



EXODUS

NARRATIVE DICE SYSTEM



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EVERY ROLL TELLS A COMPLETE STORY.

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EXODUS NDS

NARRATIVE DICE SYSTEM — CORE RULES

The **Exodus Narrative Dice System (Exodus NDS)** is an open-licensed dice resolution framework designed to be adapted to any genre or setting. These core rules define how dice pools are built, how results are interpreted, and how structured conflict, including combat and vehicle encounters, is resolved.

Character creation, default skills, universal talents, and the core resolution engine are defined here. Equipment, magic, species packages, careers beyond the generic examples, and Universe-specific rules are defined in individual **Universes** that use Exodus NDS as their foundation. Universes may rename, replace, restrict, or expand these options to match their genre; where a Universe rule conflicts with core, the Universe rule takes precedence.

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Exodus Narrative Dice System

First Edition

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You are welcome to reference, adapt, or parody content from *Exodus NDS* for personal or commercial use in your tabletop campaigns. It is literally the entire point of *Exodus NDS*.

Every roll in Exodus NDS tells a complete story. Not just whether something worked, but what happened on the way, and occasionally what changed forever.

WHAT IS EXODUS NDS?

Exodus NDS is a narrative dice resolution system built for the table. It is genre-agnostic by design, the same mechanical engine runs a space opera, a fantasy heist, a cyberpunk thriller, or a modern spy thriller without modification. Universes built on Exodus NDS bring the world, equipment, specialized advancement choices, and flavor. These core rules bring character creation, the resolution engine, and a shared baseline for skills and universal talents.

It is also open. Released under the ORC License, Exodus NDS is free to use, build upon, and adapt. Write a Universe, a campaign, or an entirely different game using these mechanics, it is yours to do so.

THE CORE IDEA

The dice produce three simultaneous layers of information on every single roll. First, a **primary outcome**, did the action succeed or fail? Second, a **secondary texture** of side effects, Boons if things went better than expected, Banes if complications crept in. Third, rare **exceptional moments** that shift the narrative entirely, a Breakthrough that cannot be undone, or a Calamity that lands regardless of whether the roll succeeds.

A roll that succeeds but generates Banes, or fails but generates Boons, is not an edge case. It is the system working exactly as intended. The goal is never a binary answer, it is always a story.

WHO THIS BOOK IS FOR

Players need to understand the dice, how characters are built, how pools are assembled, which skills and talents are available, and how to read results. Chapters One through Eight cover everything at the table before combat begins, the dice themselves, character creation, pool construction, skills and talents, resolving checks, reading results, check types, and the Story Point economy.

Game Masters will spend most of their preparation in Chapters Nine through Twelve, structured play, initiative, adversary tiers, vehicles, and recovery. The Quick Reference section near the end of this book is designed to sit at the GM's right hand during play.

Universe Authors will find the core rules deliberately modular. Character creation, the default skill list, and universal talents are provided as a shared baseline, but equipment, magic, expanded careers, species packages, and Universe-specific rules are yours to define. The core six characteristics, the dice system, and the resolution mechanics are the foundation, everything built on top of them belongs to your Universe. The Glossary and Quick Reference are formatted to carry over into Universes as-is.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

- **The six Exodus NDS dice** — ■ Boon and ■ Bane d6s, ◆ Ability and ◆ Trial d8s, ◆ Mastery and ◆ Crisis d12s. Any standard polyhedral dice with symbols substituted will work.
- **Tokens for Story Points** — two distinct types: Fortune (players) and Peril (GM). Coins, poker chips, or any small physical objects work. You need roughly ten total.
- **This book** — or the relevant Universe, which will reference these core rules throughout.

A NOTE ON UNIVERSES

These core rules provide default character creation, a default skill list, and universal talents, but they deliberately leave equipment, magic systems, expanded careers, species packages, and Universe-specific options to Universes. If something feels Universe-specific here, it is intended to be renamed, replaced, restricted, or expanded by the Universe you are playing with.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE DICE

Exodus NDS uses a custom set of polyhedral dice. Each die face shows one or more **symbols**. At the end of a roll, symbols are read together to determine the outcome of an action.

THE SIX SYMBOLS

There are three opposing pairs of symbols. Symbols within a pair **cancel each other out**, except where noted.

SUCCESS ✓ AND FAILURE ✕

The primary result of any check. Net Successes mean the task is accomplished. Net Failures mean it is not. A check with zero net Successes or Failures is still a failure. You need at least one Success to succeed.

BOON + AND BANE —

Secondary effects that layer onto the primary result. Boons represent things going unexpectedly well, even a failed check can generate Boons. Banes represent complications, even a successful check can generate Banes. Universes and the GM define what Boons and Banes mean in specific situations.

BREAKTHROUGH ☑ AND CALAMITY ☒

Exceptional results. A **Breakthrough** contributes one Success to the pool and triggers a significant positive effect. A **Calamity** contributes one Failure to the pool and triggers a significant negative effect. The contributed Success or Failure may be cancelled by opposing symbols in the normal way, but the special effect always triggers regardless of whether the check succeeds or fails. Each appears on only one face of the highest-tier dice.

DESIGNER NOTE

Boons and Banes do **not** determine success or failure, only Success and Failure symbols do that. Boons on a failed check and Banes on a successful check are both common and intended.

THE SIX DICE

Dice come in three size pairs. Each pair shares a die shape, distinguished by color and symbol distribution. Positive dice build your pool. Negative dice represent difficulty and opposition.

DIE	TYPE	SHAPE	ROLE
 Boon Die	Positive	d6	Situational advantage
 Bane Die	Negative	d6	Situational disadvantage
 Ability Die	Positive	d8	Base characteristic pool
 Trial Die	Negative	d8	Base difficulty
 Mastery Die	Positive	d12	Trained skill pool
 Crisis Die	Negative	d12	Upgraded difficulty

DIE FACE REFERENCE

BOON DIE (D6)

FACES	RESULT
1–2	Blank
3	+ Boon
4	+ + Boon + Boon
5	✓ + Success + Boon
6	✓ Success

BANE DIE (D6)

FACES	RESULT
1–2	Blank
3–4	— Bane
5–6	✕ Failure

ABILITY DIE (D8)

FACES	RESULT
1	Blank
2–3	✓ Success
4	✓ ✓ Success + Success
5–6	+ Boon
7	✓ + Success + Boon
8	+ + Boon + Boon

TRIAL DIE (D8)

FACES	RESULT
1	Blank
2–3	✕ Failure
4	✕ ✕ Failure + Failure
5–6	— Bane
7	✕ — Failure + Bane
8	— — Bane + Bane

MASTERY DIE (D12)

FACES	RESULT
1	Blank
2–3	✓ Success
4–5	✓ ✓ Success + Success
6–8	✓ + Success + Boon
9	+ Boon
10–11	+ + Boon + Boon
12	⊗ Breakthrough

CRISIS DIE (D12)

FACES	RESULT
1	Blank
2–3	✗ Failure
4–5	✗ ✗ Failure + Failure
6–7	✗ — Failure + Bane
8–9	— Bane
10–11	— — Bane + Bane
12	⊗ Calamity

A Breakthrough or Calamity should always produce an effect that is **meaningfully stronger than standard Boons or Banes**. These results represent turning points, sudden reversals, or decisive moments in the narrative.

