

# Diesel Empire, v16.2.0-alpha

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## 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 were the first species to be Gods-touched more than 200,000 years ago. They founded the first schools of science, magic, and philosophy, and these founding texts still form the fundamentals of modern academia.

Magic became a central tenet of elven societies nearly a 100,000 years ago, and their mastery of magic allowed the elves to rule virtually unopposed for 90,000 years, unifying and maintaining order among the rest of the younger Gods-touched species, until the *Fae* nearly 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, around 120,000 years ago, and are almost as numerous as humans. They are a major presence in every kingdom outside the *Silohain*.

Hardened tribalism and long-standing rivalries have kept orc societies 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:

- **Children of the Ordhauden** - Orcs are famous for their physical endurance and 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.

## Halfings

Halfings are the demi-Fae who were born during the Ascendancy Wars, nearly 8,000 years ago.

Though there are no major halfling nations, halfings have kept their Fae ancestors from obliterating the world for thousands of years by maintaining a peace with The Veil and the Fae. By all accounts, the Fae only tolerate the existence of this world because of their half-cousins.

### Traits:

- **Short** - Halfings never get taller than five feet and are lighter and weaker than the average human.
- **Demi-Fae** - Halfings *usually* look like smaller humans or elves but halfings have a wide range of vestigial physical traits that come from their Fae ancestry. They are also able to sense the presence of other Fae and demi-Fae as a natural intuition. **Describe your vestigial trait.**
- **Otherworldly** - The Fae nature of the halfings keeps them slightly detached from *this* reality, which makes them aloof and sometimes very stubborn.

## Dwarves

Evolving to Gods-touched from deep within the mountains of the *Essian Range*, the dwarves have formed largely isolated, but peaceful societies in the last 12,000 years, even integrating the *Lorrash* and *Koto Harrain* orcs into dwarven societies.

Though dwarves defended themselves from the Fae, their isolated societies kept them from being too deeply involved in the Ascendancy Wars.

Dwarves have a special kinship with saurians, whose medicines and ingenuity helped to stop the Firehand Plague, which nearly wiped out the dwarves 2,000 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 heavy as an average human, but *stronger*.

## Saurians

Though saurians are a relatively young species, Gods-touched only 80,000 years ago, they have been able to achieve the same level of scientific and philosophical achievements as the ancient elves, and have begun to surpass elven academics in the past century.

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 also have a long-standing relationship with the dwarves. After saurian doctors saved the dwarves from the Firehand Plague, dwarven experts and materials helped the saurians raise their empire from the swamps and muddy coasts.

### Traits:

- **Cold Blooded** - Saurians require less food to survive (preferring large, infrequent meals), but they also are unable to *naturally* regulate 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

Goblin labor helped to build the *First World* and the *Ancient World*, and they have been witness to every great fall for the last 200,000 years. 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* archaeological 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 minuscule 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 (80 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 *broadly* describe their natural capabilities and talents. **Attributes start at zero**, which is *average*, and it costs **one point** to raise an Attribute by **one**.

## Attributes

- **Dexterity** - Physical coordination, reaction, and balance.
- **Endurance** - Health and physical stamina.
- **Focus** - Alertness, concentration, and willpower.
- **Influence** - Affecting the beliefs or opinions of others.
- **Intellect** - Learning, recalling, and applying knowledge.
- **Strength** - Raw physical power that dictates speed and brawn.

## They learn.

Your character picks **one Background**, which represents their general experience and history, and helps decide your character's starting *resources*.

Your character also gets **two points to spend on Skills**, which represent their *specific* areas of expertise. **Skills start at zero**, which is *average*, and it costs **one point** to raise a Skill by **one**.

## Background

- **Criminal**. There are eleven *trillion* North Guilders in the global economy, and four *billion* beings with *vices* and *needs* that only you are willing to provide.
- **Technician**. The world is rapidly modernizing and industrializing and field technicians are at the frontline.
- **Fixer**. Kings and Princes are no longer the sole arbiters of power, and individuals who can creatively wield political capital are rapidly building their influence in the shadows.
- **Investigator**. Investigators seek to unravel the secrets of individuals in the name of public safety, or profit.
- **Medicine**.

- **Ranger.** While the world is rapidly modernizing, vast parts of the world are still completely untamed.
- **Scholar.** Knowledge, both old and new, has been key to unlocking the modern world.
- **Spy.** The most terrifying conflicts today are fought and won through stolen secrets.
- **Soldier.** Professional soldiers have become much more prominent in the few decades since the *Grand War*.
- **Watch.** Law enforcement has become increasingly more complex as the absolute rule of Kings and Princes has begun to dissolve.

## Skills

### Magical Skills

Magical Trades work the same way as regular Trades, but a character *must* have a *relevant* Magical Trade in order to cast *invocations*. Without a Magical Trade, a character can *only* cast *rituals* from manuals.

