim; in any case these are reserved Vim points that cannot be recovered while an effect is still going on.
- **Cut Hazard** - This is the default unless you specify otherwise, however, Hazard cannot be reduced below Stress or Vim. The GM or other players might remind you of this in cases where your action cannot be completed, suggesting you focus instead on Stress or Vim.

Using Secrets and Vim

Vim is “available magic power”, not magic drain/fatigue, and magic becomes easier to use as Vim rises.

Secrets have a “level” set by the GM. This is based loosely on OSR spell levels, e.g. “teleportal” is level 5, and players can always ask.

Secrets can only be used when Vim is at least as high as the Secret level. If you want to use a Secret but Vim is too low, then spend Actions to Raise Vim, roleplaying how you gather magical energy.

Secrets do not Raise Vim when used for “roleplaying only” or are 4+ levels below Vim (e.g. at Vim 9 a “teleportal” spell does not Raise Vim).

A Secret with an ongoing effect (i.e. spell duration) will end abruptly if the Vim drops below the minimum level to use that Secret. Be sure to think before Cutting Vim. Healing spells in particular need time to work until the beneficiary is fully mended.

Soaking Damage

Raise Stress and roll 1d20 when you fail a Saving Throw. If you roll higher than Hazard then you Soak 1 Damage.

Always roll even if you have armor or other defenses, because if you roll a **natural 1** then you take 1 extra Damage. On the positive side, if you roll a **natural 20** then you may roll again! Thus, you always have a tiny chance of a freak mishap or miraculous survival.

If necessary (i.e. you haven't soaked all the damage), you can roll an extra die if you have a **defensive Trait** that is relevant to the attack (e.g. “hard to kill”). The GM may allow you to roll another extra die (for a total max of 3 dice) if your Trait is extremely specific (e.g. “arrow cutting”).

Characters with an active Doom make a Soak Roll after **Downtime** (e.g. resting 8+ hours), and if successful heal 1 Damage.