CHAPTER TWO

CHARACTER CREATION

CHARACTER CREATION IN 6 STEPS

- Choose Species** — Default is human. Universes may provide species packages that modify starting characteristics, Wound/Strain Points, or grant special abilities. If a Universe provides no species packages, all characters use the baseline-human starting values regardless of their in-fiction species.
- Assign Starting Characteristics** — All six core characteristics begin at 2. Before spending XP, you may raise one characteristic by +1 and lower a different characteristic by -1. No characteristic may begin below 1 or above 4.
- Choose Background and Career** — These determine your **profession skills**. Profession skills are cheaper to purchase.
- Spend Starting XP** — Spend 110 XP on characteristic increases, skill ranks, talents, and any additional options provided by the Universe.
- Calculate Derived Values and Starting Gear** — Fill in Resistance, Wound Points, Strain Points, Defense, Initiative, talents, and gear. Begin with basic clothing, profession-appropriate items, and resources as defined by the Universe.
- Name and Personal Details** — Choose your character's name, appearance, age, motivation, and any ties to other player characters or to the world. The mechanical character is built; this step makes the character a person.

STARTING CHARACTERISTICS

A default human begins with all six core characteristics at 2:

Before spending XP, you may increase one characteristic by +1 if you reduce a different characteristic by -1. No characteristic may begin below 1 or above 4.

This free adjustment is always applied before XP spending.

CHARACTERISTIC	STARTING RATING
Might	2
Agility	2
Intellect	2
Savvy	2
Willpower	2
Charisma	2

STARTING XP

Starting characters receive **110 XP**.

This budget produces a **competent professional**, someone with a defined trade, useful capability across several skills, and one or two signature talents. A starting character is not a novice and is not yet a master.

Starting XP may be spent on any of the following:

- **Characteristic increases** during character creation (see Characteristic XP Costs below)
- **Skill ranks** in profession skills or out-of-profession skills (see Skill Advancement Costs below)
- **Universal talents** drawn from the Skills and Talents chapter
- **Universe-specific talents** offered by the Universe
- **Any additional options** the Universe makes available, such as supernatural abilities, cybernetics, magic, or species advancements

Unspent XP may be carried forward unless the Universe states otherwise.

CHARACTERISTIC XP COSTS

During character creation only, characteristics may be increased with XP. Costs are paid one rating at a time.

NEW RATING	XP COST
2	20 XP
3	30 XP
4	40 XP

Example: Raising a characteristic from 1 to 2 costs 20 XP. Raising a characteristic from 2 to 4 costs 70 XP total: 30 XP to reach 3, then 40 XP to reach 4.

No characteristic may begin above **4** during character creation.

After play begins, characteristics are not purchased directly with XP. They may only increase through talents such as **Growth** or **Greater Growth**, or through Universe-specific advancement rules.

STARTING TALENT

Starting characters gain **one free Tier 1 universal talent**.

This talent must meet any normal requirements. A Universe may replace this with a Universe-specific starting talent, restrict the available list, or grant additional starting talents.

At character creation, starting characters may purchase Tier 1 and Tier 2 talents with XP. Talents above Tier 2 require explicit Universe permission. Only the *free* starting talent is granted automatically; any further talents must be purchased with the 110 XP budget. A starter who skips characteristic increases and keeps skill ranks modest can afford several Tier 1 talents and one or two Tier 2 talents.

BACKGROUNDS AND CAREERS

Characters choose **one Background** and **one Career**.

Any skill that appears on either list is a **profession skill**. Profession skills are cheaper to purchase. Skills not on either list are **out-of-profession skills**.

Typical result: Most characters end up with 6-10 profession skills depending on overlap.

Backgrounds and Careers do **not** grant free skill ranks by default. They only determine which skills are cheaper. Universes may add free ranks or other bonuses if desired.

If a skill appears on both your Background list and Career list, it is still only a profession skill. The duplicate listing does not reduce its cost further unless the Universe says otherwise.

Universes may rename, replace, or expand these lists. The examples below are generic placeholders.

GENERIC BACKGROUND EXAMPLES

BACKGROUND	SUGGESTED PROFESSION SKILLS
Laborer	Athletics, Fortitude, Craft, Survival
Professional	Lore, Science, Negotiation, Leadership
Criminal	Streetwise, Subterfuge, Deception, Stealth
Soldier	Ranged, Melee, Athletics, Readiness, Fortitude
Wanderer	Survival, Perception, Operate, Streetwise
Performer	Charm, Deception, Reflexes, Lore
Academic	Lore, Science, Medicine, Negotiation
Survivor	Fortitude, Survival, Perception, Readiness

GENERIC CAREER EXAMPLES

CAREER	SUGGESTED PROFESSION SKILLS
Combatant	Melee, Ranged, Unarmed, Athletics, Fortitude, Readiness
Specialist	Craft, Science, Subterfuge, Perception, Operate, Lore
Face	Charm, Deception, Negotiation, Leadership, Intimidation, Streetwise
Explorer	Survival, Perception, Athletics, Operate, Fortitude, Lore
Healer	Medicine, Lore, Science, Readiness, Charm, Survival
Operator	Operate, Reflexes, Craft, Perception, Ranged, Readiness

SKILL ADVANCEMENT COSTS

Skills are rated from **0 to 5**.

A skill at rank **0** may still be attempted. The dice pool is built from the linked characteristic alone, with no upgrade from skill ranks. The character is untrained, not incapable.

During character creation, no skill may be purchased above rank **2** unless the Universe allows one profession skill to begin at rank **3**. **No starting character may begin with any skill at rank 4 or 5.**

Costs are paid one rank at a time. The listed cost is the cost to buy the **new rank**, not the total cost of the skill.

