

THIS IS A VERSION 0.1 DRAFT OF THIS GAME WHICH I'M FLOATING OUT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT. AS SUCH, FEEDBACK IS ENTIRELY WELCOME - ENCOURAGED EVEN.

## SUMMARY

### CHARACTERS

Characters have **roles**, broad descriptions of things they are good at, like *Soldier* or *Scholar* which provides a bonus to appropriate rolls reflecting the character's capabilities. Characters also have **aspects**, personal elements of the character like *Mean Spirited* or *Peaceful Warrior* which may help or hinder their efforts. Characters may also have powers, stunts or other setting specific abilities.

The exact roles in a given game, as well as other setting elements, are defined in a **module**. A module includes rules for character creation, appropriate roles, and any setting specific rules.

### RULES

Basic roll is 3d6 + modifier (based on the appropriate role) against the following table.

- 0-5      Unmitigated failure, described by the GM with an eye on making trouble.**
- 5-9      Failure, described by the player, who may mitigate the consequences of the failure, but not cancel it out. Best phrased as "Tell me how you fail."**
- 10-14    Qualified success - This is a reasonable success, but the door is open to complications. The GM may, at his option, introduce a complication to the success, or a choice that must be made in order to succeed. When the GM does this, the player gets a fate point.**
- 15-19 -   Unqualified success, narrated by the GM**
- 20+ -    Dramatic success - as with an unqualified success, but the player has the option to ask for a little extra spin.**

Beneficial situations may grant a straight bonus or be reflected as a **bonus die** (the player rolls one extra d6 and drops the lowest one before tallying them up). Less beneficial situations may result in a penalty to the roll, or the addition of a **penalty die** (the player rolls one extra die and drops the highest die before tallying). Bonuses and penalties cancel out. In extreme situations, a player may **lose a die**, or **roll an extra die**.

# INTRODUCTION

I originally came up with this system for a local game of low powered supers during the cold war, and the “Spies” module is based on that game. My goal had been to capture something in the spirit of Fudge or Fate, but using regular d6’s because there are a few tricks you can do with those that you can’t do with Fudge dice. it worked out decently well in play, and I was ultimately pleased enough with the underlying system to try writing it up as its own thing.

As with the games that inspired it. Tempo is a lightweight core of rules with an explicit space to plug in customization. It is not a truly generic system because it definitely leans towards a certain style of play, but that leaning can be steered pretty far afield if one is so inclined.

Anyway, I hope you find this a fun game, and more importantly, I hope you get the chance to run your own games with it.

## THE KIT

You’ll want to have the following on hand:

- ▶ Paper for writing things like character sheets
- ▶ Paper for notes (Index cards or post-its are best)
- ▶ Pencils
- ▶ Tokens (Beads, coins, etc.)
- ▶ A handful of 6 sided dice.

## THE BASICS

In tempo, uncertainty is resolved by rolling three 6 sided dice (3d6) and adding a number (usually between 0 and 8, more on that in a minute) and determining the outcome as follows:

<b>&gt;5</b>	<b>Unmitigated Failure</b>
<b>5-9</b>	<b>Failure</b>
<b>10-14</b>	<b>Qualified Success</b>
<b>15-19</b>	<b>Unqualified Success</b>
<b>20+</b>	<b>Dramatic Success</b>

This outcome really determines two things. While the first and most obvious is the outcome, the second is who takes responsibility for describing the outcome, and how to spin it.

*Fred is playing Finn, who needs to get into an apartment building, and is going to try to just bald face his way in with a clipboard and a bad attitude. He’s not a very good actor, but he has a certain bravado, so he’s going to get a +1 to the roll.*

## UNMITIGATED FAILURE

Unmitigated failure means things go really, really wrong. Things explode or break, interruptions disrupt the process, something takes the effort off the rails. The result is described by the GM, who is encouraged to take the opportunity to make the situation worse in new and interesting way.

*Finn's dice betray him, and he rolls 3 1's, for a grand total of 3. His +1 brings it to a 4, which is not enough to save him from an unmitigated failure. Not only does it fail, it fails miserably as the gentleman behind the reception desk stonewalls him completely and their exchange draws the attention of a cop who was in the area. Now there is a whole new challenge to face, so good luck with that!*

## FAILURE

A less dramatic failure, but still a failure. However, the player is the one for describing how their character failed. This allows a player to mitigate the consequences of a failure, at least to a point, but cannot cancel out the failure completely. Importantly, letting the player control *how* they fail allows them to stay true to their vision of their character

This can sound more complicated than it is, and there's an easy way to implement it - just ask the player "How does your character fail?"

