

Diesel Empire, v19.3.0-alpha

Written by Jefferson Lee | March 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 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.**
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.

How did your character spend their childhood? *High Society, Military, Academia, Arcana, Suburbia, Big City, or Wilderness.*

Your character has **eight** Abilities which all start at **rank one**. Based on your character's childhood, **increase two Abilities by one**.

- **Charisma.** Influence through charm and allure.
- **Cunning.** Practiced and deliberate deception.
- **Finesse.** Precision, composure, and balance.
- **Insight.** Perceiving and gathering new information.
- **Knowledge.** Applying learned experiences to a task.
- **Strength.** Controlling raw force.
- **Presence.** Inciting authority and command.
- **Resolve.** Perseverance and drive.

They learn.

Pick one Trade for your character and increase two Abilities by one. Trades represent the specific skills and experiences that your character has gained.

- **Thieves.** There are eleven *trillion* guilders in the global economy, and four *billion* beings with *vices* and *needs*. Thieves circumvent the normal markets by **stealing** and **navigating illicit markets and societies**.
- **Engineer.** The world is rapidly modernizing and industrializing and Engineers are at the frontline. Engineers can **build** and **repair** very complex technical systems.
- **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. Fixers know how to **manipulate** and **survive Court and state politics**.

- **Gilded.** Guilder is now *power*. Wealthy merchants are no longer beholden to Kings and Princes, and financial guilds run Kingdoms through *debt* instead of *guns*. The gilded have **connections** and can **manipulate nobles and politicians**.
- **Investigator.** Investigators seek to unravel the secrets of individuals in the name of public safety, or profit. They are able to **find clues** and **draw logical conclusions**.
- **Medical Professional.** Modern technology and pharmaceuticals have vastly increased the life expectancy of all beings. Medical Professions can **treat disease** and **injuries** with a *wide* variety of medicines.
- **Ranger.** While the world is rapidly modernizing, vast parts of the world are still completely untamed. Rangers know how to **survive** extreme environments and **hunt**.
- **Scholar.** Knowledge, both old and new, has been key to unlocking the modern world. Scholars specialize in **research** and have a wide **knowledge base**, including *science, history, philosophy, lore, and modern studies*.
- **Spy.** The most terrifying conflicts today are fought and won through stolen secrets. Spies are trained to **manipulate** targets and **steal** their secrets.
- **Soldier.** Professional soldiers have become much more prominent in the few decades since the *Grand War*. Soldiers are the few individuals that are **combat trained**, but also understand **military tactics**.
- **Watch.** Law enforcement has become increasingly more complex as the absolute rule of Kings and Princes has begun to dissolve. Active and former members of the Watch understand how to **enforce the laws** and **apply force**.

Magical Skills

The Magic Trades

These are the major magical schools, but there are hundreds of other schools in the world that range from the utterly alien and exotic, to the mundane.

- **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*. Mecharcanist **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 most Portal mages are taught and licensed through schools accredited and approved by the *Ascendant Accords*. **Portal rituals allow a mage to cut through reality and bypass physical distances**, but it is also possible to cut through reality into *other worlds*, which is what triggered the *Ascendancy Wars* with the *fae*.

One of the most *important* aspects of this Trade is the ability to **close portals** that have been opened by cultists and rogue mages.

- **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 modernized 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 for *additional* Trades or Ability ranks. Each rank in an Ability 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 Ability and roll a number of dice equal to its rank. Take the *highest* result, and if the character has a *relevant Trade*, add one to the result.

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

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

Result	Outcome
7+	Success. Things go exactly as planned .
6, 5	Messy. The character succeeds , but the GM describes a compromise, complication, or danger that emerges: they do not get the <i>full</i> story, their charms trigger <i>jealousy</i> , or they land on <i>unstable</i> ground.
4 or less	Failure. The character completely fails , and the GM narrates the consequences. The greater the risks, the greater the consequences: failing to repair an engine means it's <i>broken</i> , but failing to repair a <i>burning</i> engine might result in an <i>explosion</i> .

Trauma

Every character has *two Strain and one Hits*. When a character suffers trauma, **they lose Strain before 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.

Recovery

Characters recover **one Strain for four hours of rest**. Hits can only be recovered through **medical care**, and each **Hit** requires a separate **Check**. Medical complications mostly include *delays* or *slowed recovery*.

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*.

Magic Foundations

Magic Checks

Magic Checks use the same rules as *normal* Checks, but their effects are usually more extreme.

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 greater the effects, 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 a *catastrophic* effect on the *caster* and their *environment*.

Evocation and Rituals

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.

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
Fists. Still the most popular fallback, especially with orcs and dwarves.	1*
Combat Knife. The classic.	2
Long Sword. The mainstay weapon of the Silohain.	3
Spear. Also widely used by the Silohain.	4+
Longbow. Aside from magic, this is the main ranged weapon of the Silohain.	3
9mm Pistol. Most civilian pistols.	3
.45 ACP Pistol. Heavier firepower, but sometimes harder to manage. Very popular in civilian markets.	2+
5.56mm Combat Rifle. The kind of rifles favored by armies of the Ascendancy.	4
7.62mm Combat Rifle. These heavier rifles are favored by the militaries of the orc nations, but also by Bonethorne Port and the Dwarven Compact.	5
30.06 Sniper/Hunting Rifle. Used in both civilian and military arenas.	6+
14.7mm Sniper Rifle. An anti-vehicle class of weapon used in many militaries.	10++
Hand Grenade. 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
Ballistic Leather. Synthetically strengthened leather that a lot of survivalists wear.	3
Plate Armor. Steel chest armor that some kingdoms still field.	5
Elven Plate. Magically enhanced steel armor which is as light as aluminum.	5
Class IIa Kevlar. The kind of protection commonly given to watch members in major cities.	4
Class IIa KevFlex. Magically strengthened Kevlar, which makes it light enough to be woven into plain clothes. Worn by special watch members.	4
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**.