VITAL INSTINCT

CORE RULES

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INTRODUCTION

"It began as it always does – in the dark. In those cold, huddled nights around the fire, where the wind bites at you from all sides, but the leaping tongues of flame provide just enough warmth and light to sustain the imagination. Amidst the flickering light, great heroes and beasts dance in a dazzling clash of embers. A world of legend is both born and reawoken amongst the orange glow, as the ancient stories are told anew. As Irli looked upon the fire, he could feel the stories come alive."

Vital Instinct is a roleplaying game in which stories of exploration, discovery, and the fight to survive can take center-stage. In worlds of beautiful but brutally unforgiving wilderness and unexplored mysteries, you and your table have the opportunity to engage in the harsh but rewarding reality of surviving and adventuring in a wild landscape. Unlike other popular tabletop role-playing games which focus primarily on aspects of combat and"dungeon-delving", Vital Instinct is a game which is meant to showcase "real people in a fantastical setting". While combat and "dungeon-delving"-style exploration are important parts of the Vital Instinct system (in fact, they make up 2 of the 5 major modes of play), the rules and character design places a strong emphasis on the realities of survival and exploration in an unknown environment, rewarding players for interacting with their environment and surroundings.

While this may make Vital Instinct sound like a game with a large ruleset, which may be confusing to learn, the exact opposite is true - most of the specific rulesets for the game are entirely optional and can be ignored without harm to the rest of the game. For this reason, the core game provides a simple, easy-to-pick up experience which is welcoming to new players of the game or of tabletop role playing games in general. However, the optional rules provide a plethora of ways in which a gamemaster (GM) and their players can choose to deepen their experience with the game.

One final note should be made before we begin learning the basic rules for playing Vital Instinct. "Real people in a fantastical setting" is one of the primary focuses of the system, and for this reason, surviving as a character in a Vital Instinct system may feel difficult for players who are used to more heroic tabletop role-playing games. Oftentimes, the right answer will not be to fight the beast which has attacked you but instead to flee from it, or to survey the abandoned ruins before diving headfirst into them. Caution, patience, prior planning, and knowing when to flee are all rewarded in Vital Instinct and can make a potentially deadly scenario much more manageable.

CHECKS

"Irli looked out upon the horizon at the unfamiliar world which lay before him. Never before had he travelled to Ramuf Shonta – the Great Hunting Lands. Gone was the rocky, barren earth carpeted with its familiar mosses. The world he now looked upon was unfamiliar – endless expanses of rolling hills, swaying golden in the wind. Trying to navigate in this unfamiliar landscape, Irli turned to the stars to guide him – his unrelenting companions on this long journey. As he searched across the sky, he found it – Racharo, the guide bird. Following Racharo, he headed south, continuing his journey."

Before discussing the specific rules for building a character or for any mode of play, it is first important to introduce the concept of a Check, which players of other tabletop role playing games will likely already be familiar with.

In Vital Instinct, nearly all activities performed by a character require a Check of some kind, which can be done to accomplish or resist a specific activity, goal, or intention. A Check is made by rolling a die associated with a particular Stat and adding any relevant modifiers to the roll (most often from Trainings). Most Checks are Ability Checks and thus utilize one of the listed Abilities to determine which Stat is used to make the Check. However, in some cases a GM may call for a Check with a specific Stat (although this is not recommended), bypassing any Abilities and thus excluding any modifiers they may add. The most common example of a Check which is not related to an Ability is an Instinct Check which is rolled at the beginning of combat (For more information on Instinct Checks, see INSTINCT CHECK SECTION).

Most Checks usually have an associated Difficulty Class, or DC, which is set by the GM to determine if the Check is successful. A Check is considered a success if the result of the roll meets or exceeds the DC and is considered a failure if the result of the roll is less than the DC. However, some special Checks (such as Instinct Checks, or Contested Checks) may not have a DC set by the GM. In the prior passage, when looking up at the stars, Irli would have had to make a successful check against an appropriate DC to navigate, in order to avoid becoming lost. Having succeeded, he was able to orient himself and continue on his journey.

A Contested Check is a Check which does not have a set DC but is instead initiated when two creatures are attempting opposing activities (The most common example of Contested Checks occur in combat when Offensive Ability Checks by a creature are Contested by a Defensive Ability Check by the targeted creature, for more information see COMBAT SECTION). In a Contested Check, both creatures roll their Check and the creature with the higher roll succeeds while the creature with the lower roll fails, with ties going to the initiator of the Check.

