DIESEL EMPIRES
Core Rules v29.4.1 | By Jefferson Lee | UpTooLateGames.com

Creating Characters

Each player will need a *playbook* for the game (which can be found at **UpTooLateGames.com**). From the playbook, each player will:

- Pick a *species* for their character.
- Pick *one Path* for their character. *Each Core Trait* starts at *rank one* (**1**).
- Pick *one Background* from their Path. *Each* of Background Traits will begin with a rank of *two* (**2**), and the character also gains the *extra assets* of the Background.
- **Some Traits have <u>underlined</u> keywords** which have *special* meaning.

Each player then has an additional *three* (3) points to spend on their character:

- *One* (**1**) **point will give a character a** *new* **Background**, with the *new* Traits starting at *one* (**1**). The character also gains the *extra assets* of the Background. **Players can** *only* **pick** *Backgrounds* **from their character's Path**, and they *cannot* **pick** *new* **Paths**.
- *One* (**1**) **point will increase a Trait's rank by** *one* (**1**), but players can **only increase Core Traits** *or* **Traits from your character's** *starting* **or** *purchased* **Backgrounds**.

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* **draws 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 Cards

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* **when 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 an action**, which also **has an effect on the** *outcome*.

Suit	Approach
♣ Club	**Grit** (**Gr**). Forceful, daring, determined.
♦ Diamond	**Sharp** (**Sh**). Precise, logical, knowledgeable.
♥ Heart	**Wits** (**Wt**). Intuitive, careful, clever.
♠ Spade	**Quick** (**Qk**). Fast, agile, instinctive.

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 Club Pip* cards would be worth *one* (**1**).

The player can *always* ask for a *different* suit, but that might increase the **difficulty of the Check** or **change its** *outcome*. A *precise* Check can be *forced* instead, but that *will* change the outcome.

Opposing Cards
Before the character's cards are played, all of their *Strain cards* become *Opposing cards*. The GM then deals *one* (**1**) *additional* Opposing card 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**) Opposing cards. **It is possible for a Check to have** *zero* (**0**) **Opposing cards**.

Opposing cards stay *face down* until the *outcome* is revealed.

Character Cards
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 means that a player draws *two* (**2**) cards for their character.

Some **Traits** can *only* be used in **Checks** involving *specific* approaches, listed in parenthesis, so a Trait with *"(Gt, Wt)"* can only be used in Checks involving *Grit* or *Wits*.

The player can play *any* card from their hand for their character, even if *no* Traits are being used.

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

Players *can* play or discard cards *one* at a time until they *stop* or *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**. **Remember: the suit bonus applies to** *all* cards, *including* **Opposing cards.** The *final total* determines the *outcome*:

Total	Outcome	
3+	**Superb**	*Success* with an *immediate* advantage.
2	**Success**	*Success* without any complications.
1	**Messy**	*Success*, but the character **gains** *one* (**1**) *Strain*.
0	**Failure**	*Failure*, and the character **gains** *one* (**1**) *Strain*.
-1	**Bad**	*Failure* and *one* (**1**) *Wound* is inflicted.
-2 (*or less)*	**Dismal**	*Failure* and *two* (**2**) *Wounds* are inflicted.

The GM narrates the outcome, and *all of the cards played for the Check* (including *Opposing cards*) **are** *discarded*.

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

On *any* outcome, the character *gains one* (**1**) *additional* Strain if they have any Wounds (new *or* old) **at the end of the Check**.

Wounds
Wounds represent the *lasting physical* (injuries, poison, disease) *or mental* (panic, anxiety, psychosis) **trauma** inflicted on a character.

Once a character has *three* (**3**) *or more* Wounds, they are in *Shock*. *While in Shock*, characters can *still act*, but **all of their Traits are reduced to rank zero** (**0**). **The character's Traits can still be used for their** keywords, so a character in Shock can still cast magic using their *rank zero* (**0**) magic Traits.

