

Diesel Empire, v1.4.0-alpha

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Creating Characters

Step 1: Attributes

Attributes are the traits that have a strong influence over your character, like *agile, strong, precise, small, creative, technical, wise, impulsive, beautiful, confident, witty, stubborn, brave, determined*, and *cowardly* are all examples of Attributes.

- **Give your character two Attributes.** You can use our examples or create your own.
- **Your character can have duplicate Attributes**, which just means that it has a bigger impact on their lives, for better or worse.

Step 2: Species

Pick your character's species. Your choice will give your character additional Attributes.

Species: Human

Prolific. Over-confident. Stubborn. Except for the elves' Silohain, humans have a significant presence in every kingdom. Humans are also in control of the two largest kingdoms in the world, the Northern Kingdom and the Unified South Kingdoms (USK).

Attributes:

- **Social Dominance** - All major cities in the world are willing to accept the human North Gilder as currency, and almost everyone in these cities can, at least crudely, communicate in the common human language of *Northword*. Since most of the industrial centers are human, most modern inventions are made for humans.

Species: Orc

Expansive. Powerful. Stubborn. Orcs are in complete control of the Eastern Expanse. Hardened tribalism allows elves and humans to maintain control, but orc societies have been much faster in adapting to modern technology and have made significant inroads into other kingdoms.

Attributes:

- **Strong** - Orcs are born strong, naturally on par with a well trained human athlete.
- **Hard to Kill** - Orcs are famously difficult to kill.
- **Family First - Who is your family?** This concept is a central tenet of all Orc nations. Orcs are *driven* to advance the interests of their *own* family before the interests of anyone else, including themselves and other *individuals* of a family.

Species: Elves

Dogmatic. Magical. Ancient. An elven kingdom has held world influence for the last fifteen thousand years, but the *Silohain* has been in a slow decline. Elven magic is no longer as impressive as the technology from Bonethorne Port or the Huxlon Republic.

Attributes:

- **Magically Attuned** - Elves are naturally attuned to magic.
- **Magical Senses** - Elves are able to naturally sense magical energies, perceiving magic in a way similar to a sense of smell.

- **Long Lives** - Elves live a long time (1200 years or more), which gives them a level of historical wisdom, but makes it much harder to imagine the *immediate* future.
- **Homeland - Where is your home?** Elves have a *deep* connection to their home, which can have a *literal* effect on an elf's physical and emotional state.

Species: Dwarves

Productive. Generous. Loyal. The historically reclusive dwarves have become a modern world power. The Dwarven Compact was formed as a way to for the dwarven clans and their neighbors to collectively, and *responsibly*, benefit from the region's *vast* mineral wealth.

Attributes:

- **Short** - Dwarves are usually only about four feet tall, and never taller than five feet.
- **Muscular** - Though shorter, dwarves have a very dense musculature and have the same strength and weight as an average human.
- **Resilient** - Dwarves naturally have the same endurance as a human athlete.
- **Clan Affiliation - What is your Clan?** Dwarves are strongly tied to their clans, and are fiercely loyal. Dwarves from the same clan will always recognize each other and will immediately trust each other.

Species: Halflings

Patient. Diplomatic. Friendly. Though there is no major halfling nation, halflings have kept the Fae from obliterating the world. Halflings have spent thousands of years maintaining a peace with the Veil and nameless and unspeakably powerful denizens.

Attributes:

- **Short** - Halflings are short, never growing much taller than four feet. This also makes them slightly lighter and weaker than the average human.
- **Grounded** - Halflings are famously calm and composed.
- **Demi-Fae** - Halflings *usually* look like smaller humans, but halflings have a wide range of vestigial physical traits that come from their Fae ancestry.

Species: Goblins

Curious. Ancient. Underestimated. Goblins built the Ancient World and were witnesses to every great fall. Their history is as long as the elves, but goblins have never held any significant power. Today, goblins have gained renown as explorers and researchers.