Finally, some Actions or Activities may require a Group Check. A Group Check is a Check made collectively by a group of creatures and requires each creature in the group to make the associated Check. If half or more of the creatures in the group succeed on the associated Check, then the Group Check is considered a success.

STATS

"Wandering for days through the endless fields of gold, Irli felt his body sapped of all energy. His vision blurred as he stumbled onward. The heat was unlike any he had felt before as the great sky fire beat down upon him relentlessly. He could not remember the last time he had eaten, for he had grown too weak to hurl his spear. He had been the greatest hunter in the tribe, but that did nothing for him now. As the light faded and night came, he collapsed, closing his eyes, awaiting the next life."

As was discussed briefly in the rules describing Checks, all Checks (and thus nearly all activities performed by a player) are associated with a Statistic, or Stat. In general, these Stats represent the learned and innate capabilities of a creature and thus determine a creature's likelihood to succeed or fail a specific Check.

Each creature has 4 categories of Statistic (or Stats): Body, Mind, Will, and Soul. Each of these categories contains both an Innate Stat and a Learned Stat . These are shown in the table below:

Stat	Innate/Learned	Category
Might	Innate	Body
Form	Learned	
Judgement	Innate	Mind
Education	Learned	
Determination	Innate	Will
Charisma	Learned	
Intuition	Innate	Soul
Wisdom	Learned	

Each of these Stats is assigned a corresponding type of die, which ranges from a d4 to a d20 (additionally a Stat may have a "0" die). These dice are used in the process of making Checks with the corresponding Stat, though a "0 die" in a Stat indicates that the Check is failed automatically. Die such as a d14, d16, and d18 are permitted, though if these dice are unavailable or unwanted, d12+1, d12+2, and d12+3 respectively may be used as substitutes (its is recommended players at the same table all use the actual die or all use the substitutes).

A Statistic may, due to various factors, be affected by Exhaustion. When a Stat is Exhausted, its die size is temporarily reduced by 1 stage for each level of Exhaustion it has received. Exhausted Statistics may be restored through Rest, which will be discussed in a later section. In the prior passage, Irli becomes exhausted by not eating or resting for many days and despite his usual ability to hunt with ease, his exhaustion prevents him from successfully hunting. In this case, Irli might normally have a d12 or higher in a Stat such as Form since he is such a good hunter. However, after not resting or eating as well as perhaps having over-exerted himself, this Stat has gained multiple levels of Exhaustion and he may currently only have a d4 or even a 0 in Form.

Die Stage	Alternate Die
d4	-
d6	-
d8	-
d10	-
d12	-
d14	d12+1
d16	d12+2
d18	d12+3
d20	-

ABILITIES

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The primary method in which Checks are made is through Ability Checks, which allow a creature to make a Check using any of the listed Abilities in the game (See Ability Table). Abilities are divided into four main categories: Base Abilities, Offensive Abilities, Defensive Abilities, and Magic Abilities. Unlike many other tabletop role-playing games in which a specific Ability (often times called a skill) is associated with one particular Statistic, in Vital Instinct, each Ability has a number of Statistics which it is associated with, generally allowing the player to choose which Statistic they would most like to use for their Ability Check out of those associated with the particular ability.

TALENTS & SKILLS

Each of the listed Abilities can be rolled as a Talent or Skill, indicating whether an Innate Stat (Talent) or a Learned Stat (Skill) is being used to roll the Ability Check at that time. Whether an Ability Check is rolled as a Talent or Skill is relevant to what Training modifiers (if any) are added to the Ability Check (continue reading for more information on Training).

A Talent Ability Check is rolled with the die of one of the four Innate Stats (Intuition, Determination, Judgement, and Might) and which Innate Stats can be used for which Ability are indicated in the Ability Table. For example, the Perception Ability can be rolled with either the creature's Intuition die or its' Judgement die. Once the Talent Ability Check is rolled, the creature can add its Talent Training in the relevant Ability to the roll.

A Skill Ability Check is rolled with the die of one of the four Learned Stats (Wisdom, Charisma, Education, and Form) and which Learned Stats can be used for which Ability are indicated in the Ability Table. For example, the Physiology Ability can be rolled with either the creature's Education die or its Form die. Once the Skill Ability Check is rolled, the creature can add its Skill Training in the relevant Ability to the roll.