*Finn does a little bit better on this try, rolling a total of 7, which becomes an 8 with his bonus. He fails, but he manages to keep the situation under control. The guy at the desk stonewalls him, but Finn's player explains that he managed to use the conversation to get a much better sense of the layout and process of the place, specifically the blind spots, so he might be able to sneak in later. The GM's good with that - Finn is stymied, but there is still a clear course of action available to him that doesn't simply cancel out the failure.*

## QUALIFIED SUCCESS

The character narrowly succeeds, but there may be unexpected complications. The GM may narrate his success, though the outcome should be limited to the effort.

Alternately, the GM narrates the success, and in doing so, may introduce a complication or a choice into the situation. If the GM does this, the player gets a fate point (we'll explain what that is in a bit).

When in doubt, the GM should offer a complication or choice, but there are times when you just want to move the game along, or you just don't have any ideas for how to jazz it up - don't stress out about it.

*Finn rolls an 11, +1 for 12, and it works this time! At least, mostly. He gets past the desk, but the guy working there is diligent enough to not just let someone wander around. In a minute, he's going to get on his walkie talkie and send someone to find Finn. So, Finn is in, but he's now on a greatly accelerated timeframe, since he needs to get finished and get out before he's found.*

## SUCCESS

The character succeeds, and succeeds well. this outcome tends to requires surprisingly little narration, as it is usually somewhat implicit in the effort. The GM is nominally responsible for narrating this outcome, but she should be generous with allowing players to describe it if they wish.

*Finn Rolls a 16, 17 with his +1, and he nails it. The guy behind the desk is already distracted and busy and he doesn't even give Finn a second glance. On to the next priority!*

## DRAMATIC SUCCESS

The character succeeds well enough that things go really, really well. Maybe there's some unexpected benefit to his effort, maybe he catches a lucky break in terms of timing, maybe he just looks really, really awesome doing it.

The player gets to narrate a dramatic success, and he has the leeway to add in some extra flourish in to reflect the extra success. If the player doesn't really have a clear sense of how to do so (such as a roll where the player doesn't have all the details) then the GM may offer suggestions, and if the player goes too far off the rails the GM should offer alternatives that respect the intent.

*Finn rolls triple 6's, and yes, that's technically only a 19 with his bonus, but let's be kind and give him a dramatic success. He sails past the front desk no problem, but what's the something extra? The GM asks Fred, if there's some extra information he'd like, but Fred proposes that the reason the front desk is distracted is because there's a guy in there trying to fix the cameras, which are currently on the fritz. The GM's good with that, and so it goes.*

## HANDLING DESCRIPTIONS

The rules regarding who narrates are a baseline, but can be relaxed for a group who are happy to roll with bad outcomes. In this situation, the GM is encouraged to allow players to narrate all outcomes so long as they follow the same guidelines as the GM. The GM can still step in and insist on narrating when the rules support it, and the GM does have veto authority (see below) but she is encouraged to take a light hand with that.

Am I basically suggesting that if the GM uses a veto then she's screwed up? Yes I am. Not in the veto - that was probably the right call - but something slipped the rails leading up to that. The flipside of the authority to veto is the responsibility for it.

## DESCRIPTIONS AND VETO

So, the reality is that the GM has veto authority on all descriptions. This is only because someone has to, and sometimes the game needs a fast and dirty ruling to keep things moving. However, this is an authority that the GM should, ideally, never need to use. GM Veto should only be rolled out after there has been some discussion and negotiation at the table.

If the GM needs to pull out veto authority, it's expected the table will go along. However, when that happens, the GM should write "VETO" on a card and hand it to the player who has been overridden. At the end of the game, after people have set aside their player and GM hats, there should be some discussion about what lead to the veto and (perhaps more importantly) why discussion did not work. Begin with the player explaining why they were unhappy with the ruling, and allow other players to comment before the GM weighs in.

