ANALOGOUS

A RETROPUNK RPG

ANALOGOUS

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Is this Fate?

Mostly! The core rules used to develop this game are drawn from the Fate core rules, as is some of the text in the book.

However, many of the rules have been changed - including the core systems for skills and conflict resolution - because that's what you're supposed to do with Fate.

If you're familiar with Fate you'll see the similarities. If you're new don't worry, all of the rules you need are in this book alone.

Because this rules set is close enough to Fate you can switch back to those rules if you prefer them, just using the play and setting suggestions presented here.

THE BASICS

Welcome to Analogous!

If you've never played a roleplaying game before, here's the basic idea: **you and a bunch of friends get together to tell an interactive story about a group of characters you make up.** You get to say what challenges and obstacles those characters face, how they respond, what they say and do, and what happens to them.

It's not all just conversation, though – sometimes you'll use dice and the rules in this book to bring uncertainty into the story and make things more exciting.

Analogous works best with any premise where the characters are **proactive**, **capable** people leading **dramatic** lives. We give more advice on how to bring that flavor to your games in the next chapter.

What Should I Read?

If you're a new player, all you really need to know is in this chapter and on your character sheet – the GM will help you figure out the rest. You may want to check out the cheat sheet just to save your GM some effort, but otherwise, you should be good to go.

If you're a new GM, this is just the tip of the iceberg for you. You should read and get familiar with the whole book.

What You Need to Play

Getting into a game of Analogous is very simple. You need:

Between three and five people. One of you is going to be the gamemaster (or "GM" for short), and everyone else is going to be a player. We'll explain what that means in a moment.

■ **A character sheet**, one per player, and some extra paper for note-taking. We'll talk about what's on the character sheet below. (GMs, any important characters you play might have a character sheet also.)

A character sheet is provided at the end of the book, on page 240. Copy it for each player.

■ **Ten six-sided dice**, the same kind you might find in a board game. Ideally, you'll have ten dice per player at the table, as you might need to roll at the same time.

■ **Tokens**, to represent plot points. Poker chips, glass beads, or anything similar will work. You'll want to have at least thirty or more of these on hand, just to make sure you have enough for any given game. You can use pencil marks on your character sheet in lieu of tokens, but physical tokens add a little more fun.

■ **Index cards.** These are optional, but we find they're very handy for recording traits during play.

Players and Gamemasters

In any game of Analogous, you're either a **player** or a **gamemaster**.

If you're a player, your primary job is to take responsibility for portraying one of the protagonists of the game, which we call a player character (or "PC" for short). You make decisions for your character and describe to everyone else what your character says and does. You'll also take care of the mechanical side of your character: rolling dice when it's appropriate, choosing what abilities to use in a certain situation, and keeping track of plot points.

If you're a gamemaster, or GM, your primary job is to take responsibility for the world the PCs inhabit. You make decisions and roll dice for every character in the game world who isn't portrayed by a player – we call those non-player characters (or "NPCs"). You describe the environments and places the PCs go to during the game, and you create the scenarios and situations they interact with. You also act as a final arbiter of the rules, determining the outcome of the PCs' decisions and how that impacts the story as it unfolds.

Both players and gamemasters also have a secondary job: make everyone around you look awesome. Analogous is best as a collaborative endeavor, with everyone sharing ideas and looking for opportunities to make the events as entertaining as possible.

The Example Game

All of our rules examples in this book refer to the same example game and characters. The group we're following is three characters in a bubble city called Vacone, where a gigantic supercomputer runs everyone's lives. The characters frequently butt heads with the computer's enforcers as they try to 'pop the bubble' and free the town.

The participants are Ace, Zo, Huckleberry, and Eli. Ace is the GM. Zo plays a guilt-stricken ex-enforcer named Blake Dwyer. Huckleberry is Marco Marconi, a petty criminal with delusions of grandeur. Eli takes the role of Samantha Vega, a naive but genius graduate student.

We've included character sheets for the example PCs at the end of the book.

Traits

Traits are words or phrases that describe some significant detail about a character. They are the reasons why your character matters, why we're interested in seeing your character in the game. Traits can cover a wide range of elements, such as personality or descriptive traits, beliefs, relationships, issues and problems, or anything else that helps us invest in the character as a person, rather than just a collection of stats.

Traits come into play in conjunction with plot points. When a trait benefits you, you can spend plot points to invoke that trait for a bonus. When your traits complicate your character's life, you gain plot points back – this is called accepting a compel.

> Huckleberry's character, Marco, has the trait Tempted by Shiny Things on his sheet, which describes his general tendency to overvalue material goods and make bad decisions when cash is involved. This adds an interesting, fun element to the character that gets him into a great deal of trouble, bringing a lot of personality to the game.

Traits can describe things that are beneficial or detrimental – in fact, the best traits are both.

And traits don't just belong to characters; the environment your characters are in can have traits attached to it as well.

The Character Sheet

Players, your character sheet contains everything you need to know about your PC: abilities, personality, significant background elements, and any other resources that character has to use in the game. Here's an example of an Analogous character sheet, so we can show you all the components.

Your character's traits are the most important things about them: the core character concept, their biggest stumbling blocks, their important relationships and personality traits. You'll start play with five, usually, and may add more through play.

Stress is how much pressure or damage you can take. You get two boxes for free, then extras for having certain skills rated highly.

Mental stress is called Focus, physical stress is called Health, and social stress is called Composure. You'll track each one separately.

When you take too much stress you'll get consequences. Unlike stress tracks, your consequences are all mixed together. You get one slot for a mild consequence, one moderate, and one severe.

ANALOGOUS

Character Name   Player Nam

Plot Points

Traits

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Abilities & Skills
Mental   Physical

Stress & Consequences
...us   Health
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐   ☐ ☐ ☐

Mild Consequence   Moderate Conseq

Stunts

Stunts are special moves your character can do, or special abilities they have that make them better at using their skills. You'll start play with three to five stunts, and you can add more through advancement.

Your character's basic details go at the top. Their name, your name, and the game you're playing. Sometimes that's the GM's name, or sometimes you pick a name that's descriptive of the big issues or enemies in the game.

You'll also put your plot points and refresh here. Plot points allow you to change the story around you, and refresh is how many you get per session.

ne | Game

Refresh

Social

Composure

☐ ☐ ☐   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

uence | Severe Consequence

Extras

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Your character's abilities are the baseline for their mental, physical, and social contests. These scores are separate: you might have different numbers in each.

Mark your score for each beside the ability, like :

"Mental - 3"

Skills go right below that. You have three columns so you can keep skills under the ability that most often affects them. You don't need to, but it helps. The skill's rank goes to the right of that, like:

"Investigation 2"

Some players like to note their skill rating, then put the ability plus skill rating next to that so they can avoid doing math on the fly. For a character with Mental 3 and Investigation 2 that would look like:

"Investigation 2 (5)"

Both abilities and skills are rated 0, or Untrained, to 5, or Master.

Extras are anything else that you want to put on your character sheet - anything extra! That could be equipment, could be contacts, could be special rules that your character uses. There's a whole chapter on extras at the end of this book, and you can come up with more with your GM.

Taking Action

Players, some of the things you'll do in an Analogous game require you to roll dice to see if your character succeeds or not. You will always roll the dice when you're opposing another character with your efforts or when there's a significant obstacle in the way of your effort. Otherwise, just say what your character does and assume it happens.

- To **overcome an obstacle** 🌀
- To **create or unlock an advantage** ✴ for your character, in the form of a trait you can use
- To **attack** 🌐 someone in a conflict
- To **defend** 🌀 yourself in a conflict

Rolling the Dice

When you need to roll dice in Analogous, you'll grab a number of dice equal to the **ability** being tested plus any **skill** you can bring to bear in the contest. You might add or subtract extra dice from the dice pool from character or environmental **traits** or other advantages and disadvantages.

When you roll the dice 4s, 5s, and 6s count as **hits**.

So, once you've rolled the dice, how do you determine what a particular result means? Glad you asked.

Interpreting Results

When you roll the dice, you're trying to get enough hits to match or beat your opposition. In the event of a tie the active participant – the character or entity that initiated the action – wins (though usually to a lesser degree).

Active and Passive Opposition

By default, Analogous assumes that every contest is made against active opposition: that is, dice roll versus dice roll to see who has the greater number of successes. Even inanimate objects or tests against static things have their difficulty presented as dice pools to roll and compare with Player Character rolls. This method introduces more rolls and a little more variation to the table.

If you prefer a quicker game, or one without the 'swings' of oppositional rolls, you can opt for passive opposition. In this version of the game the players always roll but the GM rarely does. Instead, the difficulty becomes a static number equal to half the dice pool, rounded down. For example, a dice pool of 7 would become a difficulty target of 3: 7 / 2 = 3.5, rounded down to 3.

Many tables use passive opposition for almost everything, with the GM breaking out the dice for active opposition only against named or notable opponents.

Shifts

Generally speaking, if you match or beat the number of hits your opponent rolled, you succeed at your action. There are further grades of success, however, than just success or failure. For every three successes a character earns above their opponent they earn a **shift**.

Shift can be used to improve the results of the success: granting extra effects, providing an advantage going forward, or reducing the time taken to overcome an obstacle. Many skills have recommendations for the effects of shift on their successes.

When an opponent earns shifts against you, you're put in a difficult place. An enemy might get the same kinds of effects your shift would earn, except against you; or there might be further challenges due to the result. These are often also pointed out under their skills or elsewhere.

Passive Opposition and Shifts

If you're playing with passive opponents, the enemies won't roll and, thus, the shift is calculated just on the difficulty of the contests. In this case an active player rolling three or more hits below their target not only fails, but gives their enemy a shift to use against them. For example, rolling 1 hit against a target of 4 would generate a shift for the GM to use against the player right away.

Blake is trying to escape an ancient mechanical death trap he accidentally set off during a "routine" exploration of the Anthari Catacombs. Dozens of tiny (and some not-so-tiny) spears are shooting out of the walls in a certain hallway, and he needs to get past them to the other side.

Ace, the GM, says, "This is passive opposition, because it's just a trap in your way. It's opposing you at Great (+4). The Anthari really didn't want anyone getting to their temple treasure."

Zo sighs and says, "Well, I've got Athletics at Good (+3), so I'll try dodging and weaving through them to cross the hall."

He takes up the dice and rolls, getting -+++, for a result of +2. This steps up his result on the ladder by two, from Good (+3) to Superb (+5). That's enough to beat the opposition by one shift and succeed.

Ace says, "Well, it takes equal parts acrobatics and frantic stumbling, but you manage to make it through to the other side with only some cosmetic tears in your tunic to show for it. The mechanism shows no sign of stopping, though; you'll still have to deal with it on your way out."

Zo replies, "Just another day at the office," and Blake continues his trek through the catacombs.

Plot Points

You use tokens to represent how many **plot points** you have at any given time during play. Plot points are one of your most important resources in Analogous. They're a measure of how much influence you have to make the story go in your character's favor.

■ You can spend plot points to invoke a trait, to declare a story detail, or to activate certain powerful feats.

■ You earn plot points by accepting a compel on one of your traits.

(Hint: the best tokens for plot points are inedible, easily seen, and satisfying to fidget with.)

Invoking a trait

Whenever you're making a skill roll, and you're in a situation where a trait might be able to help you, you can spend a plot point to invoke it in order to change the dice result. This allows you to either reroll the dice or add 2 hits to your roll, whichever is more helpful. (Typically, +2 is a good choice if you rolled at least one hit per three dice, but sometimes you rolled poorly enough to take the risk for the reroll.) You do this after you've rolled the dice if you aren't happy with your total.

You also have to explain or justify how the trait is helpful in order to get the bonus – sometimes it'll be self-evident, and sometimes it might require some creative narration.

You can spend more than one plot point on a single roll, gaining another reroll or an additional 2 hits, as long as each point you spend invokes a different trait.

Marco is trying to covertly goad an heiress into describing the security features of her personal vault by posing as a visiting dignitary. The heiress is opposing Marco with 7 dice, and Marco's Social + Deceive dice pool is 6.

The heiress rolls first to set the target of the roll. On 7 dice she gets 4 hits.

Huckleberry rolls. She gets 2 hits on 6 dice, not enough to get the information she wants.

She looks at her character sheet, then to Ace, and says, "You know, long years of being Tempted by Shiny Things has taught me a thing or two about what's in a secret vault and what's not. I'm going to impress this lady by talking about the rarest, most prized elements of her collection."

Ace grins and nods. Huckleberry hands over a plot point to invoke the trait and gets to add +2 to her standing roll. This brings her result to a 4), which meets the target. The duly impressed heiress starts to brag about her vault, and Marco listens intently…

Declaring a Story Detail

Sometimes, you want to add a detail that works to your character's advantage in a scene. For example, you might use this to narrate a convenient coincidence, like retroactively having the right supplies for a certain job ("Of course I brought that along!"), showing up at a dramatically appropriate moment, or suggesting that you and the NPC you just met have mutual clients in common.

To do this, you'll spend a **plot point**. You should try to justify your story details by relating them to your traits. GMs, you have the right to veto any suggestions that seem out of scope or ask the player to revise them, especially if the rest of the group isn't buying into it.

> Samantha gets captured with his friends by some corporate goons from the next town over. The three heroes are dropped before the goons' corporate handler in an unmarked warehouse, and Ace describes the handler greeting them in Quebecois French.
>
> Eli looks at her sheet and says, "Hey, I have If I Haven't Been There, I've Read About It on my sheet. Can I declare that I learned French at some point, so we can communicate?"
>
> Ace thinks that's perfectly reasonable to assume. Eli tosses over a plot point and describes Samantha answering in passable French, surprising the goons and their handler.
>
> Eli has Samantha look at her friends and say, "Books. They're good for you."

Compels

Sometimes (in fact, probably often), you'll find yourself in a situation where a trait complicates your character's life and creates unexpected drama. When that happens, the GM will suggest a potential complication that might arise. This is called a **compel**.

Sometimes, a compel means your character automatically fails at some goal, or your character's choices are restricted, or simply that unintended consequences cloud whatever your character does. You might negotiate back and forth on the details a little, to arrive at what would be most appropriate and dramatic in the moment.

Once you've agreed to accept the complication, you get a **plot point** for your troubles. If you want, you can pay a plot point to prevent the complication from happening, but we don't recommend you do that very often – you'll probably need that plot point later, and getting compelled brings drama (and hence, fun) into your game's story.

Players, you're going to call for a compel when you want there to be a complication in a decision you've just made, if it's related to one of your traits. GMs, you're going to call for a compel when you make the world respond to the characters in a complicated or dramatic way.

Anyone at the table is free to suggest when a compel might be appropriate for any character (including their own). GMs, you have the final word on whether or not a compel is valid. And speak up if you see that a compel happened naturally as a result of play, but no plot points were awarded.

Blake has the trait The Manners of a Goat. He's attending the annual Holiday Party in Stack One with his friends, courtesy of an old contact at the Company.

Ace tells the players, "As you're milling about, a sharply dressed young lady catches Blake sticking out of the crowd. She observes him for a while, then goes to engage him in conversation, obviously intrigued by how different he looks among all the stuffy executives." She turns to Zo. "What do you do?"

Zo says, "Uh… well, I guess I'll ask her to dance and play along, see what I can find out about her."

Ace holds up a plot point and says, "And is that going to go wrong, given Blake's excellent command of basic courtesies?"

Zo chuckles and replies, "Yeah, I presume Blake will offend her pretty quickly, and that'll get complicated. I'll take the plot point."

Ace and Zo play a bit to figure out just how Blake puts his foot in his mouth, and then Ace describes some of the corporate security showing up. One of them says, "You might want to watch how you speak to the Lead Researcher, flunky."

Zo shakes his head. Ace grins the grin of the devil.

Start Playing!

These are the basic things you need to know to play Analogous. The following chapters go into greater detail on everything we've covered above and will show you how to get your game off the ground.

Where to Go from Here

Character Creation will show you how to make the characters you'll play.

Players, you'll want to read Actions and Outcomes and scan through the advancement rules at the end of Character Creation, to help you get a better handle on the nuts and bolts of doing stuff and developing your character during play. Stats, Skills, and Feats is also useful to better understand what kinds of stuff your character - and others - can do.

GMs, you're going to want to familiarize yourselves with the whole book, but Running the Game and Scenes, Sessions, and Scenarios are of particular importance to you.

A Brief History of Then...

Upstate New York, 1908, the Howell Photographic film manufacturing company is founded. In the same place, a few cities over, in 1911 a punch-card tabulating company merges with several other companies: time-keeping companies, industrial equipment, precision instruments. The new entity is titled the Advanced Basic Computing Company, or ABC.

These two companies become the forerunners, the ancestors, of computing. Each is instrumental in creating the earliest computers, gaining speed through World War II via electronic typing and tabulating machines and radio equipment. Their resources are integral to code-breaking and communications on both the Eastern and Western fronts.

Shortly after the war ends the two companies, ABC and Howell, undertake a joint project to create the world's first supercomputer: a behemoth of vacuum tubes and punch-cards they name Electronic Basic Recorder for Addition Integration Numeration, the E-BRAIN. Having acquired every university mathematician and electronic engineer from the East coast for the government-backed project, ABC and Howell become the foremost computing companies in the world from 1951 on. Consolidating power becomes a no-brainer; one company can control the market better than two. ABC and Howell negotiate a merger and emerge as Howell Advanced Computing.

HAC has an incredible run. With their position at the forefront of research they produce more patents per year than any other company on Earth from 1955 through 1969. Their dominance in computing becomes evident and unavoidable. Every piece of hardware uses HAC's patented programming, and they sell their software bundled with their hardware. Advances in digital computing allow others to use their hardware in new and innovative methods, and it soon becomes unnecessary to produce or buy anything but HAC products. That's when the Department of Justice steps in.

The DOJ pursues the clear monopoly created by HAC for a decade, during which HAC fights back viciously. They continue to conduct research and file patents, but stop releasing new products to the public as a way to slow the rushing advancement of computing technology. The DOJ's anti-trust case is eventually successful, and a judge hands down the ultimatum: HAC can either control hardware *or* software, but not both. They must split the company up.

Powerful men in smoky rooms meet, arranging ways to preserve their power. Two years later, in 1981, HAC finalizes the split. All software, digital projects, and re-programmable devices will be spun off into the new Experimental Advanced Software Technology corporation, while Howell Advanced Computing retains the name and the hardware, including analog computing tools and patents.

They saddled EAST with all the debt of the combined companies. They pursued legal action. They took steps against garage hobbyists, both legal and extra-legal. HAC systematically ate its own child, destroying digital computing and setting computer sciences back decades.

The Information Age died in its cradle.

...and Now

The world of Analogous is a little different than ours. One of the two biggest changes is shown to the left, A Brief History of Then..., and the other is this: the first modern transistors were not created in 1947. HAC's supercomputing projects took precedence and the research was shelved. Devices in Analogous still run, for the most part, on vacuum tubes, punch-cards, magnetic reels, and chip cartridges. They've all been miniaturized, but the technology never progressed beyond these tools conceptually due to the 1969 lawsuit.

Analogous is a kind of retro-cyberpunk game. Science, society, and global politics progressed more-or-less like they did in our world, with the exception that certain major computing milestones were never reached. Some base assumptions of the setting are:

■ It's sometime around 2030. The aesthetic is right in between 1950s Atomic Age futurism and 1980s digital grunge. Computer screens are green, lights are neon, and lawns have white-picket fences.

■ Personal computing never took off. Very few households own multi-purpose computing tools because they take up whole rooms.

■ Most devices do one thing. A computer might control lighting, or do text processing, or similar, but they aren't built to handle multiple different programs.

■ Devices are controlled by chip cartridges. These devices are modular chunks of computer that, when plugged into a suitable interface, allow the computer to do different things. These chip cartridges, or c-carts, range from pinkie-sized cylinders you can keep in your pocket to three-foot-by-two-foot panels of silicon, depending on how much they change the computer's functions.

■ Every household has a radio, a television, and a telephone. That means you don't choose what information comes into your house, the distributors do.

■ Throughout the 1980s and 90s corporations made a concerted and covert push to gain more control over popular media and the government. A landmark case in 2004, ruled in 2010, gave companies the ability to buy their way into government, essentially.

■ Corporations now control everything, and there aren't that many of them. Big companies own the land, run the hospitals, staff the universities, and often control every step of a process. When you eat a potato chip, every single step of that chip from planting to sale is from one company. Now magnify that: you might live in a town that has one, maybe two companies that control *every* single thing you see, do, and learn.

■ The internet, cell phones, and most other technologies made since 1985 don't exist.

■ Certain technologies above and beyond the real world - like artificial intelligence or laser guns - are being developed in secret.

■ Corporate interests want to keep control. They'll do anything, even kill, to keep the status quo.

■ Counter-culture icons fight a doomed fight against that status quo, risking their lives to give some power back to individuals.

TRAITS AND PLOT POINTS

Defining Traits

A trait is a word or phrase that describes something unique or noteworthy about whatever it's attached to. They're the primary way you spend and gain plot points, and they influence the story by providing an opportunity for a character to get a bonus, complicating a character's life, or adding to another character's roll or passive opposition.

Defining Plot Points

GMs and players, you both have a pool of points called plot points you can use to influence the game. You represent these with tokens, as we mentioned in The Basics. Players, you start with a certain number of points every scenario, equal to your character's refresh. You'll also reset to your refresh rate if you ended a mid-scenario session with fewer plot points than your refresh rate. GMs, you get a budget of plot points to spend in every scene.

When your traits come into play you will usually spend or gain a plot point.

Types of Traits

Every game of Analogous has a few different kinds of traits: game traits, character traits, situation traits, conditions, consequences, and boosts. They mainly differ from one another in terms of what they're attached to and how long they last.

Game Traits

Game traits are permanent fixtures of the game, hence the name. While they might change over time, they're never going to go away. If you've already gone through game creation, you've already defined these – the current or impending issues that you came up with. They describe problems or threats that exist in the world, which are going to be the basis for your game's story.

Everyone can invoke, compel, or create an advantage ✪ on a game trait at any time; they're always there and available for anyone's use.

Character Traits

Character traits are also permanent, but smaller in scope, attached to an individual PC or NPC. They describe a near-infinite number of things that set the character apart, such as:

■ Significant personality traits or beliefs: Sucker for a Pretty Face, Never Leave a Man Behind, The Only Good Tsyntavian Is a Dead Tsyntavian.

■ The character's background or profession: Educated at the Academy of Blades, Born a Spacer, Cybernetic Street Thief.

■ An important possession or noticeable feature: My Father's Bloodstained Sword, Dressed to the Nines, Sharp Eyed Veteran.

■ Relationships to people and organizations: In League with the Twisting Hand, The King's Favor, Proud Member of the Company of Lords.

■ Problems, goals, or issues the character is dealing with: A Price on My Head, The King Must Die, Fear of Heights.

■ Titles, reputations, or obligations the character may have: Self-Important Merchant Guildmaster, Silver-Tongued Scoundrel, Honor-Bound to Avenge My Brother.

You can invoke or call for a compel on any of your character traits whenever they're relevant. GMs, you can always propose compels to any PC. Players, you can suggest compels for other people's characters, but the GM is always going to get the final say on whether or not it's a valid suggestion.

Situation Traits & Conditions

A situation trait is temporary, intended to last only for a single scene or until it no longer makes sense (but no longer than a session, at most). Situation traits can be attached to the environment the scene takes place in – which affects everybody in the scene – but you can also attach them to specific characters by targeting them when you create an advantage ⊕.

Situation traits describe significant features of the circumstances the characters are dealing with in a scene. That includes:

■ Physical features of the environment (Dense Underbrush, Obscuring Snowdrifts, Low Gravity Planet).

■ Positioning or placement (Sniper's Perch, In the Trees, Backyard).

■ Immediate obstacles (Burning Barn, Tricky Lock, Yawning Chasm).

■ Contextual details that are likely to come into play (Disgruntled Townsfolk, Security Cameras, Loud Machinery).

■ Sudden changes in a character's status (Sand in the Eyes, Disarmed, Cornered, Covered in Slime).

Who can use a situation trait depends a lot on narrative context – sometimes it'll be very clear, and sometimes you'll need to justify how you're using the trait to make sense based on what's happening in the scene. GMs, you're the final arbiter on what claims on a trait are valid.

Sometimes situation traits become obstacles that characters need to overcome. Other times they give you justification to provide active opposition against someone else's action.

Conditions

Conditions are more permanent than a situational trait, but not quite as permanent as a character trait. They're a special kind of trait that a character might gain as the result of an action, event, or circumstance.

These are attached to a character rather than a scene. For example, the trait pitch-dark might apply to the scene, indicating that nobody can see, where a character might have blinded as a condition, indicating that they alone can't see.

Conditions stick around for a variable length of time, from a few scenes to a scenario, depending on how they were gained and what it takes to get rid of them.

A condition isn't necessarily negative. A character might gain a condition from a suit of experimental camouflage clothing called Damn-Near Invisible, or they may get the Amped Up condition from an adrenaline shot administered in an emergency room.

Consequences & Boosts

Consequences

A subset of conditions is consequences. They're a special kind of trait you take in order to avoid getting taken out in a conflict, and they describe lasting injuries or problems that you take away from a conflict (Dislocated Shoulder, Frazzled, Social Pariah).

A character might suffer a consequence for a scene or a whole story, depending on how severe it is. Because of their negative phrasing, you're likely to get compelled a lot when you have them, and anyone who can justifiably benefit from the consequence can invoke it or create an advantage ⊕ on it.

Boosts

Boosts are a super-transient kind of trait. You get a boost when you're trying to create an advantage ⊕ but don't succeed well enough, or as an added benefit to succeeding especially well at an action. You get to invoke them for free, but as soon as you do, the trait goes away.

If you want, you can also allow another character to invoke your boost, if it's relevant and could help them out.

> ## Traits of All Kinds
>
> Despite the distinctions, all the types of traits work the same in play! You can invoke and compel a condition the same way as you do a story trait. The difference in their names – calling something a consequence rather than an 'injury trait' or something like that – is to help give you some tools to use when creating feats.
>
> For example, you might create a feat called Dirty Fighter that allows you to get a shift at two hits over your target rather than three when attacking a target that's already suffering a consequence. This feat wouldn't work if they had a temporary negative condition, only if it's a consequence – but it does work in physical, mental, and social conflicts alike.

Deciding When to Use Mechanics

Because traits tell us what's important, they also tell us when it's most appropriate to use the mechanics to deal with a situation, rather than just letting people decide what happens just by describing what they do.

GMs, this comes up for you most often when you're trying to figure out whether to require a player to roll dice. If a player says, "I climb this ladder and grab the cables," and there's nothing special about the ladder or the cables, then there's no real reason to require an overcome action to grab it. But if the situation traits tell you that the ladder is in a lab Crowded With Flasks and the cable is carrying a High Voltage, then you suddenly have an element of pressure and risk that makes it worth going to the dice for.

Players, this comes up for you most often when invoking your traits and considering compels. Your traits highlight what makes your character an individual, and you want to play that up, right? So when the opportunity comes up to make your character more awesome by invoking, go for it! When you see an opportunity to influence the story by suggesting a compel for your character, do it! The game will be much richer for it as a whole.

Making a Good Trait

Because traits are so important to the game, it's important to make the best traits you can. So, how do you know what a good trait is?

The best traits are double-edged, say more than one thing, and keep the phrasing simple.

Double-Edged

Players, good traits offer a clear benefit to your character while also providing opportunities to complicate their lives or be used to their detriment.

A trait with two sides is going to come up in play more often than a mostly positive or negative one. You can use them frequently to be awesome, and you'll be able to accept more compels and gain more plot points.

Try this as a litmus test – list two ways you might invoke the trait, and two ways someone else could invoke it or you could get a compel from it. If the examples come easily to mind, great! If not, add more context to make that trait work or put that idea to the side and come up with a new trait.

Let's look at a trait like Computer Genius. The benefits of having this trait are pretty obvious – any time you're hacking or working with technology, you could justify invoking it. But it doesn't seem like there's a lot of room for that trait to work against you. So, let's think of a way we can spice that up a bit.

What if we change that trait to Nerdy McNerdson? That still carries the connotations that would allow you to take advantage of it while working with computers, but it adds a downside – you're awkward around people. This might mean that you could accept compels to mangle a social situation, or someone might invoke your trait when a fascinating piece of equipment distracts you.

GMs, this is just as true of your game and situation traits. Any feature of a scene you call out should be something that either the PCs or their foes could use in a dramatic fashion. Your game traits do present problems, but they also should present ways for the PCs to take advantage of the status quo.

Say More Than One Thing

Earlier, we noted several things that a character trait might describe: personality traits, backgrounds, relationships, problems, possessions, and so forth. The best traits overlap across a few of those categories, because that means you have more ways to bring them into play.

Let's look at a simple trait that a soldier might have: I Must Prove Myself. You can invoke this whenever you're trying to do something to gain the approval of others or demonstrate your competence. Someone might compel it to bait you into getting into a fight you want to avoid, or to accept a hardship for the sake of reputation. So we know it has a double edge, so far so good.

That'll work for a bit, but eventually this trait will run out of steam. It says just one thing about the character. Either you're trying to prove yourself, or this trait isn't going to come up.

Now tie that trait in with a relationship to an organization: The Legion Demands I Prove Myself. Your options open up a great deal. Not only do you get all the content from before, but you've introduced that the Legion can make demands of you, can get you into trouble by doing things you get blamed for, or can send NPC superiors to make your life difficult. You can also invoke the trait when dealing with the Legion, or with anyone else who might be affected by the Legion's reputation. Suddenly, that trait has a lot more going on around it.

GMs, for your situation traits, you don't have to worry about this as much, because they're only intended to stick around for a scene. It's much more important for game and character traits to suggest multiple contexts for use.

Clear Phrasing

Because traits are phrases, they come with all the ambiguities of language. If no one knows what your trait means, it won't get used enough.

That isn't to say you have to avoid poetic or fanciful expression. Just a Simple Farmboy isn't quite as fetching as Child of Pastoral Bliss. If that's the tone your game is going for, feel free to indulge your linguistic desires.

However, don't do this at the expense of clarity. Avoid metaphors and implications, when you can get away with just saying what you mean. That way, other people don't have to stop and ask you during play if a certain trait would apply, or get bogged down in discussions about what it means.

Let's look at Memories, Wishes, and Regrets. There's something evocative about the phrase. It suggests a kind of melancholy about the past. But as a trait, I don't really know what it's supposed to do. How does it help you? What are the memories of? What did you wish for? Without some concrete idea of what the trait's referring to, invoking and compelling it is pretty much impossible.

Suppose we talk about this some, and you specify that you were going for this idea that your character was scarred from years spent in the last Great War. You killed people you didn't want to kill, saw things you didn't want to see, and pretty much had all your hope of returning to a normal life taken away.

I think this is all fantastic, and I suggest we call it Scars from the War. Less poetic, maybe, but it directly references all the stuff you're talking about, and gives me ideas about people from your past I may be able to bring back into your life.

If you're wondering if your trait is unclear, ask the people at the table what they think it means.

If You Get Stuck

Now you know what makes for a good trait, but that doesn't narrow down your potential choices any – you still have a nearly infinite set of topics and ideas to choose from.

If you're still stuck about what to choose, here are some tips to make things a little easier on you.

Sometimes, It's Better Not to Choose

If you can't think of a trait that really grabs you and the other people at the table, you're better off leaving that space blank, or just keeping whatever ideas you had scribbled in the margins. Sometimes it's much easier to wait for your character to get into play before you figure out how you want to word a particular trait.

So, when in doubt, leave it blank. Maybe you have a general idea of the trait but don't know how to phrase it, or maybe you just have no idea. Don't worry about it. There's always room during the game to figure it out as you go.

The same thing is true if you have more than one idea that seems juicy, but they don't work together, and you don't know which one to pick. Write them all down in the margins and see which one seems to really sing in play. Then fill the space in later, with the one that gets the most mileage.

Always Ask What Matters and Why

We said above that traits tell you why something matters in the game and why we care about it. This is your primary compass and guide to choosing the best possible trait. When in doubt, always ask: what do we really care about here, and why?

The events of the phases should help you figure out what your trait should be. Don't try to summarize the events of the phase or anything like that with your trait – remember, the point is to reveal something important about the character. Again, ask yourself what really matters about the phase:

- What was the outcome? Is that important?
- Did the character develop any important relationships or connections during this phase?
- Does the phase help establish anything important about the character's personality or beliefs?
- Did the phase give the character a reputation?
- Did the phase create a problem for the character in the game world?

Assume that each question ends with "for good or ill" – these features, relationships, and reputations aren't necessarily going to be positive, after all. Developing a relationship with a nemesis is as juicy as developing one with your best friend.

If there's more than one option, poll the other players and GM to see what they find interesting. Remember, you should all be helping each other out – the game works best if everyone's a fan of what everyone else is doing.

> During Marco's phase three, Huckleberry states that she complicated Samantha's story by showing up at an opportune moment and stealing the artifact that Samantha stole from his rivals. Eventually the artifact returns to Samantha's hands.
>
> She's trying to tease out what the best trait would be, and she doesn't have a whole lot of information to go on. Going through the questions above, we see a lot of potential options: she showed off her underhandedness, she definitely suggested a relationship with Samantha of some kind, and Samantha's rivals might now have a beef with her as well.
>
> Huckleberry polls the rest of the group, and after some talking, everyone seems to be pretty enthused about Marco having some kind of trait-based connection to Samantha – they did all grow up in the same suburb, after all. She decides on I've Got Samantha's Back, because it's specific enough to be invoked and compelled, but leaves room for development later on in the game.

Vary It Up

You don't want all your traits to describe the same kind of thing. Five relationships means that you can't use your traits unless one of them is in play, but five personality traits means that you have no connection to the game world. If you're stuck on what to pick for a trait, looking at what kinds of things your other traits describe may help you figure out which way to go for the current phase.

> Zo ends up with Company Bruiser and The Manners of a Goat as Blake's high concept and trouble. So far, this is a pretty straightforward character: a violent type whose mouth and demeanor are always getting him into trouble.
>
> Zo does their phase one and explains to us that Blake was a miscreant and street rat that grew up practically as an orphan; his parents were around, but never really paid too much attention to him or spent effort reining him in. He eventually decided to enlist in the Company security agency after someone saved him from a clobbering in a bar fight and suggested he do something worthwhile with his life.
>
> Ace asks them what really matters about this phase, and Zo ponders a bit. Blake's first two traits are heavy on personal description, but he doesn't have a lot of relationships yet. So Zo focuses on that and decides they want a connection to the guy who pulled him into the militia.
>
> They end up naming that guy Old Finn, and Blake ends up with the trait I Owe Old Finn Everything, and Ace now has a new NPC to play with.

Let Your Friends Decide

We've talked before about the fact that the game works best if everyone is invested in what everyone else is doing. Collaboration is at the heart of the game, and we'll probably say it a lot more times before the end of this book.

You always have the option, especially with traits, of simply asking the GM and other players to come up with something on your behalf. Pitch them the events of the phase and ask them the same questions they're going to be asking of you. What matters to them? What are they excited about? Do they have suggestions about how to make the events of the phase more dramatic or intense? What trait do they think would be most interesting or appropriate?

You have the final decision as to what your character's traits are, so don't look at it as giving up control. Look at it as asking your ever-important fan club and audience what they want to see, and using their suggestions to jumpstart your own train of thought. If everyone has a bit of input on everyone else's characters, the game will benefit from that sense of mutual investment.

Blake is trying to win a contest of wits with a rival at a ball game, and the skill they're currently using is Rapport, which they've described as "attempting to shame each other as politely as possible."

Zo rolls badly on one of the contest exchanges, and says, "I want to invoke The Manners of a Goat." Ace gives them a skeptical look and replies, "What happened to 'as politely as possible'?"

Zo says, "Well, what I was thinking about doing was making some kind of ribald but not vulgar innuendo about the guy's parentage, in order to get the crowd at the stadium bar to laugh at him, perhaps despite themselves. I figure that bawdy put-downs are precisely my cup of tea."

Ace nods and says, "Okay, I'll take that."

Zo spends the plot point.

If you want to see more examples of invoking a trait, we've scattered them throughout the book; they're so integral to how Analogous works that they naturally end up in many examples of play.

Invoking Traits

The primary way you're going to use traits in a game of Analogous is to invoke them. If you're in a situation where a trait is beneficial to your character somehow, you can invoke it.

In order to invoke a trait, explain why the trait is relevant, spend a plot point, and you can choose one of these benefits:

■ Take 2 extra hits on your current skill roll after you've rolled the dice.

■ Reroll all your dice.

■ Pass a +2 hit benefit to another character's roll, if it's reasonable that the trait you're invoking would be able to help.

■ Add 2 dice to any non-character source of opposition, if it's reasonable that the trait you're invoking could contribute to making things more difficult. You can also use this to create opposition at a target of 2 if there wasn't going to be any.

It doesn't matter when you invoke the trait, but usually it's best to wait until after you've rolled the dice to see if you're going to need the benefit. You can invoke multiple traits on a single roll, but you cannot invoke the same trait multiple times on a single roll. So if your reroll doesn't help you enough, you'll have to pick another trait (and spend another plot point) for a second reroll or that +2.

The group has to buy into the relevance of a particular trait when you invoke it; GMs, you're the final arbiter on this one. The use of a trait should make sense, or you should be able to creatively narrate your way into ensuring it makes sense.

Precisely how you do this is up to you. Sometimes, it makes so much sense to use a particular trait that you can just hold up the plot point and name it. Or you might need to embellish your character's action a little more so that everyone understands where you're coming from. That's one reason we recommend making sure that you're on the same page with the group as to what each of your traits means – it makes it easier to justify bringing it into play.

If the trait you invoke is on someone else's character sheet, including situation traits attached to them, you give them the plot point you spent. They don't actually get to use it until after the end of the scene, though.

The Ellipsis Trick…

If you want an easy way to ensure you have room to incorporate traits into a roll, try narrating your action with an ellipsis at the end ("…"), and then finish the action with the trait you want to invoke. Like this:

Huckleberry says, "Okay, so I duck into the scuffle and…" (rolls dice, hates the result) "…and it looks like I'm going to miss at first, but it turns out to be a quick feint-and-slash, a classic move from the Back-Stabbing Specialist," (spends the plot point).

Eli says, "So I'm trying to decipher the schematics in the book and…" (rolls the dice, hates the result) "…and as an Ivory Tower Academic…" (spends a plot point) "… I'm already familiar with this kind of design."

Free Invocations

You don't always have to pay a plot point to invoke a trait – sometimes it's free.

When you succeed at creating an advantage, you "stick" a free invocation onto a trait. If you earn a shift you might get two invocations. Some of the other actions also give you free boosts.

You also get to stick a free invocation on any consequences you inflict in a conflict.

Free invocations work like normal ones except in two ways: no plot points are exchanged, and you can stack them with a normal invocation for a better bonus. So you can use a free invocation and pay a plot point on the same trait to get 4 extra hits instead of 2, two rerolls instead of one, or you can add +4 hits to another character's roll or increase opposition by 4 dice. Or you could split the benefits, getting a reroll and a +2 bonus. You can also stack multiple free invocations together – whatever suits the situation.

After you've used your free invocation, if the trait in question is still around, you can keep invoking it by spending plot points.

The Reroll vs Two Hits

Rerolling the dice is a little riskier than just getting the 2 hit bonus, but has the potential for greater benefit. We recommend you reserve this option for when you've rolled poorly on the dice, to maximize the chance that you'll get a beneficial result from rerolling. Remember that on average you'll get one hit per two dice you roll, so a reroll will benefit you most when you get far fewer than that, like one hit on five dice.

Marco succeeds on an attack, and causes his opponent to take the Gut-Stuck consequence. On the next exchange, he attacks him again, and he can invoke that for free because he put it there, giving him a +2 or a reroll.

If you want, you can pass your free invocation to another character. That allows you to get some teamwork going between you and a buddy. This is really useful in a conflict if you want to set someone up for a big blow & have everyone create an advantage, then and pass their free invocations onto one person, to stack all of them up at once for a huge bonus.

Compelling Traits

The other way you use traits in the game is called a compel. If you're in a situation where having or being around a certain trait means your character's life is more dramatic or complicated, someone can compel the trait. That trait can be on your character, the scene, location, game, or anywhere else that's currently in play. We'll start with character traits, and then talk about situation traits in a bit.

In order to compel a trait, explain why the trait is relevant, and then make an offer as to what the complication is. You can negotiate the terms of the complication a bit, until you reach a reasonable consensus. Whoever is getting compelled then has two options:

- Accept the complication and receive a plot point
- Pay a plot point to prevent the complication from happening

The complication from a compel occurs regardless of anyone's efforts – once you've made a deal and taken the plot point, you can't use your skills or anything else to mitigate the situation. You have to deal with the new story developments that arise from the complication.

If you prevent the complication from happening, then you and the group describe how you avoid it. Sometimes it just means that you agree that the event never happened in the first place, and sometimes it means narrating your character doing something proactive. Whatever you need to do in order to make it make sense works fine, as long as the group is okay with it.

GMs, you're the final arbiter here, as always – not just on how the result of a compel plays out, but on whether or not a compel is valid in the first place. Use the same judgment you apply to an invocation – it should make instinctive sense, or require only a small amount of explanation, that a complication might arise from the trait.

Finally, and this is very important: if a player wants to compel another character, it costs a plot point to propose the complication. The GM can always compel for free, and any player can propose a compel on his or her own character for free.

Types of Compels

There are two major categories for what a compel looks like in the game: events and decisions. These are tools to help you figure out what a compel should look like and help break any mental blocks.

Events

An event-based compel happens to the character in spite of herself, when the world around her responds to a certain trait in a certain way and creates a complicating circumstance. It looks like this:

You have _____ trait and are in _____ situation, so it makes sense that – unfortunately for you – _____ would happen to you. Damn your luck!

> Marco has I Know A Guy while covertly attending a black-market auction, so it makes sense that – unfortunately for him – an old friend would recognize him in the crowd and make a noisy introduction, turning all eyes at the auction his way. Damn his luck!
>
> Blake has I Owe Old Finn Everything and is returning to the slums where he grew up after they were invaded by a violent gang, so it makes sense that – unfortunately for him – Old Finn was worked over and put into the hospital when he tried to stand up to the goons. Damn his luck!
>
> Samantha has Rivals in the University Electric and is attempting to get an audience with the academic board so it makes sense that – unfortunately for her – those rivals force the University to demand he provide a detailed account of her highly-coveted research to re-establish his relationship with the organization. Damn her luck!

As you'll see with decision-based compels, the real mileage is in the complication itself. Without that, you don't really have anything worth focusing on – the fact that the PCs continually have complicated and dramatic things happen to them is, well, exactly what makes them PCs in the first place.

GMs, event-based compels are your opportunity to party. You're expected to control the world around the PCs, so having that world react to them in an unexpected way is pretty much part and parcel of your job description.

Players, event-based compels are great for you. You get rewarded simply by being there – how much more fun can you have? You might have a difficult time justifying an event-based compel yourself, as it requires you to assert control over an element of the game that you typically aren't in charge of. Feel free to propose an event-based compel, but remember that the GM has the final say on controlling the game world and may veto you if she's got something else in mind.

Decisions

A decision is a kind of compel that is internal to the character. It happens because of a decision he makes, hence the name. It looks like this:

You have ____ trait in ____ situation, so it makes sense that you'd decide to ____. This goes wrong when ____ happens.

> Blake has The Manners of a Goat while trying to impress a classy lady at a party, so it makes sense that he'd decide to share some boorish, raunchy humor and/or commentary. This goes wrong when he discovers she's the daughter of a Company director, and his offense is tantamount to a crime in Vacone.
>
> Marco has Tempted by Shiny Things while touring a national museum, so it makes sense that he'd decide to, ahem, liberate a couple of baubles for his personal collection. This goes wrong when he discovers that the artifacts are counterfeits and now Marco's made an enemy of the head curator of the museum.
>
> Samantha has Not the Face! when she gets challenged to a barfight, so it makes sense that she'd decide to back down from the challenge. This goes wrong when the rest of the patrons decide she's a coward and throw her unceremoniously out into the street.

So the real dramatic impact from these kinds of compels is not what decision the character makes, most of the time – it's how things go wrong. Before something goes wrong, the first sentence could be a prelude to making a skill roll or simply a matter of roleplaying. The complication that the decision creates is really what makes it a compel.

The decision part should be very self-evident, and something a player might have been thinking about doing anyway. The same goes for players trying to compel NPCs or each other's PCs – make sure you have a strong mutual understanding of what that NPC or other character might do before proposing the compel.

Players, if you need plot points, this is a really good way of getting them. If you propose a decision-based compel for your character to the GM, then what you're basically asking is for something you're about to do to go wrong somehow. You don't even have to have a complication in mind – simply signaling the GM should be enough to start a conversation. GMs, as long as the compel isn't weak (as in, as long as there's a good, juicy complication), you should go with this. If the compel is weak, poll the rest of the group for ideas until something more substantial sticks.

If you offer a decision-based compel, and no one can agree on what the decision part should be, it shouldn't cost a plot point to counter: just drop it. Countering a decision-based compel should only mean that the "what goes wrong" part doesn't happen.

> GMs, remember that a player is ultimately responsible for everything that the character says and does. you can offer decision-based compels, but if the player doesn't feel like the decision is one that the character would make, don't force the issue by charging a plot point. Instead, negotiate the terms of the compel until you find a decision the player is comfortable making, and a complication that chains from that decision instead. If you can't agree on something, drop it.

Compelling with Situation Traits

Just like with every other kind of trait use you can use situation traits (and by extension, game traits) for compels. Because situation traits are usually external to characters, you're almost always looking at event-based compels rather than decision-based ones. The character or characters affected get a plot point for the compel.

Because the warehouse is On Fire, and the player characters are trapped in the middle of it, it makes sense that, unfortunately, the ruffian they're chasing can get away in the confusion. Damn their luck!

The manor house Marco is searching through is Littered with Debris, so it makes sense that, unfortunately, the city guard is going to arrive there before he finds what he's looking for, which will leave him with a lot of explaining to do. Damn his luck!

The private library Samantha is currently working in has Layers of Dust everywhere, so it makes sense that, unfortunately, while she might be able to find the information she's looking for, the University bounty hunter pursuing him will know that she was here. Damn her luck!

Retroactive Compels

Sometimes, you'll notice during the game that you've fulfilled the criteria for a compel without a plot point getting awarded. You've played your traits to the hilt and gotten yourself into all kinds of trouble, or you've narrated crazy and dramatic stuff happening to a character related to their traits just out of reflex.

Anyone who realizes this in play can mention it, and the plot point can be awarded retroactively, treating it like a compel after the fact. GMs, you're the final arbiter. It should be pretty obvious when something like this occurs, though — just look at the guidelines for event and decision compels above and see if you can summarize what happened in the game according to those guidelines. If you can, award a plot point.

Using Traits for Roleplaying

Finally, traits have a passive use that you can draw on in almost every instance of play. Players, you can use them as a guide to roleplaying your character. This may seem self-evident, but we figured we'd call it out anyway – the traits on your character sheet are true of your character at all times, not just when they're invoked or compelled.

Think of your collection of traits as an oracle – like a tarot spread or tea leaves. They give you a big picture of what your character's about, and they can reveal interesting implications if you read between the lines. If you're wondering what your character might do in a certain situation, look at your traits. What do they say about your character's personality, goals, and desires? Are there any clues in what your traits say that might suggest a course of action? Once you find that suggestion, go for it.

Playing to your traits also has another benefit: you're feeding the GM ideas for compels. You're already bringing your traits into the game, so all they have to do is offer you complications and you're good to go.

GMs, you'll use your NPCs traits the same way, but you get an additional way of "reading the tea leaves": you can also use them as a way of figuring out how the world reacts to the characters. Does someone have the trait Strongest Man in the World? That's a reputation that might precede that character, one that people might know about and react to. People might crowd in to see that character when he's passing through.

Also, it suggests something about that character's physical size and build. You know that most people are going to give that character a wide berth in a crowded space, might be naturally intimidated, or might be overly aggressive or brusque as overcompensation for being intimidated.

But no one's going to ignore that character. Inserting these kinds of trait-related details into your narration can help your game seem more vivid and consistent, even when you're not shuffling plot points around.

> Blake comes back to his home neighborhood only to find that it has been invaded by an upstart violent gang and his mentor, Old Finn, has been put in the hospital for standing up to them. Last anyone heard the gangsters were waiting at the hospital for him to get out so they could finish the job.
>
> The laborers in the neighborhood are overjoyed to see Blake again, and want him to stay and help rebuild the town. Zo looks at the traits on Blake's sheet: Company Bruiser, I Owe Old Finn Everything, The Manners of a Goat, and Smashing is Always an Option. Their read of those traits is that Blake is painfully rude, aggressive, solves problems with violence, and very loyal.
>
> There's not a chance in hell that Blake's going to stay and rebuild when he can bust Finn out of hospital. Not only that, he's going to lecture the able-bodied folks of the neighborhood and let them know what he thinks of letting an old man stand up for them on his own. He probably uses words like "spineless" and "ungrateful." He's not making any new friends today.
>
> Ace says that he pisses off the neighborhood so much that they're thinking about bouncing him from his own hometown. That's the compel: Blake's manners are going to get him kicked out of the Northbrook slum-burb. Zo takes it, accepting that complication. "Screw them anyway," they say. "I'll rescue Finn without their help!"