As is discussed briefly in the above paragraphs, Training in a particular Ability is split into two parts: Training in the Innate aspect of the Ability (also called the Talent Training) and Training in the Learned aspect of the Ability (also called the Skill Training). Thus, whenever a creature rolls an Ability Check with an Innate Stat, they may add their Talent Training modifier to the Check, and whenever a Creature rolls an Ability Check with a Learned Stat, they may add their Skill Training modifier to the Check.

Whether a creature chooses to roll a particular Ability Check with their Skill or Talent is generally up to the player at the time of the Check, as is which Stat they roll the Check with. However, a GM or a Feat may request that an Ability Check be rolled specifically as a Talent or a Skill, or may request that the Ability Check be rolled with a particular Stat.

EXPERTISE & INEPTITUDE

In some cases, a feat, condition, or the GM may grant a creature Expertise or Ineptitude on a particular Ability Check. When an Ability Check is rolled with Expertise, the size of die used in the Check is increased by one stage. When an Ability Check is rolled with Ineptitude, the size of the die used in the Check is decreased by one stage. If multiple levels of Expertise or Ineptitude are applied to an Ability Check, the size of the die is increased or decreased by a number of stages equal to the level of Expertise or Ineptitude. [As an example, a creature with a d8 in Education may choose to roll a Physiology Check and may temporarily be granted expertise on the Physiology Check. In this case, if the creature chooses to roll the Physiology check with Education, it may temporarily use a d10 for the Check, rather than it's d8 Education die]. This increase or decrease in die size only affects the current roll for the relevant Ability Check and does NOT reduce or increase the Stat which was used for the Ability Check.

For GMs, it is recommended to use Expertise and Ineptitude to represent specific situational circumstances which may help or hinder an Ability Check. Finally, Expertise and Ineptitude from multiple sources can stack, resulting in higher levels of Expertise or Ineptitude.

[[INSERT ABILITY TABLE HERE]]

WELLNESS

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In order to track the health and wellbeing of a creature, rather than a single pool of "hit points", each creature has 7 Wellness Values - scores which indicate the current state of various aspects of their body and mind. These Wellness Values are: Vitality, Nutrition, Hydration, Oxygen, Stamina, Morale, and Temperature. Each of these values generally range on a scale from 0 to 12; except Temperature, which ranges from -12 to 12. Although, various Feats may alter the range of a particular Wellness Value for a creature.

Wellness Values can decrease in two ways, either by Natural Decline or by taking Damage of a type corresponding to the particular Wellness Value. Natural Decline is a decrease to a Wellness Value which occurs periodically, representing the occasional need to eat, drink, sleep, etc. How much Wellness Values are reduced and how often is indicated in the table below. On the other hand, Damage can be caused by various attacks, abilities, circumstances, or at GM discretion when appropriate. Damage always comes with a Damage Type, which will decrease the Wellness Value associated with that type (See the table below for Wellness Values and their associated Damage Types. If, at any point, a Wellness Value should take Damage but is already at 0 (or 12/-12 in the case of Temperature), that Damage is instead dealt directly to the Vitality value. If a creature's Vitality is at 0 and is dealt Damage, the creature gains the Dying condition.

Note: A Wellness Value decreasing due to Natural Decline does not apply its decrease to Vitality once it has reached 0 since this decrease is not considered Damage.

Whenever a Wellness Value reaches 0 by any means (or either -12 or 12 for Temperature), the creature will gain the Condition associated with that Wellness Value. See the table below for which Conditions correspond to which values.

Wellness Values may be restored up to their maximum (or reset to 0 in the case of Temperature) through various means. See the SURVIVAL SECTION and REST SECTION for details.

For simplicity, a GM and their players may choose not to track Natural Decline of Wellness Values at the intervals in which decreases occur, but may instead choose a shorter or longer interval which is easier to keep track of (such as a 24-hour day). This is perfectly fine as long as the values of the decreases are modified accordingly, since the set intervals for Natural Decline are simply meant to represent the continuous decrease of these Wellness Values over time.

[INSERT WELLNESS TABLE]

CONDITIONS

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As was previously discussed in the Wellness Scores Section, there are Conditions which can be applied to a creature in a given circumstance (such as when a Wellness Score reaches 0).

Conditions are simply an additional set of rules which are applied to a creature while they are active. There are 3 types of Conditions: Wellness Conditions, Body Conditions, and General Conditions.

Wellness Conditions are applied once a Wellness Value has reached 0 (or 12/-12 in the case of Temperature) and generally exhibit effects on a creature consistent with real world symptoms one might experience when suffering from a lack of hydration, nutrition, sleep, etc. For this reason, Wellness Conditions can only be removed when the corresponding Wellness Value is 1 or greater.