As GM, this is **NOT** an opportunity to justify your decision. Nobody cares if you were right. This is a chance for you to understand where expectations diverged so that you can do a better job next time.

## OPTIONAL RULE: FUMBLES

Unmitigated failures may be impossibly rare in some games, and if you want to make sure they can happen, however rarely, then use the following fumble rule:

*Any result of all 1's is an automatic unmitigated failure.*

You can offer a similar rule for Dramatic successes just as easily, but it's usually less necessary.

## OTHER FACTORS

So, the baseline is pretty simple: roll 3d6 plus a bonus based on a relevant skill and try to hit a target number. But situations are rarely so simple as that. A given roll may be modified by one of the following:

An **Bonus** is a numerical bonus that kicks in when the character has a concrete, measurable and reasonably re-usable advantage in this particular task. This bonus usually ranges from +1 to +3, and is a good way to handle things like tools. If a tool is so appropriate that you feel it should give a bigger advantage, then it might be worth reconsidering the roll in the first place.

If there is more than one bonus in effect on a roll, the player should take the highest single bonus +1. Bonuses and penalties cancel out.

A **Penalty** is the inverse of an advantage, a numerical penalty applied to the roll. As with Advantages, this represents concrete, repeatable elements working against the player, like inferior tools or an unfair competition.

If there are penalties from multiple sources, use the largest one with an additional -1 penalty.

A **Bonus Die** is used to represent a more situational advantage, something that might be useful, but is not really reliable in its utility. Most often, bonus dice come from **aspects**, but they're also a useful tool for the GM to grant a bonus without needing to make a really detailed ruling on the spot.

A bonus die is an extra d6 added to the roll. After the roll, the lowest die is removed, so the player is still tallying 3d6, just a 3d6 that's slanted in his favor. It is possible to add any number of bonus dice to a roll, and if you do so, always remove enough dice to end up with 3d6.

A **Penalty Die** is the inverse of a bonus die (and the two cancel out). It's an extra die added to the roll, but afterwards the **HIGHEST** die is removed from the pool. Once again, the range of the result is 3d6, but skewed against the player. Multiple penalty dice can be in play, but the result is still always going to be 3d6.

Penalty dice are used on potential problems rather than guaranteed ones. Something that could trip you up, but you might be able to work past is a good use of a penalty die.

## WHEN TO USE WHAT

The difference between a hard modifier (bonus/penalty) and a soft one (bonus die/penalty die) becomes intuitive over time, but it's worth taking some time to think about when to use what.

## BONUS VS. BONUS DIE

The easiest rule of thumb on this is whether the thing providing the bonus can reasonably be attributed with the success of the endeavor (or could be identified as such in retrospect). After a roll, you **know** how much of an impact the bonus had. You succeeded because your tool was good enough (or you did so well you never even needed it!). On the other hand, it's really hard to concretely say that you succeeded because you really had your heart in it (something represented by a bonus die). So think about the story of success, and it should inform your decision.

## PENALTY VS. PENALTY DIE:

If you're on a bike trying to catch someone in a car, that's probably going to be a penalty because the car is simply faster. Certainly, the size of that penalty could change based on the situation (and could even become a bonus in a traffic-jam type situation where maneuverability trumps speed) but whatever the case, the difference in car vs bike will always have a pretty measurable impact on the situation.

If you're trying to catch someone in a car and you're also in a car, but your car is in bad shape, then that might be more aptly represented with a penalty die. It might not be enough to slow you down, but it's also possible that your hood starts spewing black smoke - the dice will tell the story

## MIXED MODIFIERS

Now, bonus dice and penalty dice cancel each other out (so two bonus dice and one penalty die become one bonus die) and bonuses and penalties cancel out (so a +3 and a -2 become a +1) but they don't cross over. It is entirely possible to have a situation where you have a penalty but also have bonus dice.

If that seems odd, consider that it is basically the plot of every sports movie ever. The underdogs are outclassed (taking a penalty) but their hearts are pure and they have dramatic, swelling music, all the kinds of things that grant bonus dice. You should not necessarily seek out such situations (they are a little confusing) but when they happen, you should stand up and take notice, because something really interesting may be happening.

## TOOLS AND MODIFIERS

For tasks which require a tool of some sort, the assumption of the effort is that the tool is available and it does not automatically grant a bonus or penalty, but an exceptionally good (or bad) tool might.