Example: Buying a profession skill from rank 0 to rank 2 costs 15 XP total: 5 XP for rank 1, then 10 XP for rank 2.

PROFESSION SKILL COSTS

NEW RANK	XP COST
1	5 XP
2	10 XP
3	15 XP
4	20 XP
5	25 XP

OUT-OF-PROFESSION SKILL COSTS

Out-of-profession skills cost **5 XP more per rank**:

NEW RANK	XP COST
1	10 XP
2	15 XP
3	20 XP
4	25 XP
5	30 XP

DERIVED VALUES

Resistance = half Might (rounded up) + armor or protection (minimum 0)

Wound Points = 10 + Might

Strain Points = 10 + Willpower

Melee Defense and **Ranged Defense** begin at 0 and are increased by equipment, talents, or situational effects.

Initiative uses two common checks for the character sheet:

- **On Watch / Prepared** — Savvy + Perception
- **Surprised / Under Sudden Pressure** — Willpower + Readiness

The GM declares which Initiative check applies based on whether the characters had warning. *On Watch / Prepared* applies when the characters knew danger was coming, were actively keeping watch, or had time to ready themselves. *Surprised / Under Sudden Pressure* applies when the scene begins without warning, when ambushed, or when a peaceful moment violently changes character.

Resistance Design Note

Using half Might (rounded up) gives physically tough characters a modest Resistance bump (+1 across the Might 1–5 range, scaling as 1, 1, 2, 2, 3) without letting Might dominate damage reduction. Most of the durability difference between characters comes from **Wound Points** (10 + Might), not Resistance, armor, equipment, and talents are the primary ways to push Resistance higher.

LANGUAGES AND LITERACY

Languages are defined by the active Universe. By default, every character knows the **common tongue of the land they grew up in**, fluently and literately. Additional languages, dialects, secret tongues, technical jargon, or trade cants are defined by the Universe and may be granted by Background, Career, species, or purchased with XP at a cost the Universe specifies.

If the Universe is silent on languages, assume one default language is universally spoken among the people the characters interact with, and treat language as flavor rather than a mechanical barrier. If the Universe specifies multiple languages or restricts literacy, those rules take precedence.

STARTING FORTUNE POINTS

Fortune Points refresh at the start of every session, including the first; no starting allocation is recorded on the character sheet. The GM's Peril Pool and the rules for spending and refreshing Story Points are described in the **Story Points** chapter.

RECOVERY SUMMARY

Chapter Twelve defines the full recovery rules. Use this summary during character creation and at the table.

STRAIN RECOVERY

- At the end of any structured encounter, recover Strain equal to **Willpower**.
- During a full rest, recover **all** Strain unless you were incapacitated by Strain.
- As a Maneuver once per encounter, any character with Strain Points may **Catch Breath** and recover **1 Strain**. Minions and Elites do not have Strain Points and cannot Catch Breath.
- The **Catch Breath** talent improves this to **2 Strain** once per encounter.
- Spend + **1 Boon** with no stronger use to recover **1 Strain**.

WOUND RECOVERY

- After a full night's rest or equivalent, recover Wounds equal to **Might**.
- If receiving medical care, the caregiver makes a Medicine check.
- Each net Success on the Medicine check restores **1 additional Wound**.
- + **2 Boons** may restore **1 extra Wound**, preserve supplies, or reduce recovery time.
- During structured play, urgent field treatment is an Action and uses Medicine.

INCAPACITATION

- **Strain incapacitation:** After a full rest, reduce current Strain to half your Strain Points, rounded down. This replaces the normal short-rest recovery of all Strain.
- **Wound incapacitation:** You are stable after the encounter unless the situation remains immediately lethal. You remain unconscious or helpless until current Wounds fall below your Wound Points.

CRITICAL INJURIES

- Critical Injuries are triggered when a ☹ Breakthrough is spent on an attack, when sufficient + Boons are spent on an attack, or when an already incapacitated character is hit.
- Each existing Critical Injury adds **+10** to future Critical Injury rolls.
- The **+10** penalty remains until that specific Critical Injury is removed through medical treatment.
- The immediate effect of a Critical Injury may be temporary, but the injury itself remains until removed. See Chapter Twelve.

POST-CREATION ADVANCEMENT

After play begins, the GM awards XP at the end of each session (typically 10-25 XP).

Skills and talents are purchased using the same costs. Characteristics may only increase through talents such as **Growth** or **Greater Growth**, or through Universe advancement rules.

OPEN DECISIONS FOR UNIVERSES

The core rules deliberately leave the following open for Universes to define. If a Universe is silent on any of them, the defaults given elsewhere in this book apply.

- Whether one profession skill may begin at rank 3 at character creation
- Whether starting characters may purchase or be granted talents above Tier 2
- Whether Growth and Greater Growth are available, and at what cost
- Species packages, including any modifications to starting characteristics, Wound Points, or Strain Points
- Languages beyond the default common tongue, and any rules for literacy
- Starting gear packages, resources, currency, and wealth assumptions
- Starting Fortune Point allocation and the GM's starting Peril Pool
- The Critical Injury and Vehicle Critical Hit tables, and any expanded recovery rules
- Any additional starting options such as supernatural abilities, cybernetics, magic, mutations, psionics, or genre-specific systems

QUICK REFERENCE CHECKLIST

Use this checklist while building a character. It recaps the 6-step process in checklist form.

1. Begin with all six characteristics at 2.
2. Apply the free +1 / -1 characteristic adjustment.
3. Choose one Background and one Career.
4. Spend 110 XP on characteristic increases, skill ranks, and talents.
5. Gain one free Tier 1 universal talent.
6. No skill may begin above rank 2 unless the Universe allows one profession skill to begin at rank 3. Skills may not begin at rank 4 or 5.
7. Calculate derived values: Resistance, Wound Points, Strain Points, Defenses, Initiative.
8. Choose starting gear from the Universe.
9. Name your character and note appearance, age, motivation, and ties to other PCs and the world.

CHARACTER CREATION EXAMPLE

Rana is a human scout, courier, and part-time thief.

She begins with all six characteristics at 2. Before spending XP, she applies the free adjustment: Agility increases to 3 and Might decreases to 1.