General Conditions are applied in specific circumstances or by certain abilities. Most often they represent a situation which might alter the way a creature interacts with their surroundings, and for this reason, most general conditions can be removed when the circumstance resulting in the condition is resolved. For example, a creature may become temporarily Blinded by darkness, but by lighting a fire, that creature is no longer Blinded.

Body Conditions are applied either in the case of a Critical Hit (see COMBAT SECTION for details), or under some other specific circumstances (See the rules on Body Parts & Targeting for more information).

Many Conditions come with a Potency value. This value indicates the severity of the Condition, the specific mechanics of how each Condition uses its Potency are discussed in the text of the Condition itself. Conditions of the same type are unable to stack unless they are on different Body Parts, instead the Condition with the highest Potency is used.

Listed below are all the standard Wellness and General conditions along with the descriptions of their effects.

WELLNESS CONDITIONS

Suffocating - 4 Suffocation Damage every minute, this Damage cannot be healed while this condition is applied. Body Stats Exhausted by 1 stage, this Exhaustion cannot be restored while this condition is applied. Lose this Condition if Oxygen Score is 1 or more.

Dehydrated - 2 Desiccation Damage every 6 hours, this Damage cannot be healed while this condition is applied. Body Stats Exhausted by 1 stage, this Exhaustion cannot be restored while this condition is applied. Lose this Condition if Hydration Score is 1 or more.

Starving - 2 Starvation Damage every 24 hours, this Damage cannot be healed while this condition is applied. Body Stats Exhausted by 1 stage, this Exhaustion cannot be restored while this condition is applied. Lose this Condition if Nutrition Score is 1 or more.

Demoralized - Will Stats Exhausted by 1 stage, this Exhaustion cannot be restored while this condition is applied. Lose this Condition if Morale Score is 1 or more.

Hypothermic - 4 Cold Damage every hour, this Damage cannot be healed while this condition is active. Form and Judgement Stats Exhausted by 1 stage, this Exhaustion cannot be restored while this condition is applied. Gain 1 level of Ineptitude for Flexibility Checks while condition is applied. Lose this Condition if Temperature Score is - 11 or more

Heatstroke - 4 Heat Damage every hour, this Damage cannot be healed while this condition is active. Determination and Judgement Stats Exhausted by 1 stage, this Exhaustion cannot be restored while this condition is applied. Gain 1 level of Ineptitude for Endurance Checks while condition is applied. Lose this Condition if Temperature Score is 11 or less.

Drained - This Condition always comes with a Potency, the effects of this Condition compound with each level, and the level will naturally increase every 3 days. Lose this Condition if Stamina Score is 1 or more.

1 - All Stats Exhausted by 1 stage every 24 hours. Damage taken due to attempted Exhaustion of Stats at 0 (if that attempt was triggered by this condition) cannot be healed while this condition is applied.

2 - Ineptitude on Checks using Will Stats

3 - Begin to experience moderate hallucinations (the nature of which are at GM discretion). These can be discovered as a hallucination on a DC 5 Psychology Check. At GM discretion, a different kind of check or a different DC may be used as the hallucination is investigated

4 - Begin to experience severe hallucinations (the nature of which are at GM discretion). These can be discovered as a hallucination on a DC 10 Psychology Check. At GM discretion, a different kind of check or a different DC may be used as the hallucination is investigated

GENERAL CONDITIONS

Insane -
Enchanted -
Slowed -
Hastened -
Blinded -
Prone -
Muted -
Deafened -
Incapacitated -
Stunned -
Unconscious -
Restrained -

INSTINCT

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Oftentimes, in dire situations, a creature's instincts may take over and aid them in survival when they otherwise might not have had the training or preparation to survive. During Character Creation, a player can choose one of the four Innate Stats to be their Instinct Stat. Then, whenever that character makes an Ability Check, they may instead choose to Roll with Instinct. In this case, the Instinct Stat is used to roll the Check (and the relevant talent training is added to the roll), regardless of whether or not that Stat may normally be used to roll that Ability Check. After the roll, the Instinct Stat gains 1 level of Exhaustion.

Additionally, Instinct Rolls are made to determine the turn order in Combat, which provides special rules regarding the way in which Instinct Rolls are used.

