

# Diesel Empire, v19.2.0-alpha

INITIAL RELEASE for GameStorm 22

Written by Jefferson Lee | February 2022 Alpha Release

## Creating Characters

### They are born.

Pick your character's species. Your choice will give your character a set of starting *Traits*.

#### Human

Except for the elven *Silohain*, humans have a significant presence in every kingdom. Of all the Gods-touched species, humans are probably the majority, and they are easily the species with the most political and economic influence.

##### Traits:

- **Social Dominance** - Almost every major market in the world bases their services and products around human needs, and the human language of *Northword* is spoken, though not always perfectly, in nearly every corner of the world.

#### Elves

Elves and goblins were the first to be Gods-touched a hundred-thousand millennia before any of the other Gods-touched species. Elves founded the first schools of science, magic, and philosophy, and created the foundations of modern academia.

Magic is a central tenet of elven society and it allowed the elves to unify and maintain order among the the younger Gods-touched species for hundreds of generations, until the *Fae* wiped all civilized societies in the *Ascendancy Wars*.

The *exclusively* elven controlled kingdom of the *Silohain* still maintains a huge amount of influence as a founder of the Grand Ascendant Kingdoms, but they are no longer the sole world power.

##### Traits:

- **Magical Senses** - Elves are naturally attuned to magic and are able to naturally sense magical energies, perceiving magic in a way similar to a sense of *smell*.
- **Slow Aging** - Elves live a long time (500-800 years or *longer*), because their aging is *slowed*. An elven pregnancy can last for up to five years, and it takes at least a *century* for an elf to reach adulthood, which are reasons why elves generally prefer living in established elven communities.

#### Orc

Orcs evolved throughout the plains and steppes of the Eastern Expanse, where they continue to maintain *total* control. They were Gods-touched alongside humans and are slightly less numerous than humans. They are a major presence in every kingdom outside the *Silohain*.

Hardened tribalism and long-standing rivalries have kept orc kingdoms and states from attaining the same level of power as humans and elves, but orcs as a whole rival humans in terms of influence and presence in the world.

### Traits:

- **Ordhauden Grit** - Orcs are famous for their ability to survive in the harsh extremes of the Eastern Expanse. They can endure extreme cold and heat without protection, and can operate at full strength even with very little water and food.

## Halflings

Halflings are the demi-Fae who were born during the Ascendancy Wars, nearly eight thousand years ago.

Though there are no major halfling nations, halflings have kept their Fae ancestors from obliterating the world for thousands of years. By all accounts, the Fae only tolerate the existence of this world because of their half-cousins.

### Traits:

- **Small** - Halflings never get taller than five feet but are always **lighter** and **weaker** than the average human.
- **Demi-Fae** - Halflings *usually* look like smaller humans or elves, but every halfling has vestigial physical traits that come from their Fae ancestry. **Describe your character's vestigial trait.** Halflings are also able to sense the presence of other Fae and demi-Fae as a natural intuition.  
**Fae genes are always passed down.** Halfling couplings with other species *always* results in Halfling children with Halfling traits.
- **Otherworldly** - The Fae nature of the halflings keeps them slightly detached from *this* reality, which makes them aloof and sometimes hard to understand.

## Dwarves

Evolving to Gods-touched from deep within the mountains of the *Essian Range*, the dwarves have formed largely isolated, but peaceful societies, which kept them from being too deeply involved in the Ascendancy Wars, and the rise of the Grand Ascendant Kingdoms.

Dwarves have a special kinship with saurians, whose medicines and ingenuity helped to stop the Firehand Plague, which nearly wiped out the dwarves two thousand years ago.

### Traits:

- **Short** - Dwarves are usually only about four feet tall, and never taller than five feet.
- **Muscular** - Though shorter, dwarves have a very *dense* musculature which makes them as strong and as heavy as an average human.

## Saurians

Though saurians are a young Gods-touched species, they have been able to achieve the same level of scientific and philosophical achievements as the elves, and have begun to surpass elven academics in the past few centuries.

Saurians, like the dwarves, were not badly affected by the Ascendancy Wars, which allowed them to create a stable and thriving civilization in the swamps of the Southern Expanse.

The saurians have a long-standing relationship with the dwarves. After saurian doctors saved the dwarves from the Firehand Plague, dwarven experts, magics, and materials helped the saurians raise a powerful republic from the swamps and muddy coasts of the Southern Expanse.