Attributes:

- **Small** - Goblins are famously small, never exceeding more than three feet. This also makes them much lighter and weaker than the average human.
- **Stubborn Survivors** - Goblins can survive on miniscule amounts of food and water in very extreme conditions.
- **Numerous** - Goblins can be found in *every* corner of the world.
- **Extreme Immunities** - Goblins *can* get sick and are weakened by infectious diseases, poisons, and *radiation*, but only *very old* Goblins (60 years or more) actually *die* from these causes. Sadly this has made Goblins a favored target for magical and scientific experimentation.

Species: Saurians

Strange. Respected. Isolated. Before Bonethorne Port, the saurian-controlled *Huxlon Empire* led the world in science. Their ingenuity allowed them to form an empire hidden by the swamps of the *Southern Expanse*. Today, the *Huxlon Republic* continues to be a scientific powerhouse.

Attributes:

- **Abstract Thinker** - Saurians are some of the most coveted thinkers in the world thanks to their unique and unusual brain structure.
- **Reclusive** - Saurians rarely have any cause or desire to *leave* the swamplands of the Southern Expanse, so seeing a saurian anywhere else is *highly* unusual.
- **Amphibious** - Saurians are able to *safely* breath underwater for a little under fifteen minutes and roughly twenty minutes in an *emergency*.

Step 3: Trades and Skills

Trades represent your character's general ability and knowledge, while **Skills** represent their active experience in a specific field. A character with the *Diplomat Trade* knows how to broker a deal, but a character with the *Negotiate Skill* has *actually* helped kingdoms sign deals.

- You get **eight points** to spend on Skill ranks.
- **The rank of the Trade is based on the total value of the Trade's Skills.** If a character has *three Professional Skills* in a Trade, then the rank of the Trade would be *Expert*.
- Your character **can** have *multiple* Trades.

Rank Chart

Ranks	Value	Description
Untrained	0	You have no training beyond <i>fiction</i> and <i>documentaries</i> .
Trained	1	You have worked in the field, but never on your own.
Professional	2	You are able to handle routine challenges without any problem.
Expert	4	You are a leader in the field and others rely on your abilities when there is a disaster.
Veteran	8	You are a pioneer in the field.
Master	16	You are a historical figure in the field, and will be remembered as a legend.

Starting Resources

For each *point* you spend in a *Trade*, pick and describe *one* item from the *Trade Resource* list as one of your character's starting resources.

Trade and Skill List

Trade: Assassin

Stalking and murdering a target without getting caught.

Skills:

- **Murder (Diamond)** - Killing through unconventional means.
- **Escape (Club)** - The ability to escape without being detected.
- **Access (Club)** - The ability to reach a target without being detected.
- **Alertness (Spade)** - Being aware of danger and opportunities.
- **Manipulation (Heart)** - Guiding someone towards a truth, real or imagined.

Trade Resources: Advanced electronics, watch contact, political contact, high-end concealed weapon, safe-house, criminal contact, advanced surveillance tools, advanced security tools.

Trade: Diplomat

The ability to negotiate firm agreements despite cultural and political challenges.

Skills:

- **Negotiate (Heart)** - The ability to create compromise and agreement.
- **Control (Club)** - Being able to maintain confidence and authority.
- **Culture (Spade)** - The ability to hold a dignified and intelligent conversation in several languages.
- **Intelligence (Spade)** - Gathering and analyzing important details and secrets.
- **Motives (Heart)** - Reading and understanding someone's desires and fears.

Trade Resources: Political contact, criminal contact, political favor, profitable investment, academic contact, foreign contact, foreign influence.

Trade: Engineer

The practical application of scientific properties to create complex systems.

Skills:

- **Invention (Club)** - Designing new systems, compounds, and materials.
- **Material (Diamond)** - Working with natural and synthetic compounds.
- **Practical (Spade)** - Repairing and maintaining complex systems.
- **Scientific (Spade)** - An advanced academic understanding of the physical and chemical processes in a system.
- **Supply (Heart)** - Being able to find the components needed for a system, and getting the best price.

Trade Resources: Academic contact, workshop, advanced electronic, laboratory, political contact, advanced tool kit.