Removing or Changing a Trait

Game and character traits change through advancement. See the Milestones section in The Long Game for that.

If you want to get rid of a situation trait, you can do it in one of two ways: roll an overcome action specifically for the purpose of getting rid of the trait, or roll some other kind of action that would make the trait make no sense if you succeed. (For example, if you're Grappled, you could try to sprint away. If you succeed, it wouldn't make sense for you to be Grappled anymore, so you'd also get rid of that trait.)

If a character can interfere with your action, they get to roll active opposition against you as per normal. Otherwise, GMs, it's your job to set the dice pool of the challenge, pick a passive target difficulty, or just allow the player to get rid of the trait without a roll if there's nothing risky or interesting in the way.

Finally, if at any point it simply makes no sense for a situation trait to be in play, get rid of it.

Creating and Discovering
New Traits in Play

In addition to your character traits, game traits, and the situation traits that the GM presents, you have the ability to create, discover, or gain access to other traits as you play.

For the most part, you'll use the create an advantage ⊕ ⊗ action to make new traits. When you describe the action that gives you an advantage, the context should tell you if it requires a new trait or if it derives from an existing one. If you're bringing a new circumstance into play – like throwing sand in someone's eyes – you're indicating that you need a new situation trait.

With some skills, it's going to make more sense to stick an advantage to a trait that's already on some other character's sheet. In this case, the PC or NPC you're targeting would provide active opposition to keep you from being able to use that trait.

If you're not looking for a free invocation, and you just think it'd make sense if there were a particular situation trait in play, you don't need to roll the dice or anything to make new traits – just suggest them, and if the group thinks they're interesting, write them down.

> ## For the GM: Quick & Easy Storytelling Trick
>
> So, if you don't have any traits made up for a scene or an NPC, just ask the players what kinds of traits they're looking for when they roll to create an advantage. If they tie or succeed, just write down something similar to what they were looking for and say they were right. If they fail, write it down anyway, or write another trait down that's not advantageous to them, so as to contrast with their expectations.

Secret or Hidden Traits

Some skills also let you use the create an advantage ⊕ action to reveal traits that are hidden, either on NPCs or environments – in this case, the GM simply tells you what the trait is if you get a tie or better on the roll. You can use this to "fish" for traits if you're not precisely sure what to look for – doing well on the roll is sufficient justification for being able to find something advantage-worthy.

Generally speaking, we assume that most of the traits in play are public knowledge for the players. The PCs' character sheets are sitting on the table, and probably the main and supporting NPCs are as well. That doesn't always mean the characters know about those traits, but that's one of the reasons why the create an advantage ⊕ action exists – to help you justify how a character learns about other characters.

Also, remember that traits can help deepen the story only if you get to use them – traits that are never discovered might as well never have existed in the first place. So most of the time, the players should always know what traits are available for their use, and if there's a question as to whether or not the character knows, use the dice to help you decide.

Finally, GMs, we know that sometimes you're going to want to keep an NPC's traits secret, or not reveal certain situation traits right away, because you're trying to build tension in the story. If the PCs are investigating a series of murders, you don't exactly want the culprit to have Sociopathic Serial Murderer sitting on an index card for the PCs to see at the beginning of the adventure.

In those cases, we recommend you don't make a trait directly out of whatever fact you're trying to keep secret. Instead, make the trait a detail that makes sense in context after the secret is revealed.

> Ace is making an NPC who's secretly a mad scientist, a modern-day vampire dependent on blood transfusions from unwilling captives to live. He's also a high-ranking agent of the Computer here in Vacone, so they don't want to give things away too easily.
>
> Instead of making a Secretly a Vampire trait, she decides to make a few personal details instead: Bloodthirsty; Authority Figure; and Methodical, Exacting, Insane. If the PCs discover a couple of these, or see them on the table, they might start to suspect the NPC, but it's not going to ruin the mystery of the scenario right away.

Refresh

Each player gets a number of plot points to start each session off with. That amount is equal to the character's refresh rate. The refresh for a default starting character is three plot points, but you can opt to spend up to two of your refresh to buy additional feats.

You get additional refresh as your character achieves a major milestone (which we discuss in The Long Game), which you can spend on getting more feats or keep in order to increase your starting plot point total. You can never have less than one refresh.

You might end a session of play with more plot points than your refresh. If that happens, you don't lose the additional points when you start the next session, but you don't gain any either. At the start of a new scenario, you reset your plot points to your refresh rate no matter what.

Feats and Refresh

Three Feats = Refresh of 3

Four Feats = Refresh of 2

Five Feats = Refresh of 1

Spending Plot Points

You spend plot points in any of the following ways:

> Invoke a trait: Invoking a trait costs you one plot point, unless the invocation is free.

> Power a Feat: Some feats are very potent, and as such, cost a plot point in order to activate.

> Refuse a Compel: Once a compel is proposed, you can pay a plot point to avoid the complication associated with it.

> Declare a Story Detail: To add something to the narrative based on one of your traits, spend a plot point.

Earning Plot Points

You earn plot points in any of the following ways:

> Accept a Compel: You get a plot point when you agree to the complication associated with a compel. As we said above, this may sometimes happen retroactively if the circumstances warrant.

> Have Your Traits Invoked Against You: If someone pays a plot point to invoke a trait attached to your character, you gain their plot point at the end of the scene. This includes advantages created on your character, as well as consequences.

> Concede in a Conflict: You receive one plot point for conceding in a conflict, as well as an additional plot point for each consequence that you've received in that conflict. (This isn't the same as being taken out in a conflict, by the way, but we'll get into that later.)

The GM and Plot Points

GMs, you also get to use plot points, but the rules are a little bit different than the rules for players.

When you award players plot points for compels or concession, they come out of an unlimited pool you have for doing so – you don't have to worry about running out of plot points to award, and you always get to compel for free.

The NPCs under your control are not so lucky. They have a limited pool of plot points you get to use on their behalf. Whenever a scene starts, you get one plot point for every PC in that scene. You can use these points on behalf of any NPC you want, but you can get more in that scene if they take a compel, like PCs do.

You reset to your default total, one per PC, at the beginning of every scene.

There are two exceptions:

■ You accepted a compel that effectively ended the last scene or starts the next one. If that happens, take an extra plot point in the next scene.

■ You conceded a conflict to the PCs in the previous scene. If that happens, take the plot points you'd normally get for the concession into the next scene and add them to the default total.

If the immediate next scene doesn't present a significant interaction with NPCs, you can save these extra points until the next scene that does.

> Ace is running a climactic conflict, where the PCs are battling a nemesis they've been trying to subdue for several scenarios now. Here are the characters in the scene:
>
> > Dr. Sanford Guin, a main NPC
>
> > Security Chief Blatz, a supporting NPC
>
> > Slick Rob, a gangster hired to do Dr. Guin's dirty work, a supporting NPC
>
> > Two nameless NPC sergeants
>
> > Blake
>
> > Marco
>
> > Samantha
>
> Her total plot point pool for this scene is 3 plot points: one each for Blake, Marco, and Samantha. If Samantha had been elsewhere (say, doing some scientific research), Ace would've gotten two plot points, one for Blake and one for Marco.
>
> Late in the conflict, Dr. Guin is forced to concede so she can get away with his skin intact. He has taken two consequences in the conflict, meaning that he gets three plot points for conceding. Those three plot points carry over to the next scene.

ABILITIES, SKILLS, AND FEATS

Defining Abilities

The three abilities in Analogous are 'baseline' levels of competence for characters in physical, social, and mental challenges. Appropriately, they're called Physical, Social, and Mental. These abilities are the foundation of everything your character does in the game that involves challenge or chance (and dice).

Abilities are rated from 1 to 5 for characters. An average NPC will have ratings of 2 across the board. Player Characters are a cut above the rest, and between that exceptional aptitude and their training, will have the edge over your average nameless mook.

Special NPCs, legendary Player Characters, and creatures may have abilities outside of this. An elephant, for example, probably has a Physical ability beyond the boundaries of humans. Objects and groups may also have abilities. The easiest way to gauge if something has one or more abilities is to ask if it could roll dice for something or have dice rolled against it. A brick wall might have a Physical ability, but certainly not Mental or Social abilities.

Defining Skills

A skill is a word that describes a broad family of competency at something – such as Athletics, Fight, or Deceive – which your character might have gained through innate talent, training, or years of trial and error. While abilities represent a baseline of talent, your character's skills show focal areas in which they excel.

Skills are rated 0 to 5. The higher the rating, the better your character is at the skill. Taken together, your list of skills gives you a picture of that character's potential for action at a glance – what you're best at, what you're okay at, and what you're not so good at.

We define skills in two ways in Analogous – in terms of the game actions that you can do with them, and the context in which you can use them. There are only a handful of basic game actions, but the number of potential contexts is infinite.

There are also some special effects that some skills perform, such as giving you additional stress boxes for a conflict. See Physique and Will in the default skill list below for examples.

Even though there are only four actions that all skills adhere to, the skill in question lends context to the action. For example, both Burglary and Engineering allow you to create an advantage ⊕, but only under very different contexts – Burglary allows you to do it when you're casing a place you're about to break into, and Engineering allows you to do it when you're examining a piece of machinery. The different skills let you differentiate the PCs' abilities from one another a bit, allowing each person to have a unique contribution to the game.

Defining Feats

A feat is a special trait your character has that changes the way a skill works for you. Feats indicate some special, privileged way a character uses a skill that is unique to whoever has that feat, which is a pretty common trope in a lot of settings – special or elite training, exceptional talents, the mark of destiny, genetic alteration, innate coolness, and a myriad of other reasons all explain why some people get more out of their skills than others do.

Unlike skills, which are about the sort of things anyone can do in your campaign, feats are about individual characters. For that reason, the next several pages are about how to make your own feats, but we'll also have example feats listed under each skill in the Default Skill List.

Having feats in your game allows you to differentiate characters that have the same skills as one another.

Blake and Marco both have a high Fight skill, but Marco also has the Dirty Fighter feat, which makes him better at kicking an enemy when they're down. This differentiates the two characters a great deal – Marco has a unique capability to analyze and take advantage of his enemies' weaknesses in a way Blake doesn't.

One might imagine Marco starting a fight by testing an enemy with moves and jabs, carefully assessing her opponent's limits before moving in for a decisive strike, whereas Blake is happy to wade in brawling.

You can also use this to set apart a certain set of abilities as belonging to a dedicated few, if that's something your setting needs. For example, in a contemporary setting, you might feel that there shouldn't be a base skill that allows just anyone to have medical training. (Unless, of course, it's a game about doctors.) However, as a feat for another, more general knowledge skill (like Scholarship), you can have one character be "the doctor" if that's what the player wants.

The Basic Game Actions

We cover these in more detail in Actions and Outcomes, but here's a quick reference so that you don't have to flip all the way over there right now.

Overcome: True to its name, you tackle some kind of challenge, engaging task, or hindrance related to your skill.

Create an advantage: Whether you're discovering something that already exists about an opponent or creating a situation that helps you succeed, creating advantages allows you to discover and create traits, and lets you get free invocations of them.

Attack: You try to harm someone in a conflict. That harm may be physical, mental, emotional, or social in nature.

Defend: You try to keep someone from harming you, getting past you, or creating an advantage to use against you.

Feats

Building Feats

In Analogous, we allow players to take feats during character creation, or leave open the option to take feats during play. There are a number of example feats listed under each skill entry below. These are not a hard and fast list; rather, they're there to show you how to create your own (though you can certainly lift directly from the book if you'd like to).

We also have a list of all the things that feats can potentially do, to help you when you're coming up with them for your game. When in doubt, look at the listed feats for guidance, as well as those the example characters have.

GMs, if you have some particular set of abilities you want to reinforce as being important or unique to your game, you're going to want to create a list of feats that the players can reference during character creation. Usually, you'll do this as part of creating extras; see the Extras chapter for more details.

Feats and Refresh

Taking a new feat beyond the first three reduces your character's refresh rate by one.

The most basic option for a feat is to allow a skill to do something that it normally can't do. It adds a new action onto the base skill in certain situations, for those with this feat. This new action can be one that's available to another skill (allowing one skill to swap for another under certain circumstances), or one that's not available to any skill.

Here are some new action feats:

Backstab. You can use Stealth to make physical attacks, provided your target isn't already aware of your presence.

The Fight in the Dog. You can use Provoke to enter the kinds of contests that you'd normally need Physique for, in return for taking physical stress as you push yourself past the limits of your body.

You're Never Safe. You can use Burglary to make mental attacks and create advantages against a target, by staging events in such a way as to shatter their confidence in their security.

Just because you have a feat doesn't mean you always have to use it when it becomes relevant. Using a feat is always a choice, and you can opt not to use a feat if you don't think it would be appropriate or you just don't want to.

For example, you could have a feat that allows you to use Fight in place of Athletics when defending against thrown weapons and other missile attacks. Whenever you're attacked by a gunman, you can choose to use Fight, or you can simply use Athletics as anyone else would. It's entirely your choice.

Adding a Bonus to an Action

Another use for a feat is to give a skill an automatic bonus under a particular, very narrow circumstance, effectively letting a character specialize in something. The circumstance should be narrower than what the normal action allows, and only apply to one particular action or pair of actions.

The usual bonus is +2 dice to the dice pool. However, if you want, you can also express the bonus as a free shift on a successful action, if that makes more sense. Remember that a shift grants you additional effects to append to the success of an action.

You can also use this to establish any effect worth about one shift as an additional benefit of succeeding at the skill roll. This might be a target 1 passive opposition, the equivalent of 2 damage, a mild consequence, or an advantage that takes a difficulty 1 contest to remove.

Here are some examples of adding a bonus to an action:

■ Circuit Pro. Gain a +2 bonus to create an advantage ⊕ using Science whenever the situation has specifically to do with computing hardware.

■ Lead in the Air. You really like emptying magazines. Any time you're using a fully automatic weapon and you succeed at a Shoot attack, you automatically create a 3-dice contest against movement in that zone until your next turn, because of all the lead in the air. Normally, you'd need to take a separate action to set up this kind of interference, but with the feat, it's free.

■ Miss Manners' Acolyte. Gain a +2 bonus to any attempt to overcome obstacles with Rapport when you're at an aristocratic function, such as a night at the opera or a yacht regatta.

Players, when you're building feats that give an action bonus, look out for situations that seem like they'd only come up rarely in play. Like, the Circuit Pro feat above would be inappropriate if your game doesn't deal with technology a lot, and Miss Manners' Acolyte will be useless if your campaign doesn't deal with the upper crust on a fairly regular basis. If you don't think you'll use the feat at least once or twice in most of your game sessions, change the condition associated with the bonus.

GMs, it's on you to help the players make sure their feats see use – look at the conditions they choose here as a "laundry list" of stuff that you want to trend toward in your sessions.

Creating a Rules Exception

Finally, a feat can allow a skill to make a single exception, in a narrow circumstance, for any other game rule that doesn't precisely fit into the category of an action. The Challenges, Contests, and Conflicts chapter is full of different little rules about the circumstances under which a skill can be used and what happens when you use them. Feats can break those, allowing your character to stretch the boundaries of the possible.

The only limit to this is that a feat can't change any of the basic rules for traits in terms of invoking, compelling, and the plot point economy. Those always remain the same.

Here are some feats that create rules exceptions:

■ Academic. Use Scholarship in place of another skill during a challenge, allowing you to use Scholarship twice in the same challenge.

■ Hogtie. When you use Engineering to create a Hogtied (or similar) advantage on someone, you can always actively oppose any overcome rolls to escape the hogtie (also using Engineering), even if you're not there. Normally, if you weren't there, the escaping character would roll against the quality of the rope or knots, likely making it easier for them to escape.

■ Riposte. If you earn a shift on a Fight defense, you can choose to inflict a 2 damage on your attacker rather than taking a boost.

Balancing Feat Utility

If you look at most of the example feats, you'll notice that the circumstances under which you can use them are pretty narrow compared to the base skills they modify. That's the sweet spot you want to shoot for with your own feats: you want them to be limited enough in scope that it feels special when you use them, but not so narrow that you never see them come up after you take them.

If the feat effectively takes over all of the skill's base actions, it's not limited enough. You don't want a feat replacing the skill it modifies.

The two main ways to limit a feat are by keeping its effects to a specific action or pair of actions (only creating an advantage or only attack and defend rolls), or by limiting the situations in which you can use it (only when you're among foreigners, only when it deals with academia, and so on).

For the best results, use both: have the feat restricted to a specific action, which can only be used in a very specific in-game situation. If you're worried about the situation being too narrow, back up and think of the ways the skill might be used in play. If you can see the feat being relevant to one of those uses, you're probably on the right track. If you can't, you may need to adjust the feat a little to make sure it'll come up.

You can also restrict a feat by only allowing it to be used once in a certain period of game time, such as once per conflict, once per scene, or once per session.

Plot-Point-Powered Feats

Another way to restrict how often a feat comes into play is to have it cost a plot point to use. This is a good option if the desired feat effect is very powerful, or there doesn't seem to be a good way for you to change the wording of the feat to make it come up less often in play.

Our best advice for determining what really powerful means is that it either goes beyond the specified limits we gave above (so, if it adds a new action to a skill and a bonus), or significantly affects conflicts. Specifically, almost any feat that allows you to do extra stress in a conflict should cost a plot point to use.

Zo's considering a feat for Blake called "Hand Cannoneer." They want it to add two shifts to any successful Shoot attack when Blake wields his custom, oversized revolver.

Ace thinks it over. It fulfills all the criteria for limitations, but there's one problem: neither Ace nor Zo can envision very many situations where Blake wouldn't be using his favorite gun. So he'd basically be able to use that feat every time he attacked someone, which would replace the normal use of the Shoot skill. She decides that's too much, and asks him to modify the feat.

Zo thinks about it, and says, "Well, how about if it lets me do that whenever I'm fighting an agent of the Company with my pistol?"

Ace points out that the Company is more likely to use catspaws and stooges than send agents after the players, so it might be a while before Blake goes toe-to-toe with a genuine Company agent.

Zo agrees that it probably wouldn't come up often enough, and thinks some more.

Then it comes to them. "How about this… what if, when someone takes a mild consequence from an attack with the revolver, it's turned into a moderate consequence instead? Or if it's moderate it becomes severe? It would still take up the minor consequence slot."

Ace likes this, because it'll come up in nearly every conflict Blake gets into, but it won't be something they can take advantage of every exchange. Ace asks for a further restriction of one use per combat, and they call it done.

On Blake's sheet, Zo writes:

Hand Cannoneer. Once per combat when you shoot an opponent with your custom revolver and they take a consequence, you can upgrade that consequence's severity by one level.

Feat Families

If you want to get detailed about a particular kind of training or talent, you can create a feat family for it. This is a group of feats that are related to and chain off of each other somehow.

This allows you to create things like fighting styles or elite schools in your setting and represents the benefits of belonging to them. It also helps you get specific about what types of specialized competencies are available, if you want to give your game a sense of having distinct 'character classes' – so there might be an "Ace Pilot" or a "Cat Burglar" family of feats.

Creating a feat family is easy. You make one feat that serves as a prerequisite for all the others in the family, qualifying you to take further feats up the chain. Then, you need to create a handful of feats that are all related somehow to the prerequisite, either stacking the effects or branching out into another set of effects.

Stacking Effects

Perhaps the simplest way of handling a related feat is just making the original feat more effective in the same situation:

If the feat added an action, narrow it further and give the new action a bonus. Follow the same rules for adding a bonus – the circumstances in which it applies should be narrower than that of the base action.

If the feat gave a bonus to an action, give an additional +2 bonus to the same action or add an additional shift effect to that action.

If the feat made a rules exception, make it even more of an exception. This might be difficult depending on what the original exception is. (Don't worry, you have other options.)

Keep in mind that the upgraded feat effectively replaces the original. You can look at it as a single super-feat that costs two slots (and two refresh) for the price of being more powerful than other feats.

Here are some feats that stack:

■ Fencing Master. (requires Fencer.) When you're fighting anyone who is armed with a sword, you get a further +2 bonus to creating an advantage using Fencer.

■ Ettiquettician (requires Miss Manners' Devotee.) When you overcome an obstacle ◉ with Miss Manners' Devotee, you may additionally create a situation trait that describes how the general attitude turns in your favor. If anyone wants to try and get rid of this trait, they must overcome 3 dice of opposition.

■ Pedagogic Professional. (requires Academic.) You gain a +2 bonus when you use Scholarship in place of another skill during a challenge. This allows you to use Scholarship twice in the same challenge.

Branching Effects

When you branch, you create a new feat that relates to the original in terms of theme or subject matter, but provides a wholly new effect. If you look at stacking effects as expanding a feat or skill vertically, you can look at branching effects as expanding them laterally.

If your original feat added an action to a skill, a branching feat might add a different action to that skill, or it might provide a bonus to a different action the skill already has, or create a rules exception, etc. The mechanical effect isn't connected to the prerequisite feat at all, but provides a complementary bit of awesome.

This allows you to provide a few different paths to being awesome that follow from a single feat. You can use this to highlight different elements of a certain skill and help characters who are highly ranked in the same skill differentiate from each other by following different feat families.

As an example of how this works, let's take a look at the Deceive skill. If you look at the skill description, there are several avenues that we might enhance with feats: lying, sleight of hand and misdirection, disguise, creating cover stories, or social conflict.

So let's make our first feat something like this:

Fast Talk. You get a +2 to overcome obstacles with Deceive, provided you don't have to talk to the person you're trying to deceive for more than a few sentences before blowing past them.

Here are some potential options for branching off of that feat:

■ Quick Disguise. (requires Fast Talk.) You're able to put together a convincing disguise in a heartbeat, using items from your surroundings. You can roll Deceive to create a simple disguise without any time to prepare, in nearly any situation.

■ Instant Cover. (requires Fast Talk.) You can whip up a cover story like no one's business, even if you haven't made an effort to establish it beforehand. Any time you overcome an obstacle ⊛ in public using Deceive, automatically add a situation trait representing your cover story, and stick a free invocation on it.

■ Hey, What's That? (requires Fast Talk.) Gain a +2 bonus whenever you're using Deceive to momentarily distract someone, as long as part of the distraction involves saying something.

Every one of those feats thematically relates to very quick, spontaneous uses of Deceive, but they each have a different way to help you.

The Skill List

Here is the basic list of skills for you to use in your Analogous games, along with example feats tied to each. These should give you a good foundation from which to build your characters. If your game will explore different themes, locations, or social strata you may include additional skills and feats that support these in play, or eliminate those that won't be used.

Each skill description contains a list of game actions that you can use the skill for. This list is not necessarily exhaustive – see our guidelines for what to do with edge cases. The chart below shows the usual configuration of skills used to attack, defend, overcome obstacles, and create advantages.

Skill	Overcome	Create an Advantage	Attack	Defend
Athletics	✔	✔		✔
Burglary	✔	✔		
Contacts	✔	✔		
Deceive	✔	✔	✔	✔
Drive	✔	✔		
Empathy	✔	✔		✔
Engineering	✔	✔		
Expression	✔	✔		
Fight	✔	✔	✔	✔
Investigate	✔	✔		
Perception	✔	✔		
Physique	✔	✔		
Provoke	✔	✔	✔	
Rapport	✔	✔	✔	
Resources	✔	✔		
Scholarship	✔	✔		
Science	✔	✔		
Shoot	✔	✔	✔	
Stealth	✔	✔		
Will	✔	✔		✔

Skills and Gear

Some of the skills, like Shoot and Engineering, imply the need for gear. We presume by default that if you have a skill, you also have the tools you need to use it, and that the effectiveness of those tools is built into the skill result. If you want to make gear special, you'll want to look at the Extras chapter.

Athletics

The Athletics skill represents your character's level of physical fitness and coordination. It's how good you are at moving your body. As such, it is a popular choice for nearly any action-y character. Note that feats of strength or endurance rather than training and coordination are best covered by Physique instead.

Overcome 🜨: Athletics allows you to overcome any obstacle that requires physical movement – jumping, running, climbing, swimming, etc. If it resembles something you'd do in the decathlon, you roll Athletics. You use overcome actions with Athletics to move between zones in a conflict if there's a situation trait or other obstacle in your way. You also roll Athletics to chase or race in any contests or challenges that rely on these types of activities.

Create an advantage 🜨: When you're creating an advantage with Athletics, you're jumping to high ground, running faster than the opponent can keep up with, or performing dazzling acrobatic maneuvers in order to confound your foes.

Attack 🜨: Athletics is used for thrown weaponry or bows, both uncommon choices in Analogous.

Defend 🜨: Athletics is a catch-all skill to roll for defense in a physical conflict, against close-quarters and ranged attacks both. You can also use it to defend against characters trying to move past you, if you're in a position to physically interfere with whoever's making the attempt.

Athletics Feats

Sprinter. You move two zones for free in a conflict without rolling, instead of one, provided there are no situation traits restricting movement.

Parkour. +2 to overcome actions with Athletics if you are in a chase across rooftops or a similarly precarious environment.

Dodge and Move. When you succeed with style on a defend action against an opponent's Fight roll, you automatically counter with some sort of shove, trip, or other clever dodge to put them into a worse position in the fight. You get to attach the Unbalanced situation trait to your opponent with a free invocation, instead of just a boost.

Burglary

The Burglary skill covers your character's aptitude for stealing things and getting into places that are off-limits. That includes a proficiency with breaking-and-entering-related tools and technology, from glass-cutters and lockpicks to magnetic key copiers and alarm systems.

Overcome 🔍: As stated above, Burglary allows you to overcome any obstacle related to theft or infiltration. Bypassing locks and traps, pickpocketing and filching, covering your tracks, and other such activities all fall under the purview of this skill.

Create an advantage ⊕: You can case a location with Burglary, to determine how hard it will be to break into and what kind of security you're dealing with, as well as discover any vulnerabilities you might exploit. You can also examine the work of other burglars to determine how a particular heist was done and create or discover traits related to whatever evidence they may have left behind.

Attack 🜲: Burglary isn't used for attacks.

Defend 🌙: Same here. It's not really a combat skill, so there's not a lot of opportunity to use it to defend.

Burglary Feats

Escapist. +2 on Burglary rolls made to create an advantage whenever you're trying to escape from a location or restraint.

Security Specialist. You don't have to be present to provide active opposition to someone trying to overcome security measures you put in place or worked on. Normally the GM would roll those checks on your behalf, likely denying you the opportunity to use certain traits or feats.

Talk the Talk. You can use Burglary in place of Contacts whenever you're dealing specifically with other thieves and burglars.

Contacts

Contacts is the skill of knowing and making connections with people. It presumes proficiency with all means of networking from fancy parties to professional settings to navigating the underworld.

Overcome ⊚: You use Contacts to overcome any obstacle related to finding someone you need to find. Whether that's old-fashioned "man on the street" type of work, polling your information network, or searching archives and computer databases, you're able to hunt down people or somehow get access to them.

Create an advantage ⊕: Contacts allows you to know who the right person to talk to is for anything you might need, or to decide that you know the perfect person already. It's likely that you'll create story details with this skill, represented by traits. ("Hey, guys, my contacts tell me that Joe Steel is the Best Mechanic For A Thousand Miles – we should talk to him.")

You can also create an advantage that represents what the word on the street is about a particular individual, object, or location, based on what your contacts tell you. These traits almost always deal with reputation more than fact, such as Known as a Mean Guy or Notorious Swindler. Whether that person lives up to their reputation is anybody's guess, though that doesn't invalidate the trait – people often have misleading reputations that complicate their lives.

Contacts could also be used to create traits that represent using your information network to plant or acquire information.

Attack ⊗: Contacts isn't used for attacks; it's hard to harm someone simply by knowing people.

Defend ⊙: Contacts can be used to defend against people creating social advantages against you, provided your information network can be brought to bear in the situation. You might also use it to keep someone from using Deceive or Contacts to go "off the grid", or to interfere with Investigate attempts to find you.

Contacts Feats

Ear to the Ground. Whenever someone initiates a conflict against you in an area where you've built a network of contacts, you use Contacts instead of Perception to roll initiative in the first round, because you got tipped off in time.

Rumormonger. +2 to create an advantage ⊕ when you plant vicious rumors about someone else.

The Weight of Reputation. You can use Contacts instead of Provoke to create advantages based on the fear generated by the sinister reputation you've cultivated for yourself and all the shady associates you have. You should have an appropriate trait to pair with this feat.

Deceive

Deceive is the skill about lying to and misdirecting people. Lies of omission, white lies, or creating distractions are all covered by this skill.

Overcome 🎯: Use Deceive to bluff your way past someone, or to get someone to believe a lie, or to get something out of someone because they believe in one of your lies. For nameless NPCs, this is just an overcome roll, but for PCs or named NPCs, it requires a contest, and the target opposes with Empathy. Winning this contest could justify placing a situation trait on your target, if buying into your lie could help you in a future scene.

Deceive is also the skill you use for determining if a disguise works, whether on yourself or others. You'll need to have the time and supplies to create the desired effect.

You can also use Deceive to do small tricks of sleight-of-hand and misdirection.

Create an advantage ⚔: Use Deceive to create momentary distractions, cover stories, or false impressions. You could feint in a swordfight, putting an opponent Off-Balance and setting you up for an attack. You could do the whole, "What's that over there!" trick to give you a Head Start when you run away. You could establish a Wealthy Noble Cover Story for when you attend a royal ball. You could trick someone into revealing one of their traits or other information.

Attack ⚔: Deceive is an indirect skill that creates a lot of opportunities you can capitalize on, but is only used to 'attack' in mental conflicts where you're attempting to mislead and baffle your enemy.

Defend 🛡: You can use Deceive to throw off Investigation attempts with false information and to defend against efforts made to discern your true motives with the Empathy skill.

Deceive Feats

Lies upon Lies. +2 to create a Deceive advantage against someone who has believed one of your lies already during this session.

Mind Games. You can use Deceive in place of Provoke to make social and mental attacks, as long as you can make up a clever lie as part of the attack.

One Person, Many Faces. Whenever you meet someone new, you can spend a plot point to declare that you've met that person before, but under a different name and identity. Create a situation trait to represent your cover story, and you can use Deceive in place of Rapport whenever interacting with that person.

Social Skills and Other Characters

Many of the social skills have actions that let you change the emotional state of another character or make them accept some fact in the story (like believing one of your lies).

A successful use of a social skill does not confer the authority to force another character to act contrary to their nature or how the person controlling the character sees them. If another PC gets affected by one of your skills, the player gets input on how their character responds. They can't negate your victory, but they can choose what it looks like.

So, you may successfully Provoke by getting in their face and screaming at them, intending to scare them into hesitation and create an advantage ⚔. But if the other player doesn't imagine his character reacting that way, you should work out an alternative — maybe you make him so angry that he's unbalanced by his rage, or you embarrass him by making a spectacle around him in public.

As long as you get your advantage, you're fine. Use it as an opportunity to create story with other people, instead of shutting them down.

Drive

The Drive skill is all about operating vehicles and things that go fast: motorcycles, cars, and trucks.

Overcome 🎯: Drive is the equivalent of Athletics when you're in a vehicle – you use it to successfully accomplish movement in the face of difficult circumstances, like rough terrain, small amounts of clearance, or feat driving. Obviously, Drive is also ripe for contests, especially chases and races.

Create an advantage 🎯: You can use Drive to determine the best way to get somewhere in a vehicle, and a good enough roll might allow you to learn features of the route that get expressed as traits, or declare that you know a Convenient Shortcut or something similar.

Create an advantage 🎯: You can use Drive to determine the best way to get somewhere in a vehicle, and a good enough roll might allow you to learn features of the route that get expressed as traits, or declare that you know a Convenient Shortcut or something similar.

You can also just read the Athletics description, and then make it about a vehicle. Advantages created using Drive often revolve around getting good positioning, doing a fancy maneuver, or putting your opponent in a bad spot.

Attack 🎯: Drive isn't usually used as an attack skill (though feats can certainly alter this). If you want to ram a vehicle, you can attack with Drive, but you take the same damage you inflict.

Defend 🎯: Avoiding damage to a vehicle in a physical conflict is one of the most common uses of Drive. You can also use it to defend against advantages being created against you or overcome actions of someone trying to move past you in a vehicle.

Drive Feats

Captain. You can use your Drive skill to sail watercraft. Normally it applies only to land vehicles.

Hard to Shake. +2 to Drive whenever you're pursuing another vehicle in a chase scene.

Pedal to the Metal. You can coax more speed out of your vehicle than seems possible. Whenever you're engaged in any contest where speed is the primary factor (such as a chase or race of some kind) and you tie with your Drive roll, it's considered a success.

Pilot. You can use your Drive skill to pilot aircraft. Normally it applies only to land vehicles.

Ramming Speed! When ramming another vehicle, you ignore two shifts of damage. So if you ram and hit for four shifts, you only take two yourself.

Empathy

Empathy involves knowing and being able to spot changes in a person's mood or bearing. It's basically the emotional Perception skill.

Overcome ⬤ : You don't really use Empathy to overcome obstacles directly – normally, you find out some information with it, and then use another skill to act. In some cases, though, you might use Empathy like you would Perception, to see if you catch a change in someone's attitude or intent.

Create an advantage ⬤ : You can use Empathy to read a person's emotional state and get a general sense of who they are, presuming you have some kind of interpersonal contact with them. Most often, you'll use this to assess the traits on another character's sheet, but sometimes you'll also be able to create new traits, especially on NPCs. If the target has some reason to be aware that you're trying to read them, they can defend with Deceive or Rapport.

You can also use Empathy to discover what circumstances will allow you to make social or mental attacks on someone, figuring out their breaking points.

Attack ⬤ : Empathy can't really be used in this capacity.

Defend ⬤ : This is the skill to use in order to defend against Deceive actions, allowing you to pierce through lies and see through to someone's true intent. You can also use it to defend against those creating social advantages against you in general.

Special: Empathy is the main skill you use to help others recover from consequences that are social in nature.

Empathy Feats

Lie Whisperer. +2 to all Empathy rolls made to discern or discover lies, whether they're directed at you or someone else.

Nose for Trouble. You can use Empathy instead of Perception to determine your turn order in a conflict, provided you've gotten a chance to observe or speak to those involved for at least a few minutes beforehand during this scene.

Psychologist. Once per session you can reduce someone else's social or mental consequence by one level of severity (severe to moderate, moderate to mild, mild to nothing at all) by succeeding on a Empathy roll with a difficulty of 2 for a mild consequence, 3 for moderate, or 4 for severe. You need to talk with the person you're treating for at least half an hour in order for them to receive the benefits of this feat, and you can't use it on yourself. (Normally, this roll would only start the recovery process, instead of changing the consequence level.)

Engineering

Engineering is the skill of working with machinery, for good or ill. Despite the name it includes any kind of working with your hands, from repairing cars to constructing computer hardware. In fact, even carpentry and knitting would fall under Engineering, though they may be less likely to come up in a typical game.

Overcome 🔍: Engineering allows you to build, break, or fix machinery, presuming you have the time and tools you need. Often, actions with Engineering happen as one component of a more complex situation, making it a popular skill for challenges. For example, if you're just fixing a broken door, neither success nor failure is interesting; you should just succeed and move on. Now, if you're trying to get your car to start while a pack of guard dogs is hunting you...

Create an advantage ⊕: You can use Engineering to create traits representing features of a piece of machinery, pointing out useful features or strengths you can use to your advantage (Armor-Plated, Rugged Construction) or a vulnerability for you to exploit (Flaw in the Cross-Beam, Hasty Work).

Creating Engineering advantages can also take the form of quick and dirty sabotage or jerry-rigging on mechanical objects in the scene. For example, you might create a Makeshift Pulley to help you get to the platform above you or throw something into the machine gun that's firing on you to give it a Jammed Pivoting Joint and make it harder to hit you.

Attack 🌐: You probably won't use Engineering to attack in a conflict, unless the conflict is specifically about using machinery, like with siege weaponry. GMs and players, talk over the likelihood of this happening in your game if you have someone who is really interested in taking this skill. Usually, weapons you craft are likely to be used with other skills to attack, like Fight or Shoot.

Defend 🌙: As with attacking, Engineering doesn't defend, unless you're somehow using it as the skill to control a piece of machinery that you block with.

Engineering Feats

Always Making Useful Things. You don't ever have to spend a plot point to declare that you have the proper tools for a particular job using Engineering, even in extreme situations (like being imprisoned and separated from all your stuff). This source of opposition is just off the table.

Better than New! Whenever you succeed and earn a shift on an overcome action to repair a piece of machinery, you can immediately give it a new situation trait (with a free invocation) reflecting the improvements you've made instead of just a boost.

Hardware Technician. You have a knack for computer hardware. Computers you build or upgrade – a process taking at least a week of work – grant a +1 to their users or, if they act have a +1 to their own rolls and 1 additional box of stress above and beyond the normal.

Expression

Characters use Expression to put on artistic performances, impress a crowd, or create a work of art.

Overcome ⬚: You'll use Expression to address challenges where you need to communicate something without speaking to another person – that would be Rapport. Expression is, instead, about the way to show yourself to the world as a whole. When you need to make a great first impression on a big crowd, keep your cool in a high-stakes TV interview, or perform ballet before visiting dignitaries, you'll roll Expression.

Create an Advantage ⬚: Expression can be used flexibly to create an advantage in social circumstances by leveraging your poise, style, and presentation. You might use it at the start of a confrontation to Shock and Awe those around you before settling into a social conflict, for example.

Attack ⬚: You probably won't attack with Expression outside of something like a rap battle.

Defend ⬚: Characters that know how to express themselves also know how to conceal their frustration. Expression is used to defend against Provoke or Rapport in social confrontations.

Special: The Expression skill gives you additional Composure, or social stress boxes. An Expression rating of 2 or higher grants you an extra Composure box. A rating of 4 grants you one more. A 5 in Expression gives you the ability to take an additional mild social consequence before progressing to a moderate consequence.

Expression Feats

Art Critic. You can use Expression to learn about someone's traits, the same way you would normally use Empathy, if you can get access to a piece of art they've made (sculpture, a novel, a painting, a song they've written, etc.) for ten minutes or more.

Conversational Writer. You can use the Expression skill where you would normally use Rapport if your target is reading something you've written, such as a letter or poem.

Crowd Pleaser. When you use Expression to create a situational trait on a group or crowd you get a free invocation of that trait, or an extra free invocation if you already got one.

Fight

The Fight skill covers all forms of close-quarters combat, both unarmed and using weapons. For the ranged weapons counterpart, see Shoot.

Overcome ⊗: Since you don't really use Fight outside of a conflict, it's not often used to overcome obstacles. You might use it to display your fighting prowess in a demonstration, or to participate in some kind of regulated bout or sport fighting, which would allow you to use this skill in a contest.

Create an advantage ⊕: You'll probably use Fight for most of the advantages you create in a physical conflict. Any number of special moves can be covered with advantages: a targeted strike to stun, a "dirty move," disarming, and so on. You could even use Fight to assess another fighter's style, spotting weaknesses in his or her form that you can exploit.

Attack ⊕: This is self-explanatory. You make physical attacks with Fight. Remember, this is for close-in work, so you have to be in the same zone as your opponent.

Defend ⊗: You use Fight to defend against any other attack or create an advantage ⊕ attempt made with Fight, as well as pretty much any action where violently interposing yourself could prevent it from happening. You can't use this skill to defend against Shoot attacks.

Fight Feats

Dirty Fighter. When you use Fight to attack a target that's already suffering a consequence you earn a shift for every 2 hits over your target difficult you get rather than every 3.

Heavy Hitter. When you succeed with style on a Fight attack and choose to spend a shift to gain a boost, you gain a full situation trait with a free invocation instead.

Backup Weapon. Whenever someone's about to hit you with a Disarmed situation trait or something similar, spend a plot point to declare you have a backup weapon. Instead of a situation trait, your opponent gets a boost, representing the momentary distraction you suffer having to switch.

Killing Stroke. Once per scene, when you force an opponent to take a consequence, you can spend a plot point to increase the consequence's severity (so mild becomes moderate, moderate becomes severe). If your opponent was already going to take a severe consequence, he must either take a severe consequence *and* a second consequence or be taken out.

Investigate

Investigate is the skill you use to find things out. It's a counterpart to Perception – whereas Perception revolves around situational alertness and surface observation, Investigate revolves around concentrated effort and in-depth scrutiny.

Overcome ⟁: Investigate obstacles are all about information that's hard to uncover for some reason. Analyzing a crime scene for clues, searching a cluttered room for the item you need, even poring over a musty old tome to try and find the passage that makes everything make sense.

Racing against the clock to collect evidence before the cops show up or disaster occurs is a classic way to use Investigate in a challenge.

Create an advantage ⟁: Investigate is probably one of the most versatile skills you can use to create an advantage. As long as you're willing to take the time, you can find out just about anything about anyone, discover nearly any detail about a place or object, or otherwise make up traits about nearly anything in the game world that your character could reasonably unearth.

If that sounds broad, consider the following as just a few of the possibilities for using Investigate: eavesdropping on a conversation, looking for clues at a crime scene, examining records, verifying the truth of a piece of information, conducting surveillance, and researching a cover story.

Attack ⟁: Investigate isn't used to make attacks.

Defend ⟁: Same here.

Investigate Feats

Attention to Detail. You can use Investigate instead of Empathy to defend against Deceive attempts. What others discover through gut reactions and intuition, you learn through careful observation of micro-expressions.

Eavesdropper. On a successful Investigate roll to create an advantage by eavesdropping on a conversation, you can discover or create one additional trait (though this doesn't give you an extra free invocation).

The Power of Deduction. Once per scene you can spend a plot point (and a few minutes of observation) to make a special Investigate roll representing your potent deductive faculties. For each shift you make on this roll you discover or create a trait, on either the scene or the target of your observations, though you may only invoke one of them for free.

Perception

The Perception skill involves noticing things. It's a counterpart to Investigate, representing a character's overall awareness, ability to pick out details at a glance, and other powers of observation. Usually, when you use Perception, it's very quick compared to Investigate, so the kinds of details you get from it are more superficial, but you also don't have to expend as much effort to find them.

Overcome ⟁: You don't really use Perception to overcome obstacles too often but when you do it's used in a reactive way: noticing something in a scene, hearing a faint sound, spotting the concealed gun in that guy's waistband.

Note that this isn't license for GMs to call for Perception rolls left and right to see how generally observant the players' characters are; that's boring. Instead, call for Perception rolls when succeeding would result in something interesting happening and failing would result in something just as interesting.

Create an advantage ⟁: You use Perception to create traits based on direct observation – looking over a room for details that stand out, finding an escape route in a debris-filled building, noticing someone sticking out in a crowd, etc. When you're watching people, Perception can tell you what's going on with them externally; for internal changes, see Empathy. You might also use Perception to declare that your character spots something you can use to your advantage in a situation, such as a convenient Escape Route when you're trying to get out of a building, or a Subtle Weakness in the enemy's line of defense. For example, if you're in a barroom brawl you could make a Perception roll to say that you spot a puddle on the floor, right next to your opponent's feet that could cause him to slip.

Attack ⟁: Perception isn't really used for attacks.

Defend ⟁: You can use Perception to defend against any uses of Stealth to get the drop on you or ambush you, or to discover that you're being observed.

Perception Feats

Cold Read. You can use Perception in place of Empathy to learn the traits of a target through observation.

Danger Sense. You have an almost preternatural capacity for detecting danger. Your Perception skill works unimpeded by conditions like total concealment, darkness, or other sensory impairments in situations where someone or something intends to harm you.

Reactive Shot. You can use Perception instead of Shoot to make quick, reactive shots that don't involve a lot of aiming. However, because you're having a knee-jerk reaction, you're not allowed to concretely identify your target before using this feat. So, for example, you might be able to shoot at someone you see moving in the bushes with this feat, but you won't be able to tell if it's friend or foe before you pull the trigger. Choose carefully!

Physique

The Physique skill is a counterpart to Athletics, representing the character's physical aptitudes, such as raw strength and endurance.

Overcome ⊛: You can use Physique to overcome any obstacles that require the application of brute force – most often to overcome a situation trait on a zone – or any other physical impedance, like prison bars or locked gates. Of course, Physique is the classic skill for arm-wrestling matches and other contests of applied strength, as well as marathons or other endurance-based challenges.

Create an advantage ⊕: Physique has a lot of potential for advantages in physical conflict, usually related to grappling and holding someone in place, making them Pinned or Locked Down. You might also use it as a way of discovering physical impairments possessed by the target – grappling the old mercenary tells you that he has a Bum Leg or something.

Attack ⊜: Physique is not used to harm people directly – see the Fight skill for that.

Defend ☽: Though you don't generally use Physique to defend against attacks, you can use it to provide active opposition to someone else's movement, provided you're in a small enough space that you can effectively use your body to block access. You might also interpose something heavy and brace it to stop someone from getting through.

Special: The Physique skill gives you additional Health, or physical stress boxes. A Physique rating of 2 or higher grants you an extra Health box. A rating of 4 grants you one more. A 5 in Physique gives you the ability to take an additional mild physical consequence before progressing to a moderate consequence.

Physique Feats

Grappler. +2 to Physique rolls made to create advantages on an enemy by wrestling or grappling with them.

Take the Blow. You can use Physique to defend against Fight attacks made with fists or blunt instruments.

Tough as Nails. Once per session, at the cost of a plot point, you can reduce the severity of a physical consequence by one step, or eliminate a mild consequence altogether.

Provoke

Provoke is the skill about getting someone's dander up and eliciting negative emotional response from them – fear, anger, shame, etc. It's the "being a jerk" skill.

To use Provoke, you need some kind of justification. That could come entirely from situation, or because you have a trait that's appropriate, or because you've created an advantage with another skill (like Rapport or Deceive), or because you've assessed your target's traits (see Empathy).

This skill requires that your target can feel emotions – robots and zombies typically can't be provoked.

Overcome ⊚: You can Provoke someone into doing what you want in a fit of emotional pique. You might intimidate them for information, piss them off so badly that they act out, or scare them into running away. This will often happen when you're going up against nameless NPCs or it isn't worthwhile to play out the particulars. Against PCs or important NPCs, you'll need to win a contest. They oppose with Will.

Create an advantage ⊕: You can create advantages representing momentary emotional states, like Enraged, Shocked, or Hesitant. Your target opposes with Poise or Will, depending on the nature of the conflict.

Attack ⊛: You can make social attacks with Provoke, to do emotional harm to an opponent. You may also make Mental attacks, seeking to derail someone's focus. Your relationship with the target and the circumstances you're in figure a great deal into whether or not you can use this action.

Defend ⊚: Being good at provoking others doesn't make you better at avoiding it yourself. You need Poise or Will for that.

Provoke Feats

Armor of Fear. You can use Provoke to defend against Fight attacks, but only until the first time you're dealt damage in a conflict. You can make your opponents hesitate to attack, but when someone shows them that you're only human your advantage disappears.

Provoke Violence. When you create an advantage on an opponent using Provoke, you can use your free invocation to become the target of that character's next relevant action, drawing their attention away from another target.

Okay, Fine! You can use Provoke in place of Empathy to learn a target's traits, by bullying them until they reveal one to you. The target defends against this with Poise. (If the GM thinks the trait is particularly vulnerable to your hostile approach, you get a +2 bonus.)

Rapport

The Rapport skill is all about making positive connections to people and eliciting positive emotion. It's the skill of being liked and trusted.

Overcome 🏹 : Use Rapport to charm or inspire people to do what you want, or to establish a good connection with them. Charm your way past the guard, convince someone to take you into their confidence, or become the man of the hour at the local tavern. For nameless NPCs, this is just an overcome action, but you may have to enter a contest to sufficiently ingratiate yourself to a named NPC or PC.

Create an advantage ⊕ : Use Rapport to establish a positive mood on a target or in a scene or to get someone to confide in you out of a genuine sense of trust. You could pep talk someone into having Elevated Confidence, or stir a crowd into a Joyful Fervor, or simply make someone Talkative or Helpful.

Attack 🌐 : Rapport is used in social confrontations to bring someone around to your way of thinking. When you use it this way the social stress inflicted is from the difficulty they have resisting your charms.

Defend 🌙 : Rapport defends against any skill used to damage your reputation, sour a mood you've created, or make you look bad in front of other people. It does not, however, defend against mental attacks. That requires Will.

Rapport Feats

Best Foot Forward. Twice per session, you may upgrade a boost you receive with Rapport into a full situation trait with a free invocation.

