

DIESEL EMPIRES

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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** and **each Core Trait starts at rank one (1)**. 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 *three (3)* points to spend:

- **One (1) point** will give a character a **new Background**, but **the new Traits start at one (1)**. 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 Core Traits or 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 fatigue** of a character and are **dealt to the player face down** and stay with the character until their next *Check* 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). Knowledge, reason, cleverness.
♥ Heart	Wits (Wt). Intuition, awareness, influence.
♠ Spade	Quick (Qk). Precision, finesse, reaction.

Add *one (+1)* to the base value of all cards (except Jokers) that match the suit of the Check, including *Strain* and *Opposing Cards*, so in a *Grit Check* all *Pip Club* cards would be worth *one (1)*.

Opposing Cards

Before the player plays cards, all of their character's *Strain* become *Opposing Cards*. If there are any *difficulties* that have a *meaningful impact* on the Check, the GM will deal *one (1) Opposing Card (face down)* for each complication, so a *driving Check* in *poor weather* and on *bad roads* would add *two (2) Opposing Cards*. *Opposing Cards* stay *face down* until the *outcome*.

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 player can then 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) additional card* from the deck, so *three (3) discards* gives the player *three (3) extra 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 Opposing Cards* and *subtract the total value of the Opposing Cards from the total value of the character's cards* to determine the outcome:

Total	Outcome	
3	Superb	They <i>succeed</i> and they gain an <i>immediate advantage</i> .
2	Ideal	They <i>succeed</i> without any problems.
1	Messy	They <i>succeed</i> , but they <i>gain one (1) Strain</i> .
0	Failure	They <i>fail</i> and <i>gain one (1) Strain</i> .
-1	Bad	They <i>fail</i> and <i>gain one (1) Wound</i> .
-2	Dismal	They <i>fail</i> and <i>gain two (2) Wounds</i> .

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 left 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) Strain*, but if a character ends their Check with *one (1) Wound* and *one (1) Strain*, they do *not* need to draw extra *Strain*.

Wounds

Wounds can only be gained through *failed Checks*, and represent a character's *lasting physical* (i.e., injuries, poison, disease) or *mental* (i.e., panic, anxiety, psychosis) *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 type of rest:

Rest	Hand Size	Strain Remaining
Half Enough safety to eat a quick meal, or similar.	Three (3)	One (1) or equal to Wounds

Full The *minimum* needed to *reset*, but *enough* of a **Five (5)** **Zero (0) or equal to Wounds** delay to *cause problems* (forces grow, plans are in motion, damage is being done).

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 *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 *provide aid*, or a *successful Check* to *heal naturally*. Either attempt requires a *Full Rest*.

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 cautious.
♥ Heart	Wits (Wt) . Defensive or non-lethal.
♠ Spade	Quick (Qk) . Aggressive 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 rites under <i>extreme</i> situations.
♦ Diamond	Sharp (Sh) . Careful and meticulous crafting of rites.
♥ Heart	Wits (Wt) . Casting rites through deep focus or meditation.
♠ Spade	Quick (Qk) . Casting spells <i>quickly</i> through <i>practice</i> and <i>instinct</i> .

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 is the extra *difficulty added to 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 the number of *extra Hits* a weapon inflicts, so a 2 ST weapon inflicts an *additional 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 *inflict (2) Hits*, and *subtract one (1)* from the armor rating of the target.

	Strength (ST)
Bare Hands and Feets. The classic.	0
Combat Knife. The first upgrade.	1
Long Sword. The mainstay weapon of the Silohain.	2
Longbow. Aside from magic, this is the main ranged weapon of the Silohain.	2
.38 Pistol. Most civilian pistols.	2+
.454 Pistol. Heavier firepower, but harder to manage.	3
.223 Combat Rifle. The kind of rifle favored by many modern militaries.	3+
.308 Combat Rifle. 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)
Ballistic Leather. Synthetically strengthened leather that a lot of survivalists wear.	1
Elven Plate. Magically enhanced steel armor which is as light as aluminum.	3
Class IIa Kevlar. Commonly given to watch members in major cities.	2
Class E III KevFlex, with steel inserts. Used in advanced militaries.	3
Class E IV KevFlex, with ceramic inserts. <i>Rarely</i> fielded due to its cost.	4