

Diesel Empire, v19.4.1-alpha

Written by Jefferson Lee | March 2022 Alpha Release

Creating Characters

Before the game starts, the GM will pass around a set of character sheets that contain all of the *species*, *Backgrounds*, and *Specialties* for the game.

They are born.

Pick your character's **species**. Your choice will give your character a set of starting *Traits*.

They grow up.

Increase **one Ability** by **one**. Your character has **four** Abilities which all start at **rank one**. *Abilities* describe the character's raw, basic capabilities:

- **Focus.** Precision, composure, and balance.
- **Insight.** Perceiving and gathering new information.
- **Presence.** Charisma, influence, and authority.
- **Resolve.** Perseverance and drive.

They learn.

Pick **one Background** for your character. *Backgrounds* describe the character's general experience and give them a broad set of *basic* skills.

Pick **one Specialty** from their **Background**. *Specialties* describe the character's specific areas of expertise.

They collect real experiences.

Your character gets **two points** for **Backgrounds**, **Specialties** or **Ability ranks**. Each **rank** in an Ability costs **one point**, and each *additional* Background or Specialty costs **one point**.

Your character can only learn *Specialties* from their **own Backgrounds**.

Wrap Up

Your character's *Strain* and *Hit* scores are **both equal to Resolve**. *Strain* represents how much trauma a character can suffer before they suffer *real* harm, and *Hits* represent how much they can endure before they risk *death*.

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

The GM sets the **target for the Check** based on how *difficult* it will be to achieve the character's intended outcome:

- 7 **Expert.** Requires *actual* training and experience, but it's still a *challenge*.
- 5 **Tough.** It's possible with just raw ability, but just *barely*.
- 3 **Easy.** They could still fail, but the odds are good.

The character can make **compromises** on their goals to **lower the target**, but **once the dice are rolled**, the **target cannot be changed**.

Pick a relevant **Ability** and **roll a number of dice equal to its rank** and **keep the highest result**.

Add one to the result if the character has a **relevant Specialty**. **Add one more** if the character has a **relevant Background**, even if it's not the Background of the Specialty being used.

Add or subtract one from the result depending on the *Traits* of a character. A character with the Traits *Small* and *Quiet* would *add one* to their Check if they were trying to *hide*, but they would *subtract one* if they had to *forcibly* hold back an opponent.

The character **succeeds** if the result is **equal to or greater than the target**. Otherwise, the GM narrates the consequences. **The greater the risks, the greater the consequences:** failing to repair an engine means it's *broken*, but failing to repair a *burning* engine might result in an *explosion*.

Trauma

When a character suffers **trauma**, the GM rolls a number of dice based on the **severity** of the trauma. **Each die with a result of five or greater** inflicts **one point** of Trauma. A punch to the face is generally *one* die, but a club is *three* die.

A character loses **Strain before losing Hits** and **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.

Trauma can be **both physical and mental**: a drug-induced psychotic break can be as traumatic as a punch to the face.

Recovery

Characters **recover one Strain for every hour of rest**. Hits can only be recovered through **medical care**, and each Hit requires a separate **Check**. **Strain can be recovered before Hits are fully recovered**.

The End

If the character loses Hits **after zero**, make a **Resolve Check** with a **target equal to the number of Hits below zero**. If the character **fails**, they *die*.

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 a magical Specialty**, 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

Some weapons inflict *extra* trauma. A weapon that has “+1” *Strength*, always inflicts *one additional* point of trauma.

Weapon	Strength
Fists. Still the most popular fallback, especially with orcs and dwarves.	1d
Combat Knife. The classic.	2d
Long Sword. The mainstay weapon of the Silohain.	2d+1
Spear. Also widely used by the Silohain.	3d+1
Longbow. Aside from magic, this is the main ranged weapon of the Silohain.	3d
9mm Pistol. Most civilian pistols.	3d+1
.45 ACP Pistol. Heavier firepower, but sometimes harder to manage. Very popular in civilian markets.	2d+2
5.56mm Combat Rifle. The kind of rifles favored by armies of the Ascendancy.	4d+2
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.	5d+2
30.06 Sniper/Hunting Rifle. Used in both civilian and military arenas.	5d+2
14.7mm Sniper Rifle. An anti-vehicle class of weapon used in many militaries.	6d+3
Hand Grenade. Now a common part of military equipment.	6d+2

Armor

Subtract the *Strength* of any armor protection from any **trauma** the character receives. Strength *two* armor always stops *two* points of trauma.

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 *fire*.

Armor	Strength
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	2

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. 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

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 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@uptoatgames.com.