Demagogue. +2 to Rapport when you're delivering an inspiring speech in front of a crowd. (If there are named NPCs or PCs in the scene, you may target them all simultaneously with one roll rather than dividing up your hits.)

Popular. If you're in an area where you're popular and well-liked, you can use Rapport in place of Contacts. You may be able to establish your popularity by spending a plot point to declare a story detail, or because of prior justification.

Resources

Resources describes your character's general level of material wealth in the game world and ability to apply it. This might not always reflect cash on hand, given the different ways you can represent wealth; it could be favors from well-connected friends and patrons, a line of credit from the local bank, rare art and antiquities, or anything of material value.

Overcome 👁: You can use Resources to get yourself out of or past any situation where throwing money at the problem will help, such as committing bribery or acquiring rare and expensive things. Challenges or contests might involve auctions or bidding wars.

Create an advantage ⊕: You might use Resources to grease the wheels and make people more friendly, whether that represents an actual bribe (I Scratch Your Back...) or simply buying drinks for people (In Vino Veritas). You can also use Resources to declare that you have something you need on hand, or can quickly acquire it, which could give you a trait representing the object.

Attack 🌀: Resources isn't used for attacks.

Defend 🌀: Resources isn't used to defend.

Resources Feats

Money Talks. You can use Resources instead of Rapport in any situation where ostentatious displays of material wealth might aid your cause.

Savvy Investor. You get an additional free invocation when you create advantages with Resources, provided that they describe a monetary return on an investment you made in a previous session. (In other words, you can't retroactively declare that you did it, but if it happened in the course of play, you get higher returns.)

Trust Fund Baby. Twice per session, you may take a boost representing a windfall or influx of cash.

Limiting Resources

If someone is using the Resources skill a bit too often, or you just want to represent how continually tapping into your source of wealth provides diminishing returns, you can try one of the following ideas:

Any time a character succeeds at a Resources roll, but doesn't earn a shift, give them a situation trait that reflects their temporary loss of wealth, like Thin Wallet or Strapped for Cash. If it happens again, just rename the trait as something worse: Strapped for Cash becomes Dead Broke, Dead Broke becomes Debt to Creditors. The trait is not a consequence, but it should make good compel fodder for characters who are shopping until they drop. It can go away if the character takes a break from spending cash, or at the end of the session.

Every time the character succeeds at a Resources roll, decrease the skill by one level for the remainder of that session. If they succeed at a Resources roll at Untrained (+0), they can no longer make any Resources rolls that session.

If you'd like to add a further level of detail to tracking material assets in your game, consider creating a new stress track: Wealth.

A character begins with one Wealth stress box, and gain another for each rank of Resources they have. When a character makes a sizeable purchase they roll their Wealth against the difficulty of the acquisition, taking a point of Wealth stress on a failure.

Consequences taken from Wealth stress almost always make other Wealth contests more difficult, representing the character stretching their resources. Some example consequences might be Strapped (a mild consequence that's invoked to impose a 2-die penalty to Wealth rolls), Flat Broke (a moderate consequence that deepens that penalty to 4 dice), or Deeply in Debt (a severe consequence that can be compelled to put pressure on that character, or perhaps used to turn a simple transaction into an embarrassing event that deals social stress).

Suggested costs of common purchases are shown below.

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1 die   - a knick-knack, some candy, a bus ticket
2 dice  - a decent meal, a haircut, a tank of gas
3 dice  - a tool, nice set of clothes, or commuter plane ticket
4 dice  - a weapon, a quality wrist-watch, a serious visit to the doctor
5 dice  - a used car, a luxury vacation
6 dice  - a new car, a semester's college tuition, a workshop
7 dice  - a small home in a small town, a luxury car, military hardware
8 dice  - a racecar, a personal yacht, a recognizable piece of art
9 dice  - a luxury home, a personal jet, a supercomputer
10 dice - a business
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Scholarship

The Scholarship skill is about knowledge and education. Scholarship relates to the humanities: history, classics, geography, civics, philosophy – anything that's not covered by the Science skill.

Overcome ⦿ : You can use Scholarship to overcome any obstacle that requires applying your character's knowledge to achieve a goal. For example, you might roll Scholarship to recall the historical enmity between two different towns in Southern France.

Frankly, you can use Scholarship as a go-to skill any time you need to know if your character can answer a difficult question, where some tension exists in not knowing the answer.

Create an advantage ⦿ : Like Investigate, Scholarship provides a lot of very flexible opportunities to create advantages, provided you can research the subject in question. More often than not, you'll be using Scholarship to get a story detail, some obscure bit of information that you uncover or know already, but if that information gives you an edge in a future scene, it might take the form of a trait. Likewise, you can use Scholarship to create advantages based on any subject matter your character might have studied, which gives you a fun way to add details to the setting.

Attack ⦿ : Scholarship isn't used in conflicts.

Defend ⦿ : Scholarship isn't used to defend.

Scholarship Feats

I've Read about That! You've read hundreds – maybe thousands – of books on a wide variety of topics. You can spend a plot point to use Scholarship in place of any other skill for one roll or exchange, provided you can justify having read about the action you're attempting.

Shield of Reason. You can use Scholarship as a defense against Provoke attempts, provided you can justify your ability to overcome your fear through rational thought and reason.

Specialist. Choose a field of specialization, such as geography, criminology, or literature. You get a +2 to all Scholarship rolls relating to that field of specialization.

Science

This skill covers a lot of ground, from pure mathematics to psychology, and everything in between: zoology, physics, biology, geology. Anything that doesn't fit under Scholarship is probably Science. This skill also covers working with computers, programming or otherwise.

Overcome 🔍 : You'll use Science to overcome in circumstances where your knowledge is tested. You might use Science to divine the functions of cutting-edge lab equipment, identify an exotic substance, or perform surgery.

Create an Advantage ⊕ : Where you can use your superior scientific knowledge to discover, recall, or suss out a trait you can likely create an advantage. That makes this a very flexible skill in this regard, like Investigation and Scholarship.

Attack 🌐 : Science is not suited to attack.

Defend 🌙 : Science typically won't be used to defend.

Science Feats

Physician. When you use Science to help a character heal from a physical consequence or reduce physical stress and you succeed you gain a free shift on the success.

Forensics. You can use Science rather than Investigation when attempting to uncover clues or unravel riddles that leave behind some physical evidence.

Specialist. Choose a field of specialization, such as chemistry, biology, or mathematics. You get a +2 to all Science rolls relating to that field of specialization.

Shoot

The counterpart to Fight, Shoot is the skill of using firearms, either in a conflict or on targets that don't actively resist your attempts to shoot them (like a bull's-eye or the broad side of a barn).

Overcome ⦿: Unless, for some reason, you need to demonstrate your Shoot ability in a non-conflict situation, you probably won't be using this skill for normal obstacles much. Obviously, contests involving Shoot are a popular staple of adventure fiction, and we recommend you look for the opportunity to have them if you have a character who specializes in this.

Create an advantage ✦: In physical conflicts, Shoot can be used to perform a wide variety of moves, like trick shots, keeping someone under heavy fire, and the like. In cinematic games, you might even be able to disarm people and pin their sleeves to walls – pretty much anything you've seen in an action movie. You could also make the argument for creating traits based on your knowledge of guns (like placing a Prone to Jams trait on an opponent's gun).

Attack ✦: This skill makes physical attacks. You can make them from up to two zones away, unlike with Fight. (Sometimes the range will change with the weapon.)

Defend ◐: Shoot is unique in that it doesn't really have a defense component to it – you'd use Athletics for that. You could use it to lay down some covering fire – which might act as a defense for your allies or provide opposition to someone else's movement – though it could just as easily be represented by creating an advantage (Covering Fire or Hail of Bullets, for example).

Shoot Feats

Called Shot. During a Shoot attack, spend a plot point and declare a specific condition you want to inflict on a target, like Shot in the Hand. If you succeed, you place that as a situation trait on them in addition to hitting them for stress.

Quick on the Draw. You can use Shoot instead of Perception to determine turn order in any combat where shooting quickly would be useful.

Uncanny Accuracy. Once per conflict, stack an additional free invocation on an advantage you've created to represent the time you take to aim or line up a shot (like In My Sights).

Stealth

The Stealth skill allows you to avoid detection, both when hiding in place and trying to move about unseen. It pairs well with the Burglary skill.

Overcome 🪶: You can use Stealth to get past any situation that primarily depends on you not being seen. Sneaking past cameras and security, hiding from a pursuer, avoiding leaving evidence as you pass through a place, and any other such uses all fall under the purview of Stealth.

Create an advantage 🎯: You'll mainly use Stealth to create traits on yourself, setting yourself in an ideal position for an attack or ambush in a conflict. That way, you can be Well-Hidden when the guards pass by and take advantage of that, or Hard to Pin Down if you're fighting in the dark.

Attack 🌐: Stealth isn't used to make attacks.

Defend 🛡: You can use this to foil Perception attempts to pinpoint you or seek you out, as well as to try to throw off the scent of an Investigate attempt from someone trying to track you.

Stealth Feats

Face in the Crowd. +2 to any Stealth roll to blend into a crowd. What a "crowd" means will depend on the environment – a subway station requires more people to be crowded than a small bar.

Instant Vanish. Once per scene, you can vanish while in plain sight by spending a plot point, using a smoke pellet or other mysterious technique. This places the Vanished boost on you. While you're vanished, no one can attack or create an advantage 🎯 on you until after they've succeeded at an overcome roll with Perception to suss out where you went (basically meaning they have to give up an exchange to try). This trait goes away as soon as you invoke it, or someone makes that overcome roll.

Slippery Target. Provided you're in darkness or shadow, you can use Stealth to defend against Shoot attacks from enemies that are at least one zone away.

Will

The Will skill represents your character's general level of mental fortitude, the same way that Physique represents your physical fortitude.

Overcome 🎯: You can use Will to pit yourself against obstacles that require mental effort. Puzzles and riddles can fall under this category, as well as any mentally absorbing task, like deciphering a code. Use Will when it's only a matter of time before you overcome the mental challenge, and Scholarship or Investigation if it takes something more than brute mental force to get past it. Many of the obstacles that you go up against with Will might be made part of challenges, to reflect the effort involved.

Contests of Will might reflect particularly challenging games, like chess, or competing in a hard set of exams.

Create an advantage 🌐: You can use Will to place traits on yourself, representing a state of deep concentration or focus.

Attack 🗡: Will isn't really used for attacks.

Defend 🛡: Will is the main skill you use to defend against mental attacks from skills like Provoke or Rapport in mental conflict, representing your ability to keep on topic and on target.

Special: The Will skill gives you additional boxes of Focus, or mental stress. A Will rating of 2 or higher grants you an extra Focus box. A rating of 4 grants you one more. A 5 in Will gives you the ability to take an additional mild mental consequence before progressing to a moderate consequence.

Will Feats

Strength From Determination. Use Will instead of Physique on any overcome rolls representing feats of strength. On a failure you take damage equal to the successes you rolled as your mind-over-matter philosophy collapses.

Hard Boiled. You can choose to ignore a mild or moderate consequence for the duration of the scene. It can't be compelled against you or invoked by your enemies. At the end of the scene it comes back worse, though; if it was a mild consequence it becomes a moderate consequence, and if it was already moderate, it becomes severe.

Cold Blooded. You can use Will instead of Expression to defend against Provoke attacks in social combat.

ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES

It's Time for Action!

You roll the dice when there's some kind of interesting opposition keeping you from achieving your goals. If there's no interesting opposition, you just accomplish whatever you say you're trying to do.

As we've said in prior chapters, characters in an Analogous game solve their problems proactively. Players, during the game you're going to do a lot – you might break into the bad guy's fortress, pilot a starship past a minefield, rally a group of people into a protest, or poll a network of informants to get the latest word on the street.

Whenever you take action, there's a good chance that something or someone is going to be in your way. It wouldn't be an interesting story if the bad guy just rolled over and handed you victory on a plate – clearly, he's got some crazy security measures to keep you out of his place. Or the mines are unstable and already blowing up around you. Or the protesters are really scared of the cops. Or someone's been bribing the informants to keep quiet.

That's when it's time to take out the dice.

Choose the character's **ability** and **skill** that are most appropriate to the action.

Roll a number of dice equal to that ability rating plus skill rating.

Any dice that come up 4, 5, or 6 are **hits**.

If you **invoke** a trait, add 2 hits to your result or reroll the dice.

> Marco needs to bribe his way past the guards keeping him from getting into the Company archives. Ace says they'll do this as a straight-up overcome action, because the guards are nameless NPCs anyway and not really worth a conflict.
>
> Huckleberry looks through Marco's skill list and picks Resources as his skill, hoping he can scrounge enough out of his wallet to satisfy them. Marco's Social rating is 3 and his Resources is 2, so he'll roll 5 dice for this contest.
>
> Huckleberry rolls and gets 1, 2, 2, 4, and 6. That's 2 hits on the roll.

The Dice Pool

When you're rolling dice, the total of the ability, skill, equipment, and other bonuses being rolled is the dice pool. The dice pool can't be smaller than 1 or larger than 10. If penalties would reduce the dice pool to zero, it fails automatically: there's no scenario in which you could succeed. If the dice pool would be larger than 10 dice, extras are instead converted into automatic successes. For every 2 dice over 10 you get 1 success (so 1 at 12 dice, 2 at 14, and so on).

Opposition

As we said in The Basics, whenever you roll the dice, you're comparing your roll to your opposition. Opposition is either active, meaning it's another person rolling dice against you, or passive, meaning that it's just a set rating on the ladder which represents the influence of the environment or situation you're in. GMs, it's your job to decide what the most reasonable source of opposition is.

> Ace rolls opposition against Huckleberry on behalf of the guards. They decide the most appropriate opposing skill is Will; they're trying to resist the temptation of bribery, after all.
>
> The guards are nameless NPCs with no reason to be particularly strong of will, so Ace gives them a Social ability of 2 and a Will of 1. They roll 3 dice and get 5, 5, and 6: a remarkable 3 successes on 3 dice!
>
> That beats Huckleberry's result by 1. Marco fails, but Ace decides that the more fun result of this is to have the security team let him into the archives… for five minutes. Marco gains the trait Pressed for Time, and Ace will use Marco's future rolls to gauge how long he takes. If he stays past his allotted time the rest of the security team will make an appearance.

Opposition does not count as an action for the opposing character; it's just a basic property of resolving actions. In other words, a player doesn't have to do anything special to earn the right to actively oppose an action, as long as the character is present and can interfere. If there's any doubt, having an appropriate situation trait helps justify why a character gets to actively oppose someone else.

For the GM: Active or Passive?

Analogous makes the assumption that every roll will be actively contested. Even if another character isn't presenting the opposition, the circumstances, situation, events, objectsm - whatever the Player Characters are pushing against is pushing back. This means a lot of rolls at the table and the potential of 'swingy' results where the GM's dice roll unexpectedly high or low.

If you want to eliminate some of this extra chaos or if the extra rolls are slowing gameplay down, switch to passive opposition. Passive opposition assumes that the GM's roll gets a perfectly average result: one hit per two dice, rounded down. This is slightly favorable to the players, of course, but it keeps the action moving.

Even when using passive opposition for most things at the table, consider keeping active opposition on the table for named NPCs and major rolls. The extra dice will add some drama, and you can let the players know "this is a nine-die task," while not giving away precisely the number they need to hit. They won't know until you roll, or until you reveal what you rolled in secret!

Outcomes

Every roll you make in an Analogous game results in one of three outcomes, generally speaking. The specifics may change a little depending on what kind of action you're taking, but all the game actions fit this general pattern. When you roll the dice, either you're going to fail, tie, or succeed. There's further nuance in the form of shifts on successes and failures.

Failure

If you roll fewer hits than your opposition, you fail.

This means one of several things: you don't get what you want, you get what you want at a cost, or you suffer some negative mechanical consequence. Sometimes, it means more than one of those. It's the GM's job to determine an appropriate cost.

Total Failure

When you fail by three or more hits you fail completely, and your opposition earns a shift for every three hits by which their roll exceeds yours. Those shifts become complications for you: you might suffer a minor or serious cost in addition to failing, or your opponent might get to place a trait with a free invocation on you for the exchange, or something similar.

Success

If you – the active participant in the contest – get more hits than the defender, you succeed.

You get what you want: you convince the bouncer to let you pass, you find the answer you were looking for in the library, you lose the car tailing you.

Total Success

Every three shifts over your opponent that you earn gets you a shift. If you earn at least one shift you not only succeed, you succeed completely. A total success. Success with style. A critical hit.

However you say it, succeeding with a shift means you not only met your goal but got some additional effect. This might be extra stress in a conflict, reducing the time to accomplish a task, or grant you a boost on your next action.

Tie

When your roll and the defender's tie you succeed to some lesser degree, or incur a minor cost in your success. This may resolve differently depending on the type of action, as noted below. Ties always go to the active participant rather than the defender.

Ties

When a character and their opposition score an equal number of hits in a contest you might find yourself asking who won. The rule is: when two or more participants in a contest get a tie, the winner is the active participant.

The active participant in any contest is whoever prompted the contest. If it occurred on someone's turn, that's probably them. Let's look at some examples:

In a combat exchange using Fight, one person rolls to throw a punch and one rolls to dodge it. The character punching is the active participant: if there's a tie, they hit their target.

A burglar attempts to pick a lock quietly, rolling a contest against the difficulty of the lock. The burglar is, of course, the active participant.

The local weather crew drives their van straight into the center of the freak tornado outside of town. The GM is treating the tornado as an entity and has it roll against the driver of the van as it pushes and shoves the vehicle. In this case the tornado is the active participant.

The easy way to identify the active participant is to ask "if this person succeeds, does the situation change or remain the same?" The active participant is always the one trying to change things while the defender retains the status quo. If the fighter misses their mark, the defender remains un-punched. If the burglar fails their contest, the lock remains locked. If the tornado fails, the van remains on the road.

For the GM: Costs

When you fail a contest, you're likely to incur a cost. The GM might decide that you can succeed at your initial goal, but suffer a minor cost. If you fail badly — a total failure — you might incur a major cost, or fail and wind up paying a cost as well.

When you're thinking about costs, think both about the story in play and the game mechanics to help you figure out what would be most appropriate.

A minor cost should add a story detail that's problematic or bad for the PC, but doesn't necessarily endanger progress. You could also ask the PC to take stress or give someone who opposes the PCs a boost.

It's okay if the minor cost is mainly a narrative detail, showing how the PC just barely scratched by. We give more advice about dealing with costs on in Running the Game.

A serious cost should make the current situation worse somehow, either by creating a new problem or exacerbating an existing one. Bring in another source of opposition in this scene or the next one (such as a new opposing NPC or an obstacle to overcome), or ask the player to take a consequence at their lowest free level, or give someone who opposes the PC an advantage with a free invocation.

For the GM: How Hard Should Contests Be?

For rolling against a character, you don't really need to worry about how hard the roll is - just use the NPC's skill level and roll the dice like the players do, letting the chips fall where they may. We have guidelines about NPC skill levels in Running the Game.

For non-character opposition, you have to decide what dice pool the player is going to be rolling against. It's more an art than a science, but we have some guidelines to help you.

Any contest rolling equal dice to the player has an even chance of success. An uneven dice pool favors the greater dice pool, obviously; for example, a pool of 4 dice has about a 24% chance to earn more successes than a 6-die pool. The table below shows the likelihood of a certain number of hits for a dice pool of a given size.

Number of Dice

% Likelihood of Successes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	50%	75%	88%	94%	97%	98%	99%	100%	100%	100%
2	-	25%	50%	69%	81%	89%	94%	96%	98%	99%
3	-	-	13%	31%	50%	66%	77%	86%	91%	95%
4	-	-	-	6%	19%	34%	30%	64%	74%	83%
5	-	-	-	-	3%	11%	23%	36%	50%	62%
6	-	-	-	-	-	2%	6%	14%	25%	38%
7	-	-	-	-	-	-	1%	4%	9%	17%
8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0%	2%	5%
9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0%	1%
10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0%

Using the average success of a dice pool can help you gauge an appropriate challenge. If you want a player to have about a one-in-three chance of meeting a challenge and they have 7 dice to roll, that means you're looking for a target number of hits between 4 and 5. That's 9 dice. Voila!

Remember that players are going to have access to boosts and traits to invoke frequently, giving them rerolls and bonus dice more often than not. Between that and the fact that a failed roll can still yield success with a cost, don't be afraid to set ambitious targets if it will be interesting.

Of course, if there's no call to make the contest especially difficult, don't. Most day-to-day challenges will be 2 or 3 dice, and give your players chances to show off and earn shifts.

The Four Outcomes

When you make a skill roll, you're taking one of four actions: overcome 🔍, create an advantage ✛, attack 🔆, or defend 🛡.

There are four types of actions you can take in a game of Analogous. When you make a skill roll, you have to decide which of these you're going to try. The skill descriptions tell you which actions are appropriate for that skill and under which circumstances. Usually, the action you need to take will be pretty obvious from the skill description, your intent, and the situation in play, but sometimes you might have to talk it over with the group to find out which is the most appropriate.

The four actions are: overcome, create advantage, attack, and defend.

🌑Overcome

Use the overcome action to achieve assorted goals appropriate to your skill.

Every skill has a certain niche of miscellaneous endeavors that fall under its purview, certain situations where it's an ideal choice. A character with Burglary tries to jimmy a window, a character with Empathy tries to calm the crowd, and a character with Engineering tries to fix the broken axle on his sedan after a desperate chase.

When your character's in one of these situations and there's something between her and her goals, you use the overcome action to deal with it. Look at it as the "catch-all" action for every skill – if it doesn't fall into any other category, it's probably an overcome action.

The opposition you have to beat might be a character working against you, or simply opposition based on the difficulty of your task.

■ Total failure when you roll overcome means you not only miss your mark, but suffer a serious cost or give the defender one or more free shifts to use.

■ When you fail an overcome action you don't achieve your goal or don't make progress. Your GM may allow you to accept a serious cost to succeed, allowing the story to progress while introducing complications.

■ If you tie the defense when attempting to overcome you accomplish your goal but suffer a minor cost as well.

■ When you succeed at an overcome action, you attain your goal without any cost.

■ When you succeed at an overcome action and earn a shift, you get a boost in addition to attaining your goal.

You may occasionally run into situations where it seems appropriate to provide a different benefit or penalty for a given action result than the one listed. It's okay to go back to the basic description of the four outcomes and sub in something that makes sense.

For example, on the overcome action it says you get a boost in addition to success when you succeed completely. But if that overcome roll is going to end the scene, or you can't think of a good boost, You may choose to offer a story detail as an extra benefit instead.

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**CHAPTER 4
ACTIONS AND
OUTCOMES**

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> Blake stalks around the siege tower of the Red Emperor's fortress, trying to sabotage the ballistas. If he succeeds, the army who hired him has a much better chance in the field when they attack tomorrow morning.
>
> Ace says, "Okay, so you make it to the top of the tower, and you start working. But then, you hear footsteps echoing below you in the tower. Sounds like the next guard patrol got here just a bit early."
>
> "Damn," Zo says. "Figures I'd get the one guard squad with real discipline. I need to disable these and get out! If they find me, General Ephon already told me he'd disavow my existence."
>
> Ace shrugs a bit and says, "Work fast? You're looking at passive opposition here – crunched for time, and dealing with intricate machinery bits, so I'll call that Great (+4)."
>
> Blake has the Engineering skill at Average (+1). Zo grumbles and says, "Should have convinced Samantha to do this." He rolls, getting a +2, for a Good (+3) result. Not good enough.
>
> Blake chips in a plot point and says, "Well, you know what I always say… Smashing Is Always an Option," referring to one of his traits. Ace chuckles and nods, and with the invocation, he manages a Superb (+5). That's enough to succeed, but not enough to succeed with style, so Blake accomplishes his objective at no cost.
>
> He describes how he hastily dismantles the ballista, applying rather violentsabotage before diving for a hiding spot as the guards get closer…

✛Create an Advantage

Use the create an advantage action to make a situation trait that gives you a benefit, or to claim a benefit from any trait you have access to.

The create an advantage action covers a broad range of endeavors, unified around the theme of using your skills to take advantage (hence the name) of the environment or situation you're in.

Sometimes, that means you're doing something to actively change your circumstances (like throwing sand in an opponent's eyes or setting something on fire), but it could also mean that you're discovering new information that helps you (like learning the weakness of a monster through research) or taking advantage of something you've previously observed (like your opponent's predisposition to a bad temper).

When you roll to create an advantage ✛, you must specify whether you're creating a new situation trait or taking advantage of a trait that's already in place. If the former, are you attaching that situation trait to a character or to the environment?

If your target is another character, their roll always counts as a defend action.

If you're using create an advantage ✛ to make a new trait...

■ When you fail completely, you either don't create the trait, or you create it but someone else gets the free invocation – whatever you end up doing works to someone else's advantage instead. That could be your opponent in a conflict, or any character who could tangibly benefit to your detriment. You may have to reword the trait to show that the other character benefits instead – work it out with the recipient in whichever way makes the most sense.

■ When you fail, you get a boost instead of the situation trait you were going for. This might mean you have to rename the trait a bit to reflect its temporary nature (Rough Terrain becomes Rocks on the Path).

■ If you tie you create a situation trait.

■ When you succeed, you create a situation trait with a free invocation.

■ When you earn shifts, you get an extra free invocation on that trait for every shift!

> While deep in the Caverns of Yarzuruk, Marco is in the unfortunate position of having to fight some animated temple golems.
>
> The first couple of exchanges have not gone well, and she's taken a couple of big hits already. Huckleberry says, "Ace, you said there was a lot of filigree and furnishings and stuff laying around, right?"
>
> Ace nods, and Huckleberry asks, "Can I knock some of it over in order to trip these guys up a bit? I imagine if they're big, clodhopping golems, they aren't as agile as I am."
>
> She says, "Sounds fine to me. Sounds like you're trying to create an advantage ✛ with Athletics. One of the golems gets to roll a defend action against you, just because it's close enough to get in your way."
>
> Marco has Athletics at Great (+4). Huckleberry rolls and gets a +1, for a Superb (+5) result. The nearest golem rolls to defend and only gets a Fair (+2). Marco succeeds with style! Huckleberry places the trait Cluttered Floor on the scene and notes that she can invoke that trait twice for free.
>
> Ace describes the golems' difficulty with their footing, and now Marco's got a little bit of an advantage in the coming exchange...

Discover an Advantage

If you're using create an advantage on an existing trait…

■ A total failure, which would normally create shifts for the defender, is treated like a failure and allows the GM to attach a minor cost to the action.

■ When you fail, you give a free invocation on that trait to someone else instead. That could be your opponent in a conflict, or any character who could tangibly benefit to your detriment.

■ When you tie or succeed, you place a free invocation on the trait.

■ If you earn shifts on a success you earn an additional free invocation for every shift. Nice!

> Samantha is approaching a local merchant he's been hired to get close to (i.e. spy on) for the sultan of Wanir, in the famous bazaar of Wanir's capital city.
>
> Eli says, "I'm going to use Rapport to create an advantage 🏵, get this guy to open up to me. I don't know what I'm looking for in terms of a trait; just some juicy observation I can use later or pass on to Marco." He has the Friendly Liar feat, so he can do this without needing Deceive, despite the fact that he's hiding his real intent.
>
> Ace says, "Works for me. He's a merchant, so his Deceive's pretty high. I'm going to say it's passive opposition, though, because he's not really suspicious of you. Try and beat a Great (+4)."
>
> Eli rolls. His Rapport skill is Good (+3), and he manages a +1 on the dice, for a tie.
>
> Ace looks at her notes, grins, and says, "Okay, here's what you notice. This merchant is obviously a very social fellow, boisterously engaging other shop owners and potential customers as he makes his rounds. This geniality takes on more of a flirtatious, suggestive air any time he speaks to young men - he can't seem to help that."
>
> She slides an index card with the trait Sucker for a Pretty Man written on it, to indicate that the merchant's trait is now public. Eli notes that he has a free invocation on that trait.
>
> "Pretty man, huh?" Eli says. "Does he think I'm pretty?"
>
> Ace grins. "He certainly thinks you're friendly."
>
> Eli rolls his eyes. "The things I do for business…"

🜨 Attack

Use the attack action to harm someone in a conflict or take them out of a scene.

The attack action is the most straightforward of the four actions – when you want to hurt someone in a conflict, it's an attack. An attack isn't always physical in nature; physical combats, mental contentions, and social confrontations all use the same rules to attack, defend, and account for stress and consequences.

Most of the time, your target will directly oppose your attack, rolling to defend themselves. Your GM might roll a static dice pool to oppose you if your opponent can't put up a fight (like, say, they're tied up), or the NPC isn't important enough to bother with dice.

The opposition to an attack action is always a defend action, so you can see the two actions being intertwined. This is true even if your table is using passive defense for the defender rather than rolling for them.

■ For a total failure on an attack you don't inflict any stress and instead suffer a minor cost.

■ When you fail at an attack, you don't cause any harm to your target. As per usual, your GM may allow you to turn a failure into a success – with no shifts – by accepting a complication. This is uncommon in conflicts, where every hit counts, but may allow the GM a way to let you take out nameless NPCs while creating interesting conditions.

■ When you tie the defense you don't hit and deal damage, but gain a boost.

■ When you succeed on an attack, you inflict one stress on your target.

■ Every shift you earn on the attack roll can be used to deal an extra point of stress. In combat some weapons will deal extra damage or allow you to trade your shifts for special effects rather than damage.

You'll find more information about stress and consequences shortly.

> Marco is locked in combat with Drisban, one of the famed Scarlet Twenty, the elite guard of Antharus. In her inimitable fashion, Marco attempts to slice him open with her flashing blade.
>
> Marco's Fight skill is at Good (+3). Drisban defends with his Fight at Great (+4). Huckleberry rolls and gets a +2, for a Superb (+5) attack.
>
> Ace rolls for Drisban and gets a 1, bringing his total to Good (+3). Huckleberry wins by two, inflicting a 2-shift hit.
>
> But she decides that isn't good enough. "I'm also invoking Infamous Girl With Sword," she says, "because for heaven's sake, this is what I do, and I'm not letting this punk off easy."
>
> Huckleberry chips in her plot point, making her final result Epic (+7). She gets 4 shifts and succeeds with style, cutting into him with a flourish. She chooses to inflict a 4-shift hit, but she could also have inflicted a 3-shift hit and taken a boost, if she'd wanted to.
>
> Now Drisban needs to use stress or consequences to stay in the fight!

🛡 Defend

Use the defend action to avoid an attack or prevent someone from creating an advantage against you.

Whenever someone attacks you in a conflict or tries to create an advantage on you, you always get a chance to defend. As with attacks, this isn't always about avoiding physical sources of danger – some of the skills allow you to defend against attempts to harm your mind or damage your ego.

■ A total failure on a defense roll means you take the hit and your attacker may deal extra damage or get some further bonus or benefit against you.

■ When you fail at a defense, you suffer the consequences of whatever you were trying to prevent. You might take a hit or have an advantage created on you.

■ When you tie a defense, you grant your opponent a boost.

■ When you succeed at a defense, you successfully avoid the attack or the attempt to gain an advantage on you.

■ When you succeed completely at a defense, it works like a normal success, but you also gain a boost as you turn the tables momentarily.

> Samantha is arguing a magical thesis before the council of the Collegia Arcana. But one of the adjutants on the council, an old rival named Vokus Skortch, has it in for Samantha. He wants not only to see Samantha fail, but to damage Samantha's self-confidence by forcing him to misstep and doubt himself. The group agrees that they know each other well enough that Skortch could affect him this way, so the conflict is on.
>
> As Samantha finishes his opening argument, Ace describes how Skortch uses Provoke as an attack, poking holes in Samantha's theories and forcing him to reevaluate. Skortch has a Provoke of Good (+3).
>
> Samantha defends with Will, which he has at Fair (+2). Ace rolls for Skortch and gets a +1, for a total of Great (+4). Eli rolls for Samantha and gets a +2, tying at Great (+4). Samantha doesn't have to deal with taking a hit, but he does grant Skortch a boost, which Ace decides to call Momentarily Tripped Up.

Can I Defend Against Overcome Actions?

Technically, no. The defend action is there to stop you from taking stress, consequences, or situation traits; basically, to protect you against all the bad stuff we represent with mechanics.

But! You can roll opposition if you're in the way of any action, as per the guidelines. So if someone's doing an overcome action that might fail because you're in the way, you should speak up and say, "Hey, I'm in the way!" and roll to oppose it. You don't get any extra benefits like the defend action gives you, but you also don't have to worry about the aforementioned bad stuff if you lose.

No Stacked Effects!

You'll notice that the defend action has outcomes that mirror some of the outcomes in attack and create an advantage. For example, it says that when you tie a defense, you grant your opponent a boost. Under attack, it says that when you tie, you receive a boost.

That doesn't mean the attacker gets two boosts: it's the same result, just from two different points of view. We just wrote it that way so that the results were consistent when you looked up the rule, regardless of what action you took.

CONTESTS, CHALLENGES, AND CONFLICTS

Zooming In on the Action

Most of the time, a single skill roll should be enough to decide how a particular situation in play resolves. You're not obligated to describe actions in a particular timeframe or level of detail when you use a skill. Therefore, you could use a single Athletics roll to find out whether you can safely navigate a rock face that will take days to climb, or use that same single skill roll to find out whether you can safely avoid a swiftly falling tree that's about to crush you.

Sometimes, however, you'll be in a situation where you're doing something really dramatic and interesting, like pivotal set pieces in a movie or a book. When that happens, it's a good idea to zoom in on the action and deal with it using multiple skill rolls, because the wide range of dice results will make things really dynamic and surprising. Most fight scenes fall into this category, but you can zoom in on anything that you consider sufficiently important – car chases, court trials, high-stakes poker games, and so on.

We have three ways for you to zoom in on the action in Analogous:

■ Contests, where a single roll will provide all the details you need

■ Challenges, when one or more characters try to achieve something dynamic or complicated

■ Conflicts, when two or more characters are trying to directly harm each other

Contests

A contest is a matched set of rolls, one against another, to see which side earns more hits. Every roll in Analogous is a contest, even if you're using the optional rule to represent some rolls as static numbers of hits.

The contest results described under Outcomes in Chapter 4 are the purest examples of contests: the direct results of a single action.

The scope of a contest will help you figure out the stakes of success or failure, and further to identify what kinds of costs and traits might result from total success or complete failure.

> Samantha has been felled in a battle with a shadowy group of assassins who ambushed him and Marco just outside of town! Marco finishes off the last of them, ending the conflict, then starts toward her fallen friend.
>
> That's when the assassins' leader, a cutpurse she knows well as Teran the Swift, blinks in with teleportation magic next to Samantha's unconscious form! He starts casting another teleportation spell, clearly intending to leave with Samantha. Marco breaks into a run. Can she get there before Teran finishes his spell?
>
> Ace looks through the questions for setting up the contest.
>
> The previous conflict scene had a situation trait of Muddy Ground, so she decides to keep that in play.
>
> Clearly, Teran and Marco are directly opposing each other, so they'll be providing active opposition.
>
> Teran's going to be rolling his Scholarship skill for the contest, because he's casting a spell. Because this is a pretty straightforward movement-related situation for Marco, Ace and Huckleberry agree that Athletics is the most appropriate skill to roll.

Attacks in a Contest

If someone tries to attack in a contest, then they're doing direct harm, and it ceases to be a contest. You should immediately stop what you're doing and start setting up for a conflict instead.

Extended Contests

Whenever two or more characters have mutually exclusive goals, but they aren't trying to harm each other directly, they're in a contest. Arm wrestling matches, races or other sports competitions, and public debates are all good examples of contests. If the struggle is going to take a while with chances to take and lose the lead, it's an extended contest.

GMs, answer the following questions when you're setting up an extended contest:

What are the "sides"? Is every character in the contest in it for herself, or are there groups of people opposing other groups? If you have multiple characters on a side, they roll together using the Teamwork rules.

What environment does the contest take place in? Are there any significant or notable features of that environment you want to define as situation traits?

How are the participants opposing each other? Are they rolling against each other directly (like in a straight sprint race or a poker match), or are they trying to overcome something in the environment (like an obstacle course or a panel of judges)?

What skills are appropriate for this contest? Does everyone have to roll the same one, or do several apply?

Now you can get started.

An extended contest proceeds in a series of exchanges. In an exchange, every participant gets to make one skill roll to determine how well they do in that leg of the contest. This is basically an overcome action.

Players, when you make a contest roll, compare your result to everyone else's.

If you got the highest result, you win the exchange. If you're rolling directly against the other participants, then that means you got the most hits out of everyone. If you're all rolling against something in the environment, it means you got the most shifts out of everyone.

Winning the exchange means you score a victory (which you can just represent with a tally mark or check mark on scratch paper) and describe how you take the lead.

If you succeed with a shift and no one else does, then you get to mark two victories.

If there's a tie for the highest result, no one gets a victory, and an unexpected twist occurs. This could mean several things depending on the situation: the terrain or environment shifts somehow, the parameters of the contest change, or an unanticipated variable shows up and affects all the participants. GMs, you should create a new situation trait reflecting this change.

The first participant to achieve three victories wins the contest.

Marco has Athletics at Great (+4). Teran has Scholarship at Good (+3).

In the first exchange, Huckleberry rolls poorly for Marco and ends up with an Average (+1). Ace rolls a 0 on the dice and stays at Good (+3). Ace wins, so Teran wins the exchange and takes 1 victory. Ace describes Teran completing the first major rune of the spell, raising a lambent green glow into the air.

In the second exchange, Huckleberry turns the tables, rolling exceptionally well and getting a Superb (+5), whereas Ace only gets a Fair (+2) for Teran. That's a success with style, so Huckleberry picks up two victories and the lead. Huckleberry describes Marco in a full-on sprint, bearing down on Teran.

In the third exchange, they tie at Good (+3)! Ace now has to introduce an unexpected twist into the contest. She thinks about it for a moment, and says, "Okay, so it looks like some of the various magical reagents on Samantha's belt pouch are reacting weirdly with the magic of Teran's spell, throwing Magical Distortions into the air." She writes down that situation trait on an index card and puts it on the table.

In the fourth exchange, they tie again, this time at Great (+4). Huckleberry says, "Forget this noise. I want to invoke two traits: one, because I have I've Got Samantha's Back on my sheet, and Magical Distortions, because I figure that they're going to interfere more with his spellcasting than my running." She passes Ace two plot points.

That puts her final result at Legendary (+8), another success with style and another two victories. That gives her four victories to Teran's one, and she wins the exchange and the contest!

Ace and Huckleberry describe how she snatches Samantha just before Teran finishes his spell, and he teleports away without his prize.

Creating Advantages in an Extended Contest

During any exchange, you can try to create an advantage ⊕ before you make your contest roll. If you're targeting another participant, they get to defend normally. If someone can interfere with your attempt, they provide active opposition as normal.

Doing this carries an additional risk: failing to create an advantage means you forfeit your contest roll, which means there's no way you can make progress in the current exchange. If you at least tie, you get to make your contest roll normally.

If you're providing a bonus via the Teamwork rules, failing to create an advantage means the lead character doesn't benefit from your help this exchange.

Marco tries to throw mud in the eyes of Teran the Swift as she's running to save Samantha. Huckleberry says she wants to create an advantage ⊕, with Teran as her target and a new trait called Mud in the Eyes. (Imaginative, we know.)

She rolls Athletics to create the advantage and gets a Great (+4). Teran rolls Athletics to defend and gets a Good (+3).

Teran gets mud in his eyes as Marco intended, and Huckleberry marks that she has a free invocation on it.

Because Huckleberry didn't fail, she gets to make her contest roll normally. Ace decides that being semi-blinded isn't going to stop Teran from continuing to cast, so he also gets to roll normally.

Challenges

A single overcome action is sufficient to deal with a straightforward goal or obstacle – the hero needs to pick this lock, disarm this bomb, sift out a vital piece of information, and so on. It's also useful when the details of how something gets done aren't important or worth spending an intense amount of time on, when what you need to know is whether the character can get something done without any setbacks or costs.

Sometimes, however, things get complicated. It's not enough to pick the lock, because you also have to hold off the hordes of attacking robots and set up the booby traps that will keep pursuers off your back. It's not enough to disarm the bomb, because you also have to land the crashing blimp and keep the unconscious scientist you're rescuing from getting hurt in said landing.

A challenge is a series of overcome actions that you use to resolve an especially complicated or dynamic situation. Each overcome action uses a different skill to deal with one task or part of the situation, and you take the individual results as a whole to figure out how the situation resolves.

GMs, when you're trying to figure out if it's appropriate to call for a challenge, ask yourself the following questions:

Is each separate task something that can generate tension and drama independently of the other tasks? If all the tasks are really part of the same overall goal, like "detaching the detonator," "stopping the timer", and "disposing of the explosive material" when you're disarming a bomb, then that should be one overcome action, where you use those details to explain what happened if the roll goes wrong.

Does the situation require different skills to deal with? Holding off the robots (Fight) while pushing down a barricade (Physique) and fixing your broken motorcycle (Engineering) so that you can get away would be a good instance for a challenge.

To set up a challenge, simply identify the individual tasks or goals that make up the situation, and treat each one as a separate overcome roll. (Sometimes, only a certain sequence for the rolls will make sense to you; that's okay too.) Depending on the situation, one character may be required to make several rolls, or multiple characters may be able to participate.

Your challenge might occur across the span of scene, taking it from start to finish in the order of the rolls with each determining the conditions of the next. You may also see several challenges in a single scene, with moments of action interspersed with narration.

> Samantha is attempting to finish the consecration ritual of the Qirik in order to sanctify the ground of the roadside inn and grant it the protection of the Qirik gods. Normally, this wouldn't be too interesting, except that he's trying to get it done before a horde of slavering, flesh-hungry zombies he unwittingly set free earlier in the adventure overruns the inn.
>
> Ace sees several different components to this scene. First there's the ritual itself, then there's keeping the inn boarded up, and finally there's keeping the panicking inhabitants of the inn calm. That calls for Scholarship, Engineering, and some kind of social skill. Eli immediately chooses Rapport.
>
> Thus, Eli will be rolling all three of those skills separately, one for each component Ace identified. She sets the opposition for each of these at Good (+3). she wants him to have even chances, while leaving room for a variable outcome.
>
> Now they're ready to start.

Attacks in a Challenge

Challenges are meant to represent the difficulties of accomplishing a task without someone directly causing you harm. If you're in a situation where it seems reasonable to roll an attack, you should start setting up for a conflict.

To conduct a challenge, call for each overcome action in whichever order seems most interesting, but don't decide anything about how the situation turns out until after you've collected all the results – you want to have the freedom to sequence the events of each roll in the order that makes the most sense and is the most entertaining. Players, if you get a boost on one of your rolls, feel free to use it on another roll in the challenge, provided you can justify it.

GMs, after the rolls have been made, you'll consider the successes, failures, and costs of each action as you interpret how the scene proceeds. It could be that the results lead you into another challenge, a contest, or even a conflict.

If you have any boosts that went unused in the challenge, feel free to keep them for the rest of this scene or whatever scene you're transitioning to, if the events of the challenge connect directly to the next scene.

Advantages in a Challenge

You can try to create an advantage during a challenge, for yourself or to help someone else out. Creating an advantage doesn't count towards completing one of the challenge goals, but failing the roll could create a cost or problem that negatively impacts one of the other goals. Be careful using this tactic; advantages can help complete tasks more effectively and create momentum, but trying to create them is not without risk.

Eli takes a deep breath and says, "All right, let's do this." He takes up the dice.

He decides to tackle securing the inn first, so he rolls his Good (+3) Engineering skill and gets a 0 on the dice. That ties the roll, allowing him to achieve the goal at a minor cost. Ace says, "I'm going to say that I get a boost called Hasty Work to use against you if I need it – you are working fast, after all."

Eli sighs and nods, and then goes for the second goal in the challenge, which is calming the locals with his Good (+3) Rapport. He makes his roll and gets a terrible 3 on the dice! Now he has the option to fail or to succeed with a major cost. He goes for success, leaving Ace to think of a good major cost.

She thinks a moment. How to make calming the villagers costly? Then she grins. "So, this is a story thing more than a mechanics thing, but you know, you're using Rapport, so you're probably being pretty inspirational right now. I could see you inadvertently convincing some of these farmers and peasants that those zombies are no real threat, and that they totally can go out and fight with little consequence. Because your magic is keeping them safe, right?"

Eli says, "But they have to be in the inn for that to work!" Ace is just grinning. Eli sighs again. "Okay, fine. Some people get totally the wrong idea and are potentially going to get themselves killed. I can just hear them now, "Samantha, why did you let my husband die? Augh."

Ace grins some more.

Eli goes for the final part of the challenge: the ritual itself, cast with his Great (+4) Scholarship. Ace invokes the boost she got earlier and says, "Yeah, you totally have very distracting zombies chipping apart your barricades. Very distracting." That pushes the difficulty for the final roll up to Superb (+5).

He rolls a +2 and gets a Fantastic (+6), enough to succeed with no cost.

Ace nods and together they finish describing the scene: Samantha finishes the ritual just in time, and the holy power of the Qirik descends on the inn. Some zombies on the verge of breaking in get sizzled by the holy aura, and Samantha breathes a sigh of relief… until he hears the panicked screams of villagers outside the inn.

But that's next scene.

Conflicts

In a conflict, characters are actively trying to harm one another. It could be a fist fight, a shootout, or a sword duel. It could also be a tough interrogation, a psychic assault, or a shouting match with a loved one. As long as the characters involved have both the intent and the ability to harm one another, then you're in a conflict scene.

Setting up a Conflict

Setting up a conflict is a little more involved than setting up contests or challenges. Here are the steps:

1. Set the scene, describing the environment the conflict takes place in, creating situation traits and zones, and establishing who's participating and what side they're on.

2. Roll initiative to determine turn order.

3. Start the first exchange:

    a. Each character declares their intended actions from the lowest initiative to the highest.

    b. Those actions are then resolved from top to bottom.

    c. On other people's turns, they defend or respond to actions as necessary.

    d. Reduce everyone's initiative by the speed of their actions.

4. When everyone's acted go back to step 3 as long as someone has an initiative over 0

5. If nobody has an initiative over 0, go to step 2 and continue

You know the conflict is over when everyone on one of the sides has conceded or been taken out.

Combats, Confrontations, & Contentions

Conflicts can be mental, social, or physical. A physical conflict is a combat; a mental conflict is a contention; and a social conflict is a confrontation.

The kind of stress you take in a conflict depends on the nature of the conflict: Focus in a mental conflict, Composure in a social conflict, and Health in a physical conflict, as you might expect.

The same is true of consequences. When you take a consequence in combat it might be something like "Gut Shot" or "Dislocated Shoulder," while mental consequences might be things like "Frazzled," or "Nervous Break," and social consequences will look like "Shame-faced" or "Ranting and Raving."

No matter the nature of the conflict, we'll follow the same steps and use the same rules to resolve exchanges. Differences   like what skills are used and the like   are called out in the text.

Setting the Scene

GMs and players, you should talk briefly before you start a conflict about the circumstances of the scene. This mainly involves coming up with quick answers to variations of the four W-questions, such as:

- Who's in the conflict?
- Where are they positioned relative to one another?
- When is the conflict taking place? Is that important?
- What's the environment like?

You don't need an exhaustive amount of detail here, like precise measures of distance or anything like that. Just resolve enough to make it clear for everyone what's going on.

GMs, you're going to take this information and create situation traits to help further define the arena of conflict.

> Blake, Samantha, and Marco are breaking into a dockside warehouse in order to find smuggled goods on behalf of their latest employer. Unfortunately, someone tipped the smuggler off. Now Og, one of his thug lieutenants, is at the warehouse waiting for them to show up, and he brought along four friends.
>
> The participants in the conflict are pretty obvious: the PCs, plus Og and four nameless enforcers, all NPCs under Ace's control. The warehouse is the environment, and the group takes a moment to talk about it. Boxes and crates everywhere, large and open, there's probably a second floor, and Ace mentions the loading door is open because they're waiting for a ship to come in.

Situation Traits

GMs, when you're setting the scene, keep an eye out for fun-sounding features of the environment to make into situation traits, especially if you think someone might be able to take advantage of them in an interesting way in a conflict. Don't overload it – find three to five evocative things about your conflict location and make them into traits.

Good options for situation traits include:

- Anything regarding the general mood, weather, or lighting – dark or badly lit, storming, creepy, crumbling, blindingly bright, etc.
- Anything that might affect or restrict movement – filthy, mud everywhere, slippery, rough, etc.
- Things to hide behind – vehicles, obstructions, large furniture, etc.
- Things you can knock over, wreck, or use as improvised weapons – bookshelves, statues, etc.
- Things that are flammable

Considering our warehouse again, Ace thinks about what might make good situation traits.

