

# DIESEL EMPIRES

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## 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**, which has a set of *Traits*. **These Traits begin with a rank of one (1)**. You also gain the *extra assets* of the Background.
  - **Both Backgrounds and Traits have keywords**. Underlined keywords have *special* rules.

You have an additional *three (3)* points to spend:

- **One (1) point will increase a Trait's rank by one (1)**.
- **One (1) point will give a character a new Background**, but *without any of its Traits*. Traits can be bought for **one (1) point per rank**. You *do* gain the extra assets of the Background.
- **You can only pick Backgrounds and Traits from your character's chosen Path**, and you *cannot* gain new Paths.

## Playing the Game

### The Deck

The game requires a *standard Poker deck* with *both Jokers*.

Everyone *except* for the GM gets *five (5)* cards at the start of the game. **The GM *never* carries a hand and players can *never* have more than five (5) cards in their hand.**

The *base value* of the cards is *zero (0)* for *Pip cards* (the cards numbered 2 through 10), *one (1)* for *Royal cards* (Queens, Kings, Jacks), *two (2)* for *Aces*, and *three (3)* for *Jokers*.

Whenever the deck runs out of cards, immediately *reshuffle* the discard pile and create a *new deck*.

### Strain Cards

*Strain cards* represent the *physical or mental stress* of a character and are **dealt to the player face down and are held until a Check is called or the character rests**.

The GM can deal Strain cards *anytime* a character suffers a serious amount of *physical or mental stress*.

### Checks

The GM can call for a *Check* anytime the *outcome* of a character's action will have a *meaningful* impact on the story. The GM decides *what will be Checked*, which also determines the *suit* of Check.

Check	Suit	
Finesse	♠ Spade	Agility, dexterity, or focus.
Influence	♥ Heart	Persuasion, authority, or social connections.
Insight	♦ Diamond	Observation, intuition, or knowledge.
Resolve	♣ Club	Strength, stamina, or willpower.

Add *one (+1)* to the base value of *all Cards that match the suit of the Check*, so *all matching Pip cards* would be worth *one (1)*. *Jokers do not get this bonus*, but are still worth *three (3)*.

Extra Strain

If a Check is *exceptionally difficult*, the GM can deal *one (1) or two (2) additional Strain cards before* the player draws. *Other factors* might also produce extra Strain for this Check.

Character Draw

If the character has a *Background* that is *relevant to the Check* (based on the *description* or *keywords*), the player *draws and reveals one (1) card* from the deck.

If the character's *Background* has a *Trait* that is *relevant to the Check*, the player *draws and reveals one (1) additional card for each rank in the Trait*, so a rank *two (2)* Trait would mean the player draws *three (3)* cards: *one (1)* for their *Background* and *two (2)* for their *Trait*.

The player can *play any card from their hand to add to the character's draw*.

The player can also *discard cards from their hand*. *Each discard* allows the player to *draw and reveal one (1) additional card*, so *three (3)* discards would give the player *three (3)* additional draws.

A player can *play or discard as long as they still have cards in their hand*.

The player can also choose to *add one (1) Strain* to *draw and reveal one (1) additional card*, but this can only be done *once* per Check.

The Outcome

Reveal *all of the character's Strain cards*. The outcome is determined by taking the *total value of the character's cards* and *subtracting the total value of the Strain cards*.

Total	Outcome	
3+	Superb	They <u>succeed</u> and they gain an <i>immediate advantage</i> .
2	Ideal	They <u>succeed</u> .
1	Messy	They <u>succeed</u> , but they <i>gain one (1) Strain</i> .
0	Stalemate	They <u>fail</u> and <i>gain one (1) Strain</i> .
-1	Setback	They <u>fail</u> and <i>either suffer one (1) Hit or a setback</i> to their progress.
-2	Disaster	They <u>fail</u> and <i>either suffer two (2) Hits or a permanent setback</i> (an ally dies, something important is destroyed, etc.)

The GM narrates the outcome, *all of the cards revealed for the Check are discarded*, and *any Strain gained from the outcome is dealt to the character*.

Rest

*Rest can recover both cards and Strain*, depending on the *quality* of rest:

Rest		Hand Size	Strain
Quick	A brief pause to <i>focus</i> , which <i>can be taken during a fight</i> .	<i>One (1) card</i>	-
Half	Having the safety to <i>eat a quick meal</i> or something similar.	<i>Three (3) cards</i>	<i>Half</i>
Full	Getting a <i>half day of rest</i> .	<i>Five (5) cards</i>	<i>All</i>

*Rest recovers cards back to a set hand size*, so if a player has two (2) cards in their hand, a *Quick* rest *would not* be helpful since their hand is *greater* than *one (1)*, but a *Half* or *Full* rest *would be* useful.