Trade: Fixer

The creative application of law and politics in the pursuit of power.

Skills:

- **Back-Channel (Spade)** - Collecting and understanding exploitable secrets.
- **Intimidate (Heart)** - The ability to gain control through fear.
- **Perseverance (Diamond)** - The will to survive no matter the cost.
- **Power (Club)** - Exerting political power for gain.
- **Rule (Heart)** - The ability to gather and maintain control.

Trade Resources: Political contact, criminal contact, political favor, profitable investment, criminal influence, foreign contact, safe-house.

Trade: Medical

Using modern medical techniques and medicines to heal others.

Skills:

- **Diagnosis (Spade)** - Finding the cause of an ailment.
- **EMT (Club)** - Healing trauma in emergency situations.
- **Medicine (Spade)** - The practical application of herbalism and pharmaceuticals.
- **Psychology (Heart)** - Understanding the underlying mental or emotional trauma.
- **Surgery (Diamond)** - The art of healing extreme trauma.

Trade Resources: Trauma kit, advanced medical equipment, advanced pharmaceuticals, medical contact, lab access, university access, hospital access.

Trade: Outlaw

Operating in the shadow side of a kingdom and how to thrive in that darkness.

Skills:

- **Fighting (Club)** - Improvised methods of combat.
- **Respect (Spade)** - The knowledge needed to gain and *keep* power.
- **Muscle (Diamond)** - Physical capability.
- **Hustling (Heart)** - The ability to gather information and resources.
- **Intimidation (Heart)** - Coercion through force.

Trade Resources: Criminal influence, criminal investment, illegal weapon, illegal pharmaceuticals, political contact, foreign contact.

Trade: Ranger

The training needed to survive and live in a hostile environment for extended periods.

Skills:

- **Endurance (Diamond)** - Physical and mental fortitude.
- **Hunting (Club)** - Seeking, stalking and killing a target.
- **Instinct (Heart)** - A sense for finding things out of balance.
- **Survival (Spade)** - Skills for living in harsh environments.
- **Awareness (Spade)** - Paying attention to the environment.

Trade Resources: Survival pack, hunting weapon, advanced survival equipment, cabin in the wild, Fae contact, GPS access.

Trade: Scholar

The art of pursuing and processing new knowledge through methodical research and careful study.

Skills:

- **Secrets (Club)** - Lost and forbidden knowledge.
- **Research (Spade)** - Discovering new knowledge.
- **Genius (Heart)** - Attempting to find solutions from unrelated facts.
- **Foundations (Diamond)** - General knowledge of all academic pursuits.

Trade Resources: University access, academic contact, research grant, political contact, lab access, Fae contact.

Trade: Spy

Gathering information about a target through covert observation, or more aggressive means like bribery, and torture.

Skills:

- **Clandestine (Club)** - The art of keeping secrets and staying undetected.
- **Coercion (Heart)** - Convincing a target to perform a given action.
- **Interrogation (Heart)** - Extracting the truth from a target.
- **Observation (Spade)** - The ability to detect important details.
- **Intelligence (Diamond)** - The ability to discern hidden secrets from collected research and observation.

Trade Resources: Political contact, criminal contact, foreign contact, foreign influence, safe house, advanced electronics, high-level political access, Fae contact, advanced surveillance tools, advanced security tools.

Trade: Thief

The art and craft of stealing through careful and patient observation, followed by complete improvisation when the plan completely falls apart.

Skills:

- **Fast-Talk (Heart)** - The ability to convince through confusion.
- **Fencing (Heart)** - The art of selling illegal products for the best price.
- **Security (Spade)** - The training needed to setup and bypass secure systems.
- **Stealing (Club)** - The art of taking something in secret.
- **Stealth (Diamond)** - Discipline required to be undetectable.

Trade Resources: Political contact, criminal contact, safe house, advanced electronics, advanced surveillance tools, advanced security tools, high-end vehicle.

Trade: Soldier

The tactical knowledge needed to maneuver a battlefield and the combat training needed to win a fight.