She decides that there are enough crates in here to make free movement a potential problem, so she picks Heavy Crates and Cramped as traits. The loading door is open, which means that there's a large dock with water in it, so she also picks Open to the Water as a situation trait, figuring that someone might try to knock someone in.

As the scene unfolds, players might suggest features of the environment that are perfect as traits. If the GM described the scene as being poorly lit, a player should be able to invoke the Shadows to help on a Stealth roll even if she hadn't previously established it as a trait. If the feature would require some intervention on the part of the characters in the scene to become trait-worthy, then that's the purview of the create an advantage ⊕ action. Usually the barn doesn't catch On Fire! without someone kicking over the lantern. Usually.

Situation Traits & Zones in Social and Mental Conflicts

In a non-physical conflict, it might not always make sense to use situation traits and zones to describe a physical space. It'd make sense in an interrogation, for example, where the physical features of the space create fear, but not in a really violent argument with a loved one. Also, when people are trying to hurt each other emotionally, usually they're using their target's own weaknesses against them - in other words, their own traits.

So, you may not even need situation traits or zones for a lot of mental conflicts. Don't feel obligated to include them.

Zones

GMs, if your conflict takes place over a large area, you may want to break it down into zones for easier reference.

A zone is an abstract representation of physical space. The best definition of a zone is that it's close enough that you can interact directly with someone (in other words, walk up to and punch them in the face).

Generally speaking, a conflict should rarely involve more than a handful of zones. Two to four is probably sufficient, save for really big conflicts. This isn't a miniatures board game – zones should give a tactile sense of the environment, but at the point where you need something more than a cocktail napkin to lay it out, you're getting too complicated.

If you can describe the area as bigger than a house, you can probably divide it into two or more zones – think of a cathedral or a shopping center parking lot.

If it's separated by stairs, a ladder, a fence, or a wall, it could be divided zones, like two floors of a house.

"Above X" and "below X" can be different zones, especially if moving between them takes some doing – think of the airspace around something large, like a blimp.

When you're setting up your zones, note any situation traits that could make moving between those zones problematic. They'll be important later, when people want to move from zone to zone. If that means you need more situation traits, add them now.

> Ace decides the warehouse needs to be multiple zones. The main floor is big enough, in her mind, for two zones, and the Heavy Crates she mentioned earlier make it hard to freely move between them.
>
> She knows there's also a second floor ringing the inner walls, so she makes that an additional zone. She adds Ladder Access Only to the scene.
>
> If, for some reason, someone decides to run outside, she figures that can be a fourth zone, but she doesn't think she needs any traits for it.
>
> She sketches the rough map on an index card for everyone to see.
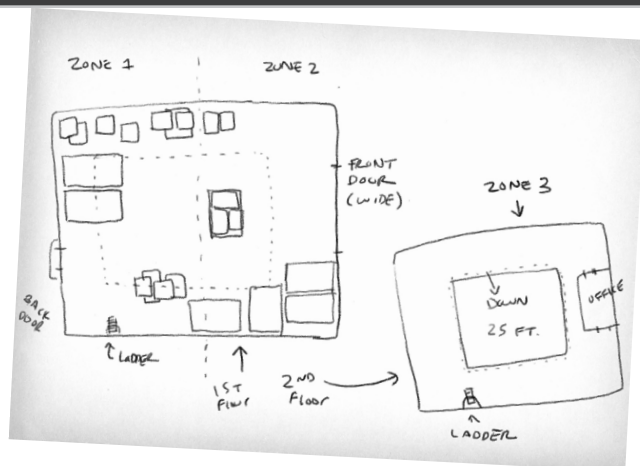
Establishing Sides

It's important to know everyone's goal in a conflict before you start. People fight for a reason, and if they're willing to do harm, it's usually an urgent reason.

The normal assumption is that the player characters are on one side, fighting against NPCs who are in opposition. It doesn't always have to be that way, however – PCs can fight each other and be allied with NPCs against each other.

Make sure everyone agrees on the general goals of each side, who's on which side, and where everyone is situated in the scene (like who's occupying which zone) when the conflict begins.

It might also help, GMs, to decide how those groups are going to "divvy up" to face one another – is one character going to get mobbed by the bad guy's henchmen, or is the opposition going to spread itself around equally among the PCs? You might change your mind once the action starts, but if you have a basic idea, it gives you a good starting point to work from.

> In our continuing warehouse fight example, the sides are obvious: Og and his buddies want to do in the PCs, and the PCs want to keep that from happening.
>
> Eli asks Ace about finding the smuggled goods, and Ace replies, "If you think you can sneak in a moment during the fight to look for them, go for it. We'll see what happens."
>
> The conflict starts with everyone on the main warehouse floor.
>
> Marco has a Perception of Good (+3), higher than everyone else, so she goes first.
>
> Samantha has a Perception of Average (+1), so he goes second.
>
> Blake and Og both lack the Perception skill. Blake has Athletics at Good (+3), and Og has it at Fair (+2), so Blake goes third and Og goes last.

Initiative & Turn Order

Your skills determine when you act in a conflict. At the start of the conflict everyone involved – characters or other entities – will roll initiative. Initiative is based on an ability plus a skill, just like every other roll in Analogous, but it's special in one major way: you're not counting hits! Instead, you're totaling up the result of the dice you rolled. A roll of six dice showing 1, 3, 3, 4, 5, 5, for example, would be 21 (the total), not 3 (the hits).

Each type of conflict uses a different ability and skill for initiative:

■ Combat: Physical + Perception

■ Confrontation: Social + Empathy

■ Contention: Mental + Investigation

As you can see, the skill used is not always paired with the ability you'd expect, like using Physical + Perception for combat. Feel free to play with the skills used. Consider using whatever skill leads into the conflict, even if that's different for different participants.

For example, if one character is attempting to spring a surprise attack they might roll Physical + Stealth, while their target might roll Physical + Perception. A character could open a social conflict aggressively with Social + Provoke, or a mental conflict under false pretenses with Mental + Deceive. If you can see how the character would use that skill to initiate combat, use it for their initiative!

If the conflict progresses to a second initiative roll it might no longer be appropriate to use the same skills, and characters might return to the default.

Once initiative is rolled, you'll start – counter-intuitively – at the bottom. Each participant, going from lowest initiative to highest, states what they plan to do in this exchange. When you reach the top, turn around and start resolving actions from highest initiative to lowest. This lets characters with high initiatives 'respond' to those with lower initiatives.

When you act in a conflict you reduce your initiative by 10, right after the action, to a minimum of 0.

Once everyone has acted in the conflict check the initiative scores and start declaring actions again, starting from the bottom-up and skipping anyone with an initiative score of 0.

If nobody has an initiative score over 0 it's time to re-set the scene, confirm where everyone is, and roll initiative again to start a fresh round of combat.

Some effects in a conflict may move your initiative around right in the middle of an exchange! Using a huge, slow weapon might reduce your initiative, or being bullied by a crowd. Most of these kinds of changes will be rare, and will be called out in the text. If the GM decides moving your initiative up or down is an appropriate cost or bonus the usual change is plus or minus 5.

Your initiative never goes below 0.

Characters with an initiative of 0 can still defend and speak in a conflict, but won't act otherwise until the conflict's participants roll initiative again.

Simpler Initiative

If you don't want the additional complexity of the default initiative system, use the system below. It more closely matches the normal use of skills, and cuts down on the paperwork. It also ensures everyone acts the same number of times in a round of combat, for good or for ill.

In a physical conflict, compare your Physical + Perception skill to the other participants. In a social conflict, compare your Social + Empathy skill. In a mental conflict use Mental + Investigation. Whoever has the most hits gets to go first, and then everyone else in descending order.

If there's a tie, compare a secondary or tertiary skill. For physical conflicts, that's Athletics, then Physique. For social conflicts, Rapport, then Expression. In mental conflicts, Will, then Scholarship.

Even Simpler Initiative

Okay, one die. The GM rolls a die. On odds the players all go first - they pick which order amongst themselves - followed by all the NPCs and other GM-controlled entities, in whatever order. On an even roll, it's the opposite.

OR you can have whoever starts the conflict go first, then pick the next person to go, then they pick the next person, and so on ('popcorn' style). This continues until everyone's gone, no repeats, and the last character to go gets to pick the first of the next round.

OR you can have everyone go in direct order of their abilities, with ties all acting at once, so everyone in a mental conflict that has a Mental score of 5 goes first, then the 4s, then the 3s, and so on.

OR...

You can use whatever method you want to determine who goes when. Pick the version that brings the right blend of chaos and order to your table, keeping in mind that:

> Everyone should have a chance to go before someone goes a second time.

> Players should have some way of knowing approximately where in the order they are so they can plan around it.

> Everyone should go about the same number of times in a conflict.

Taking Your Actions

Most of the time, you're going to be attacking another character or creating an advantage on your turn, because that's the point of a conflict – take your opponent out, or set things up to make it easier to take your opponent out.

GMs, if you have a lot of nameless NPCs in your scene, keep their scores and actions simple. Also, consider using mobs instead of individual NPCs to reduce the number of participants in the tussle.

However, if you have a secondary objective in the conflict scene, you might need to roll an overcome action instead. You'll encounter this most often if you want to move between zones but there's a situation trait in place making that problematic.

Regardless, you only get to make one skill roll on your turn in an exchange, unless you're defending against someone else's action – you can do that as many times as you want. You can even make defend actions on behalf of others, so long as you fulfill two conditions: it has to be reasonable for you to interpose yourself between the attack and its target, and you have to suffer the effects of any failed rolls.

> In the first exchange of our warehouse fight, Marco goes first. Huckleberry has Marco attack the thug that's eyeing her. That's her action for the exchange – she can still roll to defend whenever she needs to, but she can't do anything else proactive until her next turn.
>
> On Eli's turn, he has Samantha do a full defense; normally, he'd be able to defend and get an action this exchange, but instead, he gets a +2 to his defense rolls until his next turn.
>
> On Zo's turn, he has Blake create an advantage ⊕ by placing a trait on Og called Hemmed In, hoping to corner him between some crates. That's his action for the exchange.
>
> Ace goes last, and she just has all of her NPCs attack their chosen targets.

Full Defense

If you want, you can forgo your action for the exchange to concentrate on defense. You don't get to do anything proactive, but you do get to roll all defend actions for the exchange at a +2 bonus.

Abandoning Your Action

If you've already declared your action for the exchange but your turn hasn't come around yet, you can abandon it to defend yourself against an opponent with a higher initiative than you. This means that you don't get to take your normal action: you switch it at the last minute to defending yourself instead. You still reduce your initiative by 10 when you defend yourself.

Choose whether you're doing this when you're rolling your defense against the attack, and make sure to tell the GM.

Resolving Attacks

A successful attack puts a point of stress on your target, plus one point of stress per every shift you earned on the attack. Some weapons, circumstances, and the like can add extra stress when an attack lands rather than adding dice to the attack roll.

If you get hit by an attack, one of two things happen: either you absorb the hit and stay in the fight, or you're taken out.

Fortunately, you have two options for absorbing hits to stay in the fight – you can take stress and/or consequences. You can also concede a conflict before you're taken out, in order to preserve some control over what happens to your character.

If, for whatever reason, you want to forego your defense and take a hit (like, say, to interpose yourself in the path of an arrow that's about to skewer your friend), you can.

Because you're not defending, the attacker's rolling against zero hits, no opposition, which means you're probably going to take a bad hit.

Stress

One of your options to mitigate the effect of a hit is to take stress.

The best way to understand stress is that it represents all the various reasons why you just barely avoid taking the full force of an attack. Maybe you twist away from the blow just right, or it looks bad but is really just a flesh wound, or you exhaust yourself diving out of the way at the last second.

Socially, stress could mean that you just barely manage to ignore an insult, or clamp down on an instinctive emotional reaction, or hold fast against a compelling argument, or something like that.

In a mental contention taking stress represents losing your focus, becoming exhausted and muddled in your thoughts, or beginning to make errors in your judgment.

Stress boxes also represent a loss of momentum – you only have so many last-second saves in you before you've got to face the music.

On your character sheet, you have a number of stress boxes, dependent on your abilities and skills (like Physique, Will, and Expression).

When you take stress just tick off a number of boxes equal to the stress you suffered. If you have no boxes left after counting up your stress you've reached the end of the stress track. When you fill a stress track you pause to decide whether you're going to concede, be taken out, or take a consequence.

You empty your stress track when you've left a conflict and had a moment to breathe and collect yourself again.

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Og batters Blake with a whopping 3-shift hit on this exchange, wielding a giant club with spikes.

Looking at his character sheet, Zo sees that he's only got two stress boxes left a 2-point and a 4-point.

Because his 3-point box is already checked, the hit must be absorbed by a higher-value box. He reluctantly checks off the 4-point box.

Ace and Zo describe the outcome Blake gets his sword up just in time to barely deflect a blow that shatters a nearby crate, peppering Blake's face with splintered wood. One inch closer, and it might have been his face that got splintered.

Blake has one more stress box on his sheet, a 2-shift box. That means his reserves are almost gone, and the next major hit he takes is going to hurt bad....

</div>

Consequences

When you tick off the last box on your stress track you suffer a consequence. A consequence is more severe than stress – it represents some form of lasting injury or setback that you accrue from the conflict, something that's going to be a problem for your character after the conflict is over.

Consequences come in three levels of severity – mild, moderate, and severe. On your character sheet, you have a number of available consequence slots, in this section:

When you suffer a consequence you get to empty your stress track at the same time. However, there's a penalty. The consequence written in the slot is a trait that represents the lasting effect incurred from the attack. The opponent who forced you to take a consequence gets a free invocation, and the trait remains on your character sheet until you've recovered the consequence slot. While it's on your sheet, the consequence is treated like any other trait, except because the slant on it is so negative, it's far more likely to be used to your character's detriment.

Your first consequence will be a mild one unless otherwise specified by some special effect or other ruling. If you take a consequence and your mild consequence is already occupied, it bumps up to a moderate consequence; and similarly your next consequence is severe.

Unlike stress, a consequence slot may take a long time to recover after the conflict is over. Also unlike stress, you only have one set of consequences; there aren't specific slots for physical versus mental consequences. This means that, if you have to take a mild consequence due to a mental hit and your mild consequence slot is already filled with a physical consequence, you're out of luck! You're going to have to use a moderate consequence to absorb that hit (assuming you have one left).

Still, it's better than being taken out, right?

Naming a Consequence

Here are some guidelines for choosing what to name a consequence:

Mild consequences don't require immediate attention. They hurt, and they may present an inconvenience, but they aren't going to force you into a lot of bed rest. On the social side, mild consequences express things like small social gaffes or changes in your surface emotions. Mental consequences are distractions or fogginess.

Examples: Black Eye, Bruised Hand, Winded, Flustered, Cranky, Temporarily Blinded, Frazzled, Dull.

Moderate consequences represent fairly serious impairments that require dedicated effort toward recovery (including medical attention). On the social side, they express things like damage to your reputation or emotional problems that you can't just shrug off with an apology and a good night's sleep. Mental consequences are problems that will nag at you until you address them. Examples: Deep Cut, First Degree Burn, Exhausted, Drunk, Terrified, Tossing & Turning, Intellectual Laughingstock.

Severe consequences go straight to the emergency room (or whatever the equivalent is in your game) – they're extremely nasty and prevent you from doing a lot of things, and will lay you out for a while. On the social side, they express things like serious trauma or relationship-changing harm. Severe mental consequences could be as bad as a break from reality or a mental block that a therapist will need to take apart. Examples: Second-Degree Burn, Compound Fracture, Guts Hanging Out, Crippling Shame, Trauma-Induced Phobia, Glossolalia, Ostracized From Society.

> Marco gets teamed up on by three of the thugs during this exchange, and with the help of a huge die roll and some situation traits, they manage to land a 6-shift attack on her. She's escaped harm so far this fight, and still has all her stress boxes and consequences available.
>
> She has two ways to take the hit. She could take one severe consequence, which negates 6 stress. She could also take a moderate consequence (4 stress) and use her 2-point stress box.
>
> She decides that it's not likely she's going to get hit for that much again, so she takes the severe consequence to keep her stress track open for smaller hits.
>
> Ace and Huckleberry agree to call the severe consequence Nearly Gutted. Marco takes a wicked slash from one of the thugs' swords, gritting her teeth through the pain....

Recovering from a Consequence

In order to regain the use of a consequence slot, you have to recover from the consequence. That requires two things – succeeding at an action that allows you to justify recovery, and then waiting an appropriate amount of game time for that recovery to take place.

The action in question is an overcome action; the obstacle is the consequence that you took. The difficulty for this obstacle is based on the severity of the consequence. Mild is a difficulty of 2, moderate is 5, and severe is 8. If you are trying to perform the recovery action on yourself, increase the difficulty by 2 dice.

Keep in mind that the circumstances have to be appropriately free of distraction and tension for you to make this roll in the first place – you're not going to clean and bandage a nasty cut while gangsters are roaming the alleys looking for you. GMs, you've got the final judgment call.

If you succeed at the recovery action, or someone else succeeds on a recovery action for you, you get to rename the consequence trait to show that it's in recovery. So, for example, Broken Leg could become Stuck in a Cast, Scandalized could become Damage Control, and so on. This doesn't free up the consequence slot, but it serves as an indicator that you're recovering, and it changes the ways the trait's going to be used while it remains.

Whether you change the consequence's name or not – and sometimes it might not make sense to do so – mark it with a star so that everyone remembers that recovery has started.

Then, you just have to wait the time.

For a mild consequence, you only have to wait one whole scene after the recovery action, and then you can remove the trait and clear the slot.

For a moderate consequence, you have to wait one whole session after the recovery action (which means if you do the recovery action in the middle of a session, you should recover sometime in the middle of next session).

For a severe consequence, you have to wait one whole scenario after the recovery action.

What Skill Do I Use for Recovery?

The skill someone would use to help a character recover from serious consequences changes based on the nature of the consequence. A physical consequence obviously requires medical attention; mental consequences might need therapy or medication; a social consequence could be helped by meditation or again therapy.

The Science skill is used to treat most consequences. Empathy or Rapport are appropriate for some mental and social consequences, as well.

Marco ended up with the severe consequence Nearly Gutted as the result of the fight.

Back at the inn, Samantha attempts to bandage up the cut. He has a feat called, "Scholar, Healer" which allows him to use his Scholarship skill for recovery obstacles. He makes his Scholarship roll at a difficulty of Fantastic (+6) and succeeds.

This allows Marco's Nearly Gutted trait to be renamed Bandaged and start the recovery process. After the next whole scenario, she'll be able to erase that trait from her sheet and use her severe consequence again in a subsequent conflict.

Extreme Consequences

In addition to the normal set of mild, moderate, and severe consequences, every PC also gets one last-ditch option to stay in a fight – the extreme consequence. Between major milestones you can only use this option once.

An extreme consequence will clear your stress track even after you've filled your mild, moderate, and severe consequences, but at a very serious cost: you must replace one of your traits (except the high concept, that's off limits) with the extreme consequence. That's right, an extreme consequence is so serious that taking it literally changes who you are.

Unlike other consequences, you can't make a recovery action to diminish an extreme consequence – you're stuck with it until your next major milestone. After that, you can rename the extreme consequence to reflect that you're no longer vulnerable to the worst of it, as long as you don't just switch it out for whatever your old trait was. Taking an extreme consequence is a permanent character change. Treat it as such.

Instant Healing

Your game might include circumstances or equipment that can speed healing or even instantly remove consequences, like an experimental serum injection. This might quicken the process of recovery, but shouldn't change the fundamental way a character eliminates a consequence.

In Analogous a consequence is largely just like any other trait. It only comes into play when someone pays a plot point to invoke it (after the initial free invocation, of course), or when it's compelled.

At best, powerful healing should simply eliminate the need to roll for a recovery action, or should reduce the severity of a consequence by one level or more. So, an auto-doc machine might turn a severe consequence into a moderate one, making the recovery time much shorter. The PC should have to spend at least one scene where the consequence could affect things, before you let it go away.

Conceding the Conflict

When all else fails, you can also just give in. Maybe you're worried that you can't absorb another hit, or maybe you decide that continuing to fight is just not worth the punishment. Whatever the reason, you can interrupt any action at any time before the roll is made to declare that you concede the conflict. This is important: once dice hit the table, what happens, happens, and you're either taking more stress, suffering more consequences, or getting taken out.

Concession gives the other person what they wanted from you, or in the case of more than two combatants, removes you as a concern for the opposing side. You're out of the conflict, period.

But it's not all bad. First of all, you get a plot point for choosing to concede. On top of that, if you've sustained any consequences in this conflict, you get an additional plot point for each consequence. These plot points may be used once this conflict is over.

Second, you get to avoid the worst parts of your fate by describing the way in which you concede. You lost, and the narration has to reflect that, but you may be able to prevent further harm. You can't use this privilege to undermine the opponent's victory, either – what you say happens has to pass muster with the group.

That can make the difference between, say, being mistakenly left for dead and ending up in the enemy's clutches, in shackles, without any of your stuff – the sort of thing that can happen if you're taken out instead. That's not nothing.

Og proves to be too much for Blake to handle in the warehouse conflict, having hit with several devastating attacks in the course of the fight.

Before Ace's next turn, Zo says, "I concede. I don't want to risk any more consequences."

Blake's taken both a mild and a moderate consequence. He gets a plot point for conceding, as well as two more plot points for the two consequences he took, giving him three total.

Ace says, "So, what are you trying to avoid here?"

Zo says, "Well, I don't want to get killed or captured, for starters."

Ace chuckles and says, "Fair enough. So, we'll say that Og knocks you out cold and doesn't bother to finish you off, because he still has Marco and Samantha to deal with. He may even think you're dead. I feel like the loss needs some more teeth, though. Hm…"

Eli pipes up with, "How about he takes your sword as a trophy?"

Ace nods. "Yeah, that's good. He knocks you out, spits on you, and takes your sword."

Zo says, "Bastard! I'm so getting him back for that one…"

Getting Taken Out

If you don't have any stress or consequences left to buy off a hit, that means you're taken out.

Taken out is bad – it means not only that you can't fight anymore, but that the person who took you out gets to decide what your loss looks like and what happens to you after the conflict. Obviously, they can't narrate anything that's out of scope for the conflict (like having you die from shame), but that still gives someone else a lot of power over your character that you can't really do anything about.

Character Death

So, if you think about it, there's not a whole lot keeping someone from saying, after taking you out, that your character dies. If you're talking about a physical conflict where people are using nasty sharp weapons, it certainly seems reasonable that one possible outcome of defeat is your character getting killed.

In practice, though, this assumption might be pretty controversial depending on what kind of group you're in. Some people think that character death should always be on the table, if the rules allow it   if that's how the dice fall, then so be it.

Others are more circumspect, and consider it **very** damaging to their fun if they lose a character upon whom they've invested hours and hours of gameplay, just because someone spent a lot of plot points or their die rolls were particularly unlucky.

We recommend the latter approach, mainly for the following reason: most of the time, sudden character death is a pretty boring outcome when compared to putting the character through hell. On top of that, all the story threads that character was connected to just kind of stall with no resolution, and you have to expend a bunch of effort and time figuring out how to get a new character into play mid-stride.

That doesn't mean there's no room for character death in the game, however. We just recommend that you save that possibility for conflicts that are extremely pivotal, dramatic, and meaningful for that character   in other words, conflicts in which that character would knowingly and willingly risk dying in order to win. Players and GMs, if you've got the feeling that you're in that kind of conflict, talk it out when you're setting the scene and see how people feel.

At the **very** least, even if you're in a hardcore group that invites the potential for character death on any taken out result, make sure that you telegraph the opponent's lethal intent. GMs, this is especially important for you, so the players will know which NPCs really mean business, and can concede to keep their characters alive if need be.

Movement

In a conflict, it's important to track where everyone is relative to one another, which is why we divide the environment where the conflict's taking place into zones. Where you have zones, you have people trying to move around in them in order to get at one another or at a certain objective.

Normally, it's no big deal to move from one zone to another – if there's nothing preventing you from doing so, you can move one zone in addition to your action for the exchange.

If you want to move more than one zone (up to anywhere else on the map), if a situation trait suggests that it might be difficult to move freely, or if another character is in your way, then you must make an overcome action using Athletics to move. This counts as your action for the exchange.

GMs, just as with other overcome rolls, you'll set the difficulty. You might use the number of zones the character is moving or the situation traits in the way as justification for how high you set passive opposition. If another character is impeding the path, roll their opposition and feel free to invoke obstructing situation traits in aid of their defense.

If you fail that roll, whatever was impeding you keeps you from moving. If you tie, you get to move, but your opponent takes a temporary advantage of some kind. If you succeed, you move without consequence. If you succeed with shifts, you can claim a boost in addition to your movement.

> In our continuing warehouse conflict, Marco wants to go after one of Og's thugs, who has started shooting arrows down from the second floor. That requires her to cross one zone to get to the access ladder for the second floor, and then climb it, making her opponent two zones away.
>
> She's currently mixing it up with a thug herself, whose Fight is at Fair (+2).
>
> Huckleberry tells Ace her intent, and Ace says, "Okay, the thug you're fighting is going to try and keep you from getting away, so he's going to provide active opposition."
>
> Marco's Athletics is Great (+4). She rolls and gets +0, for a Great result. The thug rolls his opposition, and rolls 1, for a result of Average (+1). That gives Marco three shifts, and a success with style.
>
> Huckleberry and Ace describe Marco faking out the thug, vaulting over a crate, and taking the ladder two rungs at a time to get up top. She takes a boost, which she calls Momentum.
>
> The thug up top swallows hard, bringing his crossbow to bear...

Advantages in COnflict

Remember that traits you create as advantages follow all the rules for situation traits – the GM can use them to justify overcome actions, they last until they're made irrelevant or the scene is over, and in some cases they represent as much a threat to you as an opponent.

When you create an advantage 🎯 in a conflict, think about how long you want that trait to stick around and whom you want to have access to it. It's difficult for anyone besides you and your friends to justify using an advantage you stick to a character, but it's also easier to justify getting rid of it – one overcome action could undo it. It's harder to justify getting rid of a trait on the environment (seriously, who is going to move that Huge Bookcase you just knocked over?), but anyone in the scene could potentially find a reason to take advantage of it.

Cover Fire and Other Impositions

When you're trying to prevent someone else from getting attacked, the main way to do it is by creating an advantage. You can pass your buddy the invocation and make it harder to hit them.

You could also put yourself directly between the attack and the intended target, such that the bad guy has to get through you to get to you're ally. Then you're just defending as normal and taking the stress and consequences yourself.

If you want to defend other people without directly interposing yourself between them and the attack, you'll need a feat.

In terms of options for advantages, the sky's the limit. Pretty much any situational modifier you can think of can be expressed as an advantage. If you're stuck for an idea, here are some examples:

Temporary Blinding: Throwing sand or salt in the enemy's eyes is a classic action staple. This places a Blinded trait on a target, which could require them to get rid of the trait with an overcome action before doing anything dependent on sight. Blinded might also present opportunities for a compel, so keep in mind that your opponent can take advantage of this to replenish plot points.

Disarming: You knock an opponent's weapon away, disarming them until they can recover it. The target will need an overcome action to recover their weapon.

Positioning: There are a lot of ways to use advantages to represent positioning, like High Ground or Cornered, which you can invoke to take advantage of that positioning as context demands.

Winded and Other Minor Hurts: Some strikes in a fight are debilitating because they're painful, rather than because they cause injury. Nerve hits, groin shots, and a lot of other "dirty fighting" tricks fall into this category. You can use an advantage to represent these, sticking your opponent with Pain-Blindness or Stunned or whatever, then following up with an attack that exploits the trait to do more lasting harm.

Taking Cover: You can use advantages to represent positions of cover and invoke them for your defense. This can be as general as Found Some Cover or as specific as Behind the Big Oak Bar.

Altering the Environment: You can use advantages to alter the environment to your benefit, creating barriers to movement by scattering Loose Junk everywhere, or setting things On Fire. That last one is a classic.

Other Actions in a Conflict

As stated above, you may find yourself in a situation where you want to do something else while your friends are fighting. You might be disarming a death trap, searching for a piece of information, or checking for hidden assailants.

In order to do this, GMs, set the player up with a modified form of challenge. One of the tasks is likely "defend yourself" – in any exchange where someone attacks you or tries to create an advantage ⊕ on you, you must defend successfully in order to be able to take one of the other actions in the challenge. So long as no one has successfully attacked you or stuck an advantage on you, you can use your action to roll for one of the challenge goals.

Free Actions

Sometimes it just makes sense that your character is doing something else in conjunction with or as a step toward their action in an exchange. You quick-draw a weapon before you use it, you shout a warning before you kick in a door, or you quickly size up a room before you attack. These little bits of action are colorful description more than anything else, meant to add atmosphere to the scene.

GMs, don't fall into the trap of trying to police every little detail of a player's description. Remember, if there's no significant or interesting opposition, you shouldn't require a roll   just let the players accomplish what they say they do. Reloading a gun or fishing for something in your backpack is part of performing the action. You shouldn't require any mechanics to deal with that.

Marco is trying to get a door open so that she and her friends can escape into an ancient vault rather than fighting off endless hordes of temple guardians.

Ace says, "Well, let's call it a Fair (+2) Engineering action to get the door open, and a Fair (+2) Physique roll to push it open enough to slide through, because it's one of those heavy vault doors. The other action is defending yourself."

On that exchange, Marco successfully defends against an attack, so she uses her action to pick the lock. She fails, and decides to succeed at a cost. Ace figures the easiest thing is to hit her with a consequence because she's in a fight. So she gets the door open, but not before one of the temple guardians gives her a Gouged Leg.

On the next exchange, she fails to defend against an attack, so she doesn't get to roll for the challenge.

On the third exchange, she defends and succeeds with style at the Physique roll to get the door open. She signals to her friends and takes a Head Start boost, because it's about to be a chase

Ending a Conflict

Under most circumstances, when all of the members of one side have either conceded the conflict or have been taken out, the conflict is over.

GMs, once you know a conflict has definitively ended, you can pass out all the plot points earned from concession. Players, take the plot points for when your traits were invoked against you, make a note of whatever consequences you suffered in the fight, and erase any checks in your stress boxes.

After much struggle and insanity, the warehouse conflict is finally over. Ace concedes the conflict on behalf of Og and his remaining thug, meaning that the PCs stay alive and can proceed to check out the smuggled goods they were interested in.

Because it was a concession, Og gets away to fight another day. Because Zo conceded to Ace in an earlier example, Og also gets away with Blake's sword as a personal trophy.

Because Zo conceded, he gets plot points. One for conceding, and another two for the mild and moderate consequences he took in the conflict. All the invocations used against him were free, so that's all he gets. Three plot points.

Eli gets two plot points, because Ace let one of the thugs invoke his Not the Face! twice against him during the conflict.

Huckleberry gets no plot points, because all the invocations against her were free, from advantages and boosts. Because she won, she doesn't get awarded for the consequences she took.

Transitioning to a Contest or Challenge

You may find yourself in a conflict scene where the participants are no longer interested in or willing to harm one another, because of some change in the circumstances. If that happens, and there's still more to resolve, you can transition straight into a contest or challenge as you need. In that case, hold off on awarding the end-of-conflict plot points and whatnot until you've also resolved the contest or challenge.

In an earlier example, Marco managed to get a vault door open so the three PCs could escape an endless horde of temple guardians. They all decide to run and try to lose them.

Now, the guardians and the PCs have mutually opposing goals but can't harm one another, so now it's a contest. Instead of running the next exchange, Ace just starts setting up for the chase.

Even though the PCs have some consequences and are due some plot points, they won't get them until after we find out if they can get away, or if they get caught.

Representing Combats, Confrontations, & Contentions

In Analogous physical, mental, and social conflicts are all represented using the same set of basic rules. Despite this, the framing of the conflict and nature of the consequences will make them distinct.

Physical conflict – combat, in the terms of Analogous – is both easy to identify and easy to imagine in the framework of the four actions. You start up combat when two or more people are trying to hurt each other.

Social confrontations are a little more abstract. They may arise when someone is trying to embarrass a rival, trying to impress a wealthy patron, or when they're seeking to convince a competing business owner to back off their territory. While these can be modeled by a single opposed roll, they might be important enough to turn into a conflict. Participants in a conflict use their actions to present arguments, make ad hominem attacks, entertain a crowd, or otherwise push their agenda. Just like in a normal combat sides can form, everyone goes in order of initiative, and both tools and situations can provide valuable traits for the scene.

Mental contentions are yet one more step abstracted. They're rare, and for a good reason: it's unusual to go head-to-head against someone in a battle of wits. More often characters are pushing the boundaries of science itself, or otherwise grappling with a circumstance, not a person. In those cases where two or more figures do have cause to think against each other, though, it can be gripping. High-stakes chess games, serial-killers playing cat-and-mouse with detectives, two hackers trying to seize control of the same mechanism, these are all mental conflicts. A mental conflict occurs when two or more participants are actively opposing each other, not just racing toward the same goal.

If you want to make social or mental conflict more vivid in the imaginations of your group, consider using combative descriptions for those conflicts. Your mental duel becomes a true duel, with ripostes and lunges, beats and parries. A social showdown with your bitter rival for Lord Blatherby's hand becomes an imaginary wrestling match, with you and your opponent trading big, showy blows! Whatever helps your group understand the back-and-forth and the play of non-phsyical fights.

Teamwork

Characters can help each other out on actions. There are two versions of helping in Analogous: combining skills, for when you are all putting the same kind of effort into an action (like using Physique together to push over a crumbling wall); and stacking advantages, for when the group is setting a single person up to do well (like causing multiple distractions so one person can use Stealth to get into a fortress).

When you combine skills, figure out who has the highest skill level among the participants. Each other participant who has at least one point in the same skill adds a +1 to the highest person's skill level, and then only the lead character rolls. So if you have three helpers and you're the highest, you roll your skill level with a +3 bonus.

If you fail a roll to combine skills, all of the participants share in the potential costs — whatever complication affects one character affects all of them, or everyone has to take consequences. Alternatively, you can impose a cost that affects all the characters the same.

> Continuing with our temple chase example, because it's group vs. group, everyone decides it'd be easier to just combine skills.
>
> Of the three PCs, Marco has the highest Athletics, at Great (+4). Blake has Good (+3) Athletics and Samantha has Average (+1) Athletics, so they each contribute +1. Marco rolls the contest on behalf of the PCs at Fantastic (+6).
>
> Ace's temple guardians only have Average (+1) Athletics, but there are five of them, so they roll Superb (+5) for the purposes of the contest.

When you stack advantages, each person takes a create an advantage ⊕ action as usual, and gives whatever free invocations they get to a single character. Remember that multiple free invocations from the same trait can stack.

> Samantha and Marco want to set Blake up for one big hit on Iron Aaron, the cybernetically-enhanced bruiser for the Black Hat gang.
>
> Both Marco and Samantha roll to create an advantage ⊕ on their turns, resulting in three free invocations on a Flashy Distraction they make from Samantha's magical fireworks (which succeeded to create the advantage) and Marco's glancing hits (which succeeded with style to add two more free invocations).
>
> They pass those to Blake, and on his turn, he uses them all for a gigantic +6 to his attack.

CHARACTER CREATION

What Makes a Good Analogous Game?

You can use Analogous to tell stories in many different places, with a variety of premises and characters. There is no default setting, though there are examples; you and your group will make that up yourselves. The very best Analogous games do have certain ideas in common with one another, thought, which we think best showcase what the game is designed to do.

Proactivity

Characters in a game of Analogous should be proactive. They have a variety of abilities that lend themselves to active problem solving, and they aren't timid about using them. They don't sit around waiting for the solution to a crisis to come to them – they go out and apply their energies, taking risks and overcoming obstacles to achieve their goals.

This doesn't mean that they don't ever plan or strategize, or that they're all careless to a fault. It just means that even the most patient among them will eventually rise and take action in a tangible, demonstrable way.

Any Analogous game you play should give a clear opportunity for the characters to be proactive in solving their problems, and have a variety of ways they might go about it. A game about librarians spending all their time among dusty tomes and learning things isn't Analogous. A game about librarians using forgotten knowledge to save the world is.

Competence

Characters in a game of Analogous are good at things. They aren't bumbling fools who routinely look ridiculous when they're trying to get things done – they're highly skilled, talented, or trained individuals who are capable of making visible change in the world they inhabit. They are the right people for the job, and they get involved in a crisis because they have a good chance of being able to resolve it for the better.

This doesn't mean they always succeed, or that their actions are without unintended consequence. It just means that when they fail, it isn't because they made dumb mistakes or weren't prepared for the risks.

Any Analogous game that you play should treat the characters like competent people, worthy of the risks and challenges that come their way. A game about garbage men who are forced to fight supervillains and get their asses constantly handed to them isn't Analogous. A game about garbage men who become an awesome anti-supervillain hit squad is.

Drama

Characters in a game of Analogous lead dramatic lives. The stakes are always high for them, both in terms of what they have to deal with in their world, and what they're dealing with in the six inches of space between their ears. Like us, they have interpersonal troubles and struggle with their issues, and though the external circumstances of their lives might be a lot bigger in scope than what we go through, we can still relate to and sympathize with them.

This doesn't mean they spend all their time wallowing in misery and pain, or that everything in their lives is always a world-shaking crisis. It just means that their lives require them to make hard choices and live with the consequences – in other words, that they're essentially human.

Any Analogous game that you play should provide the potential and opportunity for drama among and between the characters, and give you a chance to relate to them as people. A game about adventurers mindlessly punching increasing numbers of bigger, badder bad guys is not Analogous. A game about adventurers struggling to lead normal lives despite being destined to rebel against evil is.

Character Creation Is Play

The moment you sit down to make the game and characters, you're playing Analogous. This style of character creation does three things to reinforce that.

First, character creation tells part of the characters' stories, just like any other game session does. Characters that really come alive have histories of their own and with each other. This establishes where they've been, what they've done, and why they continue to act against the issues they face, together or in opposition. There's an ongoing story you're now stepping into it's just that the most interesting parts haven't happened yet.

Second, it sets the stage for the next part of the story. Each arc of a story sets up the next, so that they flow into one another in a natural evolution. Character creation needs to set up the first story arc.

Third, character creation in Analogous is collaborative. As with game creation, character creation is best done as a group activity. Doing all of this together builds a strong foundation of communication between the players and GM, and this process has a number of ways to establish connections between the characters and the setting.

Combined with game creation, character creation can take a full session to do this allows everyone to learn about the world and each other's characters. You and the other players will talk about your characters, make suggestions to each other, discuss how they connect, and establish more of the setting.

You'll want to keep good notes on this process. You can use the character sheet and character creation worksheet in the back of this book.

Start by determining your character's high concept and trouble. Then build your character's backstory, a process that takes place over three phases. Once you have that figured out, flesh out your character's skills and feats. Then you're ready to play!

Your Character Idea

Come up with your character's high concept and trouble traits.

Character creation starts with a concept for your character. It could be modeled after a character from a favorite novel or movie, or it could be based around some specific thing that you want to be able to do (like break boards with your head, turn into a wolf, blow things up, etc.). Just like you did with the game's issues earlier, you're going to take your ideas and turn them into the two central traits for your character – high concept and trouble.

Player characters should be exceptional and interesting. They could very easily find success in less exciting situations than those that come their way in play. You must figure out why your character is going to keep getting involved in these more dangerous things. If you don't, the GM is under no obligation to go out of her way to make the game work for you – she'll be too busy with other players who made characters that have a reason to participate.

When Creating Your Character:

1. Traits: Come up with your character's high concept and trouble traits.
   Name: Name your character.
2. Phase One: Describe your character's first adventure.
3. Phases Two and Three: Describe how you've crossed paths with two other characters.
4. Traits: Write down one trait for each of these three experiences.
5. Skills: Pick and rate your skills.
6. Feats: Pick or invent three to five feats.
7. Refresh: Determine how many plot points you start play with.
8. Stress and Consequences: Determine how much of a beating your character can take.

Keep Bulding Your Setting

As you're making stuff up for your characters, you'll also make stuff up about the world around them. You'll end up talking about NPCs, organizations, places, things like that. That's fantastic!

You might also come up with a character concept that adds something fundamental to the world, like saying "I want to be psychic," when nobody has mentioned supernatural powers yet. If that happens, discuss with the group if that's a part of your setting and make any necessary adjustments.

Because picking a high concept and trouble are linked, they're grouped together. You'll likely have more success coming up with a compelling character idea if you think about them as one big step rather than two separate steps. Only after you have that can you move on to the rest of character creation.

That said, don't worry too much if your character idea evolves later on, that's great! You can always go back and tinker with the early decisions.

High Concept

Your high concept is a phrase that sums up what your character is about – who they are and what they do. It's a trait, the first and most important one for your character.

Think of this trait like your job, your role in life, or your calling – it's what you're good at, but it's also a duty you have to deal with, and it's constantly filled with problems of its own. That is to say, it comes with some good and some bad. There are a few different directions you can take this:

You could take the idea of "like your job" literally: Lead Detective, Chief Surgeon, Professional Lion-tamer.

You could throw on an adjective or other descriptor to further define the idea: Callous Chief Surgeon, Reluctant Lead Detective, Awkward Professional Lion-tamer.

You could mash two jobs or roles together that most people would find odd: Actor Turned Detective, Singing Surgeon, Lion-taming Teacher.

You could play off of an important relationship to your family or an organization you're deeply involved with (especially if the family or organization are well-connected or well-known): Black Sheep of the Thompson Family, Low-level Thug for the Syndicate, University Dean's Right Hand.

These aren't the only ways to play with your high concept, but they'll get you started. But don't stress out over it – the worst thing you can do is make it into too big of a deal. You'll come up with four other traits after this one – you don't have to get it all nailed right now.

You're Punks

The inspiration for Analogous is drawn from different places, but there are a few clear stand-outs. The biggest is the genre called cyberpunk: a depiction of a corporate-owned dystopia where living is expensive and life itself is cheap. The heroes of the genre are counter-cultural icons that pit themselves against the huge machine of society in a doomed attempt to turn the tide.

You know, punks.

So, if you find yourself struggling with a high concept ora trouble, we encourage you to put the same core into your Analogous characters. Whether they're criminals, office workers, scientists, soldiers, or students, give them a reason to fight The Man. Characters should 1) know the system is broken, 2) believe it can be changed, and 3) have the strength to do so. As we mentioned early on, your characters should be competent, proactive, and dramatic.

If You Get Stumped On Traits

The golden rule of making traits in character creation: you can always change it later. If you're struggling to make a trait, write out the idea in as many words as you need to, in order to get it down on paper in the first place. If a specific phrase pops up after you write it down, great! If not, maybe someone else at the table can help you come up with a trait. And if you're still stuck, leave it for now   you'll have plenty of time during play to refine it.

And if you really need to, it's okay to leave some blank. Look at Quick Character Creation for more on leaving parts of your character sheet blank.

High concepts can have overlap among the characters, as long as you have something to distinguish how your character is different from the others. If high concepts must be similar among all the characters, such as if the GM pitches an all-scientists story, it's crucial that the troubles differ.

Zo and Huckleberry settled on the "guy and girl with sword" idea, and Eli's going with "guy without sword." But those are just starting ideas. Now it's time to turn them into proper high concepts.

Zo latches onto the idea of tying his concept to an organization, and starts with "Disciple of something." He envisions a character who has trained in some mysterious martial art, and that involves rival schools and foes that want to learn those secrets. The group helps him come up with a suitably mysterious name: Disciple of the Ivory Shroud. (And now we've made a bit more setting: there's an Ivory Shroud, mysterious martial arts, and all that implies.)

Huckleberry, on the other hand, doesn't really know where to go from "girl with sword." She's not interested in the organization thing, so she's thinking about adjectives. Eventually, she settles on Infamous Girl with Sword. (Keeping the "girl with sword" part makes her giggle, so she wants to say it often during the game.)

Eli's idea of "bookish guy without sword" would be a pretty dull trait. He thinks about what's been declared so far: an evil cult who can summon Bad Things and a mysterious martial arts school. So he asks "hey, can I be a wizard?" They talk a bit about what that means, so that being a wizard doesn't overshadow the swordsmen and isn't a weak idea. After that, he writes down Wizard for Hire.

Trouble

In addition to a high concept, every character has some sort of trouble trait that's a part of his life and story. If your high concept is what or who your character is, your trouble is the answer to a simple question: what complicates your character's existence?

Trouble brings chaos into a character's life and drives him into interesting situations. Trouble traits are broken up into two types: personal struggles and problematic relationships.

Personal struggles are about your darker side or impulses that are hard to control. If it's something that your character might be tempted to do or unconsciously do at the worst possible moment, it's this sort of trouble. Examples: Anger Management Issues, Sucker for a Pretty Face, The Bottle Calls to Me.

Problematic relationships are about people or organizations that make your life hard. It could be a group of people who hate your guts and want you to suffer, folks you work for that don't make your job easy, or even your family or friends that too often get caught in the crossfire. Examples: Family Man, Debt to the Mob, The Company Wants Me Dead.

Your trouble shouldn't be easy to solve. If it was, your character would have done that already, and that's not interesting. But nor should it paralyze the character completely. If the trouble is constantly interfering with the character's day-to-day life, he's going to spend all his time dealing with it rather than other matters at hand. You shouldn't have to deal with your trouble at every turn – unless that's the core of one particular adventure in the story (and even then, that's just one adventure).

Troubles also shouldn't be directly related to your high concept – if you have Lead Detective, saying your trouble is The Criminal Underworld Hates Me is a dull trouble, because we already assume that with your high concept. (Of course, you can turn that up a notch to make it personal, like Don Giovanni Personally Hates Me, to make it work.)

Before you go any further, talk with the GM about your character's trouble. Make sure you're both on the same page in terms of what it means. Both of you may want to find one way this trait might be invoked or compelled to make sure you're both seeing the same things – or to give each other ideas. The GM should come away from this conversation knowing what you want out of your trouble.

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Zo wants to contrast the whole "I know an ancient martial art" vibe. He's not playing an ascetic monk or anything like that. So he wants something that will get him into social trouble, something that has to do with him and not with any specific people or organizations. So he writes down The Manners of a Goat. His character will unconsciously make an ass of himself.

Huckleberry likes this idea of her character being her own worst enemy, so she's also going for a personal struggle. She's had the idea for a while of playing someone who can't help but be Tempted by Shiny Things, so she writes that down.

After seeing the other two go for personal struggles, Eli wants to add a bit to the setting by having a problematic relationship trouble. He wants something that's involved with his high concept, someone he can't just fight openly against he wants to see intrigue in his story. So he writes down Rivals in the Collegia Arcana (which also names a group of people in the setting, that Eli's character is a part of).

</div>

<div style="position:absolute;right:0">CHAPTER 6 CHARACTER CREATION</div>

An Intro to Choosing Traits

A lot of character creation focuses on coming up with traits – some are called high concepts, some are called troubles, but they basically all work the same way. Traits are one of the most important parts of your character, since they define who she is, and they provide ways for you to generate plot points and to spend those plot points on bonuses. If you have time, you really might want to read the whole chapter we have dedicated to traits before you go through the process of character creation.

In case you're pressed for time, here are some guidelines for choosing traits.

Traits which don't help you tell a good story (by giving you success when you need it and by drawing you into danger and action when the story needs it) aren't doing their job. The traits which push you into conflict – and help you excel once you're there – will be among your best and most-used.

Traits need to be both useful and dangerous – allowing you to help shape the story and generating lots of plot points – and they should never be boring. The best trait suggests both ways to use it and ways it can complicate your situation. Traits that cannot be used for either of those are likely to be dull indeed.

Bottom line: if you want to maximize the power of your traits, maximize their interest.

When you're told you need to come up with a trait, you might experience brain freeze. If you feel stumped for decent ideas for traits, there's a big section focusing on several methods for coming up with good trait ideas in Traits and Plot points.

If your character doesn't have many connections to the other characters, talk with the group about traits that might tie your character in with theirs. This is the explicit purpose of Phases Two and Three – but that doesn't mean you can't do it elsewhere as well.

If you ultimately can't break the block by any means, don't force it – leave it completely blank. You can always come back and fill out that trait later, or let it develop during play – as with the Quick Character Creation rules.

Ultimately, it's much better to leave a trait slot blank than to pick one that isn't inspiring and evocative to play. If you're picking traits you're not invested in, they'll end up being noticeable drags on your fun.

Name

If you haven't already, it's time to give your character a name!

> Zo names his character "Blake," a name that's been in his head for years. He used it years ago for another roleplaying game, and decides to bring it back for nostalgia's sake.
>
> Huckleberry names her character "Marco Marconi," a name that's so on-the-nose for a two-bit gangster that it's got to be fake, even in the fiction.
>
> Eli names his character "Samantha," because it conjures an image of a perfectly plain, average girl thrust into disastrous circumstances.

The 'Bright Side' of Troubles

Since your trouble is a trait, it's something you should also be able to invoke, right? Because we've been so focused on how this complicates your character's life, it's easy to miss how a trouble also helps your character.

