

# DIESEL EMPIRES

Core Rules v29.4.3 | By Jefferson Lee | UpTooLateGames.com

## Creating Characters

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

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

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

- *One* (1) point will allow a character to choose a *new Background*, with the *new Abilities* starting at *one* (1). The character also gains the *extra assets* of the Background. **Players can only choose Backgrounds from their character's Path, and they cannot gain new Paths.**
- *One* (1) point will increase an Ability's rank by *one* (1), but players can **only increase Core Abilities or Abilities from their character's chosen Backgrounds.**

## 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 are:

- *Zero* (0) for *Pip cards* (the cards numbered 2 through 10)
- *One* (1) for *Royal cards* (Queens, Kings, Jacks)
- *Two* (2) for *Aces*
- *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 have an **effect on the character's future Checks**.

## Checks

The GM can call for a *Check* anytime the *outcome* of a character's action will have a *meaningful* impact on the story.

### Check Suit

The GM picks the *suit* of the Check based on the *approach* or *risks* of an action, and *both* have an effect on the *outcome*.

Suit	Approach	Risks
♣ Club (C♣)	<b>Grit.</b> Forceful, daring, determined.	You are betting it all.
♦ Diamond (D♦)	<b>Sharp.</b> Precise, logical, knowledgeable.	You are being too careful.
♥ Heart (H♥)	<b>Wits.</b> Intuitive, improvised, clever.	You overlook the obvious.
♠ Spade (S♠)	<b>Quick.</b> Fast, agile, instinctive.	You are being reckless.

Add *one (+1)* to the base value of *all cards (except Jokers)* that *match the suit of the Check, including difficulty cards*, so in a *Club 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*, but that *will* change the outcome.

## Difficulty Cards

*Difficulty cards* count *against the character's final outcome*, and the GM deals *one (1) card (face-down)* 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) difficulty cards*. It is **possible for a Check to have zero (0) difficulty cards**.

All of the character's *Strain* are *added to the difficulty cards*.

*Difficulty cards* stay *face down* until the *outcome* is revealed, but the player should always know *how many difficulty cards* are being played against their character.

## Character Cards

If the character has an *Ability* that is *relevant to the Check*, the player gets to **draw and play one (1) card from the deck for each rank in the Ability**, so a rank *two (2) Ability* means that a player gets to draw and play *two (2) cards* from the deck.

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

The player can also *discard cards from their hand*, and *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 choose to stop or run out of cards*.

## Ability Key Suits

*Some Abilities* have *key suits* listed in *parenthesis*. If the *Check's Suit* is *not one of an Ability's key suits*, **add one (1) difficulty card to the Check**, so using an *Ability* with the key suits of "(C♣, H♥)" in a *Spades (S♠) Check* *adds one (1) difficulty card*.

## Check Outcome

Once the player has finished playing their cards, *reveal then subtract* the total value of the *difficulty cards* from the total value of the *character's cards*. **Remember: the suit bonus applies to all cards, including difficulty cards**. The *final total* determines the *outcome*:

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

The GM narrates the outcome, and *all of the cards played for the Check* (including *difficulty 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.

Any Wounds the character suffers *after two (2) Wounds become Serious Wounds*. Each Serious Wound reduces *all of a character's Abilities* by *one (1) rank, to a minimum of zero (0)*, so if a character with *two (2) Wounds* suffers *two (2) more Wounds*, the new Wounds are *Serious Wounds*, and *all of their Abilities* are reduced by *two (2) ranks*, but *any rank one (1) Abilities* remain at *rank zero (0)*.

Any of the character's Abilities that are reduced to *zero (0)* can still be used for Checks if the **keyword** is important (i.e. *magic*), but they *do not get to draw cards* for that Ability.

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 *does not have Serious Wounds*, a *Full Rest* will *heal one (1) Wound*.

Healing *one (1) Serious Wound* requires a *successful Check to apply medical aid*, or a *successful Clubs (C♣) Check to heal naturally*. *Either Check must be made after a Full Rest*.

## Combat Checks

Combat Checks are generally *only required* if the character is *initiating combat*, *inflicting harm in combat*, or if they are *defending against harm in combat*, and *only Abilities with the combat keyword* can be used in a combat Check.

# Magic Checks

Characters can only use magic if their Ability has one of these *magic keywords*, which indicate the specific method an Ability can be used to channel magic.

- **Ritual** 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*.

# Weapons and Armor

If a target is *hit* by a weapon, they suffer **one (1) extra Wound in addition to any Strain or Wounds from a Check**, so if a character's Check is *zero* (0) and they are *hit* with a weapon, the character takes *one* (1) *Strain* from their Check, and *one* (1) *Wound* from the weapon.

The **Strength (ST)** of a weapon does not affect the number of Wounds a weapon inflicts, so a 3 ST weapon still only inflicts *one* (1) extra wound.

Each "+" *after* a weapon's **Strength (ST)** score *does increase* the number of additional Wounds inflicted by **one (1)**, so a 3+ ST weapon will inflict *two* (2) extra Wounds on a hit.

## Armor

If the **Armor Rating (AR)** of a target is *equal or greater than* the **Strength (ST)** of a weapon it stops the weapon from inflicting *any extra Wounds*, but **any Strain or Wounds from the Check will still be inflicted**, so if a character's Check is *minus one* (-1) and they are hit with a 3+ ST weapon, 3 AR will stop the *two* (2) extra Wounds, but the character will still suffer *one* (1) *Wound* from the *Check*.