INSTINCT IN COMBAT

When Combat begins, all creatures involved in the combat must make an initiative roll, which consists of rolling the die associated with the creature's Instinct Stat (See INSTINCT ROLLS SECTION). The combat then begins, starting with the creature with the highest initiative roll and then continuing in descending order of the initiative rolls of each creature. During the first round of combat, the instincts of each creature kick in and allow them to act faster than they might otherwise. Each creature gains an additional action on it's first turn, which can be used to perform any action which requires rolling the creature's Instinct Stat. For example, a creature whose Instinct Stat is might could take an additional action to attack with their Brawling Ability during the first round of combat.

REST

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Over the course of your adventure, you will have high-action moments of drama and intensity, but those will always be followed by the necessary rest for your characters to recover. Rest is an incredibly important aspect of play and resource available to the players - scheduling rest and respecting the time it takes can make the difference between a month-long trek into vast wilderness and a day-long hike ending in a massacre by wild animals.

Rests vary in length, but are all characterized by a lack of strenuous activity (including combat) during the required time. Rests do not require sleep, but it can be beneficial to sleep during longer rests so as to obtain the benefits of both sleep and rest in the same period of time.

Each type of Rest (distinguished by length) restores a predetermined amount of Vitality, and reduces the exhaustion level of all statistics.

Note: Rests are continuous and so an interrupted rest may still grant the benefits of a shorter rest if the time requirement for the shorter rest was met.

REST LEVELS

1 minute - Restores 0 vitality, reduces exhaustion level of stats by 1, up to a maximum die of d4

10 minutes - Restores 0 vitality, reduces exhaustion level of stats by 2, up to a maximum die of d6

1 hour - Restores 0 vitality, reduces exhaustion level of stats by 3, up to a maximum die of d8

8 hours - Restores 3 vitality, reduces exhaustion level of stats by 4, up to a maximum die of d10

24 hours - Restores 9 vitality, reduces exhaustion level of stats by 5, up to a maximum die of d12. Reduce exhaustion level of stats at a d12 or greater by 1.

THE JOURNEY THUS FAR..

At this point, having covered the rules regarding Statistics, Ability Checks, Trainings, Wellness Scores, and Conditions, nearly all of the core rules of the game have been discussed. From here on out, all additional rules will simply cover optional mechanics or will describe how a particular circumstance or Mode of Play should affect or make use of the Statistics, Ability Checks, Trainings, Wellness Scores, or Conditions of a creature. If you don't quite understand the previously discussed core rules, then it is advisable to go back and reread them before continuing as all future rules will build upon these.

However, with what you know so far, you are nearly ready to begin your journey of discovery and survival in a game of Vital Instinct.

MODES OF PLAY

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While playing the game, you and your players will engage in one of 5 different Modes of Play, each with their own associated length of time per activity and rules which govern how interactions between characters and their surroundings occur. These five modes of play are listed below along with their associated length of time per activity.

[INSERT MODES OF PLAY TABLE]

At any time, the players and GM may collectively decide to transition between Modes of Play based on what is most relevant for the pacing and enjoyment of the game. For example, a party may be trekking through the wilderness in an unforgiving forest while trying to hunt and forage to survive. During this time, the party would be engaged in the Survival mode of play, taking 3 hours to conduct survival activities, such as Foraging or Hunting (see Survival). However, while hunting, the party may encounter a wild predator which attacks the party. At this time, the GM may transition the mode of play to Combat (far faster paced), in which the players will take 6 second turns to conduct actions, such as attacking or moving (see Combat).

Each of the Modes of Play is designed around "Actions" or "Activities" which a creature can perform, and the length of a standard Action is based upon the current Mode of Play (See the table above). Most Actions require a creature to make a Check (with an appropriate DC set by the GM) in order to successfully accomplish the Action. This system makes it possible to run every Mode of Play in a turn-based style, with each creature taking turns to engage in a single Action (or 2 actions in the case of Combat and Exploration). However, players and their GM may decide that a turn-based system may not be appropriate for all of the Modes of Play and may simply use the Action system to keep track of time in the game.

Generally, it is advisable for a GM to include a healthy mix of the various modes of play in order to keep the pacing of the game varied and interesting whenever possible. Additionally, different character feats may be primarily focused on a particular mode of play, and so a healthy mix of play can ensure that all characters get the opportunity to showcase their unique feats.