In short, your experience with your trouble makes you a stronger person in that regard. Dealing with personal struggles leaves you vulnerable to being tempted or cajoled, but it can also give you a sense of inner strength, because you know the sort of person you want to be. Problematic relationships often cause trouble, but people do learn hard lessons from the troubles they deal with. They especially learn how to maneuver around many of the smaller issues their troubles present.

> Zo's The Manners of a Goat could be used to the group's benefit. Maybe he turns that up intentionally, to draw attention away from Huckleberry's character sneaking around.
>
> With Huckleberry's Tempted by Shiny Things, we could reasonably say that Huckleberry's character is well-acquainted with the value of various shiny things (and well-acquainted with getting caught and locked in prison, so she knows a thing or two about escaping).
>
> Eli's Rivals in the Collegia Arcana can come in handy when dealing with rivals he knows well   he knows what to expect from their tactics. He could also use this trait to gain aid from people who share his rivals.

The Phase Trio

Describe your character's first adventure. Describe how you've crossed paths with two other characters. Write down one trait for each of these three experiences.

Important: Before moving on to this step, you need to have figured out your high concept, trouble, and name.

The three remaining traits on your character are made in phases, together called the phase trio. The first phase is about recent background: something you did that's interesting and adventurous. The second and third are about how the other player characters got involved in that adventure, and how you got involved in theirs.

This is an opportunity to tell a story about your characters. Each phase will ask you to write down two things. Use the character creation worksheet (at the back of this book) to write down those details.

First, write a summary of what happened in that phase. A couple of sentences to a paragraph should suffice – you don't want to establish too much detail up front, because you might have to adjust details in later phases.

Second, write a trait that reflects some part of that phase. The trait can cover the general vibe from the summary, or it can focus on some piece of it that still resonates with your character in the present day.

Blake gets into a bar fight with some of the Scar Triad. He is robbed of his sword and beaten severely. His life is saved by a veteran soldier named Old Finn. Finn helps to heal Blake, clean him up, and enlist him in the town militia.
* I Owe Old Finn Everything

Phases and Index Cards

In phase one, you each came up with your own adventure. In phases two and three, you're going to trade those stories around as other players' characters get involved. Figuring out how your character fits into someone else's story can be hard to do if you've handed your character phase worksheet to another player, so we recommend that you use index cards (or whatever scraps of paper you have).

During the first phase when you're writing your adventure down on your worksheet take a card and write your character's name and adventure description. Then you'll pass the card around during the second and third phases so people can contribute to your story. That way, you'll still have your worksheet when you're writing your contributions and traits, and other people will know what stories they're supposed to hook into.

As with the high concept and trouble traits, this (and the following phases) are further opportunities to flesh out the setting.

Phase One: Your Adventure

The first phase is your character's first true adventure – his first book, episode, case, movie, whatever – starring him.

You need to think up and write down the basic details of this story for the phase's summary. The story doesn't need to have a lot of detail – in fact, a pair of sentences works pretty well – because your fellow players will add in their own details to this past adventure in the next two phases (as you will to theirs).

If you find yourself stuck, look to your character's high concept and trouble. Find a dilemma that has a chance of throwing those ideas into focus. What problem do you get roped into because of your high concept or trouble? How does the other trait help or complicate your life?

Ask yourself the following story questions. If you have trouble answering them, talk to the other players and the GM for help.

■ Something bad happened. What was it? Did it happen to you, to someone you cared about, or to someone that you were coerced into helping?

■ What did you decide to do about the problem? What goal did you pursue?

■ Who stood against you? Did you expect the opposition you got? Did some of it come out of nowhere?

■ Did you win? Did you lose? Either way, what consequences arose from the outcome?

■ Once you've come up with the adventure, write a trait that relates to some part of what happened.

A note on timing: Because two other characters will be involved in the following phases, this adventure needs to be something that isn't so early in your character's life that he hasn't met the other protagonists yet. If one of you has decided that you recently showed up in the story, then the adventures involving that person happened recently. If some of you have been friends (or old rivals!) for a long time, then those adventures can take place further in the past. Your best bet is to not make these adventures specific in time; you can figure out that part once you know who's involved in your story.

> Zo goes through Phase One. He looks at the story questions to help him figure out the events of the phase, and decides on the following:
>
> The bad thing was that Blake kept getting into scrapes at his local tavern. He grew up with no sense of discipline or demeanor and constantly picked fights with people larger and stronger than him.
>
> One thug Blake insulted at the tavern was connected to the Scar Triad, so some of the thug's bandit buddies showed up and beat Blake to within an inch of his life.
>
> His bleeding body was then found by a veteran soldier named Finn who healed Blake's wounds and encouraged him to join the town militia where he could learn some discipline and fight with honor.
>
> Now Zo has to write down a trait related to this story. He decides to take I Owe Old Finn Everything as his trait, because he wants to keep the connection to Finn in his story and give Ace a cool NPC to play.

Phase Two: Crossing Paths

In the next two phases, you'll tie the group together by having other characters contribute a minor, supporting role in your adventure, and vice versa.

Once everyone has their adventure written down (which is where our index card suggestion comes in really handy), you're ready for phase two. You can pass to the left or right, or shuffle the stack and hand them out randomly (trading with the person to your right until you each have one that isn't yours). However you decide to do it, every player should now be holding someone else's adventure.

Your character has a supporting role in the story you're holding, which you get to come up with right now. Briefly discuss it with the player whose adventure it is and add a sentence or phrase to the summary to reflect your character's supporting role. Supporting roles come in three forms: they complicate the adventure, solve a situation, or both.

Complicating the adventure: Your character managed to make some part of the adventure uncertain (possibly because of an issue or trouble trait). Of course, since that happened in the past, we know you got out of it all right (or mostly all right, as indicated by the trait you take). When describing this, don't worry about how the situation is resolved – leave that for someone else, or leave it open. Descriptions like "Blake starts trouble when Marco needs him quiet" or "Samantha gets captured by mysterious brigands" are enough to get some ideas flowing.

Solving a situation: Your character somehow solves a complication that the main character in the adventure had to deal with, or your character aids the main character in the central conflict (which is an opportunity to involve your high concept trait). When describing this, you don't have to mention how the situation was created, just how your character takes care of it. Descriptions like "Marco holds off foes to give Blake time to escape" or "Samantha uses his arcane knowledge to ask the ghosts for information" are enough to give us an idea of what happens.

Complicating and solving: Here, your character either solves one situation but creates another, or creates a situation but later solves a different one. Mash up the two ideas, using the word "later" in between them, such as: "Blake starts a fight with the Scar Triad while Samantha is trying to lay low. Later, he helps Samantha by fighting off undead while Samantha's casting a spell."

The default phase trio prioritizes connecting the characters together in a shared backstory. We like this, because it's cooperative and gets you talking to one another. That's not the only way to do it, though. You could make any significant trifecta of backstory details into a phase trio. Your past, your present, and your hope for the future is another set of trio elements. The Analogous System Toolkit has more examples of phase work.

The idea is to be a bit self-serving here. You want to put a little spotlight on your character in order to figure out a good trait from it: something you're known for, something you can do, something you own or have, and someone you have a relationship with (for good or ill).

Finally, write the adventure idea and your character's contribution down on your phase worksheet. This is important, because your character gets a trait from the supporting role he played. The person whose adventure it is should also write down the contribution, if there's room on his sheet.

> Huckleberry has Blake's starting adventure and needs to decide how she fits into it.
>
> She decides that Marco helped solve the situation. After Blake ends up in the militia, he still has a grudge against the Triad members who ganged up on him. In fact, they robbed him of his heirloom sword in the process. Hearing Blake's tale of woe, Marco agrees to help steal the sword back.
>
> She takes the trait A Sucker for a Sob Story, to reflect the reason why she got involved.

Blake gets into a bar fight with some of the Scar Triad. He is robbed of his sword and beaten severely. His life is saved by a veteran soldier named Old Finn. Finn helps to heal Blake, clean him up, and enlist him in the town militia.
* I Owe Old Finn Everything

When Blake tells Marco his story, she takes pity on him and decides to help him recover his lost sword.
* A Sucker for a Sob Story

Phase Three: Crossing Paths Again

Once everyone's done with phase two, you'll trade adventures with whatever method you chose before, so long as everyone has an adventure that isn't theirs or the one they just contributed to. Then you're ready for phase three, where you'll contribute to this second adventure and determine your next trait. Follow the directions from phase two.

And with that, you have your five traits and a good chunk of background!

> Huckleberry gets Samantha's starting adventure, a pretty straightforward romp where Samantha battles his Collegia rivals to obtain a magical artifact and return it to its rightful place.
>
> She decides that she complicates that situation, by wanting the shiny artifact for herself. Eli already established that Samantha gets the artifact back to where it belongs, so she only holds it temporarily.
>
> She decides to take I've Got Samantha's Back, as a way of reflecting her willingness to stick her neck out for Samantha the group doesn't know what he did to earn such loyalty, but they figure they'll find out eventually.

NAMED OLD FINN. FINN HELPS TO HEAL BLAKE, CLEAN HIM UP, AND ENLIST HIM IN THE TOWN MILITIA.
* I OWE OLD FINN EVERYTHING

WHEN BLAKE TELLS MARCO HIS STORY, SHE TAKES PITY ON HIM AND DECIDES TO HELP HIM RECOVER HIS LOST SWORD.
* A SUCKER FOR A SOB STORY

MARCO STEALS SAMANTHA'S ARTIFACT. EVENTUALLY IT RETURNS TO SAMANTHA'S HANDS AND THE TWO GAIN A MUTUAL RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER.
* I'VE GOT SAMANTHA'S BACK

Fewer than Three Players?

The phase trio assumes that you'll have at least three players. If you have only two, consider the following ideas:

Skip phase three and just make up another trait, either now or in play.

Come up with a third, joint-story together, and write about how you each feature in that one.

Have the GM also make a character. The GM won't actually play this character alongside the PCs, though it should just be an NPC. Such an NPC can be a great vehicle for kicking off a campaign if a friend they're tied to during character creation mysteriously disappears or even dies, that's instant fuel for drama.

If you only have one player, skip phases two and three, leaving the traits blank to be filled in during play.

Abilities

Characters start play in Analogous as competent individuals, a step above the average.

When you create a character start with their Physical, Social, and Mental abilities at 2. Next, add three points wherever you'd like, creating a spread like 2, 3, 4; all 3s, or 2, 2, 5. These are your character's abilities - mark them on your character sheet.

Your traits might guide you toward your abilities, and vice versa: a character with a 5 in Mental and a 2 in both Physical and Social probably prizes their intelligence, and seeks to solve their problems with clever tricks whenever they can - but is awkward around people and may look down on physical labor.

> Based on what Huckleberry and Ace have said about Blake so far it seems pretty clear that Physical will be his highest ability. Huckleberry looks at the ways she can spend her points and decides to put two into Physical right away, raising it from 2 to 4. She considers putting the third point into either Mental or Social, but knows that Blake is hotheaded, rude, and more than a little higher-thinking-challenged. It only makes sense to go with a 2 / 2 / 5 spread for Blake and put all his points in Physical.

Skills

Pick and rate your character's skills.

Once you have mapped out your character's phases, abilities, and chosen traits, it's time to pick skills. You'll find descriptions and details for each skill in the Skills and Feats chapter.

Your skills form a pyramid, with a single skill rated at 4 – which we'll usually refer to as the peak skill – and more skills at each lower rating on the ladder going down to 1. You may be Untrained in some skills (zero), and only roll your ability when called upon to use that skill.

- One Great (+4) skill
- Two Good (+3) skills
- Three Fair (+2) skills
- Four Average (+1) skills

Note: a few skills have special benefits, notably those skills that affect the number of stress boxes you have available. If you know you want a certain number of those, put those skills on the pyramid first.

The Skill Cap

By default, we make 4 the highest rated skill PCs start with. As characters advance, they can improve beyond this cap, but it's more difficult than improving skills rated below the cap (see Major Milestones).

If you're making a game about cutting-edge technology wielded by superhuman heroes, feel free to set the tip of the skill pyramid at 5 or 6 and build the pyramid from there.

The number of skills you get should be relative to the size of the skill list. Our default skill list has 20 skills, and the Great pyramid gives you a rating in 10 of them, which means every character has some capability in half of the total number of things you can do, and there's room for six PCs to peak have skills rated at 3 and 4 with no overlap. You can tweak this for individual games, especially if you adjust the skill cap. Just keep in mind that bigger pyramids mean more overlap between characters, unless your game has a longer skill list.

Untrained (+0) is the default for any skill you do not take. Sometimes, a skill will state that it's unavailable if a character didn't take it; in those cases, it's not even at Untrained. Programming a computer with no training, for example, is not going to happen.

Eli knows that Samantha's not like the other PCs in terms of skills, so he looks to distance Samantha from them as much as possible. The group has decided that Samantha's magic is going to work off his Scholarship skill, so he's naturally going to focus on that.

He takes Scholarship as Samantha's peak skill, followed by Engineering and Rapport for a wizard, Samantha considers himself a fairly social sort. Eli takes Athletics, Will, and Investigate because he figures Samantha will need them in his line of work, and a smattering of other skills either because neither of his friends have them, or because he wants a positive score in them when everyone's separated. That ends up being Fight, Resources, Contacts, and Perception.

Feats and Refresh

Pick or invent three to five feats. Determine how many plot points you start play with.

Feats change how skills work for your character. Picking and inventing feats are covered in the Skills and Feats chapter.

You get three feats for free, and you can take up to two more feats at the cost of lowering your refresh by one each. (The gist is this: the more cool tricks you can do, the more you'll need to accept compels to get plot points.) Figuring out feats can take a while, so you may want to pick one for now and determine the rest of them during play.

> Huckleberry decides to take the Fencer feat as one of her freebies: +2 to Fight rolls made to create an advantage against an opponent, provided the opponent has a fighting style or weakness she can exploit.
>
> For her remaining free feats, she picks Second-Story Girl and Danger Sense. You can see the write-ups for these on her character sheet.

> ## Adjusting Refresh
>
> A player character in Analogous starts with a refresh of 3. That means he'll start each session off with at least 3 plot points.
>
> If you pick four feats, your refresh is 2. If you pick five feats, your refresh is 1.
>
> Note: some Analogous games will change this setup. Regardless of how feats work in your game, you can never have a refresh lower than 1.
>
> You can adjust these defaults if you want to, and give out more free feats if you want the PCs to have a lot of cool tricks and special bonuses. You can also change the default refresh rate higher refresh means that the PCs won't need to take compels as often (think 4-color superhero comics), and lower refresh means they'll need to take several early in every session in order to have a decent supply (think Die Hard). Also, the higher your refresh, the more likely it is that players will buy feats.

Stress and Consequences

Determine how much of a beating your character can take.

When Analogous characters find themselves in harm's way – a fairly common occurrence when you're highly competent, proactive, and facing drama at every turn – they have two ways to stand their ground and stay on their feet: stress and consequences.

The Conflicts section of the Challenges, Contests, and Conflicts chapter fully explains what these mean and how they're used. In brief, stress represents the ephemeral toll of participating in a conflict, whereas consequences are the lingering effects, and sometimes quite traumatic ones, of taking harm.

Every PC has three different stress tracks. The Health stress track deals with physical harm, Composure handles social stress, and the Focus stress track mitigates mental harm. The more boxes in a stress track, the more resilient the character is in that regard. By default, a character has two boxes in each stress track.

Every PC also has three consequence slots. One is mild, one is moderate, and the last one is severe. Unlike stress, these aren't classified as mental, physical, or social – any of them can apply to any type of harm. As mentioned above, consequences are the injuries and traumas you can't just shake off after the dust settles.

Certain skills and some feats can add to these defaults. See the Skills and Feats chapter for more on that. A quick reference:

Physique helps with Health, Expression with Composure, and Will helps with Focus. Each skill grants one more stress box of the respective type if rated at 1 or 2, or two more stress boxes if rated at 3 or 4. At 5, they grant the ability to take an additional mild consequence before moving up to moderate, for four consequence slots total (or five if you have two different stress-related skills at 5, or three if your character's a real beast with Expression, Physique, and Will all rated at 5). Unlike the standard three, this consequence slot is specifically restricted to stress of its type – physical, mental, or social.

You can add stress tracks if the characters in your game suffer unique kinds of harm, such as wealth stress in a very political game. Changing the number of boxes will slow down and draw out conflicts, which may be more appropriate for high-octane, pulpy games where characters are expected to take a lot of hits.

Blake has Good (+3) Physique, which nets him two more Health boxes. His Will, however, is only Average (+1), but that's still good enough for one more Focus box. He has no points in Expression, so his Composure remains at two boxes.

Marco's Physique is Fair (+2), so she gets a third Health box. His Focus remains at two boxes, thanks to an Untrained Will. His Composure benefits from Marco's +2 Expression, for an extra box.

Samantha, being a rather bookish type, has Untrained (+0) Physique, so he has only the default physical stress track of two boxes. Her Composure is also poor, as Samantha has no points in Expression. Her Good (+3) Will, though, is good for two Focus boxes.

Because none of these characters has Physique or Will rated at Master (+5) or above, each has the default number of consequences: one mild, one moderate, and one severe.

You're All Set!

At the end of this process, you should have a character with:

- A name
- Five traits, along with some backstory
- Abilities totaling 9 points, with all at a minimum of 2
- One skill rated at 4, two at 3, three at 2, and four skills at 1
- Between three and five feats
- A mental and physical stress track of 2-to-4 boxes each
- A refresh rate of 1 to 3 plot points

Now you're ready to play!

GMs, see the Scenes, Sessions, and Scenarios chapter for advice on how to take the traits from the PCs' sheets and from game creation and turn those into thrilling scenarios for the players to experience.

Players, check out the next chapter for more on how to use your traits, or jump straight to Actions and Outcomes to learn more about how to use your skills to do stuff.

**CHAPTER 6
CHARACTER
CREATION**

Quick Character Creation

If you want to skip making a detailed character and just want to play, you can leave most of the character blank and fill in as you play.

At minimum, you need to have the following filled out to start:

- High concept trait
- Best skill
- Name

When it comes to your high concept, you can start off vague and refine the trait later. Guy with Sword is an okay high concept for this method, and later you might discover something about your character that puts a spin on it. When that happens, rewrite the trait to reflect that spin.

You should know your best skill to start – that gives us further ideas about your character. If you have any other thoughts on skills, either skills you're good at or skills you're bad at, write those down. (Since you don't normally write down any skills you have at lower than Average (+1), just make a note on your sheet about those skills you're intentionally saying you don't have.)

And, of course, you need a name! Maybe a first name is all you need for the moment, or a nickname. (There's also the trick of giving yourself a name, only to later reveal that you've been hiding, are undercover, or have amnesia, and write down what your real name is.)

Starting Play

With this method, you start with 3 refresh, so you'll start playing with 3 plot points.

After the first session is over, if you're planning on playing your character again, you should take time to fill in the rest of the traits, skills, and feats.

Filling Traits in Play

Unless you immediately have an idea for your trouble trait, you'll fill that in later. With the other three traits, since you're skipping the Phase Trio, you'll just make up whatever trait seems interesting to you at the moment. Typically you'll do this when you need a trait on your character to achieve something, or you want to turn a situation that's happening into something that's compel-worthy.

As with high concept, don't stress about getting this trait dead-on. After the session's over, take some time to look over and tweak the traits you've created on the fly.

Filling Skills in Play

At any point, if you are using a skill that isn't on your character sheet, one of two things happens: you'll assume the skill is untrained, or you'll write it down on one of your empty skill slots and roll it at that level. This choice exists until all of your skill slots are filled in.

If you roll for a skill not on your sheet and choose to go with Untrained rather than write it down, you can later fill it in on your sheet as something higher. For example, you might be called to roll Scholarship, and choose to roll it at Untrained. Later, you might be called to roll it again, and this time you choose to fill it in at 2.

Likewise, if you roll well on a skill when you chose to take it at Untrained, maybe that'll inspire you to take that skill later.

Since some skills have secondary benefits, notably adjusting your stress track and consequences, you can fill those in when you want to declare your character has such a benefit. Until then, you don't have those benefits, as you're assumed to have that skill at Untrained.

Filling Feats in Play

You get three feats for free, which you can fill in at any time. You can fill in other feats at any time, but you must pay a plot point for each one to do so. That's because your refresh tells you how many plot points you start the game with, so by taking a feat, you should have started with fewer.

If you're out of plot points, but want to note down a feat you have because you're suddenly struck with the idea, do so. But your character doesn't actually have it until you gain a plot point and spend it.

You'll also need to reduce your refresh by one for the next session for each extra feat you take.

Advancement and Change

Your characters aren't going to remain static through the entire campaign. As their stories play out, they'll have the chance to grow and change in response to the events that happen in play. The conflicts they face and the complications they overcome will alter your sense of who they are and push them toward new challenges.

In addition to your characters, the game world will change also. You'll resolve threats as you play, or change the face of a location, or make such an impact on the world that one of the issues may need to change. We'll get more into world advancement later.

Character advancement in Analogous comes in one of two flavors: either you can change something on your sheet to something else that's equivalent, or you can add new things to your sheet. The opportunities you get to do this are collectively called milestones.

Defining Milestones

A milestone is a moment during the game where you have the chance to change or advance your character. We call them milestones because they usually happen at significant "break points" in the action of a game – the end of a session, the end of a scenario, and the end of a story arc, respectively.

Usually, those break points immediately follow some significant event in the story that justifies your character changing in response to events. You might reveal a significant plot detail or have a cliffhanger at the end of a session. You might defeat a major villain or resolve a plotline at the end of a scenario. You might resolve a major storyline that shakes up the campaign world at the end of an arc.

Obviously, things won't always line up that nicely, so GMs, you have some discretion in deciding when a certain level of milestone occurs. If it seems satisfying to give out a milestone in the middle of a session, go ahead, but stick to the guidelines here to keep from handing out too many advancement opportunities too often.

Milestones come in three levels of importance: minor, significant, and major.

Minor Milestones

Minor milestones usually occur at the end of a session of play, or when one piece of a story has been resolved. These kinds of milestones are more about changing your character rather than making him or her more powerful, about adjusting in response to whatever's going on in the story if you need to. Sometimes it won't really make sense to take advantage of a minor milestone, but you always have the opportunity if you should need to.

During a minor milestone, you can choose to do one (and only one) of the following:

- Switch the rank values of any two skills, or replace one 1-point skill with one that isn't on your sheet.

- Change any single feat for another feat.

- Purchase a new feat, provided you have the refresh to do so. (Remember, you can't go below 1 refresh.)

- Rename one character trait that isn't your high concept.

- In addition, you can also rename any moderate consequences you have, so that you can start them on the road to recovery, presuming you have not already done so. No roll needed.

This is a good way to make slight character adjustments, if it seems like something on your character isn't quite right – you don't end up using that feat as often as you thought, or you resolved the Blood Feud with Edmund that you had and thus it's no longer appropriate, or any of those changes that keep your character consistent with the events of play.

In fact, you should almost always be able to justify the change you're making in terms of the game's story. You shouldn't be able to change Hot Temper to Staunch Pacifist, for example, unless something happened in the story to inspire a serious change of heart – you met a holy man, or had a traumatic experience that made you want to give up the sword, or whatever. GMs, you're the final arbiter on this, but don't be so much of a stickler that you sacrifice a player's fun for consistency.

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> Marco gets a minor milestone. Huckleberry looks over her character sheet, to see if there's anything she wants to change. One thing that sticks out to her is that during the last session, Samantha has been scheming behind her back a lot and putting her in a bad position.
>
> She looks over at Eli and says, "You know what? I have this trait, I've Got Samantha's Back. I think I need to change that in light of current circumstances, and call it, I Know Samantha is Up to Something."
>
> Eli says, "Seriously? I mean, it's not like he does it all the time."
>
> Huckleberry grins. "Well, when he stops, I can change it back."
>
> Ace approves the change, and Huckleberry rewrites one of Marco's traits.
>
> Meanwhile, Blake also gets a minor milestone. Zo looks over his sheet, and notices that he spends a lot more time lying to people than he does trying to make friends with them. He asks Ace if he can swap the ranks of his Deceive and his Rapport skill, giving him Good (+3) Deceive and Fair (+2) Rapport. She agrees, and he notes the new skill totals on his character sheet.

Significant Milestones

Significant milestones usually occur at the end of a scenario or the conclusion of a big plot event (or, when in doubt, at the end of every two or three sessions). Unlike minor milestones, which are primarily about change, significant milestones are about learning new things — dealing with problems and challenges has made your character generally more capable at what they do.

In addition to the benefit of a minor milestone, you also gain both of the following:

One additional skill point, which you can spend to buy a new skill at 1 rank or increase an existing skill by one rank.

If you have any severe consequences, you can rename them to begin the recovery process, if you haven't already.

Samantha gets a significant milestone after the end of a scenario. He gains an additional skill point.

Eli looks at his character sheet, and decides he wants to take his Perception up from Fair (+2) to Good (+3). He knows that's going to screw him up with the rules, though, so instead, he decides to take Resources at Average (+1) the PCs have been on a few lucrative adventures lately, and he figures that's his opportunity to create a sense of stable wealth.

If he waits two more milestones, he'll be able to put one of his Average skills at Fair (+2), and then bump his Perception up to Good (+3) like he originally wanted.

He also has the opportunity to take one of the benefits from a minor milestone. He has been in a lot of fights this game so far, and feels like his Not the Face! is getting old, considering the number of times his character has been hit in the face. He replaces it with Hit Me, and There Will Be Consequences, to reflect his changing attitude about the violence he encounters.

Skill Columns

During character creation, you organized your skills into a pyramid. You don't have to stick to that for character advancement.

However, there's still a limitation you have to deal with: skill columns. This means you can't have more skills at a certain rank than you have at the rank below it. So if you have three skill columns at 3, you have at least three skills at 2 and at least three at 1 to support your three 3-point skills.

The pyramid follows this rule already, but when you're adding skills, you need to make sure you don't violate that limit. It's easy to forget that if you use a skill point to upgrade one of your own skills, you might suddenly not have enough skills to "support" it at the new rank.

So, let's say you have one +3, two +2, and three +1 skills. Your skill distribution looks roughly like this:

```
Physique - 3

Athletics - 2
Burglary - 2

Fight - 1
Will - 1
Engineering - 1
```

At a milestone, you want to upgrade a 2-point skill to 3. That'd give you two at 3, one at 2, and three at 1:

```
Physique - 3
Burglary - 3

Athletics - 2

Fight - 1
Will - 1
Engineering - 1
```

You see how that doesn't work? You're now missing the second +2 skill you'd need to be square with the rules.

When this happens, you have one of two options. You can buy a new skill at the lowest possible rank – in this case, +1 – and then upgrade it in subsequent milestones until you're in a position to bump the skill you want to the appropriate level. Or you can "bank" the skill point, not spend it now, and wait until you've accumulated enough to buy a skill at whatever rank you need to support the move.

In the case above, you could buy a 1-rank skill, promote one of your 1-rank skills to a 2-rank, then bump the original skill up to 3. That would take three significant or major milestones to do. Or, you could wait, bank up three skill points, buy a new skill at 2, then bump the original skill up to 3 in the same moment. It just depends on whether you want to put new stuff on your sheet or not in the interim.