Skills:

- **Combat Training (Club)** - The ability to fight and kill in open combat.
- **PT (Diamond)** - Physical training needed to navigate and endure combat.
- **Tactics (Spade)** - Using strategy to subvert and defeat an enemy.
- **Composure (Heart)** - The ability to maintain focus while under fire.
- **Alertness (Spade)** - Being aware of all the dangers and advantages of a location.

Trade Resources: Military contact, military-grade weapon, watch contact, military-grade armor, advanced tactical equipment, illegal explosives, safehouse.

Trade: Watch

The abilities needed to administer the laws and protect order in a city, using force if necessary.

Skills:

- **Authority (Heart)** - Using trust and respect to maintain control.
- **Investigation (Diamond)** - The ability to draw sound conclusions from evidence.
- **Law (Spade)** - The knowledge needed to enforce and apply the law.

- **Special Tactics (Club)** - Close-combat training in urban settings with civilians.
- **Streetwise (Spade)** - Understanding a city, including its secrets and dangers.
- **Vigilance (Diamond)** - Paying careful attention to the details.

Trade Resources: Watch contact, watch-grade weapon, military contact, political contact, watch-grade armor, tactical equipment, watch lab access, safehouse.

Magical School List

Magical Schools function exactly like any other *Trade*, but some have *prerequisites* that you must fulfill, and instead of *Skills*, Magical Schools have *Arcana*.

School: Ritual

The basic practice of reciting a spell and the completion of a rite. The more potent the outcome, the more complex, time-consuming, and dangerous the rite. This is an ancient School that is incredibly common, but it forms the basis for all modern magic.

Arcana

- **Creation (Club)** - Creating and undoing beings and objects.
- **Spellcraft (Spade)** - The ability to craft new spells and rituals.
- **Truth (Heart)** - The rites needed to see objective reality. This Arcana has destroyed countless practitioners, but it is widely employed for precision measurements.
- **Order (Diamond)** - The practice of manipulating natural law.

School Resources: Reagents contact, rare reagents, rites book, academic contact, safehouse, arcana library, university access.

School: Elemental

The ability to channel and embody the primal forces of nature. This art is older than Ritual magic and does not require any rites (though rites exist), but it requires an innate understanding of the energies at work and is *significantly* harder to *control*.

Attribute Prerequisites:

Magically Attuned

Arcana

- **Fire (Club)** - Controlling the transformational properties of fire.
- **Air (Spade)** - Manipulating the air, which surrounds and witnesses all things.
- **Water (Heart)** - Channeling the restorative and destructive elements of water.
- **Earth (Diamond)** - Harnessing the grounding and protective wisdom of the earth.

School Resources: Fae contact, elemental familiar, rites book, academic contact, safehouse, arcana library, university access.

School: Alchemical

The transformation of base materials into exotic compounds through the use of magic. The more powerful effects require the use of extreme rites, but the lesser effects can happen through simple incantations. This is considered one of the *Classical* Schools.

Trade Prerequisites:

Professional Engineer

Arcana

- **Transformation (Club)** - The founding rites of the School, which allows for the creation of new compounds from *base* elements.
- **Analysis (Spade)** - The rites to divine the nature of a compound, like its composition and how it was created.
- **Dissolution (Heart)** - The skill to break compounds down to base components.
- **Blending (Diamond)** - The rites need to combine *complex* compounds into *stable* materials. This does not always create *useful* combinations, but modern *plastics* were created through these rites.

School Resources: Fae contact, academic contact, rare elements, rites book, academic contact, lab access, safehouse, university access.

School: Mechanarcana

This School blends mechanics with alchemy to create incredibly complex systems. The more powerful effects require difficult rites, but lesser effects only need simple incantations. This Art is less than a century old, but it has had a *massive* impact on society.