Finally, while each mode of play has its own associated rules to govern interactions, which provide a guideline for how best to navigate scenarios in that mode of play - it is ultimately the choice of the GM and the players how best to utilize and enforce the rules for the overall enjoyment of the table. As many of the rules of Vital Instinct are considered to be optional so as to make the game easy to pick up and begin playing, players and GMs may collectively decide to omit, simplify, or ignore rules for certain modes of play to make the game simpler and more entertaining. This is perfectly okay and even encouraged for tables that prefer particular modes of play or just want a simpler game. However, it is worth noting that if a mode of play is going to be ignored or simplified, a GM may want to warn players against choosing character Feats which interact primarily with that Mode of Play.

COMBAT

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During combat, creatures engage in fast-paced activities while fighting to evade, capture, kill, or simply survive. The fastest of all the Modes of Play, a single round of Combat lasts 6 seconds, with each creature given two 3-second actions per round. During combat, a creature must act fast and their options are limited, and so a Creature may take any of the following basic Actions, as well as any additional Actions which a GM deems appropriate:

ACTIONS

Move - The creature can move a distance up to it's speed in increments of 5ft, as indicated on it's character sheet or stat block.

Dodge - The creature can attempt to dodge a future attack. Until that creature's next turn, any Defensive Ability Checks made against a triggering Attack gain Expertise 1.

Shove/Reposition - The creature attempts to forcibly move another creature within reach. The creature attempts a Contested Strength Check against one creature within reach. On a success, the other creature is moved 5ft in any direction.

Interact with Object - The creature attempts to interact with an object. This can include actions such as touching the object, manipulating the object, handing the object to another creature, or dropping the object. At the GM's discretion, the creature may need to make an appropriate Ability Check to accomplish their action.

Aid - Rather than using their Action to accomplish their own means, the creature chooses instead to aid an ally. The creature designates an ally and describes a way in which they aid that ally. The creature then attempts an Ability Check appropriate to the kind of aid described (determined by the GM). On a success, the aided creature gains expertise 1 on their next Ability Check.

Use a Feat - Feats may provide a creature with additional Actions which they can take during combat. The creature can take the action as indicated on the feat.

Prepare to React - The creature plans ahead attempting to react to a future situation which they may expect to arise. The creature describes another action which they are able to perform and designates a triggering condition, such as "when another creature enters my range, I attack" or "When a specific creature becomes hostile, I attempt to grab them". If the trigger occurs at any time before the creature's next turn, then the creature attempts a DC 10 Reflex Check (this DC may be changed or may become a contested check at GM discretion). On a success, the prepared action happens as described. On a failure, the prepared action may either fail to happen or may happen only partially as described at GM discretion.

Make an Ability Check - The creature may attempt an action which requires making an Ability Check. What specific activities fit into a 3-second period is up to GM discretion, but examples include actions such as Attacking, Hiding, Searching, Grappling, Persuading, Improvising a Weapon, or Administering First Aid. As a general rule, 1 Action should generally equate to 1 Ability Check.

INITIATING COMBAT

When Combat begins, all creatures involved in the combat must make an initiative roll, which consists of rolling the die associated with the creature's Instinct Stat (See INSTINCT ROLLS SECTION). The combat then begins, starting with the creature with the highest initiative roll and then continuing in descending order of the initiative rolls of each creature. During the first round of combat, the instincts of each creature kick in and allow them to act faster than they might otherwise.

Each creature gains an additional action on it's first turn, which can be used to perform any action which requires rolling the creature's Instinct Stat. For example, a creature whose Instinct Stat is might could take an additional action to attack with their Brawling Ability during the first round of combat.

ATTACKING & BLOCKING

During their turn, a creature can take 1 Action to attempt an Attack against another creature within range. When a creature attacks, they must attempt a contested Offensive Ability Check against a Defensive Ability Check made by the blocking creature.The appropriate offensive ability used in the contested check is determined by the attacker's weapon and the appropriate defensive ability used in the contested check is determined by the blocker's armor. If the attacking creature succeeds the contested Check, then they deal an amount and type of damage determined by the weapon. If the attacker succeeds by 5 or more, the attack is a Critical Hit and deals the appropriate condition to the body part which was hit as well as an amount and type of damage determined by the weapon. By default, the torso is the affected body part (For more information about Body Parts, see the BODY PARTS & TARGETING SECTION).