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  GMs, strictly enforcing how the skills work can be a pain in the ass
sometimes. If you and the players really want to be able to upgrade a certain
skill in a way that breaks the rules now, simply ask that the player spend the
next few milestones "correcting" their skill spread, rather than making them
wait. It's okay. We won't come after you.
  You might notice that this means that the further you get up the ladder, the
harder it is to quickly advance your skills. This is intentional   no one is
going to be able to get to the point where they're awesome at everything, all
the time. That's boring.
```

Major Milestones

A major milestone should only occur when something happens in the campaign that shakes it up a lot – the end of a story arc (or around three scenarios), the death of a main NPC villain, or any other large-scale change that reverberates around your game world.

These milestones are about gaining more power. The challenges of yesterday simply aren't sufficient to threaten these characters anymore, and the threats of tomorrow will need to be more adept, organized, and determined to stand against them in the future.

Achieving a major milestone confers the benefits of a significant milestone and a minor milestone, and all of the following additional options:

■ If you have an extreme consequence, rename it to reflect that you've moved past its most debilitating effects. This allows you to take another extreme consequence in the future, if you desire.

■ Take an additional point of refresh, which allows you to immediately buy a new feat or keep it in order to give yourself more plot points at the beginning of a session.

■ Advance a skill beyond the campaign's current skill cap, if you're able to, thus increasing the skill cap.

■ Rename your character's high concept if you desire.

Reaching a major milestone is a pretty big deal. Characters with more feats are going to have a diverse range of bonuses, making their skills much more effective by default. Characters with higher refresh will have a much larger fountain of plot points to work with when sessions begin, which means they'll be less reliant on compels for a while.

GMs, when the player characters go past the skill cap, it will necessarily change the way you make opposition NPCs, because you're going to need foes who can match the PCs in terms of base competence so as to provide a worthy challenge. It won't happen all at once, which will give you the chance to introduce more powerful enemies gradually, but if you play long enough, eventually you're going to have PCs who have Epic and Legendary skill ratings – that alone should give you a sense of what kind of villains you'll need to bring to get in their way.

Most of all, a major milestone should signal that lots of things in the world of your game have changed. Some of that will probably be reflected in world advancement, but given the number of chances the PCs have had to revise their traits in response to the story, you could be looking at a group with a much different set of priorities and concerns than they had when they started.

Marco reaches the end of a long story arc and is awarded a major milestone. In the game, the PCs have just accomplished the overthrow of Barathar, Smuggler Queen of the Sindral Reach, which leaves an enormous power vacuum in the game world.

Huckleberry looks at her character sheet. She took an extreme consequence in the past arc of scenarios, and allowed one of her traits to get replaced with the trait Soul-Burned by the Demon Arc'yeth. She now has the opportunity to rename that trait again, and she decides to call it I Must Kill Arc'yeth's Kind   she hasn't quite escaped the scars of the experience, but it's better than where she was, given that her aims are now proactive.

She also gets an additional point of refresh. She asks Ace whether or not she can turn her experience with Arc'yeth into something that will allow her to fight demons in the future. Ace sees no reason to object, and Huckleberry decides to buy a feat on the spot.

"Demon-Slayer: +2 to the use of the Fencer feat, when she chooses to use it against any demon or any demonic servitor."

Huckleberry records the new feat on Marco's character sheet, and rewrites the appropriate trait.

Samantha also gets a major milestone. Eli looks over his character sheet, and realizes that he's in a position to advance his peak skill, Scholarship, to Superb (+5). He does so, and Ace makes a note that she needs to make any wizardly enemies Samantha might encounter that much more powerful, just to get his attention.

Finally, Blake also reaches a major milestone. Recently in the plot, Blake discovered that the Ivory Shroud was much more than a martial arts society   they've been secret political movers and shakers for a long time, and recently supported Barathar in her efforts to control the Reach.

In response to this, Zo decides to alter his high concept slightly to Former Ivory Shroud Disciple, indicating his desire to distance himself from the order. Ace tells him that the Shroud isn't going to take his defection well.

So we have Marco with a new appetite for killing demons, Samantha reaching a heretofore unseen level of power, and Blake questioning his loyalty to his only real source of discipline. Ace makes a lot of notes about what this means for the next few scenarios.

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Back to Character Creation!

One way of looking at a major milestone is that it's the equivalent of a season finale in a television show. Once you start the next session, a lot of things have the potential to be fundamentally different about your game – you might be focused on new problems, several characters will have traits changed, there will be new threats in the setting, and so on.

When that happens, you might decide that it's a worthwhile endeavor to take a session to sit down like you did at character creation and review all the PCs again, altering or adjusting anything that seems like it might need revision – new skill configurations, a new set of feats, more changes to traits, etc. You may also want to examine the issues in your game and make sure they're still appropriate, revise location traits, or anything else that seems necessary to move your game forward.

So long as you keep them at the same level of refresh and skill points they had, reconvening like this might be exactly what you need to make sure everyone's still on the same page about the game. And GMs, remember – the more you give the players a chance to actively invest in the game world, the more it'll pay off for you when you're running the game.

STUFF

The cyberpunk genre loves stuff. Gadgets. Droids. Cyberware. Analogous is no different, except that these pieces of kit follow the same rules as everything else: items are built on skills, feats, and traits.

Equipment in Play

There are different types of stuff you'll encounter in play. Most things in the world are mundane equipment: your clothes, a pistol, a pencil, a pack of cigarettes. Sometimes you'll run into cutting-edge technology, super-science, that extends beyond reality and into sci-fi. Finally, some things are especially important to the story, iconic items that are unique or tied in some way to a character.

Mundane Stuff

For the most part, mundane equipment can be ignored. Your character has clothes that they wear. They have food in the fridge, probably, and you don't need to mark "nail clippers" onto their character sheet. Mundane stuff becomes important in three circumstances:

- The stuff is really expensive.
- The stuff has an effect on gameplay.
- Someone is preventing you from getting the stuff.

Really expensive stuff is the obvious restriction. You can't have a pocketful of diamonds as part of your household kit. Generally, you can get easy access to stuff that your lifestyle would support without even rolling Resources. A character's lifestyle is based on their Resources skill.

> Resources 0 – Destitute	You probably don't have a stable living situation, and struggle to afford anything at all.
> Resources 1 – Poor	You have a home, but may move frequently as you're priced out. You run out of money most months before your next paycheck and struggle to keep the bills paid. You can afford a few things around the house, second-hand, but rarely have money for luxuries.
> Resources 2 – Middle-class	You own your home, though you're still making payments on it. You still have to think about your budget but you can support a household as long as your partner works too, and you can go on a family vacation every year or two.
> Resources 3 – Comfortable	You've never really worried about money, it was always just there as long as you kept doing what you were supposed to. You can go on vacations and afford some cool technology. If you were to suffer a financial setback, like a medical emergency, it wouldn't bankrupt you.
> Resources 4 – Wealthy	You own a few homes and travel between them. You may have a job, but it's so far removed from 'work' that it's hard to describe. You're past the point of trading cash for most things, and instead trade favors.
> Resources 5 – Ultra-wealthy	Money is rarely, if ever, a topic of concern for you. If you want something you buy it, or more likely tell someone who works for you to buy it through one of your trusts, businesses, or foundations.

Costs for specific individual items are discussed under the Resources skill. Generally, when it comes to seeking an especially pricey piece of gear, your GM will be able to make a call as to whether it's something that would reasonably be within your reach, or at least the difficulty you'll roll against to acquire it.

If the stuff you're trying to buy would have a direct effect on gameplay, it's well within the GM's purview to decide that getting it represents a challenge of its own. If you're in the market for a souped-up car to take down to the street races so you can get in with the Drift King and his crew, you won't be able to just buy the car off the lot: it's going to be a specialized vehicle with some serious after-market modifications. The GM may rule that you have to first buy a car, then find contacts in the street-racing world to help you bring it up to speed, then roll your own skills to understand how to handle this beast.

Generally, any item that has an effect on gameplay – specialized weapons, tools, or the like that would allow you to bypass whole scenes of challenges – is not going to be for sale on the open market. Those are probably super-science or iconic items.

Finally, you might be trying to buy something that someone else is guarding. Mundane stuff can become important if someone has a monopoly on it, like the local gangsters controlling the supply of fuel into and out of the city. It could also be important due to someone preventing you, specifically, from making progress: they could be rolling Resources rolls against yours to outbid you at every turn, leaving you stranded without the thing you were looking for. If that's the case it will become apparent pretty quickly, as the world's supply of knick-knacks probably didn't dry up overnight.

Super-Science Stuff

The second kind of stuff you'll find in Analogous is technology that exists at the cutting edge. Thinking machines, jetpacks, customized viruses, that kind of thing. Super-science stuff is gear that may be unique or may be available only through certain channels. You won't be able to purchase it, you'll have to find some other way to borrow, steal, or make it yourself.

Super-science stuff is special in that it directly affects gameplay. Generally it will be represented with a feat that the item possesses and grants to its user. This feat isn't quite like those attached to skills, because these can really break the rules. A jetpack gives you a feat like Aerobatics, for example, allowing you to use your Athletics rather than Drive when using it, and the jetpack itself has vehicle statistics.

If a piece of equipment allows a character to take actions they normally couldn't, dramatically changes the way in which a set of rules works, or otherwise grants them abilities above and beyond their physical limitations, it's probably a piece of super-science tech.

Super-science stuff is almost always single-use or lost between scenarios. If you want to keep a piece of super-science tech you should talk with your GM and consider making it a feat of your own. If you find a jetpack, for example, maybe you spend the time between scenarios tweaking it to your own specifications and turn it into Jake Flash's Jetpack – thus, moving it from super-science stuff to an iconic item.

Iconic Stuff

When a character has a story around a bit of gear, it's iconic. That's Fast Jack's machine interface. That's Domingo Torniquet's car. That's Filthy Frank's revolver.

Iconic gear, like super-science technology, often comes with a feat. The difference, in this case, is that a character has the feat that makes the item special. In anyone else's hands it's just a piece of gear, but in the hands of its owner the item has a life of its own. This special-ness is usually represented as a bonus to its relevant skill, or gives the item a use beyond the usual.

Characters keep iconic items, marking them down in the Extras section of their character sheet along with their relevant mundane stuff, but also making note of them with the requisite feat and – if it's important enough – a trait. A whole character can be built around a sufficiently storied object.

Stuff In Play

In play stuff is treated like everything else. If it becomes a focal object in the scene, an inanimate object can have its own traits, abilities, skills, and feats.

For mundane objects, this is normally only relevant if someone is trying to destroy, fix, or use an item. An especially complex machine, for example, might require a difficulty 8 Mental + Engineering roll, or a character might have to enter a Physical + Physique contest against a door that has it's own Physical score of 6.

GMs, you can let your intuition guide you here. If a player or character is trying to use a piece of gear that they would have access to, in a way that makes sense in the scenario, and would benefit them, let them do it. If the equipment helps but doesn't do the job on its own (a crowbar, say, or a fully-stocked sewing kit), it might offer a +2 die bonus to their skill roll.

Weapons, armor, and vehicles are special cases where a bit more granularity is merited.

Weapons

Weapons in Analogous deal damage. The ability to hit a target is still entirely represented by a character's abilities and skills, but if the hit connects a weapon will determine the severity of the injury and may offer new ways to use shifts on the targets.

You can mostly categorize weapons as light, medium, or heavy.

Light weapons are things like pocket knives, pistols, brass knuckles, or batons: weapons you could hold in one hand or conceivably fit into a pocket. Light weapons do one point of damage on a hit.

Medium weapons are hard to hide, and what you might think of when you say 'weapons.' A fire axe, a submachine gun, a hunting rifle, or a longbow are all medium weapons. Medium weapons do two points of damage on a hit. Note that most medium weapons require a license and are probably illegal to brandish in public.

Heavy weapons are tools of war, rarely seen outside that setting and almost certainly illegal for an individual to own. Heavy weapons include rocket launchers, tripod-mounted machine guns, sniper rifles, and all kinds of explosives. Heavy weapons do at least three points of damage on a hit.

Ranged weapons, like bows and guns, can be used against targets a number of zones away indicated by the weapon. For example, a gun that says "range 2 zones" uses the Shoot skill for attacks, and can be used against enemies up to two zones over. Most pistols can be used two zones away, while rifles are usually effective at four or more zones.

Some example weapons and their traits or special rules are below. Note that most of the special rules are simply recommendations on how to use shifts in a fight.

Armor

Armor in Analogous is rare, mostly used by police, militaries, and private security. Individuals can cobble together armor from household items and heavy jackets, but it won't stand up to serious weaponry.

To keep things simple armor is considered either Light or Heavy. Light armor can be mistaken for clothes if you don't look closely, while heavy armor is clearly a protective measure.

Light armor includes reinforced leather jackets and high-tech anti-ballistic clothing. When you take damage while wearing light armor, reduce that damage by one. If this reduces the damage to 0 treat the attack as though it was a tie (granting the attacker a boost for their next attack) rather than a success.

Bulletproof vests, flak jackets, and riot gear are heavy armor. When you take damage while wearing heavy armor you reduce that damage by two points. If this reduces the damage to 0 treat the attack as though it was a tie (granting the attacker a boost for their next attack) rather than a success.

Example Weapons

Light Weapons

> Brass Knuckles - concealed - The classic tool of mob enforcers, brass knuckles are small, easily concealed, and require virtually no training to use.

> Cane - entangle - A sturdy wooden cane with a hooked handle makes for an effective club that can be carried without raising an eyebrow, and it's a great tool to trip or tangle up an enemy as well.

> Pocket Pistol - range 1 zone, concealed - Tiny holdout semi-automatic pistols can be carried in a pocket or even palmed until a fight starts.

> Knife - concealed - From kitchen knife to hunting knife to folding pocket knife, there's no easier weapon to get hold of.

Medium Weapons

> Bow - range 2 zones - While the bow-and-arrow is an antique weapon, it's still effective... and quiet.

> Chain - entangle - Bike chains or lengths of steel chain can be wrapped around an arm as an impromptu shield, used to whip, punch, or tangle up a combatant.

> Fencing Sword - defensive - Rapiers, sabers, and other such relics of the olden days are more likely to be found hanging on a display than in an enemy's hands, but they remain dangerous in the right hands.

> Hunting Rifle - range 4 zones - A hunting rifle with a high enough caliber can be a serious threat and is cheap and easy to purchase.

> Submachine Gun - range 2 zones, automatic - The gold standard of serious security forces, a submachine gun turns a single person into a serious threat.

Heavy Weapons

> Shotgun - range 2 zones, overwhelming - The shotgun's claim to fame is putting out a lot of damage in a short range. Nothing else compares for pure destructive capacity.

> Sniper Rifle - range 6 zones - For taking out enemies a half-mile away, a sniper rifle's the tool you want.

Special Weapons

> Grenade - range 1 zone, explosive (6) - Restricted to military use, grenades and similar explosives can change the course of a conflict.

> Smoke Bomb - range 1 zone, shroud - While police forces sometimes carry smoke grenades, a similar item can be ginned up with some fireworks and a chemistry set.

Weapon Traits

Automatic. In addition to its normal use an automatic weapon can be used to make a single attack against all characters in a single zone within range. Each defender rolls individually and compares their result to the attack to determine whether they take damage and how much. Doing so empties the weapon's magazine and leaves the barrel hot the weapon gains the trait Overheated or Empty Clip. A weapon with Empty Clip can't fire again until someone uses their action to reload it. An Overheated weapon suffers a serious misfire if it totally fails an attack roll against any target: it jams, breaks, or even injures its user. Be careful with your weapon after you use it on full auto!

Concealed. A concealed weapon is small enough to hide or is otherwise camouflaged. In addition to being able to use Burglary or Stealth to keep the weapon's existence a secret, a character using a concealed weapon can use Fight or Shoot to roll initiative if they make the first move and surprise their enemies.

Defensive. When you earn a shift while attacking with a defensive weapon you can use it to give yourself a boost on your next defend action in combat, and if you earn a shift while defending you can boost your next attack.

Entangle. Entangling weapons are well-suited for tripping, grappling, disarming, or otherwise disrupting a combatant. When a character earns a shift with an entangling weapon they can use it to place an appropriate trait on their target with a free invocation, as though they had created an advantage in addition to attacking.

Explosive. Explosives target everyone in a single zone. You might roll Athletics against a difficulty of 1 to land it in the right zone or may roll Engineering or Science to place it, but this is not used as the attack. Instead the weapon has its own rating that it rolls as an attack against everyone in the target zone.

Overwhelming. Weapons with the overwhelming trait deal terrible injuries. When a character takes damage from an overwhelming weapon that fills their stress track and take a consequence to clear their Health track they then mark off any excess damage against the new Health track. For example, a character with 3 Health that takes 4 damage from an overwhelming weapon would fill their Health track completely, take a consequence, then take the one extra damage on their next Health track. A sufficiently bad hit from an overwhelming weapon can take a character from fine to taken out in a single exchange.

Shroud. This weapon isn't used to attack, but to create an advantage. It applies the Shrouded trait or something similar on a single zone within range.

Vehicles

Vehicles in Analogous have four main qualities: their speed, their handling, their Health, and their cost.

A vehicle's speed is its top speed. In the case of races between similar vehicles you can use this value as a bonus to the driver's Drive roll. If you're seeing whether one vehicle can outpace another you might use it instead as a limit to the number of total successes a driver can get on those rolls, or just a static figure showing that one vehicle going flat-out will outrun the other. A higher speed score means a faster vehicle, of course.

The handling score for a vehicle is how maneuverable it is, and should be used as a bonus or penalty to Drive attempts to do cool stunts, execute hairpin turns, or otherwise move that vehicle where speed isn't the determining factor.

Just like any object, a vehicle has a physical stress track, its Health. Most vehicles have just the one stress track, after which they're taken out, some may be able to take one or more consequences (like Damaged Brakes, Overheated, or Falling Apart). Vehicles that are special – iconic or super-science vehicles, for example – are more likely to have those consequence slots. If a vehicle is important enough to have consequence slots its owner should consider taking it as a trait.

Finally, vehicles cost money. The basic guidelines for these kinds of purchases were already covered under Resources, but this provides an additional level of detail if it seems useful in your game. Note that regardless of cost, most people can't buy a fighter plane. They're just not for sale. Refer back to some of the guidance for mundane objects: getting access to military hardware, a passenger plane, or something similar should be a real challenge, not just a Resources roll.

Vehicles like tanks also have armor, reducing damage against them by 2 points when they're hit. GMs, use your judgment should your players decide to fight a vehicle head-on for some reason.

Example Vehicles

Vehicle	Speed	Handling	Health	Cost
Bicycle	1	+4	1	2
Motorcycle	3	+3	3	3
Coupe	3	+1	5	3
Sedan	3	-	6	4
Sports Car	5	+1	5	5
Racecar	6	+2	6	7
Limo	3	-1	8	6
Van	3	-1	8	4
Pickup	3	-1	10	4
Semi Truck	3	-2	16	6
Tank	2	-4	20	10
Prop Plane	5	-	8	6
Fighter Jet	8	-	12	10
Private Jet	7	-2	10	9
Helicopter	4	+1	4	8
Motorboat	5	-1	6	4
Sailboat	2	-2	10	6
Cargo Ship	1	-4	20	10

Gadgets

Stuff that isn't a weapon, armor, a vehicle, but still matters to the story is probably a gadget. "Gadgets" is a kind of catch-all category of useful little things to have.

These are mostly transitory and perform some kind of function or allow a character to act where they couldn't otherwise. For example, without a radio jammer you can't jam a radio – there's no skill for that. Lockpicks let you pick locks, a pocket shredder shreds documents, and a folding camp chair lets you sit. Work with your GM to identify what's reasonable to already have, or to have access to.

Gadgets that are a cut above the rest, but not quite at the level of super-science tech or iconic items may grant a +1 or +2 die bonus on contests made using them. It's easier to paint with a really nice set of brushes, for example, or to cook with a well-stocked kitchen. Items that provide a bonus are almost always more expensive – sometimes by a few steps – than their regular counterparts.

If a gadget comes back again and again in use talk with your GM about adding it to the extras section of your character sheet, and whether it requires any kind of other justification. For example, a character with Burglary rated at 3 probably owns a set of lockpicks and keeps it on them – that should be easy to justify.

Gadgets don't typically have feats or traits attached to them. If they get to the point of having such a trait, they're probably important enough to be iconic or super-science gear, and you can use those rules.

RUNNING THE GAME

What You Do

If you're the gamemaster, then your job is a little different from everyone else's. This chapter is going to give you a bunch of tools to make that job easier during play.

We already talked a little bit about the GM's job in The Basics, but let's take a more detailed look at your unique responsibilities.

Start and End Scenes

One of your primary responsibilities during the game is to decide definitively when a scene begins and ends. This might not seem like that big a deal, but it is, because it means that you're the person primarily responsible for the pacing of each session. If you start scenes too early, it takes a long time to get to the main action. If you don't end them soon enough, then they drag on and it takes you a long time to get anything significant done.

The players will sometimes help you with this, if they're keen on getting to the next bit of action, but sometimes they'll naturally be inclined to spend too much time bantering in character or focusing on minutiae. When that happens, it's your job to step in like a good movie editor and say, "I think we've pretty much milked this scene for all it's worth. What do we want to do next?"

We have more advice on starting and ending scenes in the next chapter, Scenes, Sessions, and Scenarios.

Drama is Better Than Realism

In Analogous, don't get too bogged down trying to maintain absolute consistency in the world or adhere to a draconian sense of realism. The game operates by the rules of drama and fiction; use that to your advantage. There should be very few moments in the game where the PCs are free of conflicts or problems to deal with, even if it'd be more "realistic" for them to get a long breather.

When you're trying to decide what happens, and the answer that makes the most sense is also kind of boring, go with something that's more exciting than sensible! You can always find a way later on to justify something that doesn't make immediate sense.

Play the World and the NPCs

As the gamemaster, it's your job to decide how everyone and everything else in the world responds to what the PCs do, as well as what the PCs' environment is like. If a PC botches a roll, you're the one who gets to decide the consequences. When an NPC attempts to assassinate a PC's friend, you're the one who gets to decide how they go about it. When the PCs stroll up to a food vendor in a market, you get to decide what kind of day the vendor is having, what kind of personality he or she has, what's on sale that day. You determine the weather when the PCs pull up to that dark cave.

Fortunately, you don't have to do this in a vacuum – you have a lot of tools to help you decide what would be appropriate. The process we outline in Game Creation should provide you with a lot of context about the game you're running, whether that's in the form of traits like current and impending issues, specific locations that you might visit, or NPCs with strong agendas that you can use.

The PCs' traits also help you decide how to make the world respond to them. As stated in the Traits and Plot points chapter, the best traits have a double edge to them. You have a lot of power to exploit that double edge by using event-based compels. That way, you kill two birds with one stone – you add detail and surprise to your game world, but you also keep the PCs at the center of the story you're telling.

This facet of your job also means that when you have NPCs in a scene, you speak for and make decisions for them like the players do for their PCs – you decide when they're taking an action that requires dice, and you follow the same rules the players do for determining how that turns out. Your NPCs are going to be a little different than the PCs, however, depending on how important they are to the story.

Let the Players Help You

You don't have to shoulder the whole burden of making up world details yourself. Remember, the more collaborative you get, the more emotional investment the players are going to have in the result, because they shared in its creation.

If a character has a trait that connects them to someone or something in the world, make that player your resident "expert" on whatever the trait refers to. So if someone has Scars from the Great War, poll that player for information whenever the Great War comes up in conversation. "You notice that this sergeant is wearing a veteran's mark, which is a rare decoration from the War. What hardcore crap do you have to do to get one of those? Do you have one?" Some players will defer back to you, and that's fine, but it's important that you keep making the offer so as to foster a collaborative atmosphere.

Also, one of the main uses of the create an advantage ⊕ action is precisely to give players a way to add details to the world through their characters. Use that to your advantage when you draw a blank or simply want to delegate more control. One good way to do this during play is to answer the player's question with a question, if they ask for information.

Judge the Use of Rules

It's also your job to make most of the moment-to-moment decisions about what's legit and what's not regarding the rules. Most often, you're going to decide when something in the game deserves a roll, what type of action that is (overcome, attack, etc.) and how difficult that roll is. In conflicts, this can get a little more complicated, like determining if a situation trait should force someone to make an overcome action, or deciding whether or not a player can justify a particular advantage they're trying to create.

You also judge the appropriateness of any invocations or compels that come up during play, like we talked about in the Traits and Plot points chapter, and make sure that everyone at the table is clear on what's going on. With invocations, this is pretty easy – as long as the player can explain why the trait is relevant, you're good to go. With compels, it can get a little more complicated, because you need to articulate precisely what complication the player is agreeing to.

We provide some more tips on judging the use of rules below.

You're the Chairman, Not God

Approach your position as arbiter of the rules by thinking of yourself as "first among equals" in a committee, rather than as an absolute authority. If there's a disagreement on the use of the rules, try encouraging a brief discussion and let everyone talk freely, rather than making a unilateral decision. A lot of times, you'll find that the group is self-policing if someone tries to throw out a compel that's a real stretch, it's just as likely that another player will bring it up before you do.

Your job is really to have the "last word" on any rules-related subject, rather than to dictate from your chair. Keep that in mind.

Eli: "Is there a way to disrupt this magical construct without killing the subjects trapped in it?"

Ace: "Well, you know that it's using their life force to power itself. If there were a way to do that, what do you think it'd look like? I mean, you're the expert wizard, you tell me."

Eli: "Hm… I think there'd be some kind of counter-incantation, like a failsafe mechanism in case things go horribly wrong."

Ace: "Yeah, that sounds good. Roll Scholarship to see if that's there."

Create Scenarios
(and **Nearly Everything Else**)

Finally, you're responsible for making all of the stuff that the PCs encounter and react to in the game. That not only includes NPCs with skills and traits, but it also includes the traits on scenes, environments, and objects, as well as the dilemmas and challenges that make up a scenario of Analogous. You provide the prompts that give your group a reason to play this game to begin with – what problems they face, what issues they have to resolve, whom they're opposing, and what they'll have to go through in order to win the day.

This job gets a whole chapter all on its own. See Scenes, Sessions, and Scenarios.

Creating Your Game

As your players create their characters, you'll be creating the game at the same time. The game – it's setting, scale, NPCs – can be anything you want.

The default assumption of Analogous is that you're setting the game:

- In the near future
- Of a world very much like ours
- Where computing and technology took a different route
- Under the control of omnipresent, immensely powerful corporations
- That seek to stifle innovation and limit freedom

When you're creating your game focus on the setting, the scale, the issues, and the major figures that are likely to appear.

Setting: Decide where and when the game takes place. Is it in an urban center? A wasteland? Domestic or overseas? In the glittering bubble-city of a high-tech corporation or in the secondhand slums on its last legs?

Scale: Decide how epic or personal your story will be. Are your players concerned with their next paycheck or with the dealings of international spy rings?

Issues: Decide what threats and pressures inherent to the setting will spur the protagonists to action. Be sure to match these issues to the setting and scale. Having characters try to bring down a corrupt government agent from a post-apocalyptic shack in the woods will be impossible. Similarly, trying to hang the drama of your story on a struggle for a family inheritance while they also participate in the Second Cyber-War may be difficult.

NPCs: Decide who the important people and locations are. These NPCs are likely to support and be tied to your setting and your issues.

Skills and Feats: Decide what sorts of things characters in the setting are likely to want to do. The base list of skills presented in this book should support most near-future sci-fi stories, but you may want to tailor it to the setting you develop with your players.

Character Creation: Make the PCs. Their issues will inform the issues of the setting, and vice versa. The creation should be collaborative to bring the characters into the story, and wrap the story around the characters.

Setting Up Your Game

The first step in setting up your Analogous game is to decide what sort of people the protagonists are and what sort of world surrounds them. Your decisions here will tell you virtually everything you need to know to get the ball rolling: what the protagonists are good at, what they may or may not care about, what problems they're likely to get into, what kind of impact these characters have on the world, and so on. You don't need complete answers (because that's part of the point of playing the game), but you should have enough of an idea that answering those questions doesn't draw a blank.

Once you have an idea of your game's themes and scale, we crystallize that into a setting. We'll do that later in this chapter.

Some sample settings are presented in the appendix at the end of the book. You can use these as starting points, or simply build stories in those settings.

A Game's Scale

Decide how epic or personal your story will be.

The setting might be small or it might be vast, but where your stories take place determines the scale of your game.

In a small-scale game, characters deal with problems in a city or region, they don't travel a great deal, and the problems are local. A large-scale game involves dealing with problems that affect a world, a civilization, or even a galaxy if the genre you're playing in can handle that kind of thing. (Sometimes, a small-scale game will turn into a large-scale one over time, as you've probably seen in long-running novel series or television shows.)

Ace likes the vibe of "guy and girl with sword," and thinks it'll shine as a small-scale game, where they might travel from town to town, but the problems they have to deal with are local—like a thieves' guild or the regent's vile machinations.

The Setting's Big Issues

Decide what threats and pressures inherent to the setting will spur the protagonists to action.

Every setting needs to have something going on that the characters care about, often a peril they want to fight or undermine. These are the setting's issues.

You'll come up with two issues as a group and write them down on index cards or a game creation worksheet. These issues are traits and will be available to invoke or compel throughout the entirety of the game.

The issues should reflect the scale of your game and what the characters will face. They're broad ideas; they don't just affect your characters, but many people in the world. Issues take two forms:

Current Issues: These are problems or threats that exist in the world already, possibly for a long time. Protagonists tackling these issues are trying to change the world, to make it a better place. Examples: a corrupt regime, organized crime, rampant poverty and disease, a generations-long war.

Impending Issues: These are things that have begun to rear their ugly heads, and threaten to make the world worse if they come to pass or achieve a goal. Protagonists tackling these issues are trying to keep the world from slipping into chaos or destruction. Examples: an invasion from a neighboring country, the sudden rising of a zombie horde, the imposition of martial law.

Game and character creation involve making traits. If you're new to Analogous, read over the Traits and Plot points chapter.

The default number of issues in an Analogous game is two: Either two current issues (for a story solely about trying to make the world a better place), two impending issues (for a story about striving to save people from threats), or one of each. The latter option is common in fiction: think about the stalwart heroes who work against some impending doom while already discontent with the world around them.

Changing the Number of Issues

Of course, you don't have to use the default number of two issues if you don't want to one or three also works, but it will change the resulting game a bit. A game with one issue will revolve around just that issue a quest to rid a city of evil, or to stop evil from happening. A game with three will show off a busy world, one where the characters' resources are strained against multiple fronts. If you think you need to focus down or expand the scope of your game, talk it over with the group and start by tweaking the number of issues to best fit what you're after.

> The group thinks about the sort of problems they want to
> deal with in the world. Eli immediately says "organized crime,"
> and they flesh that out a little. They come up with the idea of
> "The Scar Triad," a group of thugs who are known for thievery,
> extortion, and other nasty things that the world could do without.
> This is clearly a current issue.
>
> Huckleberry wants the story to also be about something on the
> verge of happening, something Really Bad. They come up with
> an impending issue: a vile cult that seeks to summon something
> horrible into the world (which means they're also saying that
> their setting includes horrible, Lovecraft-inspired things). Zo
> calls it "The Doom that Is to Come," and Eli really likes this
> idea because it gives his bookish character a hook into things
> going on in the world.

Making the Issues into Traits

As we said earlier, issues are traits. Turn the ideas you have into traits that
you could conceivably use at different times in the story (often as compels to
the protagonists or as invocations for foes, but clever players will always find
other uses for traits). Write them down, and then if you need to add a little bit to
remember the context or some details, write those down alongside the traits.

> Ace writes down The Scar Triad and The Doom that Is to
> Come as two game traits. She notes down next to The Scar Triad,
> "They're into racketeering and other nasty stuff." And with The
> Doom that Is to Come, "Led by the Cult of Tranquility."

If you're new to making traits, hold off on this for now. You'll get quite a bit
of practice making traits for your characters. Once you're done with character
creation, turn these issue ideas into traits.

Changing Issues in Play

The Long Game chapter will talk about this in detail, but issues
can change as the game progresses. Sometimes, the issue evolves
into something new. Sometimes, the characters will successfully
fight against it, and it'll be gone. And sometimes, new issues
will emerge. So the ones you make are just what you're starting
off with.

Drilling Down

You can also use issues to flesh out smaller, but nonetheless important pieces of your setting. An important location (a major city or nation, or even a memorable local restaurant) or organization (a knightly order, a king's court, or a corporation) can have impending and/or current issues as well.

We recommend you start by giving only one issue to each setting element, just to keep things from getting too bogged down, but you can always add more as the campaign progresses. Likewise, you don't have to do this right now – if you find a setting element becoming more important later in the game, you can give it issues then.

> The Cult of Tranquility keeps popping up in pre-game discussions, so the group decides that it also needs an issue. After some discussion, the group decides it'd be interesting if there was some tension in the cult's ranks, and makes a current issue called "Two Conflicting Prophecies"   different branches of the cult have different ideas of what the doom is going to be.

Faces and Places

Decide who the important people and locations are.

At this point, you've probably got your issues figured out, and you may have thought of some organizations or groups that feature prominently in your game.

Now you have to put some faces on those issues and those groups, so that your PCs have people to interact with when they're dealing with those elements. Do they have any particular people who represent them, or stand out as exemplars of what the issue's referring to? If you have any ideas at this point, write them down on an index card: a name, a relationship to the organization or issue, and a trait detailing their significance to the story.

Do the same for any notable places in your setting. Are there any important places where things happen, either important to the world, important to an issue, or important to the protagonists? If there's a place where you envision multiple scenes taking place, then talk about that. Unlike NPCs, they don't require traits.

The GM may flesh these characters and places out later, depending on their role in the story. Or one of these ideas might be a great inspiration for a protagonist! And, of course, new ones will unfold as the story progresses.

If there's a piece of your setting that's meant to be a mystery which the protagonists uncover, define it only in loose terms. The specifics can be detailed as they are revealed in play.

> After a few minutes of discussion, the group writes down:
>
> Hugo the Charitable, a lieutenant in the Scar Triad. His trait is Everyone in Riverton Fears Me.
>
> Which brings us to a place, the city of Riverton. There are two rivers here, so it's a hub for trade.
>
> Ace comes up with a sympathetic character, Kale Westal, who owns a shop in Riverton. She isn't cowed by Hugo's extortion, and will likely fall victim to an "accident." Her trait is Stubborn Because I'm Right.
>
> The Primarch, the leader of the Cult of Tranquility, whose identity is a mystery. Because that part of the setting is a mystery, they aren't going to come up with a trait or otherwise go any further, leaving those details to Ace to figure out in secret.
>
> They could go on, but they know they'll have more ideas after character creation and as they play. That's just enough to paint a picture of what's going on at the very beginning of the story.

Make Characters

Each player makes a protagonist.

You can make player characters after finishing game creation, or you can do it in the middle of this process – follow your instincts here. If you find yourself talking more about the characters than the world, go to character creation and then float back around to whatever parts of game creation you haven't done yet. Otherwise, go ahead and finish out all of game creation first.

It's worth noting that the protagonists should have some connections to the faces and places you named in the previous step. If it's difficult to relate the characters to the setting, then you may want to rethink your protagonists or revise your game so it will make a better fit for the new characters.

When you're making characters, you'll also discover a bit more about the setting as people talk about who their characters know and what their characters do. If anything comes up that should be added to your game creation notes, do so before pushing forward with playing the game.

> ### Skills and Your Setting
>
> A big part of your setting is what people can do in it. The various skills in Skills and Feats cover many situations, but you'll want to look over them to see if any don't apply or if there's a skill you need to add.
>
> Adding a skill is covered in more detail in the Extras chapter.

What to Do Before Play

As outlined earlier in this chapter, inventing or deciding on a setting is often a collaborative effort between you and your players. In that sense, the best thing you can do as GM during the game-creation process is to be open to new ideas and be generous with your own, just like everyone else. Play off of and expand upon the suggestions that the others offer up. Your players will be more invested in the game if they feel like they've had a hand in building it.

Of course, if everyone's amenable, there's nothing stopping you from showing up with a clear vision of exactly what you want to run. "Okay, this is going to be a game about the Cold War in the '60s, except it's all steampunk and mechs. Go!" Just make sure everyone's on board if you go that route. Even one player who isn't into it, and doesn't really feel inclined to get into it, can really affect the game.

Out There vs. Down Here

Speaking of steampunk mechs in a '60s-era Soviet Union, it's a good idea to consider just how "out there" you want to get. High-concept ideas are a lot of fun, but if they're too difficult to relate to then your players may have trouble wrapping their heads around the game you're proposing. Where that line is exactly will vary from group to group (and player to player), so there's no definitive answer here. Just be aware that every departure from the familiar – whether that's the real world or well-established genre conventions – has the potential to be a conceptual hurdle for your players. Get everyone on the same page and make sure to go over any questions in advance.

The opposite approach is to set the game down here, in the real world, with perhaps only one or two notable departures with greater ramifications that you can explore as you go. The easiest way to communicate a setting like this is to name a time and place you're all familiar with, then tack on the exception. For example, "It's like modern-day London, but robots are commonplace" or "It's post-World War II Los Angeles, but some returning veterans have supernatural powers."

> ### Extras: Do You Need Them?
>
> Does your setting require things like superpowers, magic, high-tech gadgetry, or something else that falls outside the confines of the mundane? Either way, you're going to want to figure that out now, before play begins. See the Extras chapter for more on what extras are and how you can make use of them in your game.

Top-Down vs Bottom-Up

There's also the matter of how broad the scope of the game will be. Some like to start with the big picture first and drill down to the details, while others prefer to start with the here and now and develop the big picture as they go. These are often called "top down" and "bottom up," respectively. Neither one's better than the other, but each has its pros and cons.

With the top-down approach, you'll determine most of the setting in advance – stuff like who the movers and shakers are, the locations of important cities, the nature of important organizations, and so on. This has the advantage of providing a clear sense of how the world fits together. For example, if you've decided that the Kingdom of Talua is in a perpetual state of conflict between five powerful Houses vying for control, then you know right away that anyone of note in the kingdom is likely to come from one of those Houses – and if they aren't, it'll have to be for a very good reason.

The downside, of course, is that unless you're working from a pre-existing setting from a movie, TV show, book, video game, or whatever, it's usually a lot of work on the front end. It also requires the players to show up with a pretty thorough understanding of it all, which can be daunting. But if everyone's up to speed, it can make for a very enjoyable and rewarding game.

If you're going bottom-up, though, you'll start with whatever's immediately important to the PCs. That might be anything from a few notable NPCs in their hometown to the name of the guy who works in the next cubicle over. Then the group figures out the details as the story goes along. There's no need to have an idea of how things fit into the world, because everyone will make that up as you go. The world just spirals out from whatever you start with.

The potential downside here is that it requires quite a bit of improvisation and thinking on your feet. That goes for everyone at the table, GM and players alike. For you, the GM, that might not be such a big deal – running a game almost always involves a degree of flying by the seat of one's pants – but not all players are going to be ready for that sort of responsibility. In addition, if your players like to immerse themselves in their characters and see the game world through their eyes, they may find it jarring to occasionally break from that perspective to, say, invent a name on the spot for the enchanted axe they just found or tell you what happened to the last Shadow Director of the CIA.

Analogous can handle either, but the system's support for player-driven contributions to the narrative in the form of traits and story details really makes the bottom-up method sing. If that's the way you like to play anyway, great! If not, no pressure – but give it a try sometime.

Small-Scale vs Large-Scale

There's already been some discussion of game scale in Game Creation, but it's worth a little more discussion.

As laid out in that chapter, small-scale stories concern events closely connected to the PCs, and probably within a very limited geographical area. Large-scale games are the opposite: epic tales spanning nations, planets, or galaxies with world(s)-shaking consequences. Both types of stories can be a lot of fun – winning the title of Grand Emperor of the Galactic Reach can be just as rewarding as winning the hand of the prettiest girl in the village.

However, don't be fooled into thinking the two are mutually exclusive. Here are a couple ways to combine them.

Start Small and Grow: This is the classic zero-to-hero story in which an unassuming individual with no pretensions to glory is suddenly swept up in events beyond the scope of his experience. Consider Luke Skywalker in Star Wars: A New Hope. He starts off a nobody moisture farmer, racing T-16s and getting up to the odd bit of mischief at Tosche Station. Then a pair of droids come into his life and inject a little mystery: Who's this Obi-Wan Kenobi? Before he knows it, he's consorting with smugglers, rescuing a princess, and striking a blow for the Rebellion. It's a classic case of starting small-scale and expanding into a large-scale story.

Peaks and Valleys: Here, you're alternating the large-scale with the small, using the latter almost as something of a breather. Typically, the large-scale storylines will deal with matters of state, the conquering of planets, the banishing of unthinkable Beings From Beyond, and the like, while the small-scale storylines will be of a more personal nature, with few if any connections to the earth-shaking events transpiring in the characters' lives. For example, you might spend a session or two tussling with that Grand Emperor, then change focus to a character reconnecting with her father or coming to the aid of a friend in need. The small-scale sessions serve as something of a breather between all that epic action, and give the players a chance to delve into some unexplored corners of their characters. Plus, if you want to connect the small- and large-scale stories down the line, you can – and the payoff will be all the more satisfying for the players.

What to Do During Play

Now that you've gone through the process of game creation with the players, let's take a detailed look at how to approach your various jobs during a session of play.

The Golden Rule

Before we go into specifics, here's our general Golden Rule of Analogous:

Decide what you're trying to accomplish first, then consult the rules to help you do it.

This might seem like common sense, but we call it out because the order is important. In other words, don't look at the rules as a straitjacket or a hard limit on an action. Instead, use them as a variety of potential tools to model whatever you're trying to do. Your intent, whatever it is, always takes precedence over the mechanics.

Most of the time, the very definition of an action makes this easy – any time your intent is to harm someone, you know that's an attack. Any time you're trying to avoid harm, you know that's a defense.

But sometimes, you're going to get into situations where it's not immediately clear what type of action is the most appropriate. As a GM, don't respond to these situations by forbidding the action. Instead, try to nail down a specific intent, in order to point more clearly to one (or more) of the basic game actions.

The Silver Rule

The corollary to the Golden Rule is as follows: Never let the rules get in the way of what makes narrative sense. If you or the players narrate something in the game and it makes sense to apply a certain rule outside of the normal circumstances where you would do so, go ahead and do it.

The most common example of this has to do with consequences. The rules say that by default, a consequence is something a player chooses to take after getting hit by an attack in a conflict.

But say you're in a scene where a player decides that, as part of trying to intimidate his way past someone, his PC is going to punch through a glass-top table with a bare fist.

Everyone likes the idea and thinks it's cool, so no one's interested in what happens if the PC fails the roll. However, everyone agrees that it also makes sense that the PC would injure his hand in the process (which is part of what makes it intimidating).

It's totally fine to assign a mild consequence of Glass in My Hand in that case, because it fits with the narration, even though there's no conflict and nothing technically attacked the PC.

As with the Golden Rule, make sure everyone's on the same page before you do stuff like this.

> Due to a failure on a previous roll, Marco has accidentally set off a deadly magical trap while in pursuit of the Idol of Karlon-Kar, an ancient god of destruction. Ace describes the hall as continually filled with fiery bolts of death, seemingly in a random configuration, with the pedestal holding the idol located on the far end of the hall from where Marco's currently standing.
>
> Huckleberry says, "Well, there's nothing for it. I'm going after the idol. I take off down the hall, keeping my eye out for fiery death bolts."
>
> Ace thinks, because she knows that dice are going to have to come out on this. If Marco is moving through the hall, it looks most like an overcome action to do the movement. But with the fiery death bolts in the room, it seems more like Huckleberry would need to defend herself. There are also two ways she could handle the trap it's technically just passive opposition against Huckleberry to prevent her passing through the room safely, but because it can do damage, it seems more like an attack.
>
> So Ace asks, "Huckleberry, we need to go to dice, but what exactly do you want to accomplish here? Are you mainly trying to make sure you don't get hit, or are you blasting through the hall to get to the idol?"
>
> Huckleberry doesn't hesitate. "Oh, the idol, for sure."
>
> Ace asks, "So you're willing to take damage in the process?"
>
> Huckleberry says, "Yeah. Throwing myself into danger as usual."
>
> Ace says, "Okay, so we can do it in one roll. Here's how we'll handle it. You roll Athletics against Fantastic (+6) opposition. If you make it, you're through the trap and don't take any harm. If you don't make it, you're stuck in the hallway and will have to try again to make it all the way through. We're also going to treat that failure like a failed defense roll, so you're going to take a hit as well. Because of all the fiery death and whatnot."
>
> Huckleberry winces, but nods and gathers up her dice.
>
> In this example, Ace combined effects from overcome and defend to determine what happens to Marco. This is totally okay, because it fits their intent and it makes sense given the situation they described. She might have decided to do both rolls separately, and that would have been fine too she just wanted to get it all into one roll.

If you're ever in doubt during play, come back to the Golden Rule and remember that you have the flexibility to do the same kind of thing as you need to. Just make sure that when you do this, you and the players are on the same page.

When to Roll Dice

Roll the dice when succeeding or failing at the action could each contribute something interesting to the game.

This is pretty easy to figure out in regards to success, most of the time – the PCs overcome a significant obstacle, win a conflict, or succeed at a goal, which creates fodder for the next thing. With failure, however, it's a little more difficult, because it's easy to look at failure in strictly negative terms – you fail, you lose, you don't get what you want. If there's nothing to build on after that failure, play can grind to a halt in a hurry.

The worst, worst thing you can do is have a failed roll that means nothing happens – no new knowledge, no new course of action to take, and no change in the situation. That is totally boring, and it discourages players from investing in failure – something you absolutely want them to do, given how important compels and the concession mechanic are. Do not do this.

If you can't imagine an interesting outcome from both results, then don't call for that roll. If failure is the uninteresting option, just give the PCs what they want and call for a roll later, when you can think of an interesting failure. If success is the boring option, then see if you can turn your idea for failure into a compel instead, using that moment as an opportunity to funnel plot points to the players.

Situation Traits Are Your Friend

When you're trying to figure out if there's a good reason to ask the PCs to make an overcome roll, look at the traits on your scene. If the existence of the trait suggests some trouble or problem for the PC, call for an overcome roll. If not, and you can't think of an interesting consequence for failure, don't bother.

For example, if a character is trying to sprint quickly across a room, and you have a situation trait like Cluttered Floors, it makes sense to ask for a roll before they can move. If there is no such trait, just let them make the move and get on to something more interesting.

Making Failure Fun

If the PCs fail a roll in the game and you're not sure how to make that interesting, try one of the following ideas.

Blame the Circumstances

The PCs are extremely competent people (remember, that's one of the things Analogous is about). They aren't supposed to look like fools on a regular or even semi-regular basis. Sometimes, all it takes is the right description to make failure into something dynamic – instead of narrating that the PC just borked things up, blame the failure on something that the PC couldn't have prevented. There's a secondary mechanism on that lock that initially looked simple (Burglary), or the contact broke his promise to show up on time (Contacts), or the ancient tome is too withered to read (Scholarship), or a sudden seismic shift throws off your run (Athletics).

That way, the PCs still look competent and awesome, even though they don't get what they want. More importantly, shifting the blame to the circumstances gives you an opportunity to suggest a new course of action, which allows the failure to create forward momentum in your story. The contact didn't make his appointment? Where is he? Who was following him to the rendezvous? The ancient tome is withered? Maybe someone can restore it. That way, you don't spend time dwelling on the failure and can move on to something new.

Succeed at a Cost

You can also offer to give the PCs what they want, but at a price – in this case, the failed roll means they weren't able to achieve their goals without consequence.

A minor cost should complicate the PC's life. Like the above suggestion, this focuses on using failure as a means to change up the situation a bit, rather than just negating whatever the PC wanted. Some suggestions:

Foreshadow some imminent peril. "The lock opens with a soft click, but the same can't be said for the vault door. If they didn't know you were here before, they sure do now."

Introduce a new wrinkle. "Yes, the Guildmaster is able to put you in touch with a mage who can translate the withered tome – a guy named Berthold. You know him, actually, but the last time you saw him was years ago, when he caught you with his wife."

Present the player with a tough choice. "You brace the collapsing ceiling long enough for two of the others to get through safely, but not the rest. Who's it going to be?"

Place a trait on the PC or the scene. "Somehow you manage to land on your feet, but with a Twisted Ankle as a souvenir."

Give an NPC a boost. "Nikolai surprises you a bit by agreeing to your offer, but he does so with a wry smile that makes you uneasy. Clearly, Nikolai Has A Plan."

Check one of the PC's stress boxes. Careful with this one – it's only a real cost if the PC's likely to take more hits in the same scene. If you don't think that's going to happen, go with another choice.

A serious cost does more than complicate the PC's life or promise something worse to come – it takes a serious and possibly irrevocable toll, right now.

One way you can do this is by taking a minor cost to the next level. Instead of suspecting that a guard heard them open the vault, a few guards burst in the room, weapons drawn. Instead of being merely cut off from their allies by a collapsing ceiling, one or more of those allies ends up buried in the debris. Instead of merely having to face an awkward situation with Berthold, he's still angry and out for their blood.

Other options could include:

Reinforce the opposition. You might clear one of an NPC's stress boxes, improve one of their skills by one step for the scene, or give them a new trait with a free invocation.

Bring in new opposition or a new obstacle, such as additional enemies or a situation trait that worsens the situation.

Delay success. The task at hand will take much longer than expected.

Give the PC a consequence that follows logically from the circumstances – mild if they have one available, moderate if they don't.

If you're stuck for just how serious a serious cost should be, you may want to use the margin of failure as a gauge. For instance, in the vault-opening example, above – the one where the guards hear the PC and burst in the room – if the player failed their Burglary roll by 1 or 2, the PCs outnumber the guards. Not a tough fight, but a fight nonetheless. If they failed it by 3 to 5, it's an even match, one that's likely to use up resources like plot points or consequences. But if they failed by 6 or more, they're outnumbered and in real danger.

Let the Player Do the Work

You can also kick the question back to the players, and let them decide what the context of their own failure is. This is a great move to foster a collaborative spirit, and some players will be surprisingly eager to hose their own characters in order to further the story, especially if it means they can keep control of their own portrayal.

It's also a great thing to do if you just plain can't think of anything. "Okay, so, you failed that Burglary roll by 2. So you're working the lock, and something goes wrong. What is it?" "You missed that Alertness roll. What don't you notice as you're sneaking up to the queen's chambers?" It's better if the question is specific, like those examples – just saying, "Okay, tell me how you fail!" can easily stall things by putting a player on the spot unnecessarily. You want to let the player do the work, not make them.

Setting Difficulties

When you're setting passive opposition for an action, keep in mind the difficulty "break points" that we mentioned in Actions and Outcomes – anything that's four or more dice above the PC's skill is probably going to cost them plot points to get past, and anything that's four or more below the PC's dice pool will be a breeze.

Rather than "modeling the world" or going for "realism," try setting difficulties according to dramatic necessity – things should generally be more challenging when the stakes are high and less challenging when they aren't.

(Functionally, this is the same as setting a consistent difficulty and assessing a circumstantial penalty to the roll to reflect rushing the task or some other unfavorable condition. But psychologically, the difference between a high difficulty and a lower difficulty with a penalty is vast and shouldn't be underestimated. A player facing a higher difficulty will often feel like they're being properly challenged, while that same player facing a large penalty, likely chosen at the GM's discretion, will often feel discouraged by it.)

Setting a difficulty low is mainly about showcasing a PC's awesomeness, letting them shine in a particular moment and reminding us why this character is in the spotlight. You can also set lower difficulties during periods when you know the PCs are low on plot points, giving them the chance to take compels in order to get more. You should also set lower difficulties on anything that's in the way of the PC's getting to the main action of a scene – you don't want them to get stalled at the evil overlord's drawbridge if the point of the scene is confronting the evil overlord!

Finally, some actions should take lower difficulties by default, especially if no one's contesting or resisting them. Unopposed efforts to create advantages in a conflict should never be harder than Average (+1) or Fair (+2), and neither should attempts to put a trait on an object or location. Remember that opposition doesn't have to always take the form of an NPC getting in the way – if the evil mastermind has hidden the evidence in his office away from prying eyes, you might consider that a form of opposition, even though the mastermind might not be physically present.

If the PCs are overflowing in plot points, or it's a crucial moment in the story when someone's life is on the line, or the fate of many is at stake, or they're finally going against foes that they've been building up to for a scenario or two, feel free to raise difficulties across the board. You should also raise difficulties to indicate when a particular opponent is extremely prepared for the PCs, or to reflect situations that aren't ideal – if the PC's are not prepared, or don't have the right tools for the job, or are in a time crunch, etc.

Setting the difficulty right at the PC's skill level is, as you might imagine, sort of a middle ground between these two extremes. Do this when you want some tension without turning things up to 11, or when the odds are slightly in the PC's favor but you want a tangible element of risk.

Important: Justify Your Choices

Your only other constraint in setting difficulties goes back to the Silver Rule above you need to make sure that your choices make sense in the context of the narrative you're creating. While we don't want you to get crazy with trying to model the world too much and thus box yourself into a useless set of constraints ("Locks in the village of Glenwood are generally of Good quality, due to their proximity to a rich iron mine."), don't look at this purely as a numbers game either. If the only reason for setting a difficulty at Superb (+5) is because it's two higher than the PC's skill level and you want to bleed his plot points off, you strain credibility.

In that sense, you can look at setting difficulties as being a lot like invoking traits there needs to be a good reason that backs up your choice in the story. It's totally okay if that justification is something you're about to make up, rather than something you know beforehand. Situation traits are a great tool for this if the players already know that the cave they're in is Pitch Black and Cramped as Hell, it's easy to justify why it's so hard to stay quiet as they Stealth through the tunnels. No one will bat an eye at you looking at the relevant situation traits and giving a +2 to the opposition for each one, because it mirrors the invoke bonus they get.

Either way, don't skip the justification part either let the players know what it is immediately when you tell them the difficulty, or shrug mysteriously and then let them find out soon thereafter (as in, the time it takes to think it up).

You might also try using "out of place" difficulties to indicate the presence of unanswered questions during the game for some odd reason, the stable you're trying to break into has an Epic (+7) lock on the door. What could be so important in there that you don't know about?

Or maybe you're trying to finish the famed initiation test of the scholastic Amethyst Order, and the test is only a Fair (+2) Scholarship roll what's the deal? Are they going easy on you? Is your appointment a political necessity? Who pulled the strings on that? Or is it just that the reputation of the Order's scholars is a fabrication?

Dealing with Extraordinary Success

Sometimes, a PC is going to roll far in excess of the difficulty, getting a lot of shifts on the roll. Some of the basic actions already have a built-in effect for rolling really well, like hitting harder on a good attack roll.

For others, it's not so clear. What's happens when you get a lot of shifts on a Engineering roll or an Investigate roll? You want to make sure those results have some kind of meaning and reflect how competent the PC's are.

Here are a few choice options.