Finn has made it past the front desk and now needs to pick a lock to get into his target office. If he has no lockpicks, then he can't even really try this, but assuming he has a set, they won't provide either a bonus or a penalty. However, if he's come with a full locksmith truck, that's probably worth a substantial bonus. If, on the other hand, he's trying to crack the lock with a paperclip and broke bobby pin, then a penalty is probably in order.

## POWERS, TRICKS AND DICE

While this is the default behavior for bonus and penalty dice, a lot of specific systems will add additional tricks that use them, such as being able to add a penalty die to your roll to add a special effect, or the ability to turn three bonus dice into an extra die (so the player rolls 4d6). These gimmicks help define individual Tempo modules.

## OTHER TRICKS

While the modifiers we've discussed so far cover a lot of situations, there are a few other tricks to handle specific situations

### HELPING

When one player wants to help another, then the helping player rolls for their action, and then hands over one of their dice as a "pre-rolled" bonus die. Which die to hand over works as follows:

**>5 - No help**

**5-9 - Lowest die**

**10-14 - middle die**

**15+ Highest die**

*Finn needs to sneak into another building, but this time he's brought help in the form of Lydia's character, Leanne. Finn's going to be making a roll to sneak, and Leanne is going to help by providing a distraction. Leanne's an excellent actress, with a +4 bonus, so she's pretty much certain to provide some help.*

*If she rolls 1,2,2 that's a 9, so she hands Finn the die showing a 1, which is not a lot of help.*

*If she rolls 1,3,3, that's an 11, so she hands Finn the middle die, one of the 3's.*

*If she rolls 2,4,6 that's a 15, so she hands Finn the 6 - definitely a big help!*

## HURRY UP!

Sometimes a player wants to qualify their effort in some way, most often in an effort to secure some specific outcome, like finishing quickly. In these situations, the player can take a penalty die, but in doing so they guarantee something about the outcome (whatever it might be).

*Finn's picking another lock (he does that a lot) and he's in a hurry, so he doesn't want to risk it taking too long, so he takes a penalty die to work fast. He gets a qualified success, but because he was explicitly working fast, the qualifiers can't be based on him taking too long.*

Alternately, the player can be willing to make a tradeoff in pursuit of success, such as doing a sloppy job to get it done quickly. Doing so allows the player to add a bonus die to the roll, but in doing so they automatically add a qualifier to the outcome (so a qualified success could end up with two qualifiers).

*Finn decides he's in enough of a hurry to try more force than finesse on this lock. Whatever the outcome, he'll end up damaging the lock, making it unusable making the tampering very obvious.*



# ASPECTS

An aspect is a descriptor that carries some mechanical weight. They usually apply to characters, but can be used in other ways. An aspect can be anything from a simple description like STUBBORN to a more detailed description like EX-SPECIAL FORCES to a statement about the character like NEVER TURN YOUR BACK ON AN ENEMY.

Aspects can help or hinder a character in a number of ways that depend upon the situation and on player choice. Most commonly, they provide bonus or penalty dice.

If an aspect might create a problem for a character, the player may opt to take a penalty die on the roll. If they do so, the player earns a **Fate Point**.

*Finn has the aspect GOOD ENOUGH IS GOOD ENOUGH. He's searching the office, and Fred feels that his tendency to cut corners will work against Finn in this situation. Fred adds a penalty die to his roll, and receives a fate point from the GM.*

Alternately, if an aspect might help in the situation, then the player can spend a fate point to add a bonus die to the roll.

*Finn also has the aspect SHARP EYES, and Fred might have decided that it would help him search the office, in which case Fred would spend a fate point and add a bonus die to the roll.*

## OTHER USES

Sometimes the benefits of an aspect are situational rather than directly related to a bonus. That is to say, even in situations where dice aren't being rolled, you can use an aspect to provide some knowledge, capability or resources.

First and foremost, if the logical application of the aspect is obvious, then it should simply be taken into account. So, if a character has the aspect FRENCH PLAYBOY and the question comes up as to whether or not he can speak french, then he clearly can.