### Traits:

- **Cold Blooded** - Saurians require less food to survive (preferring large, infrequent meals), but they have difficulty *naturally* regulating their body temperature and sudden temperature changes can be *harmful*.

- **Amphibious** - Saurians are able to *safely* breath underwater for a little under fifteen minutes and roughly twenty minutes in an *emergency*.

## Goblins

Goblins helped to build the *First World* and the *Ancient World*, and their history is as long as the elves, but goblins have never held any significant power. Instead, they have quietly co-existed in the margins with humans, elves, and orcs, living in peaceful, isolated, communities.

Goblins have begun to see a renaissance in the last few centuries. Several *key* archeological and scientific discoveries in the past century have been made by goblins, whose infamous *stubbornness* has driven them further than any other explorer or researcher.

### Traits:

- **Small** - Goblins are small, never exceeding more than four feet. This makes them much **lighter**, but also **weaker** than the average human.
- **Stubborn Survivors** - Goblins can survive on miniscule amounts of food and water in very extreme conditions.
- **Extreme Immunities** - Goblins *can* get sick and are weakened by infectious diseases, poisons, and *radiation*, but only *very old* Goblins (90 years or more) actually *die* from these causes. Sadly this has made Goblins a favored subject for magical and scientific experimentation, both *voluntary* and *involuntary*.

## They grow up.

Your character gets **two points to spend on their Attributes**, which represents a character's *general* abilities. There are **four** attributes:

- **Focus.** Precision, steadiness, and finesse.
- **Influence.** Affecting the emotions and beliefs of others.
- **Insight.** Observing, gathering, and applying knowledge.
- **Resolve.** Drive and perseverance.

All Attributes start at **one**, which is *average*, and it **costs one point to raise an Attribute by one**.

## Strain and Hits

**Strain** measures a character's physical and mental resilience, and starts at **Resolve plus three**.

**Hits** determine the amount of *trauma* a character can endure before becoming *incapacitated* and is **equal to Resolve**.

## They learn.

Your character picks **four Skills at rank one**, which represents their general experience and background:

*Athletics, Charm, Deception, Driving, Electronics, Interrogation, Intimidation, Knowledge (History, Politics, Chemistry, Physics, Medicine, Pathology, Arcane, or Beasts), Leadership, Martial Arts (Unarmed, Swords, Staff, or Archery), Mechanics, Medicine, Observation, Pickpocket, Psychology, Security, Shooting (Close Combat, or Sniping), Society (Local, Underground, Court, Diplomatic, or Military), Special Weapons (Machine Guns, or Anti-Armor), Stealth, Survival, Tracking.*

## Magic Skills

*Anatomancy, Astral, Conjuraction, Destruction, Elemental, Illusion, Mecharcana, Mentalist, Portal, Probability, Transmutation.*

## They collect *real* experiences.

Your character gets *two* points for *additional* Skills, Skill ranks, or Attributes. Each **rank** in a Skill or Attribute costs *one* point.

## Playing the Game

### What you'll need.

You'll need at least *five six-sided dice*, but *more* never hurts. Everyone will also need some pens and paper to keep track of their characters and other game notes.

### The Check

The GM can call for a *Check* anytime the *outcome* of a character's action could have a *significant* impact on the story, or if *failing* an action would result in *meaningful* consequences.

### Rolling the Dice

Pick a relevant Attribute and roll a number of dice equal to its rank. Take the *highest* result and if the character has a relevant Skill, *add* its rank to the result.

If the character *Traits* give them a **clear advantage**, *add one* to the result, but if they put the character at a **clear disadvantage**, *subtract one*. A character with the *small* and *quiet* Trait would *add one* for Checks involving *stealth*, but *subtract one* if they have to physically *barricade* a door.

The GM can also *add or subtract one* from the result depending on the *difficulty* of a Check. Hiding in a crowd is *easy*, but hiding in an empty office is *hard*.

The **final total** determines the outcome of the Check:

Result	Outcome
7+	<b>Clean.</b> Whether through luck or skill, things go <b>exactly as planned</b> .
6, 5	<b>Messy.</b> The character <b>succeeds</b> , but only <i>barely</i> . <b>The player</b> describes a <b>compromise</b> that allows them to succeed or a <b>complication</b> that they are unable to control: they have to <i>jury-rig</i> a repair, they <i>lie</i> about what is at stake, they have <i>doubts</i> about the information. <b>The player also has the option to let the GM describe this mess.</b> In this case, the GM is allowed to simply give the player a <b>Clean</b> outcome if it makes things easier.
4 or less	<b>Failure.</b> The character simply <b>fails</b> their action, and the GM narrates the consequences. <b>The greater the risks, the greater the consequences:</b> failing to repair an <i>old</i> engine is just a waste of time, but failing to repair a <i>burning</i> engine might result in an <i>explosion</i> .