*Rest recovers a portion of Strain, rounding down for a Half rest*, so a character with *three (3)* Strain recovers *one (1)* for a *Half* rest, but if they only have *one (1)* Strain, *no Strain* is recovered. **Recovered Strain is discarded.**

*Each level of trauma reduces card recovery by one (1), so if a character has severe trauma, a Half rest would only recover two (2) cards, and a Quick rest would recover zero cards.*

*Cards and Strain can be recovered in other ways, like stimulants, magic, or achieving milestones, but it is up to the GM to decide what is recovered and if there are any side-effects.*

## **Hits and Trauma**

*Hits can be gained both physically and mentally: a psychotic break can be as traumatic as a punch to the face.*

*Trauma is gained as the character suffers Hits and there are two trauma levels: severe at two (2) Hits and critical at three (3) Hits. At critical trauma the character makes a Resolve Check (tough keyword applies) to see if things get worse.*

*The character is incapacitated (unconscious or otherwise incoherent) at four (4) Hits and permanently incapacitated at five (5) Hits (dead or so affected they are a different character now).*

## **Healing**

*A character can only heal the first Hit naturally, even if they have multiple Hits, but they must take a Full rest and make a successful Resolve Check. The rest of the Hits require medical attention, and each Hit requires a Full rest and a successful Finesse Check.*

*Incapacitated characters can be medically revived with a Half rest, but that does not heal any Hits.*

## **Combat Foundations**

*Finesse Checks (combat keywords apply) are used for attack and defense in combat, and are also used if a character wants to act first (reaction keyword applies).*

*In an attack the character's final Check score is how many Hits they inflict on their opponent, so a Messy outcome would result in one (1) Hit on an opponent.*

## **Combat Keywords**

- Brawling is street fighting at 30 feet or less, using pistols, hand weapons, and fists.
- Close Combat includes the tactics and training to fight with small arms (pistols, rifles, shotguns), hand weapons, and martial arts at 30 yards or less.
- Special Combat has varying ranges and capabilities defined by the Trait.

## **Magic Foundations**

*Magic requires two things: a channel and a body to contain the channel. The channel draws out the energy, and the body keeps the energy stable enough to shape an effect.*

*Resolve Checks are used to determine if a character can channel the magic, and Resolve Checks are also used to resist magical effects. Magical Traits help with resisting magic.*

## **Magic Keywords**

- Ritual channeling uses a prepared body, like a ritual circle or prepared sacrifice. It is the oldest form of spell casting, and it is safer since the body can be prepared to endure channeling, though run-away effects can still be fatal.
- Evocation channeling works with the caster acting as the body. This poses extreme risks for the spell caster because they have to split their focus between an intricate channeling rite, and the physical labor of containing magic. This allows a caster to shape effects by simply speaking a rite, but it always causes one (1) extra Strain after the rite is complete. The recited component does allow evocation rites to be cast as a ritual instead (which does not cause extra Strain).

- **Psychic evocation** is the same as regular **evocation**, but *without a spoken component*, but it still causes **one (1) extra Strain after the rite is complete**. However, since psychics rely **entirely** on **instinct and intuition**, psychics **cannot inscribe their rites as a ritual**.

In practice, mages rely on a **combination of magics**, pairing *evocation* with *lesser ritual bodies* to mitigate side-effects. **Commercial mages** tend to rely exclusively on **permanent ritual bodies**, like *resonance granite* in hospitals or a mechanic's *Tilly Box*.

# Weapons And Armor

## Weapons

A weapon's **strength** is added as **extra Strain** to a **Check** whenever a character *fights* an opponent with that weapon. **If a character makes a successful attack Check** on an opponent, **add the weapon strength** to the Hits inflicted.

Each **“+”** **increases the number of Hits a character receives during a Check by one (1)**, so a **“++”** weapon inflicts an extra **two (2)** Hits on a character, if the character gets a *setback* or *disaster*. **If a character makes a successful attack, these Hits are still inflicted on the target**, even if the weapon strength is reduced to **zero (0)**.

Weapon	Strength (ST)
<b>Fists</b> . Still the most popular fallback.	0
<b>Combat Knife</b> . The classic.	1
<b>Long Sword</b> . The mainstay weapon of the Silohain.	2
<b>Spear</b> . Also widely used by the Silohain.	2+
<b>Longbow</b> . Aside from magic, this is the main ranged weapon of the Silohain.	2
<b>.38 Pistol</b> . Most civilian pistols.	2
<b>.45 ACP Pistol</b> . Heavier firepower, but sometimes harder to manage. Very popular in civilian markets.	2+
<b>.223 Combat Rifle</b> . The kind of rifles favored by many modern militaries due to the weight and acceptable stopping power.	3
<b>.308 Combat Rifle</b> . These heavier rifles are favored by a shrinking number of militaries due to their weight.	3+
<b>.338 Arden Sniper/Hunting Rifle</b> . Used in both civilian and military arenas.	4++

## Armor

The **armor rating (AR)** **reduces the weapon strength (ST)** of an attack, **to a minimum of zero (0)**, so armor with a rating of **two (2)** will reduce a strength **three (3)** weapon to **one (1)**, and a strength **one (1)** weapon to **zero (0)**.

Armor	Rating (AR)
<b>Ballistic Leather</b> . Synthetically strengthened leather that a lot of survivalists wear.	1
<b>Plate Armor</b> . Steel chest armor that some kingdoms still field.	2
<b>Elven Plate</b> . Magically enhanced steel armor which is as light as aluminum.	3
<b>Class IIa Kevlar</b> . The kind of protection commonly given to watch members in major cities.	2
<b>Class IIa KevFlex</b> . Magically strengthened Kevlar, which makes it light enough to be woven into plain clothes. Worn by special watch members.	2
<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.	2
<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.	3
<b>KevFlex Combat Armor</b> . Heavy KevFlex with ceramic inserts, which is rarely fielded even by Bonethorne Port and the Huxlon Republic due to its weight and cost.	4