- **Anatomancy.** An offshoot of the ancient *Necromancy* school, these rituals allow a mage to **read the anatomy of living beings** and **treat trauma** or **disease**. These rites can also be used to **alter the anatomy** of a being.
- **Astral.** One of the most dangerous schools, Astral rituals allow the **mage's consciousness to leave the physical confines of their bodies**. In astral spaces, a mage is able to **instantaneously travel** and **perceive any physical location**, but this also affects a mage's perception of time. Some mages spend years in the astral, while their bodies have only experienced seconds, but in other cases comatose mages have withered and died without ever regaining consciousness.
- **Conjuration.** The ability to **summon spirits, golems, and elemental creatures** from *this* plane of existence. This is a highly regulated Art since it is possible to **summon otherworldly creatures**, but those rituals are **forbidden**, and these mages are usually *captured* and *executed* by the *Tolsci* of the Silohain.
- **Destruction.** A side-effect of Alchemical schools, Destruction rituals allow for a caster to **break the atomic bonds of a substance** and **reduce it into component elements**. Complex and stable substances require a lot of effort to break down.
- **Elemental.** The ancient ability to **manipulate natural forces**, like the weather, and **manipulate natural elements**, like bodies of water, rock formations, fire and even *plants*. Elementalists **cannot create elements out of nothing**, but they can manipulate existing sources.
- **Illusion.** Built on the nearly extinct school of *Domination*, the Illusion school **manipulates the perception of a target**. A skilled practitioner can create illusions that are indistinguishable from reality, even influencing other Illusionists.
- **Mecharcana.** Derived from the principles of *Necromancy*, Mecharcana **allows a mage to completely understand mechanical or electronic systems**. This gives a mage the ability to **manipulate** or **repair** a system, but these rituals **do not allow a mage to conjure new parts**, so some repairs may be *impossible*. Mecharcanicist **can also attempt to improve a system**, but they are limited by the quality of the existing materials.
- **Mentalist.** An art that has its roots in Oracle magic, these rituals allow a caster to **see the thoughts and memories of others**. Skilled Mentalists can perceive thoughts in *real-time*, experiencing the moment through the senses of their subject.
- **Portal** magics are *known* but there are no *public* practitioners and teaching this knowledge is *forbidden*. **Portal rituals allow a mage to cut through reality and bypass physical**

distances, but it is also possible to simply cut through reality into *other worlds*, which is what triggered the *Ascendancy Wars* with the *fae*.

The Tolci of the Silohain have *publicly* attempted to wipe out all traces of this school over the centuries, and while no major Portal school exists, practitioners of these rites do appear.

- **Probability.** A refined version of the Divination school, **a mage is able to predict the outcome of an action or series of actions.** The **accuracy of a ritual is greatly diminished if the mage intends to influence the future**, and while some Probability mages have claimed to have been able to change their fates it is impossible to know if that is the truth, or if there was a fault in their ritual.
- **Transmutation.** The modernised version of Alchemy, **Transmutation rituals allow for basic elements to be rendered into more complex substances** and even allows those compounds to be **precisely shaped**. This always requires raw materials, which is why these rituals are sometimes paired with Destruction rituals.

This school has resulted in the greatest changes to society, creating the first diesel fuels, plastics, and electronic circuits.

## They collect *real* experiences.

Your character gets **two points to spend on Attributes or Skills**. Each rank costs **one point** and you **cannot have more than four ranks** in any Attribute or Skill.

## The Rest

Your character has **two other scores** that are important for the game:

- **Grit** determines how far a character can push themselves before they risk *actual* harm, and is equal to **two plus the character's Focus**.
- **Hits** determine the amount of trauma a character can endure before they risk *long-term* damage or even *death*. It is equal to **two plus the character's Endurance**.

## Playing the Game

### What you'll need.

You'll need at least **one six-sided die**, but **five or more die** is ideal. 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** whenever 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. A *Check* would be appropriate if the character is trying to lie to *save a life*, or they want to *lie* their way past security.

**The GM picks which Attribute to Check.** The player can suggest an Attribute (since they know their character's intent), but the GM gets to make the final call.

**The GM also decides if any one of the character's Trades applies to the Check.** If a Trade is relevant, **add the Trade's rank to the final result.**

**The player then rolls a number of dice equal to the character's Attribute score, plus one. Add everything to the highest result.**

**If the total is seven or better**, the character *succeeds* without any complications.

**If the total is five or six**, the character *succeeds*, but they suffer a *complication*:

If the total is **four or less**, the character *fails*, and **they suffer a consequence**:

## Trauma Check

**Trauma Checks** use the *Endurance Attribute* and have a *special* set of consequences. **Trades cannot** be used for this Check, but *Traits* can make this Check *easier*.