### Push

A player can use *one* Strain from their character and **add one to their result**. They can only do this *once* during a Check, and only if their character still has *Strain*.

## Trauma

When a character suffers trauma, they lose *Strain*. If they run out of Strain, **the character begins losing Hits**.

Trauma can be both *physical and mental*: a drug-induced psychotic break can be as traumatic as a punch to the face.

A character normally loses *one* Strain at a time, but **the GM** can decide that certain weapons and circumstances (big falling objects) **can inflict more trauma**.

# Incapacitated

When a character has zero Hits, they are *incapacitated*. They are not *dying*, but they are either *unconscious*, or completely *consumed* by pain or shock.

## The End

If the character loses Hits *after zero*, roll a number of dice equal to *Resolve* and take the **highest result**. If the character's *Traits* give them a better chance at *survival*, **add one** to the result, but if they *reduce* those chances, **subtract one** from the result.

If the total is *equal to or greater than the number of hits below zero*, then the character *survives*. Otherwise, they *die*. A character that's *three Hits below zero* must get a result of *three* or *greater*.

If the character *dies*, **the player** gets to narrate **how their character exits the story**. They might die quietly, or *horribly*, wander into the darkness, or be absorbed by the universe, but after their exit, they are no longer part of this story.

# Weapons And Armor

## Weapons

**Pluses** (“+”) indicate how much *extra Strain* is **lost** if a character is hit with the weapon, so “++” means a character would lose *three Strain*.

Weapon	Strength
<b>Fists</b> . Still the most popular fallback, especially with orcs and dwarves.	1*
<b>Combat Knife</b> . The classic.	2
<b>Long Sword</b> . The mainstay weapon of the Silohain.	3
<b>Spear</b> . Also widely used by the Silohain.	4+
<b>Longbow</b> . Aside from magic, this is the main ranged weapon of the Silohain.	3
<b>9mm Pistol</b> . Most civilian pistols.	3
<b>.45 ACP Pistol</b> . Heavier firepower, but sometimes harder to manage. Very popular in civilian markets.	2+
<b>5.56mm Combat Rifle</b> . The kind of rifles favored by armies of the Ascendancy.	4
<b>7.62mm Combat Rifle</b> . These heavier rifles are favored by the militaries of the orc nations, but also by Bonethorne Port and the Dwarven Compact.	5
<b>30.06 Sniper/Hunting Rifle</b> . Used in both civilian and military arenas.	6+
<b>14.7mm Sniper Rifle</b> . An anti-vehicle class of weapon used in many militaries.	10++
<b>Hand Grenade</b> . Now a common part of military equipment.	10++

## Armor

If the *Strength* of the armor is *equal to or greater than the Strength* of a weapon, the weapon deals *zero Trauma*. However, **the Strength of the armor is reduced by one**.

Armor	Strength
<b>Ballistic Leather</b> . Synthetically strengthened leather that a lot of survivalists wear.	3
<b>Plate Armor</b> . Steel chest armor that some kingdoms still field.	5
<b>Elven Plate</b> . Magically enhanced steel armor which is as light as aluminum.	5
<b>Class IIa Kevlar</b> . The kind of protection commonly given to watch members in major cities.	4
<b>Class IIa KevFlex</b> . Magically strengthened Kevlar, which makes it light enough to be woven into plain clothes. Worn by special watch members.	4
<b>Combat Armor</b> . Stiff laminate cloth with a steel plate backing. This is what is used by most militaries due to its low cost.	5
<b>KevFlex Infantry Armor</b> . Light and flexible KevFlex with ceramic inserts, which is rarely fielded by any military beyond Bonethorne Port and the Huxlon Republic.	6
<b>KevFlex Combat Armor</b> . Heavy KevFlex with ceramic inserts, which is rarely fielded	7

even by Bonethorne Port and the Huxlon Republic due to its weight and cost.

## 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](mailto:jlee@uptoolategames.com)**.