Her starting characteristics are:

MIG	AGI	INT	SAV	WIL	CHA
1	3	2	2	2	2

Rana chooses the **Criminal** Background and the **Operator** Career. Her profession skills are: Streetwise, Subterfuge, Deception, Stealth, Operate, Reflexes, Craft, Perception, Ranged, and Readiness. Her free Tier 1 universal talent is **Specialist: Stealth in urban shadows**. She spends starting XP as follows:

PURCHASE	COST
Raise Savvy to 3	30 XP
Subterfuge rank 1	5 XP
Subterfuge rank 2	10 XP
Stealth rank 1	5 XP
Stealth rank 2	10 XP
Operate rank 1	5 XP
Reflexes rank 1	5 XP
Streetwise rank 1	5 XP
Perception rank 1	5 XP
Ranged rank 1	5 XP
Low Profile	10 XP
Total Spent	95 XP

Rana has 15 XP unspent and may carry it forward unless the Universe says otherwise.

Her Resulting characteristics are:

MIG	AGI	INT	SAV	WIL	CHA
1	3	2	3	2	2

DERIVED VALUE	CALCULATION	RESULT
Resistance	half Might rounded up + armor	1 + armor
Wound Points	10 + Might	11
Strain Points	10 + Willpower	12
Melee Defense	Starting value	0
Ranged Defense	Starting value	0

Her Initiative checks are:

- **On Watch / Prepared** — Savvy + Perception
- **Surprised / Under Sudden Pressure** — Willpower + Readiness

For Step 6, Rana's player names her, sketches a quick appearance, wiry, dark-eyed, calluses on the fingertips, and writes a one-line motivation: *"I owe the wrong people, and the only way out is through."* That is enough to begin play.

CHAPTER THREE

BUILDING A DICE POOL

Every check in Exodus NDS begins by assembling a dice pool, a collection of positive and negative dice rolled together.

CHARACTERISTICS

All characters, player and non-player alike, are defined by six **characteristics** representing their fundamental capabilities. Characteristics are rated from 1 to 5 and form the foundation of every dice pool in Exodus NDS.

CHARACTERISTIC	DESCRIPTION
Might	Physical power, toughness, and endurance. Governs feats of strength, physical resilience, and the capacity to absorb punishment. Contributes to a character's base Resistance.
Agility	Speed, coordination, and precision. Governs athletic movement, fine motor control, and reaction time.
Intellect	Reasoning, memory, and analytical thinking. Governs knowledge, technical skill, and problem-solving under pressure.
Savvy	Perception, cunning, and situational awareness. Governs reading people and situations, practical instincts, and navigating the world.
Willpower	Mental fortitude, discipline, and resolve. Governs focus under pressure, resistance to stress, and recovery from exertion. Contributes to a character's base Strain Points.
Charisma	Force of personality, social influence, and leadership. Governs persuasion, intimidation, and the ability to inspire or command.

Chapter Two defines default starting characteristic ratings and advancement costs. A Universe may introduce a seventh characteristic to represent genre-specific capabilities, such as a Resonance characteristic in a Universe with psychic powers, without replacing the core six.

SKILLS

Chapter Four defines the default **skills**, trained areas of knowledge and practice, rated from 0 to 5. Each skill is linked to one of the six characteristics unless a Universe changes that pairing. Skills represent focused expertise within the broader capability that a characteristic describes.

POOL CONSTRUCTION

When making a check, the GM identifies which characteristic and skill apply. Use whichever is higher as the **total number of positive dice** in the pool, then **upgrade** a number of those dice equal to whichever rating is lower.

Upgrading means replacing an Ability Die  with a Mastery Die .

If no relevant skill applies, treat the skill rating as 0, roll Ability Dice equal to the characteristic only, with no upgrades.

EXAMPLES

Characteristic higher: A character has a characteristic of 3 and a skill of 2. Start with 3 Ability Dice, upgrade 2 → final pool:   

Skill higher: A character has a characteristic of 2 and a skill of 4. Start with 4 Ability Dice (skill is higher), upgrade 2 (characteristic) → final pool:    

UNTRAINED CHECKS

If a character has no ranks in the relevant skill (rating 0), the pool is simply a number of Ability Dice equal to the characteristic. No upgrades occur.

DOWNGRADING DICE

Some effects and conditions **downgrade** dice, the reverse of upgrading. Downgrading replaces a Mastery Die  with an Ability Die . If no Mastery Dice remain to downgrade, the effect has no further impact on the positive pool. Similarly, a difficulty pool can be downgraded by replacing a Crisis Die  with a Trial Die . Downgrading and upgrading are distinct from adding Boon or Bane Dice, they change the type of dice in the pool, not the number. If an effect would upgrade a die but no eligible dice of the lower type remain, the upgrade has no effect.

ADDING SITUATIONAL DICE

Beyond the base pool, circumstances can add Boon Dice  or Bane Dice .

- **Boon Dice** are added for favorable conditions: assistance, superior equipment, environmental advantage, or narrative momentum.
- **Bane Dice** are added for unfavorable conditions: poor visibility, inferior tools, injury, or environmental hazard.

Boon and Bane Dice can both be added to the dice pool. For example, you could aim (+1 Boon) against someone with defense of 1 (+1 Bane) and both dice are in the pool.

DICE POOL LIMITS

Dice pools are intended to remain readable and manageable at the table.

A dice pool always contains at least one die. If all positive dice would be removed, roll one Ability Die instead. If all negative dice would be removed, the check proceeds without opposition.

As a general guideline, a dice pool should not exceed **12 total dice** after all modifiers are applied. If additional dice would be added beyond this limit, the GM may instead:

- Convert excess positive dice into **automatic Boons**
- Convert excess negative dice into **automatic Banes**
- Apply a narrative effect reflecting overwhelming advantage or disadvantage

This guideline exists to preserve speed of play and clarity of results.

UNIVERSE MODIFICATIONS

Universes may modify pool construction for specific actions, magic, vehicle piloting, social influence, and other specialized systems may use different rules for how dice are assembled. Those rules always specify which characteristic and skill apply, and may add mandatory difficulty dice, resource costs, or other considerations.

Chapter Four defines the default skill list and universal talents. Universes may rename skills, replace skills, alter talent availability, add genre-specific talent trees, or define special abilities that augment, replace, or expand standard check mechanics.



CHAPTER FOUR

SKILLS AND TALENTS

This chapter defines the default skill list and universal talents available to Exodus NDS characters. Universes may rename, split, remove, restrict, or expand these options to match their genre and world.

CORE SKILL LIST

Exodus NDS uses 22 default skills. Each skill is linked to one of the six core characteristics. The GM may call for unusual characteristic + skill pairings when the situation calls for it, but the listed characteristic is the default pairing.

For example, most **Intimidation** checks use Willpower, but a courtly threat veiled behind perfect manners might use Charisma + Intimidation. Most **Craft** checks use Intellect, but forcing a damaged gate mechanism back into place might use Might + Craft.