Second, if the application of the aspect is **reasonable** (but not obvious), then the player can spend a fate point to make it applicable. In these situations, it's up to the player to describe why it makes sense in a way that everyone finds convincing. If there are objections, then it can be discussed, and the ultimate decision is subject to GM veto.

*Out FRENCH PLAYBOY needs to speak spanish, and asserts that being multilingual is part of being in the scene, so of course he knows spanish. Another player suggests that he might have a smattering, slanted towards ordering drinks and picking up ladies, but not fluency, and the first player's good with that. He spends a fate point and everyone agrees he knows enough spanish to get by,*

Aspects can also cause trouble for a character. in much the same way they can help out.

If there's a problem associated with an aspect which is an obvious consequence of the aspect, then it simply is in effect.

*A character with the aspect SHORT is short all the time, not just when its dramatically notable.*

If there's a problem associated with an aspect that is a reasonable consequence of the aspect, then the GM may give the player a fate point to bring it to bear. Players may also point out a relevant aspect to the GM to invite such a payout.

Provided that these complications are external to the player, it's not really a topic for discussion. Part of the GM's role is introducing the challenges, and using aspects for inspiration is not a way to punish players (for which they must be compensated) but rather the fate point is a "thank you" for giving the GM something cool to work with.

*If a character has the aspect NINJA, then the GM may opt to use a rival ninja clan as the bad guys in an adventure. When they first show up, the GM hands that player a fate point (or, if she wants to be enigmatic, just hand over the fate point at the start of the game without explaining why).*

Note that the GM doesn't pay EVERY time the enemy ninjas show up, just the first time. Further payouts would depend on the situations changing or complicating in some way.

Internal complications are a bit trickier. Sometimes the character has an aspect which speaks to their behavior, like filled with rage. The GM can't make the character behave angrily, but she can introduce situations where anger would be an inconvenient response. In those situations, the GM may quietly offer a fate point. If the player chooses to accept it, his character then takes a course of action that is a problematic expression of his aspect.

*We come back to Finn and his GOOD ENOUGH IS GOOD ENOUGH aspect. He's turning in a report to a superior, and it's expected that he'll do a thorough job of it. The GM slides a fate point on to the table, and after a moment, Fred picks it up and describes how Finn does a half assed job on the report to get it done quickly.*

## OTHER ASPECTS

Almost anything can have an aspect - locations, scenes, other characters, even entire campaigns. These are used the same way that a character's aspects are. The only question is whether the aspect applies at the moment. The fact that your secret lair has STATE OF THE ART SECURITY doesn't help much when you're out shopping.

## ANCHORS

Aspects can sometimes get a bit abstract, especially with players of a more poetic bent. For such players, it is reasonable to ask for one more element in an aspect: an anchor. An anchor is the name of another character in the setting who is important to that aspect. Introducing this gives the GM a nicely concrete handle with which to pull on an aspect that might otherwise be too slippery to really see use. During character creation, the GM may ask a player to provide an anchor for an aspect that she's having trouble figuring out how to play. It's also reasonable to ask for an anchor after play has gone on for a while and an aspect has prove hard to hook in.

*Leanne has the aspect ON THE SHOULDERS OF THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE. The GM kind of gets the idea, but wants to be able to bring it to bear more often, because she likes the concept, so she asks Lydia to come up with an anchor. Lydia names Nigel Asterworth, her father, a “retired” gentleman of adventure. He taught her a lot of what she knows, but is also the standard she measures herself against. More problematically, he’s pretty famous in the circles that Leanne travels in, for good and ill. Nigel is not the only way the aspect can get invoked - it still works normally - but it gives the GM a convenient way to bring it into play.*

Some games may want an anchor for every aspect on a character. This can be a lot of fun, just make sure to include the time for players to come up with names and ideas.

# CONFLICT

When a character ends up in conflict with another character, whether in a fight, a chase or the like, resolution is a little bit more complicated than normal, but it's just an extension on the existing rules.

The main difference is that in a conflict, both sides get to roll. This means that rather than comparing results to a static table, the result is based on comparing the rolls and measuring relative advantage.

In fact, conflict is all about advantage. At any point, a fight is going to be in one of the following states:

- ▶ Both sides are on equal footing
- ▶ One side has an edge
- ▶ One side holds an advantage
- ▶ One side holds a decisive advantage
- ▶ Conflicts may start on even footing, but it's rare that they stay that way - one side or another tries to seize an advantage and exploit it for a win. Exactly who gets that advantage depends on the dice.