Go Gonzo with the Narration: It might seem superfluous, but it's important to celebrate a great roll with a suitable narration of over the top success. This is a great time to take the suggestions above for Making Failure Awesome and applying them here. Let the success affect something else, in addition to what the PC was going for, and bring the player into the process of selling it by prompting them to make up cool details. "Three extra shifts on that Burglary roll – tell me, is anyone ever going to be able to lock that crypt again?" "So you got five shifts on that Contacts roll – tell me, where does Nicky the Fink usually go when he's running out on his wife, and what do you say when you find him there?"

Add a trait: You can express additional effects of a good roll by placing a trait on the PC or on the scene, essentially letting them create an advantage ⊕ for free. "So your Resources roll to bribe the guard succeeded with four shifts. She'll let you through the gate all right, and she'll also act as Available Backup if you should need some help later."

Reducing Time: If it's important to get something done fast, then you can use extra shifts to decrease the time that it takes to do an action.

Dealing with Time

We recognize two kinds of time in Analogous: game time and story time.

Game Time

Game time is how we organize play in terms of the real players sitting at the table. Each unit of game time corresponds to a certain amount of real time. They are:

Exchange: The amount of time it takes all participants in a conflict to take a turn, which includes doing an action and responding to any action taken against them. This usually doesn't take longer than a minute in a physical conflict, or a few minutes in a social or mental conflict.

Scene: The amount of time it takes to resolve a conflict, deal with a single prominent situation, or accomplish a goal. Scenes vary in length, from a minute or two if it's just a quick description and some dialogue, to a half hour or more in the case of a major set-piece battle against a main NPC.

Session: The sum total of all the scenes you run through in a single sitting. A session ends when you and your friends pack it up for the night and go home. For most people, a session is about 2 to 4 hours, but there is no theoretical limit – if you have few obligations, then you're only really limited by the need for food and sleep. A minor milestone usually occurs after a session.

Scenario: One or more sessions of play, but usually no more than four. Most of the time, the sessions that make up a scenario will definitively resolve some kind of problem or dilemma presented by the GM, or wrap up a storyline (see Scenes, Sessions, and Scenarios for more on scenarios). A significant milestone usually occurs at the end of a scenario. You can look at this like an episode of a television show – the number of sessions it takes to tell one story.

Arc: Several scenarios, usually between two and four. An arc typically culminates in an event that brings great change to the game world, building up from the resolution of the scenarios. You can look at an arc like a season of a television show, where individual episodes lead to a tumultuous climax. You're not always guaranteed to have a recognizable arc, just like not all TV shows have a plotline that carries through the whole season – it's possible to bounce from situation to situation without having a defined plot structure. Major milestones usually happen at the end of an arc.

Campaign: The sum of all the time you've sat at a table playing this particular game of Analogous – every session, every scenario, every arc. Technically, there's no upper limit to how long a campaign can be. Some groups go for years; others get to the end of an arc and then stop. We presume that a typical group will go for a few arcs (or about ten scenarios) before having a grand finale and moving on to another game (hopefully another Analogous game!). You might set up your campaign as a kind of "super-arc," where there's one massive conflict that everything else is a smaller part of, or it might simply consist of the smaller individual stories that you tell in your scenarios.

Story Time

Story time is what we call the time as the characters perceive it, from the perspective of being "in the story" – the amount of time it takes for them to accomplish any of the stuff you and the players say that they do during play. Most of the time, you'll do this as an afterthought, mentioning it in passing ("Okay, so it takes you an hour to get to the airport by cab") or mentioning it as part of a skill roll ("Cool, so after 20 minutes of sweeping the room, you find the following…").

Under most circumstances, story time has no actual relation to real time. For example, a combat exchange might take a few minutes to play out in real time, but it only covers what happens in the first few seconds of a conflict. Likewise, you can cover long swaths of time simply by saying that it happens ("The contact takes two weeks to get back to you – are you doing anything while you wait, or can we just skip to the meeting?"). When used this way, it's really just a convenience, a narrative device in order to add verisimilitude and some consistency to your story.

Sometimes, though, you can use story time in creative ways to create tension and surprise during the game. Here's how.

Deadline Pressure

Nothing creates tension like a good deadline. The heroes only have a certain number of minutes to disable the death trap, or a certain amount of time to get across the city before something blows up, or a certain amount of time to deliver the ransom before loved ones get aced by the bad guys, and so on.

Some of the game's default actions are made to take advantage of deadline pressure, such as challenges or contests – they each limit the number of rolls that a player can make before something happens, for better or for worse.

You don't have to limit yourself to using just those two, though. If you set a hard deadline for something bad in one of your scenarios, you can start keeping track of the amount of time everything takes, and use it as a way to keep the pressure on. ("Oh, so you want to browse all the town's historical archives? Well, you have three days until the ritual – I can give you a Scholarship roll, but just the attempt is probably going to eat up one of those days.") Remember, nearly everything takes time. Even a basic attempt to create an advantage ⊕ using Empathy requires you to sit with the target for a little while, and if every action the PCs are taking is chipping away at a clock, it may be time they don't have.

Of course, it'd be no fun if there was nothing they could do to improve a deadline situation, and it'd be no fun if the crawl toward the deadline was predictable.

Using Story Time in Success and Failure

Therefore, when you're using story time to create deadline pressure, feel free to incorporate unpredictable jumps in time when the PCs do really well or really badly on a roll.

Taking extra time is a great way to make failure awesome as per the guidelines above, especially using the "Success at a Cost" option – give the players exactly what they want, but at the cost of taking more time than they were trying to spend, thus risking that their efforts will come too late. Or it could be the thing that pushes a deadline over the edge – maybe things aren't completely hopeless, but now there are extra problems to deal with.

Likewise, reward extreme success by reducing the amount of time it takes to do something while the PCs are under deadline. That historical research (Scholarship) that was going to take a day gets wrapped up in a few hours. While looking for a good merchant (Contacts) to get your supplies, you manage to find another one who can fulfill your order that same day rather than in a week.

If time is a factor, you should also be able to use invocations and compels to manipulate time, to make things easier or more complicated respectively. ("Hey, I'm a Garage Bunny, so fixing this car shouldn't take me that long, right?" "Oh, you know what? Your sheet says I Can't Get Enough of the Fun and Games… doesn't it make sense that if you're looking for a guy in a casino, it'd be easy to get caught up in distractions? All those machines and stuff…")

How Much Time is a Shift Worth?

Just like with any other roll, the number of shifts you get (or the amount you fail by) should serve as a barometer for just how severe the time jump is. So, how do you decide just how much to award or penalize?

It really depends on how much time you decide the initial action is going to take. We usually express time in two parts: a specific or abstract measure of quantity, then a unit of time, such as "a few days," "twenty seconds," "three weeks," and so on.

We recommend you measure in the abstract and express all the game actions as half, one, a few, or several of a given unit of time. So if you imagine something taking six hours, think of it as "several hours." If you imagine something taking twenty minutes, you can either call that "several minutes" or round up to "half an hour", whichever feels closest.

This gives you a starting point for moving up and down. Each shift is worth one jump from wherever your starting point is. So if your starting point is "several hours," and it benefits the PCs to speed things up, then it works like this: one shift jumps the time down to "a few hours," two shifts down to "one hour," and three shifts down to "a half hour."

Going past either end of the spectrum moves you down to several increments of the next unit of time or up to half the next unit of time, depending on which direction you're going. So four shifts on the aforementioned roll might jump you from "several hours" to "several minutes." Failing by one, conversely, might jump you from "several hours" to "half a day."

This allows you to quickly deal with time jumps no matter where you're starting from, whether the actions you have in mind are going to take moments or generations.

Story Time and the Scope of an Action

It's easy to think of most actions that a PC takes being limited to anything that the character can directly affect, and working on a "person-to-person" scope. And most of the time, that's going to be precisely the case – after all, Analogous is a game about individual competence shining in the face of dramatic adversity.

However, consider for a moment what a PC might do with that competence and all the time in the world to accomplish a particular action. Imagine a month-long Rapport roll for a negotiation, where the PC gets to talk with every delegate in detail, rather than just focusing on a single conference. Imagine a weeks-long Investigate, charting out every detail of a target's personal routine.

By allowing each roll to represent a long period of time, you can "zoom out" to handle events that reach far beyond the individual player character making the roll, and affect the setting in a big way. That month-long Rapport roll might result in charting a new political course for the country the PC is negotiating for. That Investigate roll might be the start of bringing in one of the most notorious criminals in the setting, one that's been hounding the PCs for a whole campaign.

This is a great way to make long breaks in story time more interactive, rather than bogging the game down with long narration or trying to retroactively come up with what happened during that time. If the PCs have long-term goals they want to accomplish, see if you can find a way to turn that into a contest, challenge, or conflict that covers the whole break, or just have them make a single skill roll to see if something unexpected happens. If they happen to fail the roll, whatever you invent as a consequence will make good material for the game going forward.

Remember that if you do this with a conflict or a contest, that you scale each exchange appropriately – if a conflict is taking place over the course of a year, then each exchange might be a month or two, and everyone should describe their actions and the results of their actions in that context.

During a major milestone in the campaign, Blake shifted his high concept to Former Ivory Shroud Disciple, as a result of discovering a plot from within their ranks to take over a small kingdom as their own.

Ace wants to jump the campaign six months forward, and she suggests that if Blake goes on the run, they're going to try to hunt him down. She sees an opportunity to create material for the next part of the game, so she says, "I think we should find out if Blake starts the next scenario in their clutches or not."

They decide to do it as a conflict, with each exchange representing one confrontation between Blake and the Shroud's trackers. It goes badly for him and he concedes, taking a moderate consequence into the next session. Ace suggests that they want to bring Blake back into the fold rather than hurt or kill him, so Zo decides to take I Don't Know What's Right Anymore, reflecting the seeds of doubt they're planting in his mind.

When we see Blake again, he'll be in the clutches of the Ivory Shroud, struggling with his loyalties.

Zoom In, Zoom Out

There's no rule that says you're required to keep your rolls consistent in terms of story time. One cool trick you can do is use the result of one roll to segue into another roll that takes place over a much smaller period in time, or vice versa. This is a great way to open a new scene, contest, or conflict, or just introduce a change of pace.

During the aforementioned six-month break, Marco has been researching the demon compatriots of the horrific Arc'yeth, who soul-burned her in the last arc of the campaign. She decides to go it alone, even though Samantha offered to help, and ends up rolling her newly acquired Average (+1) Scholarship to succeed at an overcome roll.

She ends up doing really well, and Ace describes Marco getting lost in research for a few months. Then Ace says, "Awesome. You return home with the dirt of the trail on you, weary to the bone, hands stained with ink, but your search has uncovered the hiding place of Arc'yeth's right hand in the Circle of Thirteen, a minor demon named Tan'shael (all these apostrophes!). You fall into bed, ready to start the search in the morning… and are wakened in the middle of the night by a crashing sound coming from your study."

Huckleberry says, "Well, hell, I get up and rush in there, grabbing my sword as I go!"

Ace says, "Great you notice that your research notes are gone, and that the window is broken open. You hear footsteps rushing away into the night."

Huckleberry says, "Oh, hell no. I'm going after him. Her, it, them, whatever."

Ace says, "Great! That's using Athletics, and let's do a contest and see if you can catch the culprit." (Perception, GMs, that this is now happening in immediately consecutive time we went right from rolling for months-long stuff, to rolling for the seconds it takes for Marco to give chase.)

The contest goes badly for Marco, and the person gets away. Huckleberry immediately says, "Screw that. Someone in town has to know something, or he left some clue behind, or something. I'm going to roll Investigate."

Huckleberry rolls and succeeds with style, and Ace says, "A week later, you're in the village of Sunloft, outside the Shoeless Horse tavern, where she (it's a she, by the way) is rumored to be staying. Oh, and you got some shifts, so I'll just go ahead and tell you her name is Corathia she dropped it to someone in your hometown while trying to find your place. That's worth a trait, I Know Your Name, which you might use to undermine her confidence."

(GMs, see what happened? One roll jumped a week, but Ace and Huckleberry are playing it at the table in continuous time.)

Huckleberry says, "I bust the door down and scream her name."

Ace says, "Everyone backs away from a lithe woman at the bar, who sneers at them and goes for her sword, bounding off the stool and aiming a whistling cut at your face."

"It's on!" Huckleberry says, and goes for dice to defend. (Now it's a conflict and happening in super zoomed-in time.)

Judging the Use of Skills and Feats

By now, you pretty much have all the advice you need to deal with skill and feat use – the individual descriptions in Skills and Feats, the action descriptions and examples in Challenges, Contests, and Conflicts, and the advice immediately above about setting difficulties and how to handle success and failure.

The only other major problem you'll have to worry about is when you run into an "edge case" with a skill – a player wants to use it for an action that seems like a bit of a stretch, or a situation comes up in your game where it makes sense to use a skill for something that's not normally a part of its description.

When you run into this, talk it over with the group and see what everyone thinks. It's going to end up one of three ways:

It's too much of a stretch. Consider creating a new skill.

It's not a stretch, and anyone can use the skill that way from now on under the same conditions.

It wouldn't be a stretch if the character had a feat that allowed it.

A lot of the criteria you're going to rely on for these conversations will come from the work you and the players did with the skill list at game creation. See Skills and Feats for advice on figuring out what the limits are for a skill and what the dividing line between a skill and a feat is.

If you decide that a certain use of a skill needs a feat, allow the player in question the chance to spend a plot point to temporarily "borrow" that feat for the current roll if he or she wants. Then, if they want to keep the bonus, they have to spend a point of refresh to buy it (presuming they have any available), or wait for a major milestone to pick it up.

Traits and Details: Discovery vs. Creation

From the player's point of view, there's almost no way to know what you've made up beforehand and what you're inventing in the moment, especially if you're the kind of GM who doesn't display or consult any notes at the table. Thus, when a player tries to discover something you haven't made up yet, you can treat it as if they were making a new trait or story detail. If they succeed, they find what they're looking for. If they fail, you can use what they were looking for as inspiration to help you come up with the real information.

If you're really comfortable with improvising, this means that you can come to the table with very little prepared beforehand, and let the players' reactions and questions build everything for you. You may need to ask some prompting questions first, to narrow down the scope of what information the player's looking for, but after that, the sky's the limit.

Samantha is scouting an ancient ritual site, looking for a good place to work on banishing the curse that's been placed on the nearby village of Belwitch, the mayor of which is paying him good money for the effort.

Eli says, "I'm going to spend some time in a local library, researching some history about the site. I'd like to use Scholarship to create an advantage 👾."

Ace thinks for a moment. She didn't really have anything special planned for the site, because all her energy was focused on detailing the nature of the curse and what would be required to get rid of it, because it's being maintained by a force more powerful than the PCs currently realize.

"What kind of info are you looking for?" Ace asks. "Just book report-type details, or…?"

Eli says, "Well, what I really want to know is if anyone's used the site for dark or nefarious magic… if this village has a local boogeyman or spook story centered around that site."

Ace says, "Oh, cool. Yeah, roll your Scholarship, opposition is Fair (+2)." Unexpectedly, Eli rolls a 4 and ends up with a Untrained (+0), meaning that he failed. Eli decides not to spend any plot points on the roll.

Wanting to turn the failure into something awesome, she says, "Well, you don't get a trait for it, but what you find out is actually the opposite of what you're looking for the site has an impeccable reputation as a place of blessed power, and the records you find all talk about healing and harvest rituals that brought great plenty and good fortune to the area."

Eli says, "If the site is so powerful, how did the village become cursed?"

Ace shrugs. "Guess you'll have to investigate further if you want to find out."

In her notes, she jots something briefly about the fact that the site is now magically defiled and that the town's priest is keeping that a secret, changing Eli's suggestion a little bit and adding some material for him if he decides to ask around.

**CHAPTER 8
RUNNING
THE GAME**

Skills and SPecific Measurements

Looking over the skill descriptions, you might notice that there are a few places where we give an abstraction for something that in real life depends on precise measurement. Physique and Resources are strong examples – many people who are into strength training have some idea of how much weight they can dead lift, and people spend specific amounts of money from a finite pool when they buy things.

So how much can a character with Physical 4 and Physique 3 bench press? How much can a character with Social 2, Resources 4 spend before going broke?

The truth is, we have no idea, and we're reluctant to pursue a specific answer.

Though it may seem counter-intuitive, we find that creating minutiae like that detracts from the verisimilitude of the game in play. As soon as you establish a detail like, "Great Physique can dead lift a car for five seconds," then you're cutting out a lot of the variability that real life allows. Adrenaline and other factors allow people to reach beyond their normal physical limits or fall short of them – you can't factor every one of those things in without having it take up a large amount of focus at the table. It becomes a thing for people to discuss and even argue about, rather than participating in the scene.

It's also boring. If you decide that a 2 Resources can buy anything that's 200 dollars or less, then you've removed a great deal of potential for tension and drama. Suddenly, every time you have a Resources-based problem, it's going to hinge on the question of whether or not the cost is $200, rather than whatever the point of the scene is. It also turns everything into a simple pass/fail situation, which means you don't really have a good reason to roll the skill at all. And again, this is not realistic – when people spend money, it's not about the raw dollar amount as much as it is a question of what someone can presently afford.

Remember, a skill roll is a narrative tool, meant to answer the following question: "Can I solve X problem using Y means, right now?" When you get an unexpected result, use your sense of realism and drama to explain and justify it, using our guidelines above. "Oh, you failed that Resources roll to bribe the guard? Guess you spent just a bit more at the tavern last night than you thought... wait, why is your belt pouch gone? And who's that shady character walking a little too quickly just past the line of guards? Did he just wink at you? That bastard... now what do you do?"

Dealing with Conflicts
& Other Weird Stuff

The most complicated situations you're going to encounter as a GM will be conflicts, hands down. Conflicts use the most rules in the game and pack them into a small amount of time compared to everything else in the system. They require you to keep track of a lot of things at once – everyone's relative position, who's acting against whom, how much stress and what consequences your NPCs have taken, and so on.

They're also where your movie-watching brain will come to the fore, especially if your game features a lot of high-octane physical conflict. Action sequences you see in media don't always conform to the structured order of turns that Analogous has, so it can be hard to see how they correspond when you're trying to visualize what happens. Sometimes, people will also want to do crazy actions that you hadn't thought of when you were conceiving the conflict, leaving you at a loss for how to handle them.

Here are some tools to help you handle things with grace and speed.

Affecting Multiple Targets

Invariably, if you play Analogous long enough, someone's going to try to affect multiple people at once in a conflict. Explosions are a staple of physical conflict, but are by no means the only example – consider tear gas or some kind of high-tech stunner. You can extend this to mental conflict also. For example, you might use Provoke to establish dominance in a room with your presence, or Rapport to make an inspirational speech that affects everyone listening.

The easiest way to do this is to create an advantage ⊕ on the scene, rather than on a specific target. A Gas-Filled Room has the potential to affect everyone in it, and it's not too much of a stretch to suggest that the Inspirational Mood in a room could be contagious. In this context, the trait presents an excuse to call for a skill roll (using the overcome action) from anyone in the scene who attempts to get past it. Generally speaking, it won't cause damage, but it will make things more difficult for those affected.

> Blake stalks the battlefield in search of a worthy opponent.
>
> "Who's the biggest, toughest-looking guy around here?" Zo asks Ace.
>
> "That's easy," Ace answers. "You immediately spot a towering 7-foot-tall warrior, clearly not entirely human, armed with an unnecessarily flanged axe and flanked by three underlings. They call him Gorlok the Demon-Blooded."
>
> "Yeah, that sounds good," Zo says. "I'm gonna kill him."
>
> "I like it. His three henchmen move to intercept. They're not exactly 7-foot-tall half-demons, but they seem to know what they're doing."
>
> Zo sighs. "I don't have time for these mooks. I want to make it clear to them that they're not up to this. You know, wave my sword around menacingly and look like even more of a bad-ass. I want these guys to know that this fight is between me and Gorlok."
>
> "Sounds like you want to put a trait on the zone. Give me a Provoke roll."
>
> Zo rolls a 3, and adds his Fair (+2) Provoke for a total of Poor (1). He needed a Untrained (+0), so he's failed. But Ace likes the idea of Blake and Gorlok facing off here without anyone else getting in the way, so she decides to give it to him, but at a cost.
>
> "All right," she says, "what's it going to be?"
>
> Zo doesn't hesitate. He writes down a mild mental consequence: This Guy is Bigger Than I Thought….
>
> "Cool. They look at you, then back to Gorlok. He waves a hand dismissively. 'Go, find another to kill,' he growls. 'This one's mine.'"

Things get more complicated when you want to filter specific targets, rather than just affect a whole zone or scene. When that happens, divide your resulting total up against every target, who all get to defend as per normal. Anyone who fails to defend either takes stress or gains a trait, depending on what you were trying to do. (Note: If you create an advantage ⊕ to put a trait on multiple targets, you do get a free invocation for each one.)

> Samantha is unleashing fiery death upon his foes in a magical fashion, as is his wont. He has three such foes, charging at him across a battlefield. Samantha figures it's probably Blake's fault he's found himself in this circumstance.
>
> Samantha's magic uses his Scholarship skill, and he does extremely well, getting an Epic (+7) result.
>
> He knows he wants to get one of them pretty good, so he opts to divide his spread up as Superb (+5), Average (+1), and Average (+1). That adds up to +7, which was his roll, so he's all good. Now Ace has to defend for all three of them.
>
> The first defender rolls a Untrained (+0) and takes 5 stress. This is a nameless NPC (see below), so Ace decides he's out of the fight, and describes him screaming and batting at flames.
>
> The second defender gets a Fair (+2), beating the attack roll. He charges forward undaunted.
>
> The third defender gets a Untrained (+0) as well, taking a single point of stress. Ace checks his lone stress box and describes him sacrificing his shield to deflect the blast.

Attacking a whole zone or everyone in a scene is something you're going to have to judge by circumstance, like any other stretch use of a skill. Depending on the circumstances of your setting, this might be a totally normal thing to do (for example, because everyone uses grenades and explosives), it might be impossible, or it might require a feat. As long as you can justify it, you don't need to apply any special rules – you roll for the attack, and everyone in the zone defends as normal. Depending on the circumstances, you may even have to defend against your own roll, if you're in the same zone as the attack!

Compels and Multiple Targets

Just a quick note: players who want to compel their way out of a conflict don't get a free lunch on affecting multiple targets, whether it's one trait or several that justify the compel. A player must spend one plot point for each target they wish to compel. One plot point compels one individual, period.

Environmental Hazards

Not every participant in a conflict is another PC or NPC. Plenty of things without self-awareness can potentially threaten PCs or keep them from their goals, whether it's a natural disaster, a cunning mechanical trap, or high-tech automated security.

So, what do you do when the PCs go up against something that isn't a character?

Simple: treat it as a character. (This is the Bronze Rule of Analogous: You can treat everything like a character. We're going to get into a lot of different ways to work with that in the Extras chapter, but let's stay on topic for now.)

Is the hazard something that can harm a PC? Give it a skill and let it make attacks just like an opponent.

Is it more of a distraction or harassment than a direct threat? Let it create traits.

Does it have sensors it can use to discover a PC's traits? Give it a skill for that.

And in return, let the PCs use their skills against the threat just like they would an opponent. An automated security system might be vulnerable to "attacks" from a PC's Burglary skill, or they might escape a trap by winning an Athletics contest. If it makes sense for the hazard in question to take a good deal of effort to surpass, give it a stress track and let it take a mild consequence or two. In other words, cleave to whatever makes narrative sense – if a fire is too big for a PC to put out, the scene should focus on avoidance or escape, and work like a challenge.

Marco, Blake, and Samantha are exploring the Caverns of Kazak-Thorn, in pursuit of one of the demonic opponents that Marco's been so interested in lately. Of course, the demon princess in question doesn't appreciate being hunted by pesky adventurers and has summoned the powers of darkness to stand between our heroes and herself. So it goes.

They come to the bottom floor of the cave system, only to find it full of wisps of inky darkness, writhing around snakelike and cutting off the light where they whip about. Samantha rolls Scholarship, and Ace tells him that they are magical hunger spirits not individual entities so much as pure expressions of hunger, ready to devour anything they touch. He throws a stone into the corridor and watches the tendrils turn it to ash.

"I think I speak for us all when I say 'Yikes,'" Eli says.

He asks about banishing the monsters. Ace shakes her head a touch. "You're in Asahandra's place of power, and the whole place is just flooded with those things it'd take days to dismantle an enchantment this strong. You might, however, be able to use your magic to keep them at bay as you look for Asahandra herself."

Huckleberry says, "I'm willing to go for it. Let's do this."

Ace decides that even though she could put them into a straight-up conflict, it'd be easier and quicker to deal with it as a challenge. She tells them that to get past the shadow summoning, each of them needs Will to resist the shadows' potent magical aura and Stealth to move past. Samantha can roll Scholarship to try and thin the herd with magic. In addition, she says that the spirits can provide active opposition against each attempt, and that failing the Will roll will be treated like an attack. The three grit their teeth and start to make their way through the cave....

Dealing with Traits

As with skills and feats, the entire Traits and Plot points chapter is designed to help you judge the use of traits in the game. As the GM, you have a very important job in managing the flow of plot points to and from the players, giving them opportunities to spend freely in order to succeed and look awesome, and bringing in potential complications to help keep them stocked up on points.

Invocations

Because of that, we recommend that you don't apply extremely exacting standards when the PC wants to invoke a trait – you want them to spend in order to keep the flow going, and if you're too stringent on your requirements, it's going to discourage them from that free spending.

On the other hand, feel free to ask for more clarification if you don't get what a player is implying, in terms of how the trait relates to what's happening in play. Sometimes, what seems obvious to one person isn't to another, and you shouldn't let the desire to toss plot points lead to overlooking the narration. If a player is having a hard time justifying the invocation, ask them to elaborate on their action more or unpack their thoughts.

You might also have the problem of players who get lost in the open-ended nature of traits – they don't invoke because they aren't sure if it's too much of a stretch to apply a trait in a certain way. The more work you do beforehand making sure that everyone's clear on what a trait means, the less you'll run into this. To get the player talking about invoking traits, always ask them whether or not they're satisfied with a skill roll result ("So, that's a Great. You want to leave it at that? Or do you want to be even more awesome?"). Make it clear that invoking a trait is almost always an option on any roll, in order to try and get them talking about the possibilities. Eventually, once you get a consistent dialogue going, things should smooth out.

Compels

Compels

During the game, you should look for opportunities to compel the PCs' traits at the following times:

- Whenever simply succeeding at a skill roll would be bland
- Whenever any player has one or no plot points
- Whenever someone tries to do something, and you immediately think of some trait-related way it could go wrong

Remember that there are essentially two types of compels in the game: decision-based, where something complicated occurs as a result of something a character does; and event-based, where something complicated occurs simply as a result of the character being in the wrong situation at the wrong time.

Of the two, you're going to get the most mileage out of event-based compels – it's already your job to decide how the world responds to the PCs, so you have a lot of leeway to bring unfortunate coincidence into their lives. Most of the time, players are just going to accept you doing this without any problems or minimal negotiation.

Decision-based compels are a little trickier. Try to refrain from suggesting decisions to the players, and focus on responding to their decisions with potential complications. It's important that the players retain their sense of autonomy over what their PCs say and do, so you don't want to dictate that to them. If the players are roleplaying their characters according to their traits, it shouldn't be hard to connect the complications you propose to one of them.

During play, you'll also need to make clear when a particular compel is "set", meaning that there's no backing out without paying a plot point. When players propose their own compels, this won't come up, because they're fishing for the point to begin with. When you propose them, you need to give the players room to negotiate with you over what the complication is, before you make a final decision. Be transparent about this – let them know when the negotiation phase has ended.

Second-Rate Compels

In order for the compel mechanic to be effective, you have to take care that you're proposing complications of sufficient dramatic weight. Stay away from superficial consequences that don't really affect the character except to provide color for the scene. If you can't think of an immediate, tangible way that the complication changes what's going on in the game, you probably need to turn up the heat. If someone doesn't go "oh crap" or give a similar visceral reaction, you probably need to turn up the heat. It's not good enough for someone to be angry at the PC – they get angry and they're willing to do something about it in front of everyone. It's not good enough for a business partner to cut them off – he cuts them off and tells the rest of his associates to blacklist them.

Also, keep in mind that some players may tend to offer weak compels when they're fishing for plot points, because they don't really want to hose their character that badly. Feel free to push for something harder if their initial proposal doesn't actually make the situation that much more dramatic.

Encouraging the Players to Compel

With five traits per PC, it's prohibitively difficult for you to take the sole responsibility for compels at the table, because that's a lot of stuff to remember and keep track of. You need the players to be invested in looking for moments to compel their own characters.

Open-ended prompting can go a long way to create this habit in your players. If you see an opportunity for a potential compel, instead of proposing it directly, ask a leading question instead. "So, you're at the royal ball and you have The Manners of a Goat. Zo, do you think this is going to go smoothly for your character?" Let the player do the work of coming up with the complication and then pass the plot point along.

Also remind the players that they can compel your NPCs, if they happen to know one of that NPC's traits. Do the same open-ended prompting when you're about to have an NPC make a decision, and ask the players to fill in the blanks. "So, you know that Duke Orsin is Woefully Overconfident....You think he's going to get out of the jousting tournament unscathed? How might that go wrong? You willing to pay a plot point to say it does?"

Your main goal should be to enlist the players as partners in bringing the drama, rather than being the sole provider.

Creating the Opposition

One of your most important jobs as a GM is creating the NPCs who will oppose the PCs and try to keep them from their goals during your scenarios. The real story comes from what the PCs do when worthy adversaries stand between them and their objectives – how far they're willing to go, what price they're willing to pay, and how they change as a result of the experience.

As a GM, you want to shoot for a balancing act with the opposing NPCs – you want the players to experience tension and uncertainty, but you don't want their defeat to be a foregone conclusion. You want them to work for it, but you don't want them to lose hope.

Here's how.

Take Only What You Need to Survive

First of all, keep in mind that you're never obligated to give any NPC a full sheet like the ones the PCs have. Most of the time, you're not going to need to know that much information, because the NPCs aren't going to be the center of attention like the PCs are. It's better to focus on writing down exactly what you need for that NPC's encounter with the PCs, and then fill in the blanks on the fly (just like PCs can) if that NPC ends up becoming more important in the campaign.

The NPC Types

NPCs come in three different flavors: nameless NPCs, supporting NPCs, and main NPCs.

Nameless NPCs

The majority of the NPCs in your campaign world are nameless – people who are so insignificant to the story that the PCs interactions with them don't even require them to learn a name. The random shopkeeper they pass on the street, the archivist at the library, the third patron from the left at the bar, the guards at the gate. Their role in the story is temporary and fleeting – the PCs will probably encounter them once and never see them again. In fact, most of the time, you'll create them simply out of reflex when you describe an environment. "The plaza is beautiful at midday, and full of shoppers milling about. There's a town crier with an extremely shrill, high-pitched voice barking out the local news."

On their own, nameless NPCs usually aren't meant to provide much of a challenge to the PCs. You use them like you use a low-difficulty skill roll, mainly as an opportunity to showcase the PCs' competence. In conflicts, they serve as a distraction or a delay, forcing the PCs to work a little harder to get what they want. Action-adventure stories often feature master villains with an army of mooks. These are the mooks.

For a nameless NPC, all you really need is two or three skills based on their role in the scene. Your average security guard might have Fight and Shoot, while your average clerk might only have Scholarship. They never get more than one or two traits, because they just aren't important enough. They only have one or two stress boxes, if any, to absorb both physical and mental hits. In other words, they're no match for a typical PC.

Nameless NPCs come in three varieties: Average, Fair, and Good.

Average

Competence: Rank-and-file order-takers, local conscripts, and the like. When in doubt, a nameless NPC is Average.

Purpose: Mostly there to make the PCs look more awesome.

Traits: One or two.

Abilities: All 2s

Skills: One or two at 1

Stress: One stress box, with no consequence slots – a single hit takes out an average mook.

Fair

Competence: Trained professionals, like soldiers and elite guards, or others whose role in the scene speaks to their experience, such as a sharp-tongued courtier or talented thief.

Purpose: Drain a few of the players' resources (one or two plot points, stress boxes, possibly a mild consequence).

Traits: One or two.

Abilities: One 3, two 2s.

Skills: One at 2, and one or two at 1.

Stress: Three stress boxes, no consequence slots. One solid hit or a few middling ones will take this NPC out.

Good

Competence: Tough opposition, especially in numbers.

Purpose: Drain the players' resources – as Fair, but more so. Provide a decent stumbling block (in numbers) on the way to a more significant encounter.

Traits: One or two.

Abilities: All 3s.

Skills: A little pyramid: one 3, two 2s, and a few 1s.

Stress: Three stress boxes, no consequence slots.

Mobs

Whenever possible, identical nameless NPCs like to form groups, or mobs. Not only does this better ensure their survival, it reduces the workload on the GM. For all intents and purposes, you can treat a mob as a single unit – instead of rolling dice individually for each of three thugs, just roll once for the whole mob.

See the Teamwork section in the previous chapter to see how mobs can concentrate their efforts to be more effective.

Hits and Overflow

When a mob takes a hit, shifts in excess of what's needed to take out one NPC are applied to the next NPCs in the mob, one at a time. In this way, it's entirely possible for a PC to take out a mob of four or five nameless NPCs (or more!) in a single exchange.

When a mob takes enough stress to reduce it to a single NPC, try to have that orphaned NPC join up with another mob in the scene, if it makes sense. (If it doesn't, just have them flee. Nameless NPCs are good at that.)

> Blake and Marco are set upon by a half-dozen ill-informed street-gang toughs just for walking down the wrong alleyway.
>
> These thugs are nameless NPCs with Perception and Fight skills of Average (+1).
>
> Normally Marco's Good (+3) Perception would allow her to act first, but Ace reasons that the thugs' ability to surround the PCs gives them the drop. In a big group of six, their Average (+1) Perception is increased by +5 to a Fantastic (+6).
>
> As they make their assault, Ace splits them into two mobs of three: one for Blake and one for Marco. Both attack with Good (+3) ratings (Average Fight skill with +2 for the helpers), but neither mob hits.
>
> Marco goes next. Huckleberry says, "In a flash, Marco's sword is in hand and slicing through these punks!" She gets a Great (+4) result with her Fight. Ace's first thug mob defends with a Good (+3) (+0 on the dice, Average skill, with +2 for the helpers), so Marco deals one shift to the mob enough to take one of them out. There are still two in the mob, though, so they only get +1 for the helper when they attack next.
>
> On Zo's turn, Blake deals two shifts to the mob he's facing, enough to take out two thugs and reducing it from a mob of three to a single nameless NPC.

Nameless NPCs as Obstacles

An even easier way to handle nameless NPCs is simply to treat them as obstacles: Give a difficulty for the PC to overcome whatever threat the NPC presents, and just do it in one roll. You don't even have to write anything down, just set a difficulty according to the guidelines in this chapter and Actions and Outcomes, and assume that the PC gets past on a successful roll.

> Samantha wants to convince a group of mages that continuing their research into the Dark Void will doom them all, and possibly the world. Ace doesn't want to deal with him needing to convince each mage individually, so she makes a challenge out of them.
>
> The steps of the challenge are: establish your bona fides (Scholarship), turn them against each other (Deceive), and cow them into submission by preaching doom and gloom (Provoke). She chooses a passive opposition of Great (+4) for the challenge.

If the situation is more complicated than that, make it a challenge instead. This trick is useful when you want a group of nameless NPCs more as a feature of the scene than as individuals.

NPC First, Name Later

Nameless NPCs don't have to remain nameless. If the players decide to get to know that barkeep or town crier or security chief or whatever, go ahead and make a real person out of them – but that doesn't mean that you need to make them any more mechanically complex. If you want to, of course, go ahead and promote them to a supporting NPC. But otherwise, simply giving that courtier a name and a motivation doesn't mean he can't go down in one punch.

BARKEEP (AVG)
TRAITS
I DON'T WANT NO TROUBLE IN MY
PLACE
ABILITIES
MENT 2, PHYS 2, SOC 2
SKILLS
CONTACTS +1

TRAINED THUG (FAIR)
TRAITS
THE WAYS OF THE STREET
VIOLENT CRIMINAL
ABILITIES
MENT 1, PHYS 3, SOC 2
SKILLS
FIGHT +2
ATHLETICS +1
PHYSIQUE +1

COMPANY SCIENTIST (GOOD)
TRAITS
HAUGHTY DEMEANOR
COMPUTER GEEK
ABILITIES
MENT 3, PHYS 1, SOC 2
SKILLS
SCIENCE +3
DECEIVE +2
WILL +1
EMPATHY +1

Supporting NPCs

Supporting NPCs have proper names and are a little more detailed than nameless NPCs, playing a supporting role in your scenarios (hence the name). They often display some kind of strong distinguishing trait that sets them apart from the crowd, because of their relationship to a PC or NPC, a particular competence or unique ability, or simply the fact that they tend to appear in the game a great deal. Many action-adventure stories feature a "lieutenant" character who is the right-hand man of the lead villain; that's a supporting NPC in game terms. The faces that you assign to the locations you make during game creation are supporting NPCs, as are any characters who are named in one of the PCs' traits.

Supporting NPCs are a great source of interpersonal drama, because they're usually the people that the PCs have a relationship with, such as friends, sidekicks, family, contacts, and noteworthy opponents. While they may never be central to resolving the main dilemma of a scenario, they're a significant part of the journey, either because they provide aid, present a problem, or figure into a subplot.

Supporting NPCs are made much like nameless NPCs, except they get to have a few more of the standard character elements. These include a high concept, a trouble, one or more additional traits, one feat, and the standard two stress tracks with two boxes each. They should have a handful of skills (say four or five). If they have a skill that entitles them to bonus stress boxes, award those as well. They have one mild consequence and, if you want them to be especially tough, one moderate consequence.

Abilities for a supporting NPC should fall within the same range as your PCs - that means somewhere between 7 and 10 points. Put their highest at 3 or 4, the rest at 2, and drop a 1 in there if they're especially frail, dim-witted, or uncouth.

Skills for a supporting NPC should follow a column distribution. Because you're only going to define four or five skills, just treat it as one column. If your NPC has a skill at Great, fill in one skill at each positive step below it – so one Good, one Fair, and one Average skill.

Skill Levels: A supporting NPC's top skill can exceed your best PC's by one or two levels, but only if their role in the game is to provide serious opposition – supporting NPCs who are allied with the PCs should be their rough peers in skill level. (Another action-adventure trope is to make the "lieutenant" character better than the main villain at combat, contrasting brawn to the villain's brain.)

Concessions: Supporting NPCs should not fight to the bitter end, given the option. Instead, have them concede conflicts often, especially early in a story, and especially if the concession is something like "They get away." Conceding like this serves a few purposes. For one, it foreshadows a future, more significant encounter with the NPC. Because conceding comes with a reward of one or more plot points, it also makes them more of a threat the next time they show up. What's more, it's virtually guaranteed to pay off for the players in a satisfying way the next time the NPC makes an appearance. "So, Blake, we meet again! But this time it shall not go so easily for you."

Finally, it implicitly demonstrates to the players that, when things are desperate, conceding a conflict is a viable course of action. A PC concession here and there can raise the stakes and introduce new complications organically, both of which make for a more dramatic, engaging story.

OLD FINN (BLAKE'S MENTOR)
TRAITS
- RETIRED SECURITY BOSS
- TOO OLD FOR THIS SHIT
- BLAKE'S MENTOR
ABILITIES - MENT 2, PHYS 3, SOC 2
SKILLS
SHOOT +4, FIGHT +3, WILL +2,
ATHLETICS +1
FEATS
BATTLEFIELD EXPERT: CAN USE FIGHT
TO CREATE ADVANTAGES IN LARGE-SCALE
TACTICAL SITUATIONS

JOHNNIE RUPTURE (MAFIA THUG)
TRAITS
- I BREAK THINGS
- HARD AS A BRICK, DUMB AS A BRICK
ABILITIES - MENT 1, PHYS 4, SOC 1
SKILLS
FIGHT +6, PHYSIQUE +5, ATHLETICS +4
FEATS
-

*HAS 4 HEALTH BOXES,
CAN TAKE 1 EXTRA MILD CONSEQUENCE

TRAN QUICK (CAT BURGLAR KING)
TRAITS
- CUTPURSE AND A SCOUNDREL
- I JUST CAN'T HELP MYSELF
ABILITIES - MENT 3, PHYS 4, SOC 3
SKILLS
BURGLARY +5, STEALTH +4, SCHOLARSHIP
+3, FIGHT +2, PHYSIQUE +1
FEATS
URBAN CHAMELEON: +2 TO STEALTH IN
CITIES

*HAS 3 HEALTH BOXES

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Main NPCs

Main NPCs are the closest you're ever going to get to playing a PC yourself. They have full character sheets just like a PC does, with five traits, a full distribution of skills, and a selection of feats. They are the most significant characters in your PCs' lives, because they represent pivotal forces of opposition or allies of crucial importance. Because they have a full spread of traits, they also offer the most nuanced options for interaction, and they have the most options to invoke and be compelled. Your primary "bad guys" in a scenario or arc should always be main NPCs, as should any NPCs who are the most vital pieces of your stories.

Because they have all the same things on their sheet as PCs do, main NPCs will require a lot more of your time and attention than other characters. How you create one really depends on how much time you have – if you want, you can go through the whole character creation process and work out their whole backstory through phases, leaving only those slots for "guest starring" open.

Of course, if you want, you can also upgrade one of your current supporting NPCs to a main using this method. This is great for when a supporting NPC has suddenly or gradually become – usually because of the players – a major fixture in the story, despite your original plans for them.

You could also do things more on the fly if you need to, creating a partial sheet of the traits you know for sure, those skills you definitely need them to have, and any feats you want. Then fill in the rest as you go. This is almost like making a supporting NPC, except you can add to the sheet during play.

Main NPCs will fight to the bitter end if need be, making the PCs work for every step.

Regarding skill and ability levels, your main NPCs will come in one of two flavors – exact peers of the PCs who grow with them as the campaign progresses, or superiors to the PCs who remain static while the PCs grow to sufficient strength to oppose them. If it's the former, just give them the exact same ability and skill distribution the PCs currently have. If it's the latter, give them enough skills to go at least two higher than whatever the current skill cap is for the game and abilities totalling two points or so higher than your PCs.

So, if the PCs are currently capped at Great (+4), your main NPC badass should be able to afford a couple of Fantastic (+6) columns or a pyramid that peaks at Fantastic.

Likewise, a particularly significant NPC might have more than five traits to highlight their importance to the story.

Playing the Opposition

Here are some tips for using the opposition characters you create in play.

Right-sizing

Remember, you want a balancing act between obliterating the PCs and letting them walk all over your opposition (unless it's a mook horde, in which case that's pretty much what they're there for). It's important to keep in mind not just the skill levels of the NPCs in your scenes, but their number and importance.

Right-sizing the opposition is more of an art than a science, but here are some strategies to help.

Don't outnumber the PCs unless your NPCs have comparatively lower skills.

If they're going to team up against one big opponent, make sure that opponent has a peak skill two levels higher than whatever the best PC can bring in that conflict.

Limit yourself to one main NPC per scene, unless it's a big climactic conflict at the end of an arc. Remember, supporting NPCs can have skills as high as you want.

Most of the opposition the PCs encounter in a session should be nameless NPCs, with one or two supporting NPCs and main NPCs along the way.

Nameless and supporting NPCs means shorter conflicts because they give up or lose sooner; main NPCs mean longer conflicts.

> Dr. Sanford Quin, Blood Addict Boss
> TRAITS
> - Bloodthirsty
> - Authority figure
> - Methodical, exacting, insane
> ABILITIES - Ment 4, Phys 4, Soc 3
> SKILLS
>   Deceive +6, Science +6
>   Fight +5, Contacts +5
>   Resources +4, Will +4
>   Perception +3, Physique +3
>   Stealth +2, Expression +3
>   Scholarship +1, Engineering +1
> FEATS
>   Takes One to Know One: Use Deceive instead of Empathy to create an advantage in social situations.
>   Eyes Everywhere: Use Contacts instead of Investigation to keep tabs on someone.
>   Blood-Drinker: When you use Physique to create an advantage in combat you deal 1 damage on a success.

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Creating Advantages for NPCs

It's easy to fall into the default mode of using the opposition as a direct means to get in the PCs' way, drawing them into a series of conflict scenes until someone is defeated.

However, keep in mind that the NPCs can create advantages just like the PCs can. Feel free to use opposition characters to create scenes that aren't necessarily about stopping the PCs from achieving a goal, but scouting out information about them and stacking up free invocations. Let your bad guys and the PCs have tea together and then bring out the Empathy rolls. Or instead of having that fight scene take place in the dark alley, let your NPCs show up, gauge the PCs' abilities, and then flee.

Likewise, keep in mind that your NPCs have a home turf advantage in conflicts if the PCs go to them in order to resolve something. So, when you're setting up situation traits, you can pre-load the NPC with some free invocations if it's reasonable that they've had time to place those traits. Use this trick in good faith, though – two or three such traits is probably pushing the limit.

Change Venues of Conflict

Your opposition will be way more interesting if they try to get at the PCs in multiple venues of conflict, rather than just going for the most direct route. Remember that there are a lot of ways to get at someone, and that mental conflict is just as valid as physical conflict as a means of doing so. If the opposition has a vastly different skill set than one or more of your PCs, leverage their strengths and choose a conflict strategy that gives them the best advantage.

For example, someone going after Blake probably doesn't want to confront him physically, because Fight and Athletics are his highest skills. He's not as well equipped to see through a clever deception, however, or handle a magical assault on his mind. Samantha, on the other hand, is best threatened by the biggest, nastiest bruiser possible, someone who can strike at him before he has a chance to bring his magic to bear.

SCENES, SESSIONS, AND SCENARIOS

So, Now What?

By now, you and your group have created the PCs, established the world they inhabit, and set all the basic assumptions for the game you're going to play. Now you have a pile of traits and NPCs, brimming with dramatic potential and waiting to come to life.

What do you do with them?

It's time to get into the real meat of the game: creating and playing through scenarios.

Defining Scenarios

As mentioned in Running the Game, a scenario is a unit of game time usually lasting from one to four sessions, and made up of a number of discrete scenes. The end of a scenario should trigger a significant milestone, allowing your PCs to get better at what they do.

In a scenario, the PCs are going to face and try to resolve some kind of big, urgent, open-ended problem (or problems). The GM will typically open a scenario by presenting this problem to the players, with subsequent scenes revolving around what the PCs do to deal with it, whether that's researching information, gathering resources, or striking directly at the problem's source.

Along the way, you'll also have some NPCs who are opposed to the PCs' goals interfere with their attempts to solve the problem. These could be your Raymond Chandler-esque "two guys with guns" bursting through the door to kill them, or simply someone with different interests who wants to negotiate with the PCs in order to get them to deal with the problem in a different way.

The best scenarios don't have one particular "right" ending. Maybe the PCs don't resolve the problem, or resolve it in such a way that it has bad repercussions. Maybe they succeed with flying colors. Maybe they circumvent the problem, or change the situation in order to minimize the impact of the problem. You won't know until you play.

Once the problem is resolved (or it can no longer be resolved), the scenario is over. The following session, you'll start a new scenario, which can either relate directly to the previous scenario or present a whole new problem.

Creating a Scenario, Step-by-Step

- Find Problems
- Ask Story Questions
- Establish the Opposition
- Set the First Scene

Find Problems

Creating a scenario begins with finding a problem for the PCs to deal with. A good problem is relevant to the PCs, cannot be resolved without their involvement, and cannot be ignored without dire consequences.

That may seem like a tall order. Fortunately, you have a great storytelling tool to help you figure out appropriate problems for your game: traits.

Your PCs' traits have a lot of story built into them – they're an indication of what's important about (and to) each character, they indicate what things in the game world the PCs are connected to, and they describe the unique facets of each character's identity.

You also have the traits that are attached to your game – all your current and impending issues, location traits, and any traits you've put on any of your campaign's faces. Riffing off of those helps to reinforce the sense of a consistent, dynamic world, and keep your game's central premise in the forefront of play.

Because of all these traits, you already have a ton of story potential sitting right in front of you – now, you just have to unlock it.

You can look at a trait-related problem as a very large-scale kind of event compel. The setup is a little more work, but the structure is similar – having a trait suggests or implies something problematic for the PC or multiple PCs, but unlike a compel, it's something they can't easily resolve or deal with in the moment.

You Don't Always Have to Destroy the World

As you will see from the examples, not all of our urgent, consequential problems necessarily involve the fate of the world or even a large portion of the setting. Interpersonal problems can have just as much of an impact on a group of PCs as stopping this week's bad guy winning someone's respect or resolving an ongoing dispute between two characters can just as easily take the focus for a scenario as whatever grand scheme your badass villain is cooking up.

If you want a classic action-adventure story setup, see if you can come up with two main problems for your scenario one that focuses on something external to the characters (like the villain's scheme), and one that deals with interpersonal issues. The latter will serve as a subplot in your scenario and give the characters some development time while they're in the midst of dealing with other problems.

Create Problems

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Problems and Character Traits

When you're trying to get a problem from a character trait, try fitting it into this sentence:

You have ____ trait, which implies ____ (and this may be a list of things, by the way). Because of that, ____ would probably be a big problem for you.

The second blank is what makes this a little harder than an event compel – you have to think about all the different potential implications of a trait. Here are some questions to help with that.

■ Who might have a problem with the character because of this trait?

■ Does the trait point to a potential threat to that character?

■ Does the trait describe a connection or relationship that could cause trouble for the character?

■ Does the trait speak to a backstory element that could come back to haunt the character?

■ Does the trait describe something or someone important to the character that you can threaten?

As long as whatever you put in the third blank fits the criteria at the beginning of this section, you're good to go.

Problems and Game Traits

Problems you get from a game's current and impending issues will be a little wider in scope than character-driven problems, affecting all your PCs and possibly a significant number of NPCs as well. They're less personal, but that doesn't mean they have to be less compelling (pardon the pun).

Because ____ is an issue, it implies ____. Therefore, ____ would probably create a big problem for the PCs.

Ask yourself:

■ What threats does the issue present to the PCs?

■ Who are the driving forces behind the issue, and what messed up thing might they be willing to do to advance their agenda?

■ Who else cares about dealing with the issue, and how might their "solution" be bad for the PCs?

■ What's a good next step for resolving the issue, and what makes accomplishing that step hard?

> Marco has Infamous Girl With Sword, which implies that her reputation precedes her across the countryside. Because of that, a copycat committing crimes in her name and getting the inhabitants of the next city she visits angry and murderous would probably be a big problem for her.
>
> Blake has a trait of I Owe Old Finn Everything, which implies that he'd feel obligated to help Finn out with any personal problems. Because of that, having to bail Finn's son out of a gambling debt he owes to some very nasty people would probably be a big problem for him.
>
> Samantha has Rivals in the Collegia Arcana, which implies that some or many of them are scheming against him constantly. Because of that, a series of concentrated assassination attempts from someone or several people who know how to get past all his magical defenses would probably be a big problem for him.

Put a Face On It

While not all of your scenario problems have to be directly caused by an NPC who serves as a "master villain" for the PCs to take down, it's often easier if they are. At the very least, you should be able to point directly to an NPC who benefits a great deal from the scenario problem not going the way the PCs want it to go.

Because The Scar Triad is an issue, it implies that the Triad is making a serious power play across the land. Therefore, a complete government takeover by Triad members in the city they're sent to on their next job would probably create a big problem for the PCs.

Because The Doom that Is to Come is an issue, it implies that agents of the Cult of Tranquility are constantly trying to fulfill parts of the ancient prophecies that foretell the doom. Therefore, a series of ritual murders in the next town meant to awaken an ancient demon that sleeps under the town would probably create a big problem for the PCs.

Because the Cult of Tranquility's Two Conflicting Prophecies is an issue, it implies that there's an internal Cult struggle to validate one prophecy as being definitive. Therefore, an all-out war between rival factions in the next town that brings innocents into the crossfire would probably create a big problem for the PCs.

Problems and Trait Pairs

This is where you really start cooking with gas. You can also create problems from the relationship between two traits instead of relying on just one. That lets you keep things personal, but broaden the scope of your problem to impact multiple characters, or thread a particular PC's story into the story of the game.

There are two main forms of trait pairing: connecting two character traits, and connecting a character trait to an issue.

Two Character Traits

Because ____ has ____ trait and ____ has ____ trait, it implies that ____. Therefore, ____ would probably be a big problem for them.

Ask yourself:

■ Do the two traits put those characters at odds or suggest a point of tension between them?

■ Is there a particular kind of problem or trouble that both would be likely to get into because of the traits?

■ Does one character have a relationship or a connection that could become problematic for the other?

■ Do the traits point to backstory elements that can intersect in the present?

■ Is there a way for one PC's fortune to become another's misfortune, because of the traits?

> Because Blake is a Disciple of the Ivory Shroud, and Samantha has Rivals in the Collegia Arcana, it implies that both factions could occasionally cross paths and have incompatible agendas. Therefore, a mandate from the monks of a local Shroud monastery to capture or kill the members of a local Collegia chapterhouse for an unknown slight would probably be a big problem for them.
>
> Because Marco is Tempted by Shiny Things, and Blake has The Manners of a Goat, it implies that they're probably the worst partners for any kind of undercover heist. Therefore, a contract to infiltrate the Royal Ball of Ictherya with no backup and walk out with the Crown Jewels on behalf of a neighboring kingdom would probably be a big problem for them.
>
> Because Samantha has If I Haven't Been There, I've Read About It, and Marco is the Secret Sister of Barathar, it implies that proof of Marco's true heritage could one day fall into Samantha's hands. Therefore, the unexpected arrival of a genealogical document in code that Barathar and her henchies seek to recover at all costs would probably be a big problem for them.

Character Trait and Issue

Because you have ____ trait and ____ is an issue, it implies that ____. Therefore, ____ would probably be a big problem for you.

Ask yourself:

Does the issue suggest a threat to any of the PC's relationships?

Is the next step to dealing with the issue something that impacts a particular character personally because of their traits?

Does someone connected to the issue have a particular reason to target the PC because of a trait?

How Many Problems Do I Need?

For a single scenario, one or two is sufficient, trust us. You'll see below that even one problem can create enough material for two or three sessions. Don't feel like you have to engage every PC with every scenario   rotate the spotlight around a little so that they each get some spotlight time, and then throw in an issue-related scenario when you want to concentrate on the larger "plot" of the game.

Because Marco is the Secret Sister of Barathar and The Scar Triad is an issue, it implies that the Triad could have leverage over Marco for blackmail. Therefore, the Triad hiring her for an extremely dangerous and morally reprehensible job on the threat of revealing her secret to the world and making her a public enemy across the land would probably be a big problem for her.

Because Samantha has If I Haven't Been There, I've Read About It, and the Cult of Tranquility's Two Conflicting Prophecies are an issue, it implies that Samantha could be the key to figuring out which of the prophecies is legitimate. Therefore, getting approached by the Primarch to learn the Rites of Tranquility and figure out the truth of the prophecy, and thus becoming a target for manipulation from both major factions, would probably be a big problem for him.

Because Blake has An Eye for an Eye, and The Doom that Is to Come is an issue, it implies that anything the Cult does to Blake's loved ones would be met with a desire for vengeance. Therefore, an attack on his hometown by Cult agents on the prowl for more indoctrinated servants as preparation for the End Times would probably be a big problem for him.

Ask Story QUestions

Now that you have a really grabby problem, you can flesh the situation out a little and figure out precisely what your scenario is intended to resolve – in other words, what are the really grabby questions at the heart of this problem?

That's what you'll do in this step: create a series of questions that you want your scenario to answer. We call these story questions, because the story will emerge naturally from the process of answering them.

The more story questions you have, the longer your scenario's going to be. One to three story questions will probably wrap up in a session. Four to eight might take you two or even three sessions. More than eight or nine, and you might have to save some of those questions for the next scenario, but that's not a bad thing at all.

We recommend asking story questions as yes/no questions, in the general format of, "Can/Will (character) accomplish (goal)?" You don't have to follow that phrasing exactly, and you can embellish on the basic question format in a number of ways, which we'll show you in a moment.

Every problem you come up with is going to have one very obvious story question: "Can the PC(s) resolve the problem?" You do need to know that eventually, but you don't want to skip straight to that – it's your finale for the scenario, after all. Put other questions before that one to add nuance and complexity to the scenario and build up to that final question. Figure out what makes the problem difficult to solve.

To come up with story questions, you're probably going to have to embellish on the problem that you came up with just a bit, and figure out some of the W-How (who, what, when, where, why, how) details. That's also fine, and part of what the process is for.

Also notice that a few of the story questions have something else that modifies the basic "Can X accomplish Y?" format. The reason why you want to do this is the same reason you want to avoid rolling dice sometimes – black and white success/failure isn't always interesting, especially on the failure side.

There's also some room to extend material from this scenario into the future. Maybe the identity of Marco's opponent doesn't get answered this session at all – that's okay, because it's a detail Ace can always bring back in a later session.