Attribute Prerequisites:

Abstract Thinker

Trade Prerequisites:

Professional Engineer

Arcana

- **Binding (Diamond)** - This art to create a permanent bond between two objects. This does not create any *new* compounds, and the bond is not always very strong.
- **Machine Nature (Heart)** - This allows the engineer to fully visualize and understand the internal workings of a device.
- **Shaping (Club)** - The ability to shape *stable* materials into intricate shapes of any size. This Art is often used to shape the copper circuits of modern devices.
- **Infusion (Spade)** - Allows the infusion of magical energies into a compound. Most often this is used to create batteries and Anatomancer surgical tools.

School Resources: Workshop, advanced tools, rare elements, rites book, academic contact, lab access, university access, advanced electronics.

School: Divination

This Art allows the wielder to open their minds to visions from other realms. It can be used to peer into parts of our own reality, or even other *existences* and futures. This is an *embodied* school, and requires no rites, but rites do make the casting *safer*.

Attribute Prerequisites:

Magically Attuned, Intuitive

Arcana

- **Precognition (Club)** - The ability to see into *all* possible futures. Often a team of researchers are employed to help narrow the possibilities.
- **Outsider (Spade)** - The training needed to see outside of our realm of existence. This does not grant *comprehension*, just the ability to see.
- **Prophecy (Heart)** - The ability to try to *set* a destiny for a subject. This is most often paired with *Precognition*, since it is easier to set a subject on an *existing* course as opposed to creating an entire *destiny*.

- **Viewing (Diamond)** - This allows a wielder to see into *this* realm of reality, provided they are able to create some *connection* to their location.

School Resources: Rites book, academic contact, safehouse, arcana library, political contact, university access, Fae contact.

School: Anatomancy

A modern School, derived from the art of *Necromancy*, allows for the manipulation of living tissue. This is a highly disciplined school requiring *many* rites, but many *commercial* tools have been developed for these purposes.

Trade Prerequisites:

- *Expert Medicine*

Arcana

- **Mend Flesh (Spade)** - The ability to mend flesh and bone back together, but the caster still needs to understand how the tissue *should* be mended.
- **Sense Blood (Heart)** - This allows the wielder to sense the blood in the patient, and allows them to get a sense of the *state* of the blood, which helps for diagnoses.
- **Shape Flesh (Club)** - This Arcana allows the caster to *reshape* flesh and bone, which is used to heal scars or resolve complications from traditional surgeries.
- **Give Life (Diamond)** - Allows the mage to give some of their own life energies, or the life energies of a willing subject. Many goblins make their living selling their energies to cure rich patients of diseases.

School Resources: Advanced medical equipment, advanced pharmaceuticals, advanced alchemical compounds, medical contact, lab access, university access, hospital access.

Playing the Game

The Deck

You'll need a regular **52-card Poker deck**, *with both Jokers*.

Starting Hand

At the beginning of *each* game, the GM hands out **five cards** to each player. **The GM does not get a hand.**

Hand Size

The maximum hand size is five cards. No one can ever have more than *five* cards in their hand.

The Check

All actions taken by a character are always successful. If the character leaps across a chasm, seduces the traitor, or discovers The Cure, they always *succeed*, unless a *Check* is called.

The GM can call a *Check* whenever the actions of a character have a *significant* impact on the plot. **The outcome of the Check determines if an action is *successful*.**

Step 1: Pick a Skill or Trade

When a Check is called the player picks one of their character's Skill or Trade that is the most appropriate for the action their character is attempting. This determines the *suit* and helps the GM decide the *difficulty* of the Check.

Skills *provide* a suit to the Check, but only apply to specific situations. The *Fast Talk Skill* will not help a character bypass a lock, but it will help them get out of a lie and sets the suit of the Check to *Hearts*.

Trades *provide no suit* for a Check, but can be applied to many situations. The *Thief Trade* gives a character all the training they need to *steal*, from *lying* to *picking locks*, but there is *no suit* set for the Check.

Step 2: Determine Difficulty

The GM sets the difficulty level of the Check, based on the *rank* of the Skill or Trade that the character is using and the action the character is attempting to perform.