## TEMPO

The meaning of margin of success depends a lot on the starting point in the conflict. Once one side wins they are considered to control the tempo of the fight, and this is mechanically reflected by them holding an edge, advantage or decisive advantage. The side which controls tempo has more options than the other side, depending on their status.

When opponents are at equal footing, the outcome of the roll is handled as follows:

Tie	status does not change
Win by 1-5	winner gains the edge
Win by 6-8	winner gains the advantage
Win by 9+	winner gains a decisive advantage

Each step is considered to be inclusive of the ones below it, so if you

## EDGE

The side with the edge gets to narrate the direction of the fight - not outcomes per se, but the general direction of things.

As part of narration, the side with edge can give it up (restoring tempo to neutral) to do one of the following:

- ▶ Add an aspect to the scene
- ▶ Change the situation enough to offset a point of superiority (see below)
- ▶ Gain some other relatively small advantage, or take a secondary action.
- ▶ Use a scene aspect as if the character had spent a fate point to do so.

If the character with the edge generates the edge again, the result is the same as if the situation hadn't changed (that is, it does not improve the edge in any way).

## ADVANTAGE

The side with advantage gets to narrate the direction of the fight, and may do so to the detriment of their opponent.

As part of narration, the side with the advantage can give it up (restoring tempo to neutral) to do one of the following:

- ▶ Add an aspect to the opponent (usually in the form of an injury or other detriment)
- ▶ Change the situation enough to offset two points of superiority (see below)
- ▶ Gain the benefit of spending an edge. Gain the edge.

If a character with advantage gets advantage again, it escalates to decisive advantage (Letting your opponent keep advantage is dangerous). Any lesser result maintains the advantage (except losing, of course).

## DECISIVE ADVANTAGE

The side with decisive advantage has pretty much free reign to narrate the fight as they see fit. As part of that narration to sacrifice their decisive advantage for one of the following benefits.

Offset four points of superiority

Win the conflict on your terms. This is not *carte blanche* - you can achieve one end with a decisive victory, and if there are more things you need to accomplish, you may need to reach it more than once.

Gain the benefit of spending an advantage. Gain the Edge.

Gain the Benefit of spending the edge. Gain Advantage.

So long as the character with decisive advantage doesn't lose a roll (or sacrifice it voluntarily), he'll maintain the decisive advantage.

## CONCESSION

Between each round of a conflict, either side has the option to concede the fight, basically allowing them to lose on their own terms. Most often this means this means retreating or an equivalent.

A player can refuse a concession, but doing so requires them to sacrifice tempo, though the GM can veto lame concessions.

## SUPERIORITY

Weapons and tools impact the roll in terms of the relative advantage they offer. Any weapon is a help against an unarmed opponent, but certain weapons will be more useful in certain situations, such as a knife in close quarters. Advantage is usually worth a +1

bump, but may be as high as +3 if it's extreme. In very unblanced situations (like a fight at range where only one person has a ranged weapon), not only does that grant superiority, but the defender can't ever get better than edge, no matter how well he rolls.

#### HANDLING GEAR

Some games use extensive inventories to reflect important elements of the character. In such games, a single axis of superiority may not be enough - there might be a call for weapons, armor, magic and much much more.

If this is important, it should be detailed in the module writeup. The general solution for such things is to offer diminishing returns (so full value for the first superiority, half (rounded down) for the next one, half again (rounded down) for the next. However, specific variations may reflect other needs.

## RANDOM GM STUFF

### WHAT DOES FAILURE MEAN?

Failure does not need to be failure. A lot of actions are guaranteed to succeed eventually, but the roll determines if it succeeds within the current scope.

### CLEAR COURSE OF ACTION

Every roll should result in at least one clear course of action.

# MODULE: FLASHPOINTS

This ruleset is for an espionage game, ideally one set during the height of the Cold War.

## CHARACTER CREATION

The assumption is that when play begins the players are an established unit or cell, and that inter-player trust can be a solid commodity. A game looking to introduce a little more conflict within the party might mix it up a little.

## ASPECTS

Characters have five aspects. The first three relate to the character's history and background, while the last two relate to missions the character has previously been on with the team.