COMBAT SKILLS

SKILL	CHARACTERISTIC	DESCRIPTION
Unarmed	Might	Fighting with fists, kicks, grapples, natural weapons, shoves, holds, tackles, and improvised bodily force.
Melee	Might	Fighting with hand-held weapons in close quarters: blades, clubs, axes, spears, batons, shields, improvised weapons, or similar arms.
Ranged	Agility	Attacking at distance with bows, firearms, thrown weapons, slings, crossbows, energy weapons, or Universe-specific ranged arms.

PHYSICAL SKILLS

SKILL	CHARACTERISTIC	DESCRIPTION
Athletics	Might	Climbing, swimming, jumping, sprinting, lifting, breaking, forcing movement, and other strength-driven physical effort.
Reflexes	Agility	Balance, tumbling, quick reactions, dodging hazards, slipping restraints, catching yourself while falling, and precise body control under pressure.
Fortitude	Might	Resisting fatigue, pain, poison, disease, starvation, suffocation, harsh environments, and prolonged strain.
Stealth	Agility	Moving unseen or unheard, hiding, shadowing, masking tracks, blending into cover, and avoiding notice.

AWARENESS / FIELD SKILLS

SKILL	CHARACTERISTIC	DESCRIPTION
Perception	Savvy	Noticing details, spotting hidden things, hearing danger, reading immediate surroundings, and catching what others miss. Perception answers: “Do I notice it?”
Readiness	Willpower	Acting under sudden pressure, staying alert, resisting surprise, keeping nerve before danger lands, and determining preparedness when a scene turns dangerous. Readiness is the default defensive skill for resisting fear, intimidation, despair, coercion, and sudden mental pressure when the resistance is about nerve, composure, or preparedness . Other skills may defend when the situation calls for them, Lore against a curse-laden threat or Fortitude against supernatural dread. Readiness answers: “Am I ready for it?”
Survival	Savvy	Tracking, foraging, navigation, shelter, weather sense, wilderness travel, animal signs, reading and calming and handling ordinary animals, and staying alive away from safety.
Subterfuge	Agility	Lockpicking, sleight of hand, disabling simple security, planting or lifting objects, escaping bonds, bypassing traps, and covert physical manipulation.
Streetwise	Savvy	Street codes, criminal networks, black markets, rumors, gangs, fences, smugglers, illicit services, risky contacts, and finding illicit goods or information outside formal channels.

KNOWLEDGE / TECHNICAL SKILLS

SKILL	CHARACTERISTIC	DESCRIPTION
Lore	Intellect	Recalling history, cultures, places, lineages, institutions, laws, legends, customs, factions, and the shape of the known world. Also used to interpret clues and piece together what something means once it has been noticed.
Medicine	Intellect	Treating injury and illness, diagnosing conditions, stabilizing the wounded, aiding recovery, understanding living bodies, and identifying medical risks.
Science	Intellect	Understanding natural laws, technical principles, experiments, analysis, engineering theory, chemistry, physics, astronomy, computing, or Universe equivalents.
Craft	Intellect	Building, repairing, modifying, maintaining, sabotaging, appraising, or improvising objects, tools, structures, machines, and practical works.

Craft vs Science boundary: *The doing of a technical thing is Craft; the knowing of how it works is Science.* Repairing a damaged engine is Craft. Explaining why the engine failed, or designing a new one, is Science. The same divide applies to medicine vs biology, smithing vs metallurgy, and any other “do” / “know” pair where the Universe cares about the difference.

SOCIAL SKILLS

SKILL	CHARACTERISTIC	DESCRIPTION
Charm	Charisma	Winning people over through warmth, friendliness, humor, appeal, flirtation, sincerity, style, or likability. Charm also covers performance, oratory, music, art, and any attempt to entertain, move, or please an audience.
Deception	Charisma	Lying, disguising intent, misdirection, false identities, scams, feints, forgeries of behavior, and concealing the truth.
Negotiation	Charisma	Bargaining, diplomacy, trade, compromise, contracts, favors, treaties, and getting terms both sides can accept.
Leadership	Charisma	Commanding, rallying, organizing, inspiring, directing groups, establishing authority, and holding a group together under pressure.
Intimidation	Willpower	Threats, interrogation, menace, pressure, dominance, cold resolve, and forcing compliance through fear or force of will.

OPERATION SKILL

SKILL	CHARACTERISTIC	DESCRIPTION
Operate	Agility	Driving, riding, piloting, steering, maneuvering, controlling, or safely handling vehicles, mounts, ships, starcraft, machines, mechs, or Universe-specific control systems under pressure.

Operate vs Craft vs Science boundary: *Operate is using a system in motion or under pressure; Craft is building, repairing, or modifying it; Science is understanding, analyzing, or designing it.* Driving the wagon through the gate under fire is Operate. Patching the wagon’s broken axle afterward is Craft. Explaining why the suspension keeps failing on this terrain is Science.

REPLACEABLE SKILLS FOR UNIVERSES

The following skills are intentionally flexible. A Universe may rename, split, replace, or expand them without changing the Exodus NDS core engine.

CORE SKILL	COMMON UNIVERSE REPLACEMENTS
Lore	History, Arcana, Theology, Culture, Politics, Law, Forbidden Lore, Xeno-Lore, Myth, Old World
Medicine	Healing, Surgery, Biomancy, First Aid, Cybernetics, Xenobiology, Alchemy, Field Medicine
Science	Engineering, Computers, Mechanics, Chemistry, Physics, Astrogration, Thaumaturgy, Technomancy
Craft	Smithing, Repair, Mechanics, Fabrication, Artifice, Engineering, Hacking, Enchanting
Operate	Ride, Drive, Pilot, Sail, Spaceflight, Mecha, Gunnery, Heavy Machinery, Beast Handling
Streetwise	Underworld, Contacts, Fringe, Black Market, Court, Guilds, Society, Networks, Criminal Lore
Subterfuge	Thievery, Larceny, Infiltration, Espionage, Trickery, Hacking, Burglary, Tradecraft
Charm	Performance, Oratory, Stagecraft, Propaganda, Ritual Voice, Celebrity (split out from Charm when public art, celebrity, propaganda, ritual performance, or bardic magic is a major Universe pillar)
Survival	Beast Handling, Animal Training, Falconry, Mounted Lore (split out from Survival when mounts, animal companions, or trained beasts are central to the Universe; Survival continues to cover wilderness travel, tracking, and incidental animal contact)

Hacking and Computers are strictly Universe-specific. The Exodus NDS core does not assume any particular technology level, so digital intrusion, network security, code-breaking, and similar tasks should be defined by the Universe. Most Universes will fold the *doing* of these tasks into Craft (or its replacement) and the *knowing* into Science (or its replacement). A Universe may also create a dedicated Hacking, Computers, or Cyberwarfare skill if the genre demands it.

