2D20 System SRD: Overview

System Resource Document for 2D20 System RPGs, 2022 Edition

Overview and Statement of Intent

The **2D20 System** is a system and toolset for creating and playing games that emulate and celebrate action-packed, story-driven fiction. It thrives when paired with a setting or theme where competent, determined, often larger-than-life protagonists face tense and perilous situations, and where collaboration and teamwork are vital to success.

It aims to pair the action of the story with a degree of mechanical impact, so that what happens in the narration has direct consequences in the game, and vice versa, and relies on players and Gamemaster alike being active participants in both the fiction and the gameplay.

This System Resource Document serves is to serve as a central reference for the "core" of the **2D20 System**, as well as several common genre-specific modifications, to be used both internally by Modiphius writers and designers, and externally by licensees and affiliates. It will also serve as the basis for a setting-neutral Core Rulebook.

The SRD is broken up into seven distinct chapters, laid out as follows:

Chapter 1: Core Rules

This chapter provides a basic overview of the basic mechanics, and explains the core principles and concepts of the system. It covers the following areas:

- Scenes and Situations
- Skill Tests and Tasks
- Improving the Odds
- Momentum and Threat
- Fortune

Chapter 2: Characters

This chapter provides a standard framework for describing characters in the **2D20 System**, including several common variants and approaches. It covers the following areas:

- Attributes
- Skills
- Talents
- Personal Traits
- Character Creation Methods

Chapter 3: Action and Conflict

This chapter expands upon the core rules, providing additional content for dealing with high-stakes action scenes, and situations where conflict arises. It covers the following areas:

- Action Order
- Damage, Stress, and Harm
- Combat
- Chases and Pursuit
- Stealth and Infiltration
- Morale and Social Conflict

Chapter 4: Equipment

This chapter handles the tools that characters will use during play, and how those tools are represented. It covers the following areas:

- Common Concepts
- Acquisitions and Resources
- Armour
- Personal Belongings
- Weaponry
- Vehicles

Chapter 5: Adversaries and NPCs

This chapter deals with the array of non-player characters, and especially adversaries and enemies that the player characters are likely to encounter. It explains how NPCs differ from player characters. It covers the following areas:

- Types of NPC
- Common NPC Abilities
- Balancing Conflicts
- Example NPCs

Chapter 6: The Gamemaster

This chapter explores the role of the Gamemaster, providing advice and guidance for how the GM interacts with the game and the players, as well as explaining Gamemaster-specific mechanics such as Threat in more detail. It covers the following areas:

- Gamemaster Advice – using the *2D20 System*
- Rewards and Advancement
- Managing and Using Threat

Chapter 7: Additional Rules

This chapter deals with rules that may not be a factor in all games using the *2D20 System*, but which are necessary to have a core set of mechanics for. It covers the following areas:

- Magic and Supernatural Powers
- Corruption and Creeping Darkness
- Hacking and Electronic Warfare
- The Threat Deck

How to Play

What You'll Need

Players and Characters

Every **2D20 System** game involves several Players and their corresponding characters. One of the Players will be the **Gamemaster** (below), but everyone else will take on the role of **Player Characters**. These Player Characters (PCs) are the protagonists of the game, and each player has a single Player Character of their own, for whom they will make decisions, roll dice, and engage with the events of the story. Each Player Character has a character sheet, which is a record of their game statistics, abilities, and other important information.

The Player Characters aren't the only types of characters around, however. **Non-Player Characters** (NPCs) are everyone else, from allies and innocent bystanders, to the adversaries the Player Characters face. They are collectively controlled by the Gamemaster.

The Gamemaster

Of the Players gathered for the game, one will be the Gamemaster, or GM. The GM has a different set of responsibilities, and interacts with the rules of the game differently to everyone else. The Gamemaster controls the NPCs, is responsible for coming up with challenging situations and indomitable opponents the Player Characters will face, and oversees the ways in which the PCs overcome these problems.