### BACKGROUND ASPECTS

The first aspect picked should be the primary aspect for the agent. This is a descriptor which, if you only had to describe the character in one way, it would be this. I might be a role like Assassin or Mechanic, or it might be something that speaks to their story like Sole Survivor. There's nothing that mechanically distinguishes this aspect from other aspects as an aspect, but it is going to say a lot about the agent's role in the game, so it maybe important to consider how it's phrased.

The other two aspects should catch the character coming and going. The first reflects where the character comes from (their background, family, education or the like) and the third reflects how they got into the agency or their time in the agency (or some other service) before joining the team.

### FLASHPOINT ASPECTS

The last two aspects will be flashpoints - missions that they team took together. The details of these jobs should be worked out between the players and the GM.

## ANCHORS

After all aspects have been chosen, each player needs to come up with an anchor for each of his aspect. An anchor is a person, place or thing that is representative of that aspect to the player. The GM is expected to bring anchors up in play with some frequency as a guarantee that even fairly abstract aspects get hit often enough.

## ROLES

There are eight broad roles which cover the breadth of agent activities, and they are:

- ▶ Athlete
- ▶ Diplomat
- ▶ Observer
- ▶ Politician



- ▶ Scholar
- ▶ Soldier
- ▶ Technician
- ▶ Thief

They will be ranked at one of 4 levels

- ▶ World Class (+8)
- ▶ Elite (+6)
- ▶ Seasoned (+4)
- ▶ Trained (+2)
- ▶ Untrained (+0)

Agents are exceptionally skilled, and as such have one world class role, two elite, two seasoned, two trained and one untrained skill.

## SKILL BREAKDOWN

**Athlete** covers most physical activities like running, jumping and climbing. Hopefully it's pretty straightforward. If no other physical role is appropriate to a task, use athlete.

An Elite Athlete may choose one of the following benefits:

*Mobility* - The character can do crazy parkour/Jackie Chan type stuff, allowing them to move full tilt in environments a normal person would have to slow down for.

*Brute* - The character is strong as hell and can perform a burst of strength to do things like break ropes or bust down a door.

A World Class Athlete receives both Elite benefits.

**Diplomat** covers most social interaction, from making friends to lying to impressing the opposite sex. It does NOT cover the perception of the same (that's under this auspices of Observer).

An Elite diplomat may choose one of the following benefits:

*Subtle Inquiry* - You can tell the GM you want the answer to a specific question before you enter conversation with an NPC. Provided you converse with them for a reasonable time, you subtly steer the conversation in such a way that you get the answer you'd have gotten if you'd asked.

*Plant Seed* - After a few minutes of conversation, you can plant an idea in someone through subtle language and cues. This isn't mind control or hypnotism, it just plants an idea the way that a song gets stuck in your head. It's not a big thing, but it can be a good way to help someone have a brilliant idea.

*Gambler* - In any game of chance where there are other players, the character may roll Diplomat rather than luck (which is a 0).

*Dangerous Grace* - In any social situation where there are rules of behavior, you can force someone into a Faux Pas, or prevent such a faux pas from someone (including yourself).

A World Class Diplomat may choose two Elite benefits.

**Observers** keep track of what's going on. They rely on keen eyes, keen ears and the sharp intellect to separate the wheat from the chafe.

An Elite Observer may choose one of the following benefits:

*Cold Read* - Upon entering a scene, the observer may ask one of the following questions and get a good faith answer:

- ▶ Who is the most dangerous person in the room?
- ▶ Who is the most important person in the room?
- ▶ Who is watching me?
- ▶ Where is the fastest exit?

*Faces Are an Open Book* - Any time they make a roll against another person regarding deception (such as whether or not someone is lying) the player will be told what the opposition rolled after the fact.

*Elementary* - When the character finds a piece of information, he may ask for one additional piece of information he can extrapolate from it (such as the weight of the person who left footprints) over and above what his roll may merit.

A World Class Observer may choose two elite benefits, or he may choose a single benefit (Cold Read or Elementary) and ask two questions.

**Politician** covers all the interactions with people that do not depend on them liking you. A good politician understands how power structures work, can give good orders and find loopholes in those he receives. He understands the law and perhaps most important to an agent, he understands paperwork. Outside of the uses on a mission, politician is the skill required to requisition resources for a mission or to effectively call in support.

