DIESEL EMPIRES

v28.2.0 | By Jefferson Lee | UpTooLateGames.com

Creating Characters

Before the game starts, the **GM** will pass around a set of sheets that contain all of the *species*, *Paths*, and *Traits* for the game (which can be found at **UpTooLateGames.com**).

- **Pick your character's species**, which gives your character a set of *attributes*.
- **Pick *one Path* for your character.** Paths describe the character's course through their life and gives them a set of *Backgrounds* and *Traits* to select.
- **Pick *one Background*** from their Path starting at *one* (**1**). Backgrounds describe the *broad* abilities and experiences of a character and are <u>underlined</u>.
- **Each Background has *four* (4) *Traits***, which **have an associated *suit*** and describe the *specific capabilities* of a character. ***All the Traits of the character's* starting Background** begin with a rank of ***one* (1).**

You have an additional *three* points to spend:

- ***One* (1) point** will *upgrade* a *Background* or *Trait* score by *one* (**1**).
- ***One* (1) point** unlocks a *new* Background from a character's *starting* Path, starting at a rank of *one* (**1**). The character **does *not* gain any of the new Background's Traits.**
- ***One* (1) point** unlocks a *Trait* with a starting rank of *one* (**1**). You can only unlock Traits from your character's *unlocked* **Backgrounds**.
- A character **cannot gain *new* Paths**. They are stuck with their *starting* Path.

Playing the Game

What you'll need.

A standard Poker deck with **both Jokers**, and some pens. You'll also need copies of all of the play sheets for a game that the GM should have.

The Cards

Everyone *except* for the GM gets *five* cards at the start of the game. **The GM never carries a hand** and **players can never have *more* than *five* cards in their hand**.

- *Pip* cards are the cards numbered *2* through *10*, while *Royal cards* are **Queens**, **Kings**, and **Jacks**.
- The *base* value for cards is *zero* (**0**) for *Pip* cards, *one* (**1**) for *Royal cards*, and *two* (**2**) for *Aces*. *Jokers* are **worth** *three* (**3**), and can **represent** *any* suit.

As soon as the deck is *empty*, reshuffle the discard pile to create a *new* deck.

The Draw

The GM can call for a *Draw* 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.

1. Set the Stakes

Pick a *relevant* character *Trait* or *Background* for the Draw. **If the character has *no* relevant Traits or Backgrounds**, even *partially*, the Draw is **limited**.

If the task has *extra* complications (the task is *complex* or *taxing*, or the character is *unskilled*, *unprepared*, or if the character has *trauma conditions*), **the GM will draw *one* (1) *Opposing* card for *each* condition. These Opposing cards are kept *hidden*.**

2. Draw Cards

The player draws *one* (1) card for *each* rank of the chosen *Trait* or *Background*, and reveals them *face-up*. The total value of these cards is the character's score.

The player **can then play *any number* of cards from their hand to *increase* their score**, but these cards can only be restored if the character *rests*.

The player **can also *discard* cards from their hand, and for *each* discard the player draws *one* (1) card from the deck and adds its value to their character's score.**

If a *Trait* is being used for a Draw, *any* of the player's cards that have the *same suit* as the Trait gets *plus one* (1) to its base value, so a *Club Pip* card played with a *Club Trait* would be worth *one* (1), while a *Joker* would be worth *four* (4) (since Jokers can be played as *any* suit).

If a Draw is *limited*, the character still gets to draw *one* (1) card, but **the *maximum* score they can achieve is *always* one (1)**, even if they *draw* or *play* a Joker.

3. Narrate the Outcome

Once *all* the cards for the character are played, the GM looks at the Opposing cards and *secretly subtracts* the *base values* of the Opposing cards from the **player's score**, and the **final** score determines the *success* level of the outcome.

Opposing cards *do not* receive a bonus from a character's Trait, they *only* use the card's *base* value.

The GM **is *not* required to reveal the final score**.

Score	Outcome	
3	Superb	The character *succeeds*, and they gain an ***immediate* advantage**.
2	Ideal	The character accomplishes *exactly* what they wanted.
1	Messy	The character *barely succeeds*, so the results might be **limited**, or **new complications** might appear.
0	Failure	The character *fails*, which might expose them to **new threats** or **harm**.
-1	Dismal	The character *fails*, and the situation ***immediately* becomes *more* dangerous**.

The GM then narrates the outcome based on the final outcome.

4. Clear the Table

Once the outcome is resolved, ***all* of the cards used for the Draw are *discarded*. Opposing cards** should be placed **under** the discard pile.

Trauma

When a character suffers trauma, the GM decides how many *Hits* they receive based on the severity of the trauma (usually between *one* to *five*). **Trauma can be both *physical and mental***: a drug-induced psychotic break can be as traumatic as a hammer to the face.

A player can play *any* number of cards to *reduce* trauma. Each card stops *one* Hit and is *discarded*.