QUICK SKILL BOUNDARY GUIDE

Use this section to reduce table confusion.

SITUATION	LIKELY SKILL	SITUATION	LIKELY SKILL
Spotting an ambush before it begins	Perception	Cowing the guard into backing down	Intimidation
Noticing a folded paper on the desk	Perception	Rallying allies to hold formation	Leadership
Keeping calm and acting before surprise takes hold	Readiness	Remembering the guard's heraldry	Lore
Resisting a brutal interrogation	Readiness	Piecing together what the folded paper means	Lore
Diving away from the falling statue	Reflexes	Treating the guard's injury	Medicine
Sneaking past a guard	Stealth	Repairing the gate mechanism	Craft
Picking the guard's pocket	Subterfuge	Explaining how the gate mechanism works	Science
Knowing which fence buys stolen relics	Streetwise	Hacking the gate's control panel	Universe-specific
Lying to the guard about why you are there	Deception	Forcing the gate open	Athletics
Convincing the guard you are harmless	Charm	Calming a panicked horse at the gate	Survival
Performing a song to win over the tavern	Charm	Enduring the toxic smoke beyond the gate	Fortitude
Bargaining with the guard for entry	Negotiation	Steering the wagon through the gate under fire	Operate

UNIVERSAL TALENTS

Talents are purchased with XP. Use the default costs in this chapter unless a Universe changes them.

Universal Talent default: Every Exodus NDS Universe assumes the universal talents in this chapter are available to player characters unless the Universe explicitly removes or restricts them. A Universe may also add new talent trees, alter costs, modify a talent's mechanical text to fit its rules, or gate certain talents behind species, archetype, profession, or in-fiction requirements.

Ranked and repeatable talents: A talent may only be purchased once unless it is explicitly marked **Ranked**, or it specifies a “choose one” option. Ranked talents may be purchased multiple times and stack as written. Talents with a “choose one” option may also be purchased multiple times, but each new purchase must apply to a different choice unless the Universe says otherwise.

A talent should usually do one of the following:

- Add or remove a ■ Boon Die or ■ Bane Die.
- Upgrade or downgrade a die.
- Change how + Boons or — Banes may be spent.
- Interact with ☑ Breakthroughs or ☒ Calamities.
- Interact with Fortune or Peril Points.
- Change action economy in a narrow way.
- Grant clear narrative permission in a specific situation.

Avoid vague talent text such as “gain a small benefit” unless the Universe defines that benefit immediately afterward.

TIER 1: FOUNDATIONAL TALENTS

Tier 1 talents are broad, useful, and safe for early characters.

HARDY (*RANKED*)

Increase your Wound Points by 2.

You may purchase this talent multiple times; each purchase after the first increases Wound Points by only 1. Unless the Universe says otherwise, Hardy cannot increase your Wound Points above **20 + Might**.

STEADFAST (*RANKED*)

Increase your Strain Points by 2.

You may purchase this talent multiple times; each purchase after the first increases Strain Points by only 1. Unless the Universe says otherwise, Steadfast cannot increase your Strain Points above **20 + Willpower**.

KEEN EYE

Once per scene, remove 1 ■ Bane Die from a Perception check caused by poor visibility, distance, distraction, concealment, or clutter.

FAST HANDS

Once per turn, draw, ready, stow, or retrieve one item as a Quick Action instead of a Maneuver.

This item must be reasonably accessible. Fast Hands does not let you unpack a buried item, assemble a complex object, or bypass a meaningful obstacle.

GUARDED

As a Maneuver, take a defensive posture. Until the start of your next turn, attacks against you add 1 ■ Bane Die.

You must be able to move, defend yourself, or use available cover. Guarded ends early if you are Immobilized, Staggered, helpless, or otherwise unable to defend yourself.

WAYFARER

When making Survival checks involving travel, shelter, food, water, weather, tracking, or route-finding, remove 1 ■ Bane Die caused by natural terrain or ordinary environmental hardship.

SKILLED (*RANKED*)

Gain 1 rank in one skill, respecting normal rank limits.

Skilled grants the rank directly; do not also pay the normal skill XP cost for that rank. Each purchase applies to a different skill unless the Universe allows otherwise. At character creation, Skilled is bound by the same rank caps as direct skill purchase: rank 2 for any skill, or rank 3 for one profession skill if the Universe permits. Skilled does not bypass these caps.

SPECIALIST (*CHOOSE ONE*)

Choose one skill and one narrow use of that skill, such as “Stealth in urban shadows,” “Medicine to stabilize the dying,” “Ranged with bows,” or “Craft to repair vehicles.”

Once per scene, when making that specific kind of check, upgrade one ◆ Ability Die in the pool to one ◆ Mastery Die. If the pool has no ◆ Ability Dice to upgrade, add 1 ■ Boon Die instead.

May be purchased multiple times; each purchase must apply to a different specialty.

COOL HEAD

When making Readiness checks or checks to resist panic, surprise, fear, or sudden pressure, remove 1 Bane Die caused by fear, confusion, shock, or being caught off guard.

HELPFUL

When you assist another character, they add two assisting dice instead of one: either +2 ■ Boon Dice, or +1 ■ Boon Die and +1 ◆ Ability Die if you have more ranks in the relevant skill than the character you are assisting.

This does not override the two-die assisting limit. The assist must represent meaningful help; the GM has final say.

MOMENTUM

Once per turn, when you fail a check but generate at least 1 net + Boon, you may spend 1 + Boon to gain a minor narrative advantage related to the failed attempt.

Examples include landing in a better position, learning something useful, avoiding a worse consequence, keeping hold of an item, or setting up an ally.

TIER 2: ADEPT TALENTS

Tier 2 talents represent practiced competence and stronger scene-level utility.

CATCH BREATH

When you use the Catch Breath Maneuver, recover 2 Strain instead of 1. The Maneuver action type and the once-per-encounter limit on Catch Breath still apply; this talent only changes the amount recovered.

You cannot use Catch Breath while Staggered, unconscious, or otherwise unable to pause and steady yourself.

CONDITIONED

When making Fortitude checks against fatigue, forced marching, pain, hunger, thirst, suffocation, harsh climates, or exhausting physical strain, remove 1 ■ Bane Die.