The GM establishes scenes, building on the actions and choices of the PCs to shape the game at every state, providing a challenge and giving the PCs opportunities to shine. They also interpret how the rules apply to a given situation, such as ruling on the Difficulty of skill tests, or adjudicating when unusual situations or disagreements arise. Above all else, the GM is not the Players' enemy: the game works all the better when the GM is a fan of the Player Characters and their exploits, albeit one who seeks to make those characters' lives as dramatic, exciting, and challenging as possible.

Dice

The **2D20 System** uses a few types of dice to resolve the actions a character may attempt and the situations they may face. In most circumstances, more than one dice of a given type will be rolled at once; these dice collectively are referred to as a **dice pool**.

The first, and most commonly-used is the twenty-sided die, known throughout these rules as a **d20**. D20s are used for resolving skill tests, and for rolling on certain large tables. Often, two or more d20s will be required. This is noted as Xd20, where X is the number of dice to be rolled. Thus, 2d20 denotes that two twenty-sided dice should be rolled. It's helpful to have at least two d20s for each player, and more is better than less, as players may be rolling as many as five at a time.

The second type of dice is the six-sided die, or **d6**. These are used relatively infrequently, mainly to roll on certain small tables. If multiple six-sided dice are required, it will be noted as Xd6, where X is the number of dice required. Thus, 2d6 indicates that two six-sided dice should be rolled.

Challenge Dice

The third type of dice are **Challenge Dice**, often referred to as **[CD]**. These six-sided dice are used primarily for inflicting damage, making progress against some forms of challenge, and similar outcomes.

Each [CD] has four faces, with three possible results – a score of 1, a score of 2, and two faces showing "**!**", which is an Icon – as well as two blank faces.

Icons have a score of 1, and additionally trigger special outcomes, often called effects, depending on the circumstances of the roll. A pool of Challenge Dice is usually rolled all at once, and their results added together, so multiple Challenge Dice are noted as X[CD], where X is the number of dice rolled. So, 4[CD] indicates that four Challenge Dice should be rolled, and their results added together.

If you don't have special Challenge Dice available, you can use normal six-sided dice instead; treat any roll of a 3 or 4 as blank, and any roll of a 5 or a 6 as an Icon.

In the text, Icons are referred to either with the word Icon, or with the symbol [**!**].

D6 Roll	Challenge Die Roll	Result
1	•	1
2	••	2
3		0
4		0
5	!	1, plus an Icon
6	!	1, plus an Icon

Re-Rolls

Many circumstances allow a character to re-roll one or more dice. When re-rolling dice, the Player choose the dice they wish to re-roll. They roll those dice again, and the new results replace the original ones, even if the new result is worse.

Some situations allow for a specific number of dice to be re-rolled, while others allow all the dice in a pool to be re-rolled. Players may always choose how many dice they wish to re-roll, up to the number listed – in essence, you may always choose *not* to re-roll a die if you wish to keep that result.

Paper and Pencils

Having a supply of paper and pencils will be handy for making maps, keeping notes, and tracking various game effects. The players may wish to make notes of temporarily impairments affecting their characters, the names of characters they encounter, important events, and clues to help them through their adventures, amongst other things. The Gamemaster may need them to record the status of NPCs, and to keep notes of key details from the game. Sometimes, when secrecy is required, the Gamemaster may pass notes to Players rather than providing information to the whole group at once.

It is possible to track all of this (and more) with tablets, smartphones, and computers, but electronic devices at the game table can be distracting to some groups and should only be used with the Gamemaster's consent.

Tokens, Beads, or Chips

The Players and GM will also need a few counters. Players will need a set of six tokens of some kind to track Momentum saved up, while the Gamemaster will need a dozen or more to represent the Threat pool; each of these resources is described later. The players may also want extra tokens to denote Luck points, though these are somewhat more scarce and easier to track without tokens.

While the tokens themselves can be similar, it's advised that they be visually distinct in some way – normally a different colour – to avoid confusion between them. Poker chips, coins, glass beads, counters from other games, or similar tokens are all suitable for this purpose.

