

# DIESEL EMPIRES

v29.3.2 | By Jefferson Lee | [UpTooLateGames.com](http://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](http://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 two (2)**. You also gain the *extra assets* of the Background.
- **Some Traits have underlined keywords** which have *special* meaning.

You have an additional *five (5) points* to spend:

- **One (1) point** will give a character a *new Background*, but **the new Traits start at zero (0)**. You also 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**. **Traits cannot have a rank greater than four (4)**.
- **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 fatigue* of a character and are **dealt to the player face down and stay with the character 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.

### Pick the Suit

The GM picks the *suit* of the Check based on the character's *approach* to the action.

Suit	Approach
♣ Club	Grit (Gr). Daring, determination, strength.
♦ Diamond	Sharp (Sh). Awareness, cunning, experience.
♥ Heart	Wits (Wt). Intuition, wisdom, calm.
♠ Spade	Quick (Qk). Precision, finesse, instinct.

Add *one (+1)* to the base value of *all cards that match the suit of the Check, including Strain cards*, so *Pip Club* cards are worth *one (1)* during a *Grit Check*. **Jokers do not get this bonus.**

## Difficulties

Before the player plays cards for their character, the GM deals *one (1) Strain for each Difficulty that has a meaningful impact on the Check*, so a *driving* Check in *poor* weather and on *bad* roads would add *two (2) Strain*.

## The Character Play

If the character has a *Trait* that is relevant to the *Check*, the player **draws and plays one (1) card from the deck for each rank in the Trait**, so a rank *two (2) Trait* gives a player *two (2) draws*. The character can use *Traits* with a rank of *zero (0)*, if they have the appropriate *Background*.

The player can play any card from their hand for their character.

The player can also *discard* cards from their hand, and *each discard* allows the player to **draw and play one (1) card from the deck**, so *three (3) discards* gives the player *three (3) draws*.

A player can *play or discard* as long as they still have cards in their hand, so a player is *allowed* to discard or play cards *one card* at a time until they run out of cards.

## The Outcome

Once the player has *finished* playing their cards, **reveal all of the Strain cards and subtract the total value of the Strain cards from the total value of the character's cards** to determine the outcome:

Total	Outcome	
3	Superb	They <u>succeed</u> and they gain an <i>immediate advantage</i> .
2	Ideal	They <u>succeed</u> without any problems.
1	Messy	They <u>succeed</u> , but they <b>gain one (1) Strain</b> .
0	Failure	They <u>fail</u> and <b>gain one (1) Strain</b> .
-1	Bad	They <u>fail</u> and <b>gain one (1) Wound or two (2) Strain</b> (GM's choice). Badly failing an all-nighter won't <i>Wound</i> a character, but it's a lot of <i>Strain</i> .
-2	Dismal	They <u>fail</u> and <b>gain two (2) Wounds or three (3) Strain</b> (GM's choice).

The GM narrates the outcome, and *all of the cards revealed for the Check* (including *Strain* cards) are *discarded*. Any new *Strain* gained from the outcome is *dealt*.

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

If a character ends a *Check* with *less Strain than Wounds*, they must *draw Strain until it equals their Wounds*, so a character that ends their *Check* with *two (2) Wounds* and *one (1) Strain* would need to draw *one (1) extra Strain*.

## Wounds

Wounds can only be gained through *failed Checks*, and represent *lasting physical or mental trauma*.

Characters are *incapacitated* at *three (3) Wounds*, and are *dying* at *four (4) Wounds*. *Dying* characters that take **any more Wounds die**.

## Rest and Healing

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

Rest		Hand Size	Strain Remaining
Half	Enough <i>safety</i> to eat a <i>quick meal</i> , or similar.	Three (3)	One (1) or equal to Wounds
Full	The <i>minimum</i> needed to <i>reset</i> , but <i>enough</i> of a <i>delay</i> to <i>cause problems</i> (forces grow, plans are in motion, damage is being done).	Five (5)	Zero (0) or equal to Wounds

**Rest recovers cards back to a set *hand* size**, so if a player has *one* (1) card in their hand, a *Half Rest* would bring them back to *three* (3) cards.

**Rest also removes Strain to a set amount**, so if a character takes a *Half Rest*, their Strain would be reduced to *one* (1) card. **Characters *cannot* have less Strain than Wounds after resting**, so if a character with *two* (2) Wounds takes a *Full Rest*, they still keep *at least two* (2) Strain.

**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*.

## Healing Wounds

**Wounds can be removed** if a character can make a **successful Check** to apply *medical aid*, or a **successful Check** to heal *naturally*. Either attempt requires a **Full Rest**, and **failing Badly or Dismally** always results in *more Wounds*.