Difficulty Level		Target Value
Easy	A simple task.	1
Hard	A routine task that requires focus and effort.	2
Severe	An advanced task that the character rarely attempts.	4
Extreme	An extraordinary act that the character never thought they would have to attempt.	8
Impossible	A feat that is <i>beyond</i> a character's ability.	Joker

Increase the difficulty if the character has **Injuries** that could affect the Check or **Attributes** that make the Check more challenging.

Decrease the difficulty if the character has **Attributes** that makes the Check *easier*.

Step 3: Play Cards or Draw

Play Cards

The player can play any number of cards from their hand. To *succeed* they need to play enough cards to *match* or *exceed* the difficulty's *target value*.

The value of a card depends on its *type*:

Type	Value
Numbered Cards (2-10)	1
Royal Cards (Jack, King, Queen)	2
Aces	4
Jokers	8

Double the value of the card if it has the *same suit* as the Check.

Once the outcome of the Check has been determined, discard all of the cards in play, and the game continues normally.

The Draw

Instead of playing cards from their hand, a player can draw and play one card from the deck.

Whether or not they succeed, the card is discarded and the game continues.

Impossible Checks

If the difficulty is *Impossible*, the player can only succeed if a *Joker* comes into play, but they must also narrate the *miracle* that allows their character to succeed, which might introduce new elements to the game.

Recovery

The only way to restore lost cards is if a character takes the time to *rest*. The player must narrate a scene where their character attempts to rest, and the GM decides how many cards the player can recover.

Rest	Recovery
Pause. Enough time to eat a quick meal, take a few long deep breaths and stretch, or pack and badge a wound.	1 Card
Break. Stopping to have a good meal, take a nap in a hole, or stitch up wounds and allow the painkillers to do their job.	2 Cards
Sleep. The gold standard of rest, but the hardest to find. A deep, full REM sleep, with <i>no interruptions</i> .	4 Cards

The GM can *increase* or *decrease* this amount if the character has any *Attributes* or *Injuries* that could affect their recovery.

Injuries and Trauma

If a character suffers an *Injury* the *player* needs to describe *how* their character is injured, and record *how much Trauma* the Injury carries. Injuries usually come from *physical* harm, but effects like *psychological terror* can also inflict an Injury.

If a character reaches *five* points of Trauma, the character is either *incapacitated* or *unconscious* until their Injuries are *treated*.

If a character reaches *seven* or *more* points of Trauma, they are at a *Crossroads*.

Crossroads

When a character reaches a Crossroads, the player must decide if the character's story is going to continue.

If the player wants to continue, they must narrate how the character is able to survive, and the GM creates a *new* Attribute based on the character's *Injuries*.

If the player *does not* want to continue, they must narrate how their character exits the story. This does not have to be a *death scene*, but they are no longer part of the story.

The player *always* gets a choice when deciding a Crossroads, even if the Trauma is *grievous* and there is *no limit* to the number of Crossroads a character can endure.

Treating Injuries and Trauma

Injuries can only be treated *one* at a time. The kind of treatment that is required depends on the Injury, and it may require *several* scenes to recover from a single Injury.

If the GM thinks that the treatment is enough, both the *Injury* and its *Trauma* are healed.

Weapons and Armor

Strength Scores

Weapon and Armor Listings

Weapons

Fists, 1+Attributes
Combat Knife, 1+Attributes
Short Sword, 2+Attributes
Spear, 5+Attributes
Glock 19, 2+1
Colt .45, 3
Colt M16, 4+1
Springfield M92 Sniper, 5+2
AK-47, 5+1

Armor

Leather, 1
Half-Plate (Chest Only), 4
Full-Plate, 4
Class IIa Kevlar (Watch Vest), 4
Armored Tailored Suit, 3
Light Combat Kevlar, 5
Full Combat Kevlar, 6

Feedback

Thanks for picking up this game and taking a look! If you played in one of my playtests then *very extra* special thank you! *Diesel Empire* is in very early development, and I would absolutely love your feedback if you have any, especially if you decide to take this home and play it with your friends as the GM! Please send any feedback to jlee@uptoolategames.com.