While these resources could be tracked on paper, or by using dice to track the total, using chips or beads for this purpose has a few advantages. It's often more intuitive to track each resource by simply adding or removing tokens from a pile in the middle of the table, and it's easier for everyone to quickly gauge how many of each of these resources remain. Further, there's a visceral psychological benefit to be had in the players seeing the GM's Threat pool grow and shrink over time, and to having a tangible object to hold and move around that represents Momentum earned and spent or Threat generated.

Basic Concepts

The following are a few of the core ideas present throughout these rules, and a basic primer on the most common mechanics that Players will encounter in play. This section is presented slightly differently to the rest of the rules, addressing the reader – an individual playing a *2d20 System* game – directly.

Characters

As noted above, each player has a character, and each player character serves as one of the game's protagonists. These characters – as well as many of the non-player characters the GM controls – have several common elements that help describe their abilities.

A character's **attributes** represent their core aptitudes: the things they are innately good at, the things they're bad at, and the ways they prefer to approach problems. Each character has six attributes: **Agility**, **Brawn**, **Coordination**, **Insight**, **Reason**, and **Will**. Each attribute has a rating, normally from 6 to 12, with 8 representing an average capability.

A character's **skills** represent their training and expertise: the things they know, the things they're trained to do, and the things they spend time and effort practising. Each character has six skills: **Fight**, **Know**, **Move, Operate**, **Survive**, and **Talk**. Each Skill has a rating, from 0 (no training or knowledge) to 5 (absolute mastery and expert training). A character will also have several **focuses**, which represent areas of specific training and expert knowledge, building from those six broad skills.

A character also has a few **talents**, which are the tricks, techniques, and feats of prowess or knowledge that allow the character to triumph against impossible odds. These are special abilities, ways to obtain bonuses in specific circumstances or under a certain condition, or ways that they can benefit from a unique approach to a situation.

Scenes

A scene is the basic building block of an adventure, much as TV shows, movies, and books can be broken up into scenes. A scene is a place and time involving a specific set of people, during which exciting or dramatic events occur.

At the start of a scene, the GM will inform you where your character is, what's going on nearby, and anything else useful, important, or obvious that you should know. There'll often be a reason behind this scene, driven by what happened in the scenes before it: perhaps you came here because of a clue left by a murderer, or because you're looking for a specific person. This is setting the scene. Once the GM has finished setting the scene, you and your fellow players can ask questions about the situation and choose for your characters to do things within the scene: move around, talk to other people, or otherwise take

action. Once you've reached a point where you can't do anything further towards your goal, or you've gained a new goal that requires you go somewhere else, the scene ends, and a new one begins.

During a scene, your decisions are important; the choices you make have an impact upon the world around your character, and you'll have to face the consequences of those choices in turn. The Gamemaster can shape the events in a scene too, by spending Threat and through the actions of NPCs, but this is normally in response to your choices and those of your fellow players.

Skill Tests

During a scene, you'll want to do things; indeed, you're encouraged to. Some of those things will be so simple that the GM agrees to them instantly. Others will be impossible to attempt because of some quirk of circumstance. Some, however, will fall into the grey area between automatic and impossible.

This is where Skill Tests come in – for determining whether you can succeed, at times where success and failure are uncertain.

First, state your intent to the GM. The GM will consider the situation, and decide if you can get what you want, if your goal is impossible to achieve (even if only temporarily), or if you need a Skill Test. In the latter case, the GM will tell you three things: which **Attribute** you'll use, which **Skill** you'll use, and what the **Difficulty** is. You'll have Attributes and Skills for your character on your character sheet; add together the chosen Attribute and Skill's scores, to get a **Target Number**. Also, look at your character's Focuses: if you have any that you think apply, ask the GM if you can use it.

Next, gather up some dice. You'll want two d20s here, or more if you've got some way of gaining extra dice for the Test (we'll cover that later). Roll those dice, and check what each one rolls: any that roll equal to or less than your Target Number is a success! Even better, if you're using a **Focus**, any dice that roll equal to or less than your Skill score by itself score two successes instead of one (if you don't have a Focus, any dice that roll a 1 score two successes). Then, set aside any dice that rolled a 20 – they'll be important in a moment.