If you end up with a really large number of story questions (like eight or more), keep in mind that you don't necessarily have to answer them all in one scenario – you can bring up the questions you don't answer, either as foreshadowing or to set up stuff you're going to do in the following scenario. In fact, that's exactly how you make strong arcs – you have a pile of related story questions, and you take two or three scenarios to answer them all.

An Arcane Conspiracy: Problem and Story Questions

Marco is Tempted by Shiny Things, and Samantha has Rivals in the Collegia Arcana, which implies that the Collegia's wealth might end up on Marco's radar at an inconvenient time for Samantha. Therefore, Marco getting a lucrative contract to steal one of the Collegia's sacred treasures at the same time that Samantha's rivals try to put him on trial for crimes against creation would probably be a big problem for both of them.

Two obvious story questions spring to mind already: Will Marco get the treasure? Will Samantha win his trial? But Ace wants to save those answers for the end, so she brainstorms some other questions.

First of all, she doesn't know if they're even going to go willingly into this situation, so she starts there: Will Marco take the contract? Will Samantha allow the Collegia to arrest him, or will he resist?

Then, she needs to figure out why they can't just go straight to the problem. She decides Marco has an anonymous rival for the treasure (let's call it the Jewel of Aetheria, that sounds nice), and her mysterious employer would be most displeased if the rival beat her to the punch.

Samantha, in the meantime, has to secure a legal defense that isn't a part of the conspiracy against him, and will probably want to find out precisely who has it in for him this time.

So, that gives her three more questions: Can Marco sniff out her competitor before her competitor does the same to her? Can Samantha find an ally to defend him among the Collegia's ranks? Can Samantha discover the architects of the conspiracy without suffering further consequences?

Then, because she wants some tension between these two, one that relates to their relationship: Will Marco turn her back on Samantha for the sake of her own goals?

Perception that each of these questions has the potential to significantly shape the scenario's plot. Right off the bat, if Samantha decides not to go quietly, you have a very different situation than if he chooses to submit to custody. If Samantha's investigations get him arrested, then the trial might end up being a moot point. If Marco decides to help Samantha rather than pursuing the Jewel, then they're going to have another source of trouble in the form of Marco's employer.

Look at one of the questions for Marco: "Will Marco discover the identity of her chief competitor for the Jewel before the competitor discovers hers?" Without the emphasized part, it'd be kind of boring if she fails to discover her opponent's identity, then we've pretty much dropped that plot thread, and part of the game stalls out. No good.

The way we've phrased it, though, we have somewhere to go if she doesn't do well in this part of the scenario she may not know who her rival is, but her rival knows her now. Whatever happens with the Jewel, that rival can come back to haunt her in a future scenario. Or, we take it as a given that we're going to reveal the rival's identity to Marco eventually, but we can still have a tense set of conflicts or contests leading up to that reveal as they suss out each other's abilities.

Establish the Opposition

You might have already come up with an NPC or group of NPCs who is/are responsible for what's going on when you made up your problem, but if you haven't, you need to start putting together the cast of characters who are the key to answering your story questions. You also need to nail down their motivations and goals, why they're standing in opposition to the PCs' goals, and what they're after.

At the very least, you should be able to answer the following questions for each named NPC in your scenario:

What does that NPC need? How can the PCs help her get that, or how are the PCs in the way?

Why can't the NPC get what she needs through legitimate means? (In other words, why is this need contributing to a problem?)

Why can't she be ignored?

Wherever you can, try and consolidate NPCs so that you don't have too many characters to keep track of. If one of your opposition NPCs is serving only one purpose in your scenario, consider getting rid of him and folding his role together with another NPC. This not only reduces your workload, but it also allows you to develop each NPC's personality a bit more, making him more multi-dimensional as you reconcile his whole set of motives.

For each NPC that you have, decide whether you need to make them a supporting or main. Stat them up according to the guidelines given in Running the Game.

Advantages Can Save You Work

When you're establishing your NPCs for your scenario, you don't have to have everything set in stone when you get to the table whatever you don't know, you can always establish by letting the advantages the players create become the NPCs' traits. Also see below, for advice about winging it during play.

An Arcane Conspiracy: Opposition

Ace looks over the story questions and thinks of NPCs she'll need in order to answer them. She makes a list of the obvious suspects.

Marco's mysterious employer (not appearing)

The chief arbiter for the Collegia Arcana (supporting)

Marco's competitor for the Jewel (supporting)

A barrister who isn't part of the conspiracy (supporting)

A corrupt barrister, and the one that Samantha's rivals want to set him up with (supporting)

The Collegia wizard who engineered the conspiracy to bring Samantha down (main)

That's six NPCs, four supporting, one main, and one that isn't going to be in the scenario she really doesn't want to drop any details on who's hiring Marco yet. She also doesn't really want to keep track of five NPCs, so she starts looking for opportunities to consolidate.

One pairing that immediately strikes her is making Marco's competitor and the neutral barrister into the same person, whom she names Anna. Anna might not be involved in this conspiracy, but clearly, there's a more complicated motive at work. What's going on with her? Ace ultimately decides that Anna's motives are beneficent; she's secreting the Jewel away to keep it out of the hands of more corrupt elements in the Collegia's infrastructure. She doesn't know anything about Marco and will mistake her for an agent of those corrupt elements until they clear the air.

Then she decides that the chief arbiter and the architect of the conspiracy are the same he didn't trust anyone else to stick the final nail in Samantha's coffin, so he made sure he'd be appointed arbiter over the trial. Ace likes this because his political power makes him a formidable opponent to investigate and gives him a powerful lackey in the form of the corrupt barrister. But why does he have it in for Samantha in the first place?

She further decides that his motives aren't personal, but he's getting ready to do some stuff that will rock the foundations of the Collegia, and he knows that as a misfit in that organization, Samantha is one of the most likely candidates to resist him. So it's basically a preemptive strike.

As for the corrupt barrister, the first thing that comes to mind is a pathetic, sniveling toady who is totally in the arbiter's pocket. But she wants to add a measure of depth to him, so she also decides that the arbiter has blackmail material on him, which helps to ensure his loyalty. She doesn't know what that info is yet, but she's hoping that nosy PCs will help her figure it out through a story detail later.

She names the arbiter Lanthus, and the corrupt barrister Pight. Now she has her NPCs, and she goes about making their sheets.

Set Up the First Scene

Start things off by being as unsubtle as possible – take one of your story questions, come up with something that will bring the question into sharp relief, and hit your players over the head with it as hard as you can. You don't have to answer it right off the bat (though there's nothing wrong with that, either), but you should show the players that the question demands an answer.

That way, you're setting an example for the rest of the session and getting the momentum going, ensuring the players won't dither around. Remember, they're supposed to be proactive, competent people – give them something to be proactive and competent about right from the get-go.

If you're in an ongoing campaign, you might need the first scenes of a session to resolve loose ends that were left hanging from a previous session. It's okay to spend time on that, because it helps keep the sense of continuity going from session to session. As soon as there's a lull in momentum, though, hit them with your opening scene fast and hard.

The Trick to Starting a Scene

Asking the players to contribute something to the beginning of your first scene is a great way to help get them invested in what's going on right off the bat. If there's anything that's flexible about your opening prompt, ask your players to fill in the blanks for you when you start the scene. Clever players may try to use it as an opportunity to push for a compel and get extra plot points right off the bat we like to call this sort of play "awesome."

An Arcane Conspiracy: The Opening Scene

Ace mulls over her questions and thinks about what she wants as her opening scene. A couple of obvious suggestions come to mind:

Enforcers from the Collegia show up at Samantha's door and serve him papers, demanding he come with them.

Marco receives the contract and job details from a mysterious employer, and must decide whether or not to sign.

She decides to go with the latter scene, because she figures that if Marco rebuffs the contract and then finds out that Samantha's going to the Collegia anyway, it might create a fun scene where she tries to get the mysterious employer to reconsider. And even if she sticks to her guns, it'll establish whether or not they'll have to deal with any drama on the way there, as the mysterious employer's lackeys harass them on the way.

That doesn't mean she's going to just toss the scene with Samantha aside she's just going to save it for a follow-up to the first scene.

Let's look at our example scenes above. The prompts don't specify where the PCs are when they get confronted with their first choices. So, Ace might start the session by asking Eli, "Where exactly is Samantha when the brute squad from the Collegia comes looking for him?"

Now, even if Eli just replies with "in his sanctuary," you've solicited his participation and helped him set the scene. But Eli is awesome, so what he says instead is, "Oh, probably at the public baths, soaking after a long day of research."

"Perfect!" says Ace, and holds out a plot point. "So, it'd make sense that your Rivals in the Collegia Arcana would have divined precisely the right time to catch you away from all your magical implements and gear, right?"

Eli grins and takes the plot point. "Yeah, that sounds about right."

Of course, you can also just have your opening scenario hooks count as "pre-loaded" compels, and hand out some plot points at the start of a session to start the PCs off with a spot of trouble they have to deal with immediately. This helps low-refresh players out and can kickstart the spending of plot points right off the bat. Make sure your group is okay with giving you carte blanche authority to narrate them into a situation, though some players find the loss of control problematic.

Ace wants to start the players off with a number of plot points off the bat, so at the beginning of the session, she says to the players:

"Samantha, it's bad enough when your Rivals in the Collegia Arcana give you trouble, but when they pretend to be peasants in the local watering hole, get you drunk, and start a bar fight so they can haul you somewhere secluded, it's even worse. You wake up with a five-alarm hangover and a black eye someone punched you in the face!" (2 plot points, for Rivals and Not the Face!)

"Blake, I know Smashing is Always an Option, but how are you going to explain what happened when you tried to fix the wagon while everyone else was away?" (1 plot point for Smashing.)

"Marco, whoever decided to make you this contract offer knows you pretty well. They've included several large gems along with the contract. Problem is, you also know what noble house they were stolen from, and there's no doubt you'll be a wanted woman if you don't sign and you're infamous enough that you know no one's going to believe how you came by them." (2 plot points for Infamous Girl with Sword and Tempted by Shiny Things.)

Defining Scenes

A scene is a unit of game time lasting anywhere from a few minutes to a half hour or more, during which the players try to achieve a goal or otherwise accomplish something significant in a scenario. Taken together, the collection of scenes you play through make up a whole session of play, and by extension, also make up your scenarios, arcs, and campaigns.

So you can look at it as the foundational unit of game time, and you probably already have a good idea of what one looks like. It's not all that different from a scene in a movie, a television show, or a novel – the main characters are doing stuff in continuous time, usually all in the same space. Once the action shifts to a new goal, moves to a new place related to that goal, or jumps in time, you're in the next scene.

As a GM, one of your most important jobs is to manage the starting and ending of scenes. The best way to control the pacing of what happens in your session is to keep a tight rein on when scenes start and end – let things continue as long as the players are all invested and enjoying themselves, but as soon as the momentum starts to flag, move on to the next thing. In that sense, you can look at it as being similar to what a good film editor does – you "cut" a scene and start a new one to make sure the story continues to flow smoothly.

Starting Scenes

When you're starting a scene, establish the following two things as clearly as you can:

■ What's the purpose of the scene?

■ What interesting thing is just about to happen?

Answering the first question is super-important, because the more specific your scene's purpose, the easier it is to know when the scene's over. A good scene revolves around resolving a specific conflict or achieving a specific goal – once the PCs have succeeded or failed at doing whatever they are trying to do, the scene's over. If your scene doesn't have a clear purpose, you run the risk of letting it drag on longer than you intended and slow the pace of your session down.

Most of the time, the players are going to tell you what the purpose of the scene is, because they're always going to be telling you what they want to do next as a matter of course. So if they say, "Well, we're going to the thief's safehouse to see if we can get some dirt on him," then you know the purpose of the scene – it's over when the PCs either get the dirt, or get into a situation where it's impossible to get the dirt.

Sometimes, though, they're going to be pretty vague about it. If you don't have an intuitive understanding of their goals in context, ask questions until they state things directly. So if a player says, "Okay, I'm going to the tavern to meet with my contact," that might be a little vague – you know there's a meeting, but you don't know what it's for. You might ask, "What are you interested in finding out? Have you negotiated a price for the information yet?" or another question that'll help get the player to nail down what he's after.

Also, sometimes you'll have to come up with a scene's purpose all on your own, such as the beginning of a new scenario, or the next scene following a cliffhanger. Whenever you have to do that, try going back to the story questions you came up with earlier and introducing a situation that's going to directly contribute to answering them. That way, whenever it's your job to start a scene, you're always moving the story along.

If you have a clear purpose going into every scene and you start just before some significant piece of action, it's hard to go wrong.

Ace ended the previous session of the group's story with a cliffhanger: the revelation that Marco's mysterious employer is an agent of the Cult of Tranquility, and that the Jewel is an important component in a mysterious ritual. On top of that, Samantha's in the middle of the most important trial of his life, and the Collegia's discovered that the Jewel is missing

Now Ace's thinking about how to start things off next time. The whole situation seems to have really freaked the players out, so she definitely wants to capitalize on that. She figures Anna should return, initially confused about Marco's role in the theft and ready to fight. The scene will be about coming to an accord with Anna and realizing that they're both on the same side, as it were.

The second question is just as important you want to start a scene just before something interesting is going to take place. TV and movies are especially good at this usually, you're not watching a particular scene for more than thirty seconds before something happens to change the situation or shake things up.

"Cutting in" just before some new action starts helps keep the pace of your session brisk and helps hold the players' attention. You don't want to chronicle every moment of the PCs leaving their room at the inn to take a twenty-minute walk across town to the thief's safehouse that's a lot of play time where nothing interesting happens. Instead, you want to start the scene when they're at the safehouse and staring at the horrifically intricate series of locks he's set up on his door, cursing their luck.

If you get stumped by this question, just think of something that might complicate whatever the purpose is or make it problematic. You can also use the ninja trick mentioned earlier and ask the players leading questions to help you figure out the interesting thing that's about to happen.

Ace starts the scene with Marco and Blake walking back to their lodgings late at night, engrossed in conversation about recent events. Zo suggests they're not staying at an inn anymore not after the theft. He figures everyone from the Collegia wizards to the Cult of Tranquility will be looking for Marco, so they're holed up somewhere safe.

So they're understandably surprised by the three armed strangers who ambush them as soon as they walk in the door.

"Whoa!" Huckleberry says. "How'd they know we were going to be here?"

"Tough to say," Ace counters, and tosses her and Zo each a plot point. "But this is a Hub of Trade, Hive of Villainy."

"Fair enough," Zo says, and they both accept the compel.

"Marco, no sooner have you entered your safehouse than a hooded figure has a sword at your throat. The hood comes off it's Anna! And she's pissed. 'Where's the Jewel, you cultist scum?'"

CHAPTER 9
SCENES,
SESSIONS, AND
SCENARIOS

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SCENES, SESSIONS, & SCENARIOS

Ending Scenes

You can end scenes the way you start them, but in reverse: as soon as you've wrapped up whatever your scene's purpose was, move on, and shoot for ending the scene immediately after the interesting action concludes.

This is an effective approach mainly because it helps you sustain interest for the next scene. Again, you see this all the time in good movies – a scene will usually end with a certain piece of action resolved, but also with a lingering bit of business that's left unresolved, and that's where they cut to next.

A lot of your scenes are going to end up the same way. The PCs might win a conflict or achieve a goal, but there's likely something else they're going to want to do after – talk about the outcome, figure out what they're going to do next, etc.

Instead of lingering at that scene, though, suggest that they move on to a new one, which helps answer one of the unresolved questions from the current scene. Try to get them to state what they want to do next, and then go back to the two questions for starting scenes above – what's the purpose of the next scene, and what's the next bit of interesting action to come? Then dive right into that.

The one time you should exhibit restraint is if it's clear that the players are really, really enjoying their interactions. Sometimes people just want to yammer and jaw in character, and that's okay as long as they're really into it. If you see interest starting to flag, though, take that opportunity to insert yourself and ask about the next scene.

Using the Pillars (Competence, Proactivity, Drama)

Whenever you're trying to come up with ideas for what should happen in a scene, you should think about the basic ideas of Analogous that we talked about in The Basics   competence, proactivity, and drama.

In other words, ask yourself if your scene is doing at least one of the following things:

Giving your PCs the chance to show off what they're good at, whether by going up against people who don't hold a candle to them or by holding their own against worthy opponents.

Giving your PCs the chance to do something you can describe with a simple action verb. "Trying to find out information" is too muddy, for example. "Breaking into the mayor's office" is actionable and specific. Not that it has to be physical   "convince the snitch to talk" is also a clear action.

Creating some kind of difficult choice or complication for the PCs. Your best tool to do this with is a compel, but if the situation is problematic enough, you might not need one.

Marco's first impulse is to find out what Anna's talking about   but Ace knows Blake's impulses are... a little more violent.

"Enough talk!" Zo shouts.

"But... we just started talking," Huckleberry says.

"Even still! Why talk when Smashing Is Always an Option?" Zo holds out his hand, and Ace hands him a plot point for the compel.

Hit Their Traits

Another good way to figure out the interesting action for a scene is to turn to the PCs' traits, and create a complication or an event-based compel based on them. This is especially good to do for those PCs whose traits did not come into play when you made up your scenario problem, because it allows them to have some of the spotlight despite the fact that the overall story does not focus on them as much.

The scene opens on the big trial. Samantha stands before a panel of wizards in the Great Hall of the Collegia Arcana. While they pepper him with questions, every now and then a wizard in the gallery throws out a follow-up, an insult, or a word of discouragement. The whole thing's like a lively session of the British Parliament. Marco and Blake stand in the gallery, following the proceedings as best they can.

Ace turns to Huckleberry. "You going to let them get away with treating your friend that?"

"You're right! I can't take it anymore!" Huckleberry says. "I've Got Samantha's Back!"

Marco stands up and shouts at the Arbiter, "Hey, you want to put someone on trial for crimes against creation? How about we start with your mom, ugly!"

Ace tosses Huckleberry a plot point. "Nice."

The Scenario in Play

So, now you should be ready to begin: you have a problem that can't be ignored, a variety of story questions that will lead to resolving that problem one way or another, a core group of NPCs and their motivations, and a really dynamic first scene that will get things cooking.

Everything should be smooth sailing from here, right? You present the questions, the players gradually answer them, and your story rolls into a nice, neat conclusion.

Yeah… trust us, it'll never happen that way.

The most important thing to remember when you actually get the scenario off the ground is this: whatever happens will always be different from what you expect. The PCs will hate an NPC you intended them to befriend, have wild successes that give away a bad guy's secrets very early, suffer unexpected setbacks that change the course of their actions, or any one of another hundred different things that just don't end up the way you think they should.

Perception that we don't recommend predetermining what scenes and locations are going to be involved in your scenario – that's because we find that most of the time, you're going to throw out most of that material anyway, in the face of a dynamic group of players and their choices.

Not all is lost, however – the stuff you have prepared should help you tremendously when players do something unexpected. Your story questions are vague enough that there are going to be multiple ways to answer each one, and you can very quickly axe one that isn't going to be relevant and replace it with something else on the fly without having to toss the rest of your work.

Ace had expected that the scene with Blake, Marco, and Anna would result in a briefly violent reaction, thanks to Blake, followed by the PCs explaining that they're not with the Cult of Tranquility and everyone realizing that they're all on the same side.

Right? No.

The first swing of Blake's sword fells Anna where she stands, killing what would've been their first contact with the Sun and Moon Society, an important secret organization opposing the cult. Plus, Anna's companions are now convinced that he and Marco are indeed cultists.

So...slight detour. Ace sees a few ways to go from here:

The warriors throw caution to the wind, cry "Revenge!" and fight to the death.

One of the warriors assumes Anna's role in the scene and continues the conversation.

The warriors flee (making a concession) and report the killing to their superiors in the secret society, leaving Anna's body behind.

She decides to go with the third option. These two may be good guys, but they're not heroes, and neither one of them is up for taking on Blake after that opener. And the odds of them wanting to have a little chat with Anna's corpse at their feet are, at best, slim.

Plus, Ace figures Huckleberry and Zo will want to search the body, which would present a good opportunity to feed them information about the Sun and Moon Society. It's also a way to bring Samantha in on the action   maybe he knows something about the Sun and Moon Society already, and can make contact with them.

Also, knowing your NPCs' motivations and goals allows you to adjust their behavior more easily than if you'd just placed them in a static scene waiting for the PCs to show up. When the players throw you a curveball, make the NPCs as dynamic and reactive as they are, by having them take sudden, surprising action in pursuit of their goals.

Ace's still stuck on Anna's unexpected demise. She'd planned on making her an entry point for a whole story arc   maybe not a powerful NPC, but a pretty important one nonetheless. So if Anna's not going to be around anymore, Ace at least wants to make something out of her death.

She decides that, while the death of a member of the Sun and Moon Society would go unnoticed by most of Riverton, a guy like Hugo the Charitable would certainly hear about it. He'd already taken notice of Blake after he fought off a few Scar Triad goons. And now this. This newcomer is clearly dangerous, potentially a threat. Worst, he doesn't seem to be working for anyone.

Given Hugo's high concept trait of Everyone in Riverton Fears Me, he sees Blake as a potential asset for the Scar Triad. If you can't beat 'em, recruit 'em.

Resolving the Scenario

A scenario ends when you've run enough scenes to definitively answer most of the story questions you came up with when you were preparing your scenario. Sometimes you'll be able to do that in a single session if you have a lot of time or only a few questions. If you have a lot of questions, it'll probably take you two or three sessions to get through them all.

Don't feel the need to answer every story question if you've brought things to a satisfying conclusion – you can either use unresolved story questions for future scenarios or let them lie if they didn't get a whole lot of traction with the players.

The end of a scenario usually triggers a significant milestone. When this happens, you should also see if the game world needs advancing too.

THE LONG GAME

Defining Arcs

When you sit down to play Analogous, you might just play a single session. That's a viable way to play the game, but let's assume that you want it to go a bit longer. What you need, then, is an arc.

An arc is a complete storyline with its own themes, situations, antagonists, innocent bystanders, and endgame, told in the span of a few sessions (somewhere between two and five, usually). You don't need to have everything planned out (in fact, you probably shouldn't, given that no meticulously planned story ever survives contact with the players), but you need to have an idea of where things begin and end, and what might happen in the middle.

To make a fictional analogy, an arc is a lot like a single book. It tells its own story and ends when it's done; you provide some form of closure and move on. Sometimes you move on to another story, and sometimes your book is just the first in a series of books. That's when you have a campaign.

Defining Campaigns

When you have multiple arcs that are connected and told in a sequence, and that have an overarching story or theme that runs through all of them, you have a campaign. Campaigns are long, taking months or even years to complete (if you ever do).

Of course, that doesn't need to be as scary as it might sound. Yes, a campaign is long and large and complex. You don't, however, need to come up with the whole thing at once. As with an arc, you may have an idea where it begins and ends (and that can be helpful), but you really only need to plan an arc at a time.

See, the players are so prone to shaking things up and changing things on you that planning more than one arc at a time is often frustrating and futile. Planning the second arc of a campaign based on the events of the first arc, how it turned out, and what your players did, though...well, that can make for very satisfying play.

Building an Arc

The easiest way to build an arc is not to build one, we suggested that if you have a lot of story questions in one of your scenarios, you can reserve some of them for the next scenario. Then, in your next scenario, add some new questions to go with the unanswered ones. Lather, rinse, repeat, and you'll have material for three or four scenarios without doing that much additional work. In addition, that lets you incorporate changes to the characters' traits organically, rather than making a plan and having it disrupted.

That said, we know some GMs want to have a greater sense of structure for the long run. We recommend using the same method for building scenarios in the previous chapter to build arcs, but changing the scope of the story questions you come up with. Instead of focusing on immediate problems for the PCs to solve, come up with a more general problem, where the PCs are going to have to solve smaller problems first in order to have a chance at resolving the larger one.

The best places to look for arc-sized problems are the current or impending issues of places or organizations that you came up with during game creation. If you haven't made any up yet for a particular place or group, now might be a good time to do that, so you have material for the arc.

> Ace decides she wants to do one major arc for each PC.
>
> For Samantha, his Rivals in the Collegia Arcana makes it pretty easy   she decides that perhaps there's something more sinister behind these rivalries, such as an attempt by a dark cult operating from within to take over the Collegia and turn it to nefarious purposes.
>
> She needs to focus on story questions that are more general and will take some time to resolve. After thinking about it for a while, she chooses:
>
> Can Samantha uncover the identity of the cult's leader before the takeover occurs? (This lets her do individual scenarios about the attempted takeover.)
>
> Will Samantha's rivals ally with the cult? (This lets her do individual scenarios about each of Samantha's key rivals.)
>
> Can Samantha reconcile, at long last, with his rivals?
>
> Will the cult succeed and transform the Collegia forever? (Answering this question ends the arc.)

Then go through the same process of picking opposing NPCs, keeping in mind that their influence is supposed to be more far-reaching in an arc than in a single scenario.

Building a Campaign

Again, the easiest way to do this is not to bother – just let your scenarios and arcs emergently create a story for the campaign. Human beings are pattern-making machines, and it's very likely that you'll naturally pick up on what the long-term plot devices of your campaign need to be by keying into unanswered questions from the arcs and scenarios.

However, if you want to do a little bit of focused planning, the advice is the same as for arcs, except you're generalizing even more. Pick one story question to answer, which the PCs will spend their scenarios and arcs building to. Then, jot down some notes on what steps will lead to answering that question, so you have material for arcs and scenarios.

The very best traits to look at for a campaign-level problem are your setting's current or impending issues, because of their scope.

> Ace knows that her campaign will hinge on resolving The Doom that Is to Come. So the story question following from that is pretty obvious. "Can the PCs avert, prevent, or mitigate the prophesied doom?"
>
> She knows that to do that, they're first going to need to figure out which of the Cult of Tranquility's factions is right about the prophecy (if either). They'll also need to make sure that none of their personal enemies or The Scar Triad can interfere with whatever they need to do in order to stop the doom. That gives her a good idea of what arcs are going to make up the campaign.

World Advancement

The characters are not the only ones who change in response to events in the game. Player characters leave their mark on locations (and their faces) with their passing. Things that were crises and major issues at the start of a game get addressed, resolved, or changed. Things that weren't major problems before suddenly blossom with new severity and life. Old adversaries fall to the wayside and new ones rise.

GMs, when the players are changing their characters through milestones, you should also be looking at whether or not the traits you originally placed on the game during game creation need to change in response to what they've done, or simply because of lack of use.

Here are some guidelines regarding each milestone.

For Minor Milestones

Do you need to add a new location to the game, based on what the PCs have done? If so, come up with some NPCs to help give more personality to the location and add an issue to the place.

Have the PCs resolved an issue in a location? Get rid of the trait, or maybe change it to represent how the issue was resolved (In the Shadow of the Necromancer becomes Memories of Tyranny, for example).

> The group reaches a minor milestone because they rescued the Lord of Varendep's son from some of the Smuggler Queen Barathar's minions. It was a small victory that could pay some pretty nice dividends because they now have an ally in Lord Bornhold of Varendep.
>
> Ace thinks about what might change as a result of the group's victory. She doesn't need to add a new location, but she thinks that Barathar might have a grudge against Varendep for getting out from under her thumb now that their Lord's son has been rescued. She decides to change Varendep's issue of Secret Fealty to the Smuggler Queen to At War with Barathar to represent the shifting power dynamic, as well as Lord Bornhold's willingness to stand up to her now.

For Significant Milestones

Did the PCs resolve an issue that was on the whole game world? If so, remove (or alter) the trait.

Did the PCs create permanent change in a location? If so, create a new issue to reflect this, for better or for worse.

> Later, the group drives Barathar's lieutenant, Hollister, back out of the Sindral Reach. Barathar is still a threat, but her power is significantly diminished; this is a major victory for the party. Marco skewered Hollister in single combat, so he's no longer a threat at all; this resolves a world-wide issue, Everybody Fears Hollister, so Ace crosses it off. She's not quite sure what to replace it with yet, so she'll think about it for a bit.
>
> They also created permanent change in the Sindral Reach; that area of the world is no longer under Barathar's sway. Most of the people are grateful, but a few of Barathar's thugs remain to make trouble for the party. Ace replaces the issue Seat of Barathar's Power with a different one, Smiles in the Open, Knives in the Dark to represent how things have changed.

For Major Milestones

Did the PCs create permanent change in the game world? If so, give it a new issue to reflect this, for better or for worse.

> Finally, the heroes confront and defeat Barathar in an epic confrontation. Barathar held a lot of power in the underground throughout the world and her defeat will cause ripples. Someone's going to want to step in and take her place (probably a lot of someones), so Ace creates the issue Underworld Power Vacuum to reflect this.
>
> You don't need to make these changes as precisely or as regularly as the players do   if anything, you should be as reactive as you can. In other words, focus on changing those traits that the player characters have directly interacted with and caused the most change to.
>
> If you have traits you haven't really explored yet, keep them around if you think they're just waiting their turn. However, you can also change them in order to make them more relevant to what's going on in the moment, or simply to give the PCs more of a sense of being in an evolving world.
>
> Barathar wasn't the only game in town. The Skull-King lurks in the north, and Lord Wynthrep is stirring up war in the east. Ace likes the idea of the PCs facing down a powerful necromancer in the near future, so she decides to keep the issue Darkness Creeps from the North in place.
>
> The other issue, Saber-Rattling in the East is also interesting, but she thinks that all this confrontation with the Smuggler Queen probably gave Lord Wynthrep the opportunity he needed to escalate things. She changes Saber-Rattling in the East to The East at War!. That should give the PCs an interesting decision to make.

Also, keep in mind that if the PCs remove an impending issue, another one must arise to take its place. Don't worry about this immediately – you need to give your players a sense of enacting permanent change in the game world. But after a while, if you notice that you're low on impending issues, it's probably a good time to introduce a new one, whether on the game world as a whole or on a specific location.

Dealing with NPCs

Remember, GMs, when you add a new location to the game world, you want to add at least one new NPC to go with it. Sometimes, that might mean moving a person from a location you're not going to use anymore.

Likewise, when there's a significant change in an issue for a location or the game world, you need to evaluate if the current NPCs are sufficient to express that change. If not, you might need to add one, or alter an NPC you have in a significant way – add more traits or revise existing traits to keep that character relevant to the issue at hand.

Most of the time, it should be pretty obvious when you need a new face for a location – when the old one dies or is somehow permanently removed from the game, or is boring now, it's probably time to change things up.

When the heroes rescued Lord Bornhold's son, Carris, from the Smuggler Queen, Lord Bornhold became indebted to them. To reflect this, Ace changed a few of his traits to make him more friendly to the PCs and less subservient to Barathar.

When Barathar was defeated, Ace figured she needed someone to step in and take over the underworld. Carris and Barathar had become lovers during Carris's captivity, and he's not happy about her death. He's so unhappy, in fact, that he decides to take her place and become the Smuggler King of the Sindral Reach. Because he's vowed to retake the underworld in Barathar's name (and because Ace didn't have any stats prepared for Carris), Ace writes up new NPC stats for Carris and turns him into a brand new villain for the PCs to confront. This one could get a bit sticky!

Recurring NPCs

There are essentially two ways to reuse NPCs. You can either use them to show how the PCs have grown since they started, or use them to show how the world is responding to their growth.

With the former, you don't change the NPC, because that's the point – the next time the PCs meet them, they've outclassed them, or they have new worries, or they've somehow grown past that NPC, who remains static. Maybe you even change the category they're in – where they were once a main NPC, now they're a supporting NPC because of how the PCs have grown.

With the latter, you allow the NPC to advance like the PCs have – you add new skills, change their traits around, give them a feat or two, and otherwise do whatever is necessary to keep them relevant to the PCs' endeavors. This kind of NPC might be able to hang around as a nemesis for several story arcs, or at least provide some sense of continuity as the PCs become more powerful and influential.

> Barathar advanced right along with the PCs. She was a main villain and Ace wanted to keep her relevant and challenging right up until they defeated her, so every time the PCs got a milestone, she applied the same effects to Barathar. She also made minor tweaks here and there (changing traits, swapping skills) to react to what the PCs did in the world throughout their adventures.
>
> Sir Hanley, the knight who tried to prevent them from entering Varendep when they first got there, was pretty challenging when they first confronted him. He was a major NPC, and the fight was meant to be the culmination of an entire session. They got past him, convincing him to let them in, so he became less relevant after that. He was resentful and got in their way a few times, but he didn't advance as they did so the PCs quickly outclassed him. The last time they had a run-in with Sir Hanley, they spanked him pretty hard and sent him running off to lick his wounds.

EXTRAS

Defining Extras

An extra in Analogous is a pretty broad term. We use it to describe anything that's technically part of a character or controlled by a character, but gets special treatment in the rules. If your Analogous game were a movie, this is where the special effects budget would go.

Some examples of extras include:

- Specialized gear or equipment, like high-tech tools or a customized weapon

- Vehicles owned by the characters

- Organizations or locations that the characters rule or over which they have a lot of influence

The tools in here will let you tailor extras to fit your game or provide material to steal right off the page. It's okay. We don't mind.

We consider extras to be an extension of the character sheet, so whoever controls the character to whom the extra belongs also controls that extra. Most of the time, that'll be the players, but NPCs may also have extras controlled by the GM.

Extras require a permission or cost to own.

The Bronze Rule, aka the Fate Fractal

Before we go any further, here's something important:

In Analogous, you can treat anything in the game world like it's a character. Anything can have traits, skills, feats, stress tracks, and consequences if you need it to.

We call this the Bronze Rule, but you may also have heard of it as the Fate Fractal if you pay attention to the Internet. We've already seen some examples of this earlier in the book; you give your game its own traits during creation, you place situation traits on the environment as well as on characters, and the GM can let environmental hazards attack as if they had skills.

In this chapter, we're going to extend that notion even further.

Creating an Extra

Making an extra starts with a conversation. This should happen during game creation or character creation.

Your group needs to decide on the following:

What elements of your setting are appropriate for extras?

What do you want the extra to do?

What character elements do you need to fully express the extra's capabilities?

What are the costs or permissions to have extras?

Once you've figured all that out, look to the examples in this book to help you nail down the specifics and create a writeup similar to what we have here. Then you're done!

Setting Elements

Chances are that you already have some ideas for extras in mind after your work in game creation; pretty much every fantasy game has some kind of magic system in it while a game about superheroes needs powers. If the action revolves around some important location – like the characters' starship, a home base, or a favorite tavern – consider defining that as an extra.

By nature, extras tend to steal a lot of focus when they're introduced – gamers have an inveterate attraction to whiz-bang cool options, so you should expect them to get a lot of attention by default. When you're talking out options for extras, make sure you're prepared for the elements you choose to become a major focus in your game.

> Ace and company talk about extras for Hearts of Steel.
>
> Samantha's magic (and the magic of the Collegia Arcana) comes up as an obvious first choice, as do Blake's martial arts. Zo and Eli both note that they're not interested in lengthy lists of spells or combat moves. Also, because it's a fantasy game and magic exists, they agree that enchanted items need consideration.
>
> Going over the game's issues and locations, they decide not to worry about making any of those into extras   they're supposed to be traveling from place to place anyway, and the characters don't have enough of a stake in any of the organizations to make it worthwhile.

What Extras Do

In broad terms, sketch out what you want the extras to be able to do, compared to what your skills, feats, and traits can already do by default. Also, think about what the extra looks like "on camera." What do people see when you use it? What's the look and feel of it?

In particular, consider these points:

- Does the extra influence the story, and if so, how?
- Does the extra let you do things that no other skill lets you do?
- Does the extra make your existing skills more useful or powerful?
- How would you describe the use of the extra?

This is an important step because it may reveal that the proposed extra doesn't actually contribute as much as you thought, which allows you to either add more stuff or remove it from consideration.

For Samantha's magic, the group decides that they want to keep things pretty low-key and abstract it's just another method of solving problems, like Blake's martial arts or Marco's swordthiefery (which Huckleberry insists is a technical term) a highly trained wizard is to be feared as much as a highly trained swordsman, but no more.

They agree that it influences the story for several reasons. They imagine vistas full of unknowable magical effects and plot devices for Samantha to stick his nose in, as well as the Collegia's territorial desire over the Scholarship.

They decide that Samantha's magic will let someone interact with the supernatural in a way that other people simply can't do, and can affect and harm people, but again, they stress that it shouldn't be more powerful than other skills. Basic effects would just use the normal four actions, and rituals will use challenges, contests, or conflicts as appropriate.

Specifically, they rule out the presence of world-altering "high" magic, creating things out of thin air, firebombing whole cities, and so forth. If those things exist, it's a thread for a scenario, and the product of several people making huge sacrifices.

The group doesn't see magic influencing other skills much, which helps it keep its compartmentalized nature.

Using Samantha's magic is all about the weird. Eli imagines making up odd lists of requirements and ingredients that don't really follow a consistent pattern some things he can do quickly, others he can't, and it's all about dramatic interest in the moment to determine which is when. The group is comfortable with this looseness, so they assent.

Assigning Character Elements

Once you have the general idea down, figure out what parts of a character you need to make up the extra.

- If the extra influences the story, then it should use traits.
- If the extra creates a new context for action, then it should use skills.
- If the extra makes skills more awesome, then it should use feats.
- If the extra can suffer harm or be used up somehow, then it should take stress and consequences.

An extra might use a trait as a permission – requiring a certain character trait in order to use the other abilities of the trait. Your character might need to be born with some trait or have obtained some level of status to make use of the trait. Or the extra might provide a new trait that the character has access to, if it's the extra itself that is important to the story.

There are a few ways an extra can use skills. The extra might be a new skill, not on the default skill list. It could re-write an existing skill, adding new functions to the skill's four actions. The extra might cost a skill slot during character creation or advancement in order to be obtained. It's possible that an extra might include one or more existing skills that the character has access to while controlling the extra.

Writing up an extra as a feat works just like building a new feat. One extra could have a few feats attached to it – it may even include the skills those feat modify. Extras that include feats often cost refresh points, just as feats do.

An extra that describes some integral ability of a character might grant a new stress track – beyond physical and mental stress – directly to that character. An extra that is a separate entity from the character – such as a location or a vehicle – might have a physical stress track of its own. You might also designate a skill that influences that stress track – just as Physique provides extra stress boxes and consequence slots for physical stress.

With a firm grasp of what the extra does, you'll choose which character elements best reinforce those ideas in play and how you'll use them.

> For Samantha's magic, the group decides that it should use traits and skills for sure there's a clear story influence, and magic creates a new avenue of dealing with problems. They don't want it to enhance other skills, but rather stand alone, so it doesn't use feats. They don't envision any kind of "mana pool" or other resource associated with it, so it doesn't use stress or consequences.

Permissions & Costs

A permission is the narrative justification that allows you to take an extra in the first place. For the most part, you establish permission to take an extra with one of your character's traits, which describes what makes your character qualified or able to have it. You can also just agree it makes sense for someone to have an extra and call it good.

A cost is how you pay for the extra, and it comes out of the resources available on your character sheet, whether that's a skill point, a refresh point, a feat slot, or a trait slot.

Fortunately, because extras use character elements that are already familiar to you, dealing with costs is fairly simple – you just pay what you'd normally pay from the slots available to you at character creation. If the extra is a new skill, you just put it into your pyramid like normal. If it's a trait, you choose one of your five traits as the one you need. If it's a feat, you pay a refresh point (or more) to have it.

GMs, if you don't want players to choose between having extras and having the normal stuff available to a starting character, feel free to raise the number of slots all PCs get at character creation to accommodate extras – just make sure that each PC gets the same amount of additional slots.

> Ace establishes that Samantha should have a trait reflecting that he's been trained in the Collegia's magic, as a permission. Samantha already does, so that's a non-issue.
>
> As for cost, because his magic is going to be primarily skill-based, she's just going to make him take the magic-using skill and put it in his skill pyramid. Further, in order to save effort, she decides that the skill in question is going to be just plain old Scholarship, and suggests that anyone with the appropriate training and a high Scholarship skill could call on magic, rather than it being an issue of genetics or birthright. Eli likes this, because it's simple and down to earth, and agrees.

The Write-up

Once you've got all the elements together, you can make a writeup for your extra. Congrats!

> ## Extra: Collegia Arcana Magic
>
> Permissions: One trait reflecting that you've been trained by the Collegia
>
> Costs: Skill ranks, specifically those invested in the Scholarship skill (Normally, you'd probably also charge points of refresh, because you're adding new actions to a skill, but Ace's group is lazy and is handwaving it in favor of group consensus.)
>
> People who are trained in Collegia magic are able to use their knowledge to perform supernatural effects, adding the following actions to the Scholarship skill:
>
> Overcome 🜨: Use Scholarship to prepare and perform magical rituals successfully, or to answer questions about arcane phenomena.
>
> Create an advantage 🜨: Use Scholarship to alter the environment with magic or place mental and physical impediments on a target, such as Slowed Movement or A Foggy Head. Characters can defend against this with Will.
>
> Attack 🜨: Use Scholarship to directly harm someone with magic, whether through conjuring of elements or mental assault. Targets can defend against this with Athletics or Will depending on the nature of the attack, or Scholarship if the target also has magical training.
>
> Defend 🜨: Use Scholarship to defend against hostile magics or other supernatural effects.

Extras and Advancement

Extras advance a lot like their base elements do, according to the milestones in The Long Game. That gives us a set of base guidelines:

An extra's trait can change at any minor milestone, or at a major milestone if it's tied into your high concept.

An extra's skill may advance at any significant or major milestone, provided the move is legal, and you can get new ones at those milestones as well. You can also swap skill ranks between another skill and your extra at a minor milestone, like any other skill.

An extra's feat may advance at a major milestone when you get a refresh point. This might mean you add a new feat effect to an existing extra or buy a new feat-based extra. You can also change out a feat-based extra at a minor milestone, like you can with any other feat.

Of course many extras use more than one element. We recommend that you allow the players in your game to develop the separate pieces of such an extra at different milestones, in order to minimize confusion during play.

Examples of Extras

Here are some more pre-configured extras, at different levels of detail, to address some of the most common elements you might add to Analogous.

Archetypes

This extra allows you to quickly define a character archetype - a specific kind of person that exists in your setting. The archetype might have access to certain abilities or feats that can only be gained through the archetype, or may just be a quick way to build a character. For example, your setting might treat computer programming like occult religious knowledge, jealously guarded by a caste of tech-priests. The Tech-Priest archetype may be the only group that can use Science and Engineering skills to maintain, build, and program computers.

Decide what your archetype does: how it interacts with the game mechanically and in the story, and what your archetype feels like to play. Once you have that it should be easy to identify what skills, feats, permissions, and other bits and bobs go along with the archetype.

Extra: Media

Permissions: Choosing "The Media" archetype at character creation

Costs: Skill ranks and refresh, for associated feats

Others can spread gossip and rumors, but you have your finger on the pulse of broadcast media. At your word, the events of the day become news, whether it's on television, radio, or the Internet.

Overcome⊛: Use Media to disseminate information to the public, with whatever spin you want to put on it. More obscure or local incidents will be harder to spread, and it'll be harder to make your own spin prevalent if the story's already been picked up by other outlets. Success means that generally, the public believes what you want them to believe about the incident, though named NPCs may have more complex opinions.

Create an advantage⊛: Use Media to place traits on an event or an individual reflecting the reputation they gain from your stories.

Attack⊛: If you have sufficient leverage to psychologically harm someone through a smear campaign and/or media bullying, use this for attacks.

Defend⊛: Use Media to prevent damage to your own reputation or peace of mind from someone else using the Media skill.

Feats:

Want Ads. You may use Media for the same kind of Overcome rolls you'd use Contacts for, by summoning services you need through classifieds.

Mob Justice. You can incite people in public to physical violence with Media, and gain the use of two Average nameless NPCs for that scene, who will attack people at your direction.

Wealth

In some games, it's important to track how much wealth your character has feudal lords in competition for power, CEOs using their money to strike at their foes, or even gamblers in Gangsterland. Analogous is pretty hand-wavy with numbers in general, and we generally recommend against keeping precise track of how many gold pieces are in your character's pocket.

When you want a character resource to be finite like wealth is, a good option is to use a custom stress track to represent the exhaustion of that resource. You're creating a new context for conflict when you do this, allowing the new stress track to be attacked and harmed like mental and physical stress.

You can also use something like this to model honor or reputation in a setting where that matters, like feudal Japan.

As an interesting advancement option, you might consider allowing permanent downgrades of the Resources skill as a tradeoff for upgrading certain extras, if that extra is something money can buy.

You may note that this system is implemented, in part, as a sidebar option for Analogous games where a player is leaning heavily on Resources. The rules below simply clarify and expand on that.

Extra: Resources, Revisited

Permissions: None, anyone can take the skill

Costs: Skill ranks

At creation, all characters get a new stress track called Wealth, with special mild (A 20-spot From a Friend), moderate (Payday Loan), and severe (They Want To Break My Kneecaps) consequence that they can take in wealth-related conflicts.

When characters make a Resources test they may take Wealth stress on a failure, or if they are somehow opposed by another (see the Attack and Defend actions, below). Treat Resources-based conflicts like any other, including initiative, though these conflicts may play out over months of hostile takeovers and legal actions.

Add the following actions to the Resources skill:

Attack⚙: You can make financial moves to destroy someone else's resources or force them to overspend to deal with you, and thus inflict wealth stress and consequences. If you take someone out this way, it means some kind of permanent shift in their finances for the worse.

Defend🜚: Use Resources to maintain your status in the face of attempts to destroy your capital.

Special: Characters with Resources rated at 1 or 2 gain an extra Wealth stress box; characters with 3 or 4 gain one more. A character with Resources at 5 gains an additional mild consequence slot that can be used only for Wealth-related consequences.

Vehicles, Locations, & Organizations

These are all lumped together in one category because if you want them to be important, their impact is usually significant enough to justify giving them their own character sheet; something even more serious and impactful than an Iconic or Super-science gadget.

It doesn't always have to be that complicated, especially if you're going for something more subtle for example, if you want to tie up some cool feats into a vehicle and use the superpower or special gear rules above, that's perfectly valid. This is for when you want a vehicle to be a real personality and cornerstone of your game, as iconic as KITT or as cool as James Bond's Aston-Martin.

If you assign an extra its own skills, you're suggesting that the extra has the capability to act independently of you, and you need to justify why that is. Depending on the extra, you may also need to recontextualize what the skills mean or make up a new list more appropriate for the ways in which the extra acts.

In this game, the characters are given a handful of extra refresh, skill ranks, and trait slots to invest into sailing ships. The group decided to invest collectively in one awesome ship.

Extra: The Galerider

Permissions: None; understood as part of the game's conceit

Costs: Skill ranks, refresh, and trait slots, invested by several characters

Traits: Fastest Ship in the Fleet, Hidden Cargo Compartments, Lord Tamarin Wants To Sink Her

Skills: (representing the ship's crew; PCs can use their own skills if higher)

Good (+3) Perception

Fair (+2) Shoot, Sail (equivalent to Drive)

Feats: Pour On The Speed. The Galerider gives +2 on any Sail rolls to win a contest of speed.

Boobytrapped: For a plot point, any PC can have Weapon:2 on an attack or add 2 to the Weapon value of any Fight attack that happens on board, by triggering any of the nasty traps scattered across the deck and interiors as part of their action.

> ## The Game of Kings
>
> This is for a game where every PC is the ruler of a corporation or non-governmental organization, and the action deals a lot with international politics. The PCs get to build a separate character sheet for their business.

Extra: The Plenary of Ghiraul

Permissions: None; assumed as part of the game's premise

Costs: A special pool of traits, skill ranks, and feats

This small nation-state is known for its vast spy network and laws which protect the rich and powerful, usually at the expense of the peasantry. You rule it; congrats. When acting against other nations, use the skills here rather than the ones on your character sheet. In this case, your skills represent the efforts of your spies, nobles, artisans, and armies, respectively.

Traits: We're Watching You; The Rich Eat the Poor; Sharp Minds, Dull Blades

Skills: Great (+4) Investigate

Good (+3) Resources

Fair (+2) Engineering

Average (+1) Fight

Feats: Counter-Intelligence. The Plenary can use Investigate to defend against other nations' attempts to learn its traits. Succeeding with style on this defense allows the Plenary to feed the nation a trait that contains false information instead.

The sky's the limit when it comes to extras. By using the bronze rule and some guidelines on creating new skills and feats, you can dramatically change the way your game looks and feels, and the kinds of characters it supports.

APPENDICES AND INDEX

This chapter contains resources for you to use in your game:

- five sample settings ready for use in your Analogous game
- a cheat-sheet to keep things moving at your game table
- an index
- a character sheet
- a character creation worksheet
- and a game creation worksheet for the GM

Chicago, Illinois

Cops & robbers, gangs, old-school mafia nonsense.

Feels like the 1920s, 30s

Detroit, Michigan

That's right, regular old Detroit. Motor city. The town, in this history, never lost its place among the greats and represents a kind of North Coast blue-collar metropolitan center. If Chicago is the New York of the Midwest, then Detroit is the San Francisco. Notably, SF (and Seattle) never gained their prominence as the silicon juggernauts like MSFT and AAPL never got set up.

Detroit is a city of production first, and arts after. The desire for blue-collar entertainment and educational opportunities led to a booming US-Canadian joint TV scene where many of the nation's sitcoms and talk shows are produced, and a large neighborhood is called Little Los Angeles. Dozens of vocational schools and trade schools dot the city offering training in tech and computing.

The city is an icon of diversity. A huge black and latino population with access to education and property made this a second center of minority Renaissance, a new Harlem of the 80s and 90s. The city now serves as an example to many of lifting up communities as a whole, though some take out their fear and anger as well. Racist organizations quietly meet and talk about how to stymie or wreck historically minority businesses and univsersities.

Speaking of education, UM Ann-Arbor is a nearby research and tech school with extensive programs in engineering, maths, and most of all: business. The school has become a centerpiece of American education with the same kind of weight as MIT and CalTech, but seen as much more approachable. Those who want their tech education backed by real-world application choose Ann-Arbor.

Detroit has become a center of quiet government research. A small town nearby, Brighton, is the recent benefactor of two new housing projects, dozens of warehouses, a school, two supermarkets, a shopping mall, and tons of new road development. The similarities to the events around Los Alamos point to the idea - or conspiracy theory - that there are new government projects at play here. The buzz is that there's a huge underground installation where the nation's top computer scientists are testing projects beyond the scope of what's previously been available in wireless communication.

Caravans and convoys of green-fatigued grunts roll in and out of town. Men in suits with earpieces loiter by innocuous corner shops that never seem to have customers. Kids play in newly-turfed fields separated from windowless buildings by razor wire.

Entities

GM, Ford, UM Ann-Arbor, Motown Records, US Army, US Secret Service, Xerox, KKK, Northern Ministries of Christ First Church

Traits

Motors, Music, and Military; Figurehead of the American Dream

Fermington, California

(named for Enrico Fermi, home of nuclear power, jingoistic/nationalistic, everyone watching each other to enforce patriotism, Red Scare)

Feels like the 1940s, 50s

Entities

Fermi Nuclear Labs, Fermi Computing Institute, US Navy,

New York City, New York

(truly cyberpunk, huge metropolis, cultures blending, shadowy global forces moving individual pawns, super-hi-tech-analog-nonsense)

Feels like the 1980s, 90s

Entities

consulates, FBI, Secret Service, NYPD, IMB, Xerox, Chase Bank, five hundred business groups and banks, The Mob,

Traits

The City That Never Sleeps; Huddled Masses, Yearning to Breathe Free; It All Happens Here

Vacone, Nevada

(home of The Computer - Alan - everyone watches everyone, panopticon, men in black, computer running experiments, are the people even real, androids, Atomic-Age paranoia of the Company)

Feels like the 1960s, 70s

Entities

The Advanced Business Company, Alan, Sunset Security, the desert gangs, American Electric, Automated Data, Macmillan-Guin Research

Traits

The Computer Knows Everything; We're All Happy Here

CHEAT SHEET

Abilities
- Mental, Physical, and Social
- Rated 1 to 5, average 2

Skills
- Rated 1 to 5, or 0 for Untrained

Four Actions
- Overcome - used to accomplish a goal or overcome an obstacle.
- Create an Advantage - discover/create and invoke a trait for free.
- Attack - inflict stress on a character (or thing, or idea, or...).
- Defend - avoid taking stress or resist someone creating an advantage.

Outcomes
- Total Success - you accomplish your goal and earn one shift per three hits over your opponent.
- Success - one to two hits over your opponent, you reach your goal.
- Tie - you get the same number of hits as your opponent and get a lesser success or succeed at your goal with a minor cost.
- Failure - you get one or two fewer hits than your opponent and don't accomplish your goal or do meet it but pay a high cost.
- Total Failure - you fail to accomplish your target and your opponent gets one shift per three hits they got over your result.

Opposition
- Contest - a single roll, you vs an opposing force, person, or task.
- Challenge - a set of connected by different ability + skill rolls in a scene.
- Conflict - a fight: mental is contestation, physical is combat, social is confrontation.
- Hit - a result of 4, 5, or 6 on the die.

Stress
- measures your resilience
- you start with 2 boxes and get more through high abilities
- mental stress is Focus
- physical stress is Health
- social stress is Composure
- when you fill a stress track you take a consequence and empty the stress track again
- you also reduce stress back to 0 between scenes

Consequences
- temporary negative traits suffered by taking too much stress or similar circumstances
- you have three slots: one mild, one moderate, one severe
- you can take a special extreme consequence by changing your character traits - perhaps permanently
- Mild: usually a -2 to related contests
- Moderate: a -4 to related contests
- Severe: a -6 to related contests
- Extreme: a -8 to related contests
- if you would take a consequence and don't have any slots left, you're Taken Out

Recovery
- Mild - roll against 4 dice, on success you're healed in one scene
- Moderate - 6 dice, one session
- Severe - 8 dice, one scenario

CHEAT SHEET

Game Time

- Exchange - one count of the initiative order from top to bottom
- Round - a new round starts each time players roll initiative
- Scene - enough time to resolve one situation
- Session - a single meeting of the players to play, usually 2 to 4 hours
- Scenario - an 'episode' of your game
- Arc - a 'season' of your game
- Campaign - all the time you spend in a particular setting with the characters

Initiative

- tracks time in a conflict
- Mental + Perception in contestation
- Physical + Perception for combat
- Social + Empathy in confrontation
- rolls are special: instead of counting hits, add up all your dice
- declare your actions from lowest to highest initiative
- resolve your actions from highest to lowest
- when you act, reduce your initiative by 10

Traits

- Game Traits - traits that apply to the whole setting, can be invoked by anyone
- Character Traits - traits that apply to a character
- Situation Traits - temporary traits on a character or place due to the circumstances
- Boosts - a trait that can be invoked once, for free, then is gone
- Consequences - a negative trait due to suffering stress

  Invoking Traits

  Spend a plot point or use up a free invocation. Choose one:

- +2 hits on a roll for yourself or another character
- reroll a roll for yourself
- add 2 dice to a non-character roll or create an obstacle with 2 dice

Compelling Traits

- Event-based: You have _____ aspect and are in _____ situation, so it makes sense that, unfortunately, _____ would happen to you. Damn your luck.
- Decision-based: You have _____ aspect in _____ situation, so it makes sense that you'd decide to _____. This goes wrong when _____ happens.

Spending Plot Points

  Spend a plot point to:

- invoke an aspect
- power a stunt
- refuse a compel
- declare a story detail

Earning Plot Points

  Earn a plot point when you:

- accept a compel
- have a trait invoked against you
- concede a conflict (plus one for each consequence you took)

Index

ANALOGOUS

Character Name   Player Name   Game

Plot Points   Refresh

Traits

High Concept

Trouble

Abilities & Skills

Mental   Physical   Social

_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____

Stress & Consequences

Focus   Health   Composure

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Mild Consequence   Moderate Consequence   Severe Consequence

Stunts   Extras

_____   _____
_____   _____
_____   _____
_____   _____
_____   _____
_____   _____
_____   _____

Analogous pits you against a world
controlled by corporations dead-set against
progress.

Analogous is a set of rules built on Fate,
and includes five potential settings to
make your own.