## Combat Checks

**Combat Checks** work as normal, but the **approaches** have slightly different meanings in a fight:

Suit	Approach
♣ Club	Grit (Gr). Dirty, improvised, and desperate.
♦ Diamond	Sharp (Sh). Strategic and calculated.
♥ Heart	Wits (Wt). Cautious and defensive.
♠ Spade	Quick (Qk). Instinctive and lethal.

**Combat Traits can only be used in Checks that use one of the trained approaches**, which are listed in parenthesis, so a **Combat (Sh, Wt)** Trait can only be used in Checks involving *Sharp* or *Wits*.

## Hits

**When an attack succeeds it inflicts Hits. The number of Hits a character inflicts is equal to the outcome total of a Check**, so a *Messy* success inflicts *one* (1) Hit.

**If a character suffers Hits, they draw one (1) Strain for each Hit**. This is **added to any Strain or Wounds they would normally gain from a Check**, so if a character *Badly* fails a Check and takes *two* (2) Hits, they gain *one* (1) Wound and *two* (2) Strain.

## Magic Checks

**Magic Checks** work as normal, but the **approaches** have a different meanings in magic:

Suit	Approach
♣ Club	Grit (Gr). Casting through sheer <i>will</i> and <i>self-sacrifice</i> .
♦ Diamond	Sharp (Sh). Carefully and meticulously crafted rites.
♥ Heart	Wits (Wt). Cast through calm focus or deep meditation.
♠ Spade	Quick (Qk). Guided by pure intuition and instinct.

**Characters can only use magic if their Trait has one of the magic keywords.**

## Magic Keywords

These keywords indicate the specific method a Trait can be used to channel magic:

- **Ritual magic uses a prepared body**, like a *ritual circle* or *consecrated sacrifice*. It is the *oldest* form of spell casting, and it is *safer* since the body can be purposefully built to *endure* channeling, though *run-away effects* can still be dangerous.
- **Evocation channels magic through the caster's 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 Check (even if they succeed)*. The *recited* component allows 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*, and it still causes *one (1) extra Strain after the Check*. However, since psychics rely *entirely* on *instinct* and *intuition*, psychics *cannot* inscribe their rites as a *ritual*.

## Non-Player Characters (NPCs)

Every NPC has a Difficulty rating (DR), which *increases the Difficulty of a Check*.

If an NPC suffers Hits from an attack, *reduce their DR for each Hit*. When an NPC's DR falls *below zero (0)*, the GM decides if they are *incapacitated* or *dead*.

If an NPC lands an attack on a character, they *normally* inflict *zero (0) Hits*, but any *weapons* they use will *increase* the Hits they can inflict.

## Weapons And Armor

### Weapons

The *Strength (ST)* of a weapon is *added to the Hits inflicted*, so a 2 ST weapon *adds two (2) Hits*.

The number of "+" *after ST* is the amount to *reduce armor*, to a *minimum of zero (0)*, *before armor affects Hits*, so a weapon with 2+ ST would add *two (2) Hits*, and *subtract one (1)* from the armor rating of the target.

	Strength (ST)
<b>Bare Hands and Feet.</b> The classic.	0
<b>Combat Knife.</b> The first upgrade.	1
<b>Long Sword.</b> The mainstay weapon of 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>.454 Pistol.</b> Heavier firepower, but harder to manage.	3
<b>.223 Combat Rifle.</b> The kind of rifle favored by many modern militaries.	3+
<b>.308 Combat Rifle.</b> A heavier rifle, usually reserved for support fire.	4

### Armor

*Armor (AR)* *reduces the amount of Hits inflicted*, to a minimum of *zero (0)*, so 3 AR will reduce *two (2) Hits* inflicted to *zero (0)*.

*Armor only affects Hits*, so a character *can still suffer Wounds or Strain from a failure even if Hits are reduced to zero (0)*.

	Rating (AR)
<b>Ballistic Leather.</b> Synthetically strengthened leather that a lot of survivalists wear.	1
<b>Elven Plate.</b> Magically enhanced steel armor which is as light as aluminum.	3
<b>Class IIa Kevlar.</b> Commonly given to watch members in major cities.	2
<b>Class E IIa KevFlex.</b> Magically enhanced to be woven into plain clothes.	2
<b>Combat Armor.</b> Stiff laminate cloth with a steel plate backing.	2
<b>Class E III KevFlex,</b> with steel inserts. Used in advanced militaries.	3
<b>Class E IV KevFlex,</b> with ceramic inserts. <i>Rarely</i> fielded due to its cost.	4