An elite politician can choose one of the following benefits:

*A Little Bit of Law* - The politician is actually a lawyer, and has the education and paperwork to prove it, and is familiar enough with international law to fake it in any country where he can speak the language. The exact benefits of this vary from country to country, but even in those with few protections for lawyers, knowledge of the law can be handy.

*SOP* - The politician knows the rules and regulations of any organization large enough to have rules. That means he can identify them on sight and make declarations regarding how they are supposed to respond in specific situations. For example "Ok, those are Hercule Security guards - that means 4 man teams, 1/2 hour patrol intervals and a mandatory lunch break of not less than 45 minutes"

*The Man* - The politician is a person of importance, if not prominence. He might own a large share of a major corporation or be royalty from someplace where that matters, but whatever the case, he moves in the circles with the movers and shakers.

A World Class politician may have two of these benefits, or he may choose to focus on The Man, in which case he is one of the dozen or so secret figures who pull the strings behind the scenes. Whether or not this is apt for a player is a decision for the table.

**Scholars** know things. Simple as that. While there are many situations where the application of this trait is obvious, this also has the advantage of being the fallback trait to roll when no other trait seems appropriate. Scholar can be used to make declarations as appropriate, or to allow the agent to get answers without research.

An elite scholar can choose one of the following benefits:

*Linguist* - The agent is the master of a number of different (and unspecified languages). In practice it means that the character can speak any language that comes up in play.

*Great Mind* - The scholar can choose some academic field. Within that field he is a published, respected figure, the sort that gives speeches and writes book. He can use one of his aspects for free when rolling scholar within that sphere, and when dealing with other scholars within the same circle he can use the Scholar in lieu of Diplomat.

*Pattern Recognition* - Given time to study the paperwork around a situation (which is to say, the kind of situation that would have paperwork to research) the character can extract one aspect associated with the situation.

A world Class scholar may choose any two of these benefits, or may take an improved version of Great Mind, in which case he is the greatest authority on the world on the topic.

**Soldier** covers violence of any stripe - guns, fists, sharp sticks and so on. It's pretty simple

An elite soldier can choose one of the following benefits.

*Heavy Weapons* - The agent can use larger weapons, from rocket launchers to tanks. Technological complexity is no barrier to them.

*Martial Arts* - The character's skill with unarmed combat is such that they do not grant superiority (see the notes on combat, below) when fighting hand to hand, no matter what the opponent is armed with, and they gain superiority against other unarmed opponents who are not similarly trained.

*Tactician* - The agent can use soldier in lieu of Observer when in a fight.

A World Class Soldier may take two of these benefits.

**Technician** covers the ability to fix, understand and operate machinery (including driving cars).

An elite technician can choose one of the following benefits.

*Pilot* - The agent can drive anything, including planes, helicopters and boats.

*Hacker* - Computers behave for the agent like they do in the movies (well, specifically, movies from the early 80's, so it's still all green screens and squealing modems) rather than the way they act in real life.

*Gadgeteer* - The agent doesn't need to spend fate points to have reasonable tools and gadgets on hand, and anything you can't carry you can probably build it out of parts on hand.

A World Class Technician can take two benefits.

**Thief** covers activities of stealth, deception and (of course) theft.

An Elite thief can take one of the following benefits.

*Fast Hands* - The agent can perform feats of legerdemain while in the middle of the most distracting of circumstances, such as in the middle of a fight or chase.

*Face in a Crowd* - The agent can sneak in plain sight provided there are people for him to mingle among.

*Magician* - The agent is an accomplished stage magician, capable of displays both flashy and subtle.

A World Class Thief can take two benefits.

## SPECIAL RULES

Rules specific to this module.

### USING ASPECTS

A character may only use a single aspect on his sheet. A character may use any number of aspects on an opponent's sheet. That means that if you want to spend a bunch of fate points for a big bonus, you need to know your enemy well.

### DESCRIPTIVE BONUSES

Good plans, good tools and other things that might help a roll can grant a +1 bonus to any roll. Such bonuses do not stack.

## CAMPAIGN ASPECTS

The following aspect is considered to always be present in any scene.

TRUST NO ONE