Add up all the successes you scored. If you scored successes equal to or greater than the Difficulty, you've succeeded at the Skill Test. If you scored fewer successes than the Difficulty, you've failed.

In either case, the GM describes what happens to your character as a result. If you succeeded by getting more successes than the Difficulty, each extra success becomes a point of **Momentum**, and you can spend those points to improve the outcome of your Skill Test: gaining more information from a search, or hitting more accurately with an attack, or taking less time to do something, and so forth. If you like, you can save some or all the Momentum you generated, so you can benefit from it later.

After this, the GM then takes note of any 20s you rolled. Each 20 is a **Mishap**, a little problem that occurred as part of the Skill Test. They can't turn success into failure, but they're extra challenges, incidents, or events that've cropped up that you now must contend with. The GM could decide that the Mishap created a complication for you and your friends: perhaps your gun is now out of ammo after your attack, or you took too much time doing something, or you made a mess during a search, or that hand-hold you used while climbing broke after you used it. Alternatively, the GM could save this problem for later, and add two points to the **Threat** pool instead. If you want, you could even ask the GM to add to Threat instead of facing a new problem immediately.

Once all this has resolved, the game continues as normal.

Momentum

As noted above, Momentum is what happens if you score more successes than you needed during a Skill Test, with each extra success turning into a single point of Momentum. Momentum can be used for all sorts of things, limited only by your imagination and the GM's permission – it allows you to turn mere success into glorious triumph, achieving your goals swiftly and in style, and pull off daring stunts and spectacular feats of prowess.

Momentum represents the benefits of success, the small-but-crucial opportunities and advantages you and your friends create with your successes and decisive action, and the value found in teamwork and in being patient, resourceful, and tactical.

Throughout the game, there'll be plenty of suggestions for different ways to spend Momentum on specific types of Skill Test, or in specific situations, but these are suggestions first and foremost, and shouldn't stop you suggesting alternatives to the GM if you've got a clear idea of what you want to use your Momentum for.

There are a few common ways to spend Momentum too, which pretty much always apply. You can spend Momentum to buy extra dice for a future Skill Test, or to make an opponent's Skill Test more difficult. You can spend Momentum to alter the scene or otherwise create some advantage to capitalise upon later. You can spend Momentum to ask the GM questions about the situation, gaining extra information with each point of Momentum spent.

You can also save your Momentum, putting it into a group pool to use later. As a group, you and your fellow players can have up to six points of Momentum saved up at any time. Whenever you succeed at a Skill Test, you can spend Momentum from that group pool alongside, or instead of, spending Momentum you've generated on that Skill Test. Further, some uses of Momentum, like buying dice or increasing opponent Skill Test difficulty, can be paid for directly out of the group pool, without needing a successful Skill Test first.

But sometimes you won't have enough Momentum available to achieve what you want to achieve. In these situations, you can take risks, brave the uncertain, and make your own luck, by adding to **Threat**, with each point of Threat given to the GM providing the same benefit as a point of Momentum spent.

Threat

The GM has a pool of tokens like the players' Momentum pool, called Threat. Threat is the counterpart to Momentum, representing potential unknown challenges and perils. It's all the things that could go wrong.

The GM spends Threat to change things in an ongoing scene. That might be to bring in reinforcements, or create some unpleasant reversal of fortunes, or make abrupt changes to the environment around the players. The GM also spends Threat for NPC adversaries in the same ways that you can spend Momentum on your own character, such as buying extra dice, or increasing the Difficulty of Skill Tests, or creating advantages.

The GM gains Threat when NPCs save Momentum – they use the Threat pool instead of a group Momentum pool – and when you and your fellow players choose to add to Threat because you've run

out of Momentum. Threat can also grow because of Mishaps on Skill Tests, and for a few other reasons, so the GM will normally warn you if a particular action or event will add to Threat.