STRONG ARM

When making Athletics, Melee, Unarmed, or *thrown* Ranged checks involving throwing, shoving, pushing, pulling, breaking, grappling, or forceful movement, you may spend 1 Boon to move the target or object a short distance, knock it off-balance, or create an opening.

The GM determines what movement is plausible based on size, footing, and the scene. Strong Arm does not apply to bows, firearms, or other non-thrown ranged weapons.

TWIST OF FATE

Once per session, after rolling a check, reroll one die in your pool.

You must keep the second result.

LOW PROFILE

When using Stealth or Subterfuge to avoid attention in a crowd, occupied area, public location, or busy environment, remove 1 Bane Die.

CONVINCING

When using Charm, Deception, or Negotiation with a plausible argument, credible disguise, fair offer, or believable lie, add 1 ■ Boon Die.

This talent does not help with impossible claims, absurd offers, or lies contradicted by obvious evidence.

DANGER SENSE

Once per scene, when danger would catch you completely unaware, the GM may allow you to make a Perception or Readiness check before the danger fully lands.

Success lets you act normally or warn one ally. Failure may still reduce the severity of surprise at the GM's discretion.

UNSHAKEN

When resisting fear, intimidation, despair, coercion, mental pressure, or supernatural dread, remove 1 ■ Bane Die.

QUICK RECOVERY

When you recover Strain at the end of an encounter or during a full rest, recover 1 additional Strain.

When receiving care for Wounds, the character treating you adds 1 ■ Boon Die to the Medicine check.

PRACTICAL EXPERTISE (CHOOSE ONE)

Choose Craft, Medicine, Science, or Operate.

When making checks with the chosen skill using poor tools, improvised tools, damaged equipment, unfamiliar models, or rushed conditions, remove 1 Bane Die.

May be purchased multiple times; each purchase must apply to a different skill from the list above.

BOON READER

When you generate 2 or more + Boons on a Perception, Readiness, Streetwise, Lore, Medicine, Science, or Survival check, you may spend 2 + Boons to ask the GM one yes/no question about the scene, subject, danger, or NPC.

The GM should answer honestly, though the answer may be incomplete if the character lacks access to the full truth.

TIER 3: EXPERT TALENTS

Tier 3 talents represent significant expertise, durability, and distinct character identity.

GROWTH (UNIVERSE-RESTRICTED)

You may pay the normal upgrade cost to increase one characteristic by 1, respecting the Universe's normal characteristic limits. You may not take this talent more than once.

Universe-Restricted: Growth is **not** assumed to be available in every Universe. Universes must explicitly enable Growth and may impose tier, story, or in-fiction gates (such as requiring a milestone, training arc, mentor, ritual, augmentation, or significant in-world event).

UNBROKEN

Once per session, when you would be incapacitated by Wounds or Strain, remain functional until the end of your next turn.

After that turn, you suffer the incapacitation normally unless healing, recovery, or another effect prevents it.

HARDENED (CHOOSE ONE)

Choose one circumstance when you purchase this talent: physical attacks, environmental damage, poison/disease, fear/mental pressure, or social coercion.

When resisting or reducing harm from the chosen circumstance, add 1 ■ Boon Die to the relevant check. If the harm is damage and the GM agrees the talent applies, increase your effective Resistance by 1 against that instance.

May be purchased multiple times; each purchase must apply to a different circumstance.

RALLYING WORDS

As an Action, make a Leadership check targeting one ally at Short range who can hear or understand you.

On success, that ally recovers 1 Strain plus 1 additional Strain per uncancelled Success beyond the first. You may spend 2 + Boons to affect one additional ally in range.

EXPERT CARE

When making Medicine checks to stabilize, treat, or speed recovery, add 1 ■ Boon Die.

When you generate 2 or more $+$ Boons on such a check, you may spend 2 $+$ Boons to reduce the time required, preserve scarce supplies, or remove 1 additional Wound, as appropriate to the Universe's recovery rules.

SKEPTIC

When resisting deception, illusion, false evidence, manipulation, supernatural misdirection, forged signals, or misleading appearances, remove 1 ■ Bane Die.

When you generate 2 or more $+$ Boons on the check, you may learn one clue about what is wrong, missing, or inconsistent.

MENTAL FORTRESS

When resisting mental, emotional, fear-based, psychic, or coercive effects, you may downgrade one negative die in the pool.

This effect may be used once per encounter.

CROWD FIGHTER

When engaged with multiple foes, reduce the total Bane Dice imposed by being outnumbered, surrounded, flanked, or pressed by a crowd by 1.

Once per turn, when an engaged enemy misses you and generates at least 1 $-$ Bane, you may spend 1 of that enemy's $-$ Banes to reposition yourself within Engaged range.

RELIABLE SKILL (CHOOSE ONE)

Choose one skill.

When making a calm, routine, non-combat check with that skill and the difficulty is Average or lower, you may treat a result with no net Successes and no net Failures as a success with a minor cost or delay.

Reliable Skill does not apply in structured combat, severe danger, opposed checks, or checks with upgraded difficulty unless the GM allows it. May be purchased multiple times; each purchase must apply to a different skill.

RESOURCEFUL

Once per session, declare that you have a plausible small item, contact, clue, preparation, or minor advantage that fits your character and the current situation.

The GM may require a Story Point, a reasonable explanation, or a complication if the declaration is especially convenient.

MASTERY SPEND (CHOOSE ONE)

Choose one skill when you purchase this talent.

Once per session, after rolling a check with that skill, you may spend 1 Fortune Point and convert 2 net $+$ Boons into 1 ✓ Success.

This conversion happens after normal cancellation. It cannot create a Breakthrough, and it cannot be used if no net Boons remain. May be purchased multiple times; each purchase must apply to a different skill.

SILVER TONGUE

When making Charm, Deception, or Negotiation checks against a target who has personal stakes in the outcome, such as pride, loyal-

ty, fear, self-image, reputation, or emotional investment, you may downgrade one negative die in the pool.

This effect may be used once per scene. Silver Tongue helps with personal leverage, not impersonal procedure: it does not apply to market pricing, contract terms, treaty bargaining, institutional negotiations, or other situations where the target has no personal skin in the game.

MASTER INFILTRATOR

When using Stealth or Subterfuge to bypass security, infiltrate a guarded location, escape captivity, or move through a hostile environment unnoticed, add 1 ■ Boon Die.