**On a seven or better**, the character is still hurt, but things do not get worse.

**On a five or six**, the character suffers an *Injury* described by the GM (broken bones, concussions, deep lacerations, internal trauma, etc). Injuries *might* make future Checks *harder*, and a character can have *multiple* Injuries.

**On a four or less**, the character suffers an *Injury* that is severe enough to *Incapacitate* them. **If the character was already Incapacitated**, the GM decides if the character is *dying* or just *dead*.

The GM can periodically ask for *additional* Trauma Checks if a character's Injuries remain untreated.

## Recovery

A character recovers *all their Grit* if they can take a *break*. This can be *quick*, like a slug from a flask, or a few bites of food, but it needs to be long enough to *stop* and *breathe*. **Injuries do not stop a character from recovering Grit.**

A character's *Hits* and *Injuries* are treated *individually*, and recovery depends on the nature of each Injury, but *almost all* injuries need **medical treatment**. Broken bones need to be treated differently than gunshot wounds. **Recovering from the Injury** heals the *Hit*.

## Magic Foundations

**Magic Checks** use the same rules as *normal* Checks, but there are a few things that can affect the *difficulty* of a Magic Check.

**Magic is the manipulation of the natural order.** Spells that go *against* the natural order tend to be *harder* to cast. Spells that *cause* wounds are *harder* than spells that *heal* wounds, since flesh wants to stay *intact*, but on the same token, spells that *remove* diseases are harder than spells that *cause* wounds, because a broken bone is a *possibility*, but *Stage Four Cancer* does not simply *disappear*.

**Practitioners shape their magical effects by using well-practiced rites to pull energy from local space-time, and alternate realities.** The risks associated with casting a spell come from *regulating* and *controlling* this energy over a *fixed* amount of time. *Any* effect is possible with *unlimited* casting time, but most mages have to work on a *deadline*.

**The higher the risk, the more dangerous the Consequences.** Most often this either results in a **corruption of the spell effect**, or **losing control of the magical energies**, or **both**, which can have an effect on the *caster* and their *environment*.

There are two ways to shape magical energies:

- **Evocation** can produce powerful effects in just a few minutes, or even *seconds*. **Evocation requires training in an associated Magical Trade**, but allows a caster to pull magical energy *directly* from the universe, and requires *no* preparation (just *skill*). This puts the caster at significant *personal* risk, but the ability to cast rites via *evocation* is highly *coveted*.
- **Rituals** are the *oldest* form of spell casting, and can be **performed by anyone**. Rituals are the most stable ways to cast a spell, but can take *hours*, *days*, or even *years* to complete and require significant preparation. The *longer* a ritual is performed, the *lower* the risk, and the more *powerful* the effect.

Spell casters can employ **Sacrifices** or **Foci** to aid in evocations or rituals:

- **Sacrifices**, *material* or *living*, provide an *instant* source of energy that can be consumed, which makes spells *easier* to cast and *safer*. The effectiveness of a sacrifice depends on the value of the sacrifice. A raw diamond is a good sacrifice since it is dense, *ancient* matter, but a character's *heirloom wedding band* is a more *substantial* sacrifice since it is *unique* and contains *living memories*.
- **Foci** or **totems** make a spell *safer* to cast by providing familiar *channels* for the caster. They are always tied to a single spell, or a set of spells that have extremely *similar* effects, and while this limits their use, foci and totems are *reusable*. Foci and totems are often used in conjunction with *simple* rites to ensure consistent and sustainable effects: ER Anatomancers will use *foci* in triage to simply *stabilize* patients.

## Special Checks

### Combat Checks

**Violent conflict is handled through Checks**, just like any other action, though *Fatigue*, *Strain*, and *Harm* are *more* common in combat Checks.

**If the order of combatants needs to be established, the GM decides the order** based on the *scene*, each character's *Trades*, and their *Focus* or *Dexterity* attributes. **Trades should have a bigger effect than Abilities when determining order.** A trained *Soldier* will react faster than someone with good *Focus*. **A player can ask to act earlier**, but that will probably require a *Check*, usually *Focus* or *Dexterity* plus a relevant **combat Trade**.

## Weapons And Armor

### Weapons

**Pluses (“+”) indicate how much extra Grit or Hits are lost**, so “++” means your character loses *three* Grit or Hits when they are harmed by this weapon.

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.	3+
<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.	4*
<b>30.06 Sniper/Hunting Rifle.</b> Used in both civilian and military arenas.	4+*
<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

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	4

woven into plain clothes. Worn by special watch members.

**Combat Armor.** Stiff laminate cloth with a steel plate backing. This is what is used by most militaries due to its low cost. 5

**KevFlex Infantry Armor.** Light and flexible KevFlex with ceramic inserts, which is rarely fielded by any military beyond Bonethorne Port and the Huxlon Republic. 6

**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. 7

## 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@uptodategames.com](mailto:jlee@uptodategames.com).