At *five* (**5**) **Wounds** the character sustains a *permanent* **injury**. If the character **suffers** *more than five* (**5**) **Wounds**, they *cannot be saved* and **they exit the story** *at the end of the game*.

Rest and Healing

Rest restores cards and *Strain* depending on the type of rest:

Rest		Hand Size	Strain Left
Half	Enough *safety* to eat a *quick meal* or take a *similar* level of rest.	*Three* (**3**)	*One* (**1**)
Full	The *minimum* needed to *rest*, but **enough of a delay to** *cause problems* (risks grow, enemies fortify, damage is being done).	*Five* (**5**)	*Zero* (**0**)

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.

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

If a character *is not* in **Shock**, a *Full Rest* will *heal one* (**1**) **Wound**.

If a character *is* in **Shock**, **healing** *one* (**1**) **Wound** requires a *successful* **Check** to *apply medical aid*, or a *successful* <u>Grit</u> **Check** to heal *naturally*. **Either** **Check must be made** *after* a *Full Rest*.

A character is no longer in *Shock* once they are down to only *two* (**2**) **Wounds**.

Combat Checks

Combat Checks are resolved *normally*, but the **approaches** are slightly different:

Suit	Approach
♣ Club	**Grit** (**Gr**). Dirty, messy, and desperate.
♦ Diamond	**Sharp** (**Sh**). Strategic, cunning, and precise.
♥ Heart	**Wits** (**Wt**). Defensive, alert, and cautious.
♠ Spade	**Quick** (**Qk**). Aggressive, direct, and lethal.

The GM will let you know if a combat Check is required, and **only Traits with the** <u>combat</u> **keyword can be used in a combat Check**.

Magic Checks

Magic Checks are resolved *normally*, but the **approaches** have a different meanings in magic:

Suit	Approach
♣ Club	**Grit** (**Gr**). Sacrifice, endurance, and willpower.
♦ Diamond	**Sharp** (**Sh**). Preparation, practice, and precision.
♥ Heart	**Wits** (**Wt**). Focus, clarity, and calm.
♠ Spade	**Quick** (**Qk**). Fast, messy, and instinctive.

Characters can only use magic if their Trait has one of these *magic keywords*, which indicate the specific method a Trait can be used to channel magic:

- <u>*Ritual*</u> magic requires 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** _focusing_ **and** _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 Strain).
- _Psychic_ **evocation** is the **same as regular** _evocation_, but _without_ **a** _spoken_ **component**, and **it causes** _one_ (**1**) _extra_ **Strain** _after_ **the Check** (**even if they** _succeed_). However, since psychics rely **entirely** on _instinct_ and _intuition_, psychics **cannot inscribe their rites as a** _ritual_.

Weapon Strength (ST)

If a character is _hit_ **by a weapon, the** _Strength_ (**ST**) **of a weapon is** _subtracted_ **from the Check's** _outcome_, so if a character's Check is _zero_ (0) and they are _hit_ with a _3 ST_ weapon, the character's final outcome is a _minus three_ (-3).

If a character _hits_ **something with a weapon, the ST is** _added_ **to the Check's outcome**, so if a character's Check is _one_ (1) and they _hit_ with an _3 ST_ weapon, the character's final outcome is _four_ (4).

Armor Rating (AR)

Armor Rating (**AR**) _reduces_ **the ST of a weapon to a** _minimum_ **of** _zero_ (**0**), so _3 AR_ will reduce a _2 ST_ weapon to _0 ST_.

The number of "+" _after_ **the ST of** _some_ **weapons is the amount to** _reduce_ **AR, to a** _minimum_ **of** _zero_ (**0**), _before_ **it affects ST**, so a _2+ ST_ weapon versus _2 AR_, would result in a _1 ST_ hit, and a _1++ ST_ weapon versus _2 AR_ would _also_ result in a _1 ST_ hit.