RANGED ATTACKS

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TIMING SUGGESTIONS

As an optional combat rule, a GM or table may choose to implement a "time limit" to turns in Combat, where players themselves are given a limit as to how long they are allowed to discuss their turn before the round continues automatically. This may be done to make combat feel fast-paced, prevent over-strategizing, or simply to make more efficient use of time. If this rule is implemented, it is suggested to use a 1-minute, 3-minute, or 5-minute timer per player or creature turn and to be as consistent as possible so as to avoid anyone feeling as though a player or creature is being allowed more or less time than everyone else. It is also encouraged for players to pre-plan out their actions while other creatures are taking their turns, so as to make the most efficient use of their turn time. Finally, if a timer is implemented, it is highly suggested that a default action be determined, such as Attacking, Dodging, or Aiding, so that players are still able to accomplish something with their turn.

SOCIAL

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In general, Social activities take place over timescales of minutes to hours, with a single social action by a creature taking 10 minutes. The Social Mode of Play will generally consist of players and creatures carrying out a series of 10 minute activities (generally at the same time, but a GM may have the creatures take turns to make running the situation more manageable). A single Social Action can be used to: barter, deceive, coerce, converse, ask for assistance, enact diplomacy, etc and may often be accompanied by a player and GM role playing of the scenario. Players may also choose to combine their Social Actions to instead perform Group Social Actions, which follow the rules of Group Checks.

Additionally, there is an optional Reputation system which can be incorporated into Social Modes of Play in order to provide structure and deepen the importance of Social encounters. At GM discretion, a player character or the party may have a Reputation Score with another creature or group of creatures, which ranges from 0 to 100. The GM ultimately determines what this score starts as and how much the score changes, based upon the actions and perceptions of the party or player character (as a default, most scores will start at 6). In most scenarios, a GM would generally inform the players of their Reputation Score with a particular creature or organization upon a successful Psychology check (with an appropriate DC determined by the circumstances) and ask the player(s) to track future changes to these Reputation Scores themselves. However, if deception is involved, the GM may secretly keep track of a separate, true Reputation Score which is unknown to the player(s). During Social encounters, Player(s) can take a 10 minute Social Action to make an appropriate Ability Check to directly influence a reputation score. Reputation Scores will generally influence things such as the price of goods, willingness of Non-Player Characters (NPCs) to cooperate or disclose information, and level of diplomacy. Below is a table of standard Reputation Scores and what they mean.

[INSERT SOCIAL REPUTATION TABLE]

EXPLORATION

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Exploration is a mode of play which takes place over hours, with a single Exploration Action taking 30 minutes. The Exploration mode of play tends to have a very loose structure and could be considered equivalent to a "dungeon crawl" style of play in other tabletop role playing games. Generally, in the Exploration mode of play, players will explore a small, localized area in order to gain familiarity with it, uncover secrets, or obtain items. Oftentimes, what actions a creature can take in the Exploration Mode of Play vary significantly depending upon the region being explored, but common actions may include: searching for a particular item, exploring a room, wandering, or interacting with an object. Like all of the Modes of Play, the Exploration mode can optionally be run in a turn-based style in which each player takes turns describing what they would like to do as an Action. If this is done, it is recommended that each player get two 30 minute Actions per turn, so that 1 round of Exploration lasts 1 hour.

Additionally, there is an optional system which can be incorporated into the Exploration Mode of Play, called Familiarity. Whenever a player character performs an Action which allows them to learn more about a location, creature, object or organization the GM may reward that player with an amount of Familiarity. A player character's Familiarity with a place, creature, object, or organization is represented as a number between 0 and 100, and every 25 points of Familiarity will grant 1 level of Expertise on Checks to recall information about that place, creature, object, or organization. However, a GM may choose to modify the level of Expertise granted if necessary.

The amount of Familiarity rewarded for a particular Action is dependent upon the quality and relevance of the Action, and Familiarity is usually awarded in multiples of 5, ranging between 0 and 30 at a time. To store information about a player character's relevant Familiarity Scores, an optional Familiarity sheet is provided to player characters.

Finally, gaining Familiarity in a specific location, object, or creature which is a part of a broader location, organization, or group can also improve the Familiarity with the broader location, organization, or group. However, the GM may decide that this can only increase the Familiarity of the broader location, organization, or group up to a set amount, most often 30.

[INSERT FAMILIARITY TABLE]

SURVIVAL

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In the Survival Mode of Play, your party will engage in 3-hour Actions as you trek across the land and conduct activities necessary to surviving and restoring your Wellness Values. While in Survival, you can conduct any one of the following Actions: Travel, Hunt, Forage, Find Water, Set Up Camp, or Scout. The specifics of each of these Actions is listed below.