Trauma Levels

There are *two* trauma conditions: *severe* at *three* (3) Hits and *critical* at *six* (6) Hits. The character *dies* at *ten* (10) Hits. Both severe *and* critical trauma conditions count as *complications* in a Draw. Additionally, if a character is in *critical* condition they must make a *Draw after* taking any action

more complicated than *walking* or *asking for help*. If they *fail*, they **pass out**, and if they *fail dismally*, they **pass out** and **suffer** *one* (**1**) **Hit**.

Recovery

Characters that are *not* in *critical* condition can recover *one* (**1**) to *five* (**5**) **cards** when they **rest**. The GM decides how many cards are recovered, but characters can recover at least *one* (**1**) card just by drinking some water, and *five* (**5**) cards if they can stop to eat a light meal.

Each Hit requires a *separate* Draw to recover, either through *natural healing*, or applying *medical aid*. **Heal a number of Hits equal to the final Draw score**. A *dismal* failure means the character **suffers** *one* (**1**) **Hit**. If the character is **unconscious**, they can be revived if **any Hits are healed**.

Characters *are not* required to recover Hits, and can carry *Hits or trauma conditions indefinitely*.

Magic Foundations

Magic requires *two* things: a *channel* and a *body* to *contain* the channel. The channel is what actually shapes the *effect*, but it is up to the body to keep an effect stable enough to *do* something.

There are two methods of channeling:

- **Evocation is channeling with the *caster* acting as the body.** This poses *extreme* risks for the spell caster, as it means that *failed* attempts at channeling will affect the caster's own body, mind, or *soul*. **It is also very difficult**, because the caster has to split their focus between an *intricate* channeling rite, and *suppressing the fear of being ripped asunder*.
- **Psychic evocation** is the same as regular Evocation, but without a *spoken* component. **Chanting and speaking make evocation significantly easier**, but any rite can be performed *psychically* at *increased difficulty*.
- **Ritual channeling uses a *prepared* body**, like a *ritual circle* or *prepared sacrifice*. It is the *oldest* form of spell casting and it is *easier*, but requires a lot more **preparation**. It is also **safer** for the caster, though **run-away effects** from powerful rites can still be *fatal* and extremely *destructive*. *Psychic rituals* are possible, but the practice is uncommon.

In practice, *field* mages rely on a *combination* of the two methods, pairing *evocation* channeling with *lesser ritual bodies* to *mitigate* side-effects. **Professional mages** tend to rely exclusively on *rituals* using **permanent ritual bodies**, like *resonance granite* in hospitals or a mecharcanist's *Tilly Box*.

Magic Draws

Magic Draws use the same rules as *normal* Draws, though magic is considerably more *unpredictable* and *dangerous* than conventional actions.

Weapons And Armor

Weapons

A weapon's *strength* determines the *base* number of Hits it inflicts. On a *successful* attack, **add the final Draw score to the weapon strength**. If a character *suffers* damage from a weapon, **add the *Opposing card total* to the weapon strength**.

Weapons with a "+" *reduce* the target's Armor Rating by *one* (**1**), so a "2+" weapon will only inflict *two* (**2**) Hits, but will reduce *rating two* (**2**) armor to *one* (**1**).

Weapon	Strength (ST)
Fists. Still the most popular fallback.	0
Combat Knife. The classic.	1
Long Sword. The mainstay weapon of the Silohain.	2
Spear. Also widely used by the Silohain.	2+
Longbow. Aside from magic, this is the main ranged weapon of the Silohain.	2+
.40 Pistol. Most civilian pistols.	2+
.45 ACP Pistol. Heavier firepower, but sometimes harder to manage. Very popular in civilian markets.	3
.223 Combat Rifle. The kind of rifles favored by many modern militaries due to the weight and acceptable stopping power.	4+
.308 Combat Rifle. These heavier rifles are favored by a shrinking number of militaries due to their weight.	5
.338 Arden Sniper/Hunting Rifle. Used in both civilian and military arenas.	6+

Armor

Subtract the *Rating* of any armor protection from **the strength of any weapon** that hits the character, so a rating *two* (**2**) armor reduces a weapon's strength by *two* (**2**). **Armor is not perfect** and the **GM** can change the effectiveness of Armor depending on the attack. Steel armor is great for stopping blades, but it is *useless* against a *flamethrower*.

Armor	Rating (AR)
Ballistic Leather. Synthetically strengthened leather that a lot of survivalists wear.	1
Plate Armor. Steel chest armor that some kingdoms still field.	2
Elven Plate. Magically enhanced steel armor which is as light as aluminum.	4
Class IIa Kevlar. The kind of protection commonly given to watch members in major cities.	2
Class IIa KevFlex. Magically strengthened Kevlar, which makes it light enough to be woven into plain clothes. Worn by special watch members.	2
Combat Armor. Stiff laminate cloth with a steel plate backing. This is what is used by most militaries due to its low cost.	3
KevFlex Infantry Armor. Light and flexible KevFlex with ceramic inserts, which is rarely fielded by any military beyond Bonethorne Port and the Huxlon Republic.	4
KevFlex Combat Armor. Heavy KevFlex with ceramic inserts, which is rarely fielded even by Bonethorne Port and the Huxlon Republic due to its weight and cost.	5

Feedback

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