DIESEL EMPIRES

v29.1.0 | 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, 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*. <u>Underlined</u> keywords** have *special* rules.

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

- *One* (1) **point** will give a character **a *new* Background**, but **the Traits *all* start at *zero* (0).** You *do* **gain** the extra assets of the Background.
- *One* (1) **point will increase a Trait's rank by *one* (1)**, but you can **only increase Traits from your character's *starting* or *purchased* Backgrounds.**
- **You can *only* pick *Backgrounds* from your character's 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

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 *resolved* or the character *rests*.**

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

The GM must deal any *extra Strain before* the player draws for their character, so that **the player knows** *how much* Strain they are facing *before* they draw and play cards.

Generally, a GM should only assign *extra* Strain if the character is facing *extraordinary* or *overwhelming* challenges.

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 Outcome

Reveal all of the Strain cards and *subtract* the total value of the Strain cards from the total value of **the character's cards.** The *final total* determines the outcome.

Total	Outcome	
3+	Superb	They <u>succeed</u> and they gain an **immediate** advantage.
2	Ideal	They <u>succeed</u>.
1	Messy	They <u>succeed</u>, but they **gain** *one* (1) **Strain**.
0	Bad	They <u>fail</u> and **gain** *one* (1) **Strain**.
-1	Dismal	They <u>fail</u> and **gain** *one* (1) **Strain**, *and* **either** suffer *one* (1) **Hit or** a *setback* to their progress.
-2	Disaster	They <u>fail</u> and **gain** *one* (1) **Strain**, *and* **either** suffer *two* (2) **Hits or** a *permanent setback* (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 *new* Strain gained from the outcome is *dealt*.

If the player has *zero* (0) cards in their hand, they may now *draw* and *keep one* (1) *card*.

Rest

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

Rest		Hand Size	Strain Left
Quick	Pausing long enough to **stop** and **focus**.	*One* (1) card	*2 Strain*
Half	**Having the safety** to *eat a quick meal* or something similar.	*Three* (3) cards	*1 Strain*
Full	Getting **two hours of *sleep***, or the *equivalent*.	*Five* (5) cards	*0 Strain*

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 *also* recovers Strain back to a set level, so if a character has *two* (2) Strain, a *Quick* rest *would not* be helpful since they are at *two* (2) Strain, but a *Half* or *Full* rest *would be* useful.

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

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** (*tough* keyword applies). **The rest of the Hits** require *medical* **attention**, and *each* Hit requires a *Full rest* and a *successful Insight* **Check**.

Incapacitated characters can be **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 *or* it is the number of *extra Hits* the character inflicts when they make a *successful* attack.

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 *dismal* or *disastrous* outcome. **If a character makes a *successful* attack, *these are bonus Hits* that are inflicted on the target.**

Weapon	Strength (ST)
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
.38 Pistol. Most civilian pistols.	2
.45 ACP Pistol. Heavier firepower, but sometimes harder to manage. Very popular in civilian markets.	2+
.223 Combat Rifle. The kind of rifles favored by many modern militaries due to the weight and acceptable stopping power.	3
.308 Combat Rifle. These heavier rifles are favored by a shrinking number of militaries due to their weight.	3+
.338 Arden Sniper/Hunting Rifle. 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)
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.	3
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.	2
KevFlex Infantry Armor. Light and flexible KevFlex with ceramic inserts, which is rarely fielded by any military beyond Bonethorne Port and the Huxlon Republic.	3
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.	4