Note: A number of Survival actions make use of "Wayfinding Checks". A "Wayfinding Check" is an ineptitude 1 Perception or Nature Check

ACTIONS

Travel - To take a travel action, all members of the party must take the travel action. When travelling, one designated party member must make a DC X Wayfinding Check. On a success, the party is able to move a distance determined by their speed (See Speed & Travel Section) in their chosen direction. On a failure, the party becomes lost and may either fail to move a significant distance or move a distance determined by their speed in the wrong direction, at the GM's discretion. Additionally, one designated party member can choose to make a Perception Check. On a success, the party becomes aware of potential dangers or problems in their path. On a failure, the party remains unaware of any potential dangers or problems.

Hunt - When hunting, a player first makes a DC X Nature or Perception Check.On a success, the player may roll twice on the appropriate hunting roll table for their location and chooses the better result. On a failure, the player rolls once on the appropriate hunting roll table for their location and takes the result. At GM discretion, a character may describe additional actions taken or make additional checks to influence the outcome of the hunting roll table.

Forage - When foraging, a player first makes a DC X Nature Check. On a success, the player may roll twice on the appropriate foraging roll table for their location and chooses the better result. On a failure, the player rolls once on the appropriate foraging roll table for their location and takes the result. At GM discretion, a character may describe additional actions taken or make additional checks to influence the outcome of the foraging roll table.

Find Water - A player first makes a DC X Nature Talent Check with the following results. Success (5 or more) - - Same as a success, but the water is also potable. Success - The player finds water. Then make a DC 10 flat d20 check. On a success, the water is potable. On a failure, the water is not potable. Failure - Make a DC 10 flat d20 Check. On a success, the player finds non-potable water. On a failure, the player finds no water. Failure (5 or more) - The player is unable to find water

In order to render non-potable water potable, a player must succeed on a DC X Ability Check with an appropriate ability determined by the GM. For rules regarding the potability of water, see FOOD AND WATER SECTION

Set Up Camp - When setting up camp for the first time each day, the GM secretly rolls on the camp problems table. The party may then attempt a DC X group Perception Check to identify the problem. On a success, the problem is identified. On a failure, the problem remains unidentified and the party cannot make another group Perception Check to identify the problem. The party must then make a DC X group Construction Check. On a success, the party successfully sets up camp and averts the problem. On a failure, the party is unable to set up camp completely and must re-attempt the Set Up Camp action. Once a camp problem has been encountered, a party cannot encounter it again.

Scout - A player makes a Wayfinding Check to scout the area, with an appropriate DC dependent upon the conditions and terrain of the area. On a success, the player

DOWNTIME

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Of all the five modes of play, downtime is the slowest, with a single Action taking 24 hours or more. However, in many circumstances, Downtime can be one of the most important Modes of Play, as it allows for planning, crafting, and the building of capital and resources.

Unlike in other Modes of Play, a downtime Action is automatically assumed to include at least 8 hours of rest, unless otherwise specified by a player or the GM. The kinds of actions you can perform during Downtime are highly variable, often including new and novel ideas. Because of this, what qualifies as an appropriate Downtime Action is most often left to the GM's discretion. However, there are some basic rules for determining whether or not specific Actions can be completed.

All actions during downtime require 5 Checks to complete, with a default DC of 10 (this may be changed as the GM sees fit). The GM may decide what kind of Check is most appropriate for each of the 5 required Checks, as well as the number of successes required to complete the activity. Additionally, the GM may determine that failing to meet the number of required successes could result in either a complete failure of the activity or could result in a partial success. If, for example, the GM claims 4 successes are needed to perform a given downtime action and you get 3 successes, they may determine that you fail or that you simply claim a lower level of success. Finally, the 5 required checks need not be the same kind of Check or have the same DC.

Examples of various Downtime Activities might include earning an income via employment, campaigning for a political position, investigating rumors or mysteries, building a house or fortified encampment, crafting an item, or performing extended hunting or foraging activities.

CONGRATULATIONS!

You now know the basic rules of Vital Instinct and can begin your own epic survival adventure. However, before you get started, it is important to provide one last reminder.

While the rules given provide a very useful set of tools to give structure to a fun and immersive survival adventure game; at its core, Vital Instinct is about storytelling. You and your table will have the most fun and share the greatest memories not because of the rules that have been given, but because of the stories that you have worked together to create, and the characters which you have made to inhabit them. Always remember that the fun of storytelling supersedes any written rule in this or any book. So, if your intuition tells you to bend or break a rule for the sake of telling a good story or creating a lasting memory, do it.

FOLLOW YOUR INSTINCTS..