When you generate 2 or more $+$ Boons on such a check, you may spend 2 $+$ Boons to gain one of the following narrative effects, GM permitting:

- Learn one specific detail about the area's defenses, occupants, or layout.
- Leave no detectable trace of your passage.
- Place yourself in an advantageous position for your next action.

TIER 4: MASTER TALENTS

Tier 4 talents are powerful, reliable, and often shape how a character approaches scenes.

COMMANDING PRESENCE

When you use Leadership to assist, rally, organize, or direct allies, you may affect one additional ally within range.

When you generate 2 or more $+$ Boons on a Leadership check, you may spend 2 $+$ Boons to extend the effect by one round, one exchange, or one meaningful beat, depending on the scene.

DEFENSIVE OPERATOR

When operating a vehicle, mount, ship, machine, mech, or similar controlled system, remove 1 Bane Die from checks to avoid crashes, pursuit hazards, difficult maneuvers, incoming attacks, or loss of control.

Universes may rename this talent as Defensive Driver, Ace Pilot, Sure Rider, Helmsmaster, or similar.

MASTERFUL RECOVERY

Once per encounter, when you recover Strain, remove a temporary condition, or receive medical care, increase the recovery effect.

Choose one recovery type that fits the triggering effect: 2 additional Strain recovered, 2 additional Wounds recovered, or one additional step of condition relief.

EXPLOIT OPENING

Once per round, when an enemy within Short range suffers a condition, generates 3 or more $-$ Banes, suffers a ⊗ Calamity, or is hit by a ⊙ Breakthrough effect, you may add 1 ■ Boon Die to your next check against that enemy before the end of your next turn.

TACTICAL MIND

At the start of a structured encounter, after initiative is rolled but before the first turn, make a Perception, Readiness, or Leadership check at Average difficulty.

On success, choose one ally who can see or hear you. That ally adds 1 ■ Boon Die to their first check of the encounter. Spend 2 + Boons to affect one additional ally.

GREATER GROWTH (UNIVERSE-RESTRICTED)

You may pay the normal upgrade cost to increase one characteristic by 1, respecting the Universe's normal characteristic limits. You may take this talent more than once, however, you may not use this on the same Characteristic more than once.

Universe-Restricted: Greater Growth is **not** assumed to be available in every Universe and should be rarer than Growth. Universes must explicitly enable Greater Growth and may impose stricter tier, story, or in-fiction gates than Growth (often requiring a major milestone, transformation, ascension, augmentation, or campaign-defining event).

SIGNATURE SKILL (CHOOSE ONE)

Choose one skill.

Once per session, when you succeed on a check with that skill and generate at least 2 net + Boons, you may immediately create one additional narrative benefit appropriate to the skill and scene.

This benefit should be stronger than a normal Boon spend but weaker than a Breakthrough.

PERIL TURNER

Once per session, when the GM spends a Peril Point to upgrade a difficulty die against you or an ally within Short range, you may spend 1 Fortune Point to *turn* the peril.

The GM's Peril Point still upgrades the difficulty as normal. After the roll resolves, you may convert 1 net — Bane in the result into 1 + Boon. This conversion happens after normal cancellation; if the roll generated no net Banes, the talent's spend still counts as used.

This Fortune Point spend is a **reactive trigger** and does not count against the one-Story-Point-per-check limit.

TIER 5: DEFINING TALENTS

Tier 5 talents are rare, powerful, and character-defining. They should feel like the kind of ability other people tell stories about.

DEFIANT WILL

Once per session, when you would be defeated, controlled, broken, incapacitated by Strain, overwhelmed by fear, or forced to yield through mental or emotional pressure, you may remain in control long enough to take one immediate Action or Maneuver.

After that action resolves, the original consequence applies unless your action plausibly prevents it.

You may not trigger Defiant Will and Last Stand in the same encounter.

LEGENDARY SKILL (CHOOSE ONE)

Choose one skill.

Once per session, before rolling an important check with that skill, declare it a legendary attempt. Upgrade one positive die in the

pool. If the check succeeds, add one additional meaningful narrative effect beyond normal Success and Boon spending.

If the check fails, the failure should still be memorable, costly, or revealing.

SIGNATURE TECHNIQUE

Create one named character-defining move, method, tactic, trick, procedure, spell-form, maneuver, or social play.

Work with the GM to define:

- The skill or skills it uses.
- When it can be triggered.
- Its cost, if any.
- Its normal effect.
- What extra effect occurs on 3+ Boons or a Breakthrough.
- What complication may occur on 3+ Banes or a Calamity.

Signature Technique should be narrow, memorable, and strong. It should not replace an entire skill or make other characters irrelevant.

MYTHIC PRESENCE

Your reputation, bearing, authority, legend, infamy, or sheer force of identity changes how people respond before a roll is made.

Once per session, when entering a social scene where your identity matters, choose one:

- Add 1 ■ Boon Die to your first Charm, Leadership, Negotiation, or Intimidation check in the scene.
- Force one lesser NPC to hesitate, listen, withdraw, or seek permission before opposing you directly.
- Establish that someone present has heard of you, for good or ill.

The GM may attach complications when your reputation cuts both ways.

LAST STAND

Once per session, when you are badly injured, outnumbered, cornered, or otherwise facing likely defeat, you may trigger Last Stand at the start of your turn.

Until the end of that turn:

- Add 1 ■ Boon Die to all checks.
- Ignore the effects of being incapacitated until the turn ends.
- You may suffer 2 Strain to add 1 additional ■ Boon Die to one check.

When the turn ends, suffer the normal consequences of your condition. If you exceeded your Wound or Strain threshold, you collapse unless another effect prevents it.

You may not trigger Last Stand and Defiant Will in the same encounter.

IMPOSSIBLE TURN

Once per session, when a situation becomes disastrous, you may declare an Impossible Turn.

Choose one immediate effect, subject to GM approval:

- Escape a lethal or impossible position, but leave something important behind.
- Convert total defeat into survival at a major cost.
- Prevent an ally's immediate defeat, but expose yourself to danger.
- Turn a failed plan into a new opportunity with a serious complication.
- Force the scene to continue instead of ending in disaster.

Impossible Turn does not erase consequences. It changes the shape of the consequence.

FATEBREAKER

Once per session, when you roll a ☒ Calamity, you may also trigger a ☑ Breakthrough effect.

The Calamity still occurs. Fatebreaker does not cancel it. Instead, the disaster creates a decisive advantage, revelation, opening, or reversal in your favor.

The Breakthrough effect should be directly connected to the Calamity. Something goes very wrong, and that very failure becomes the reason something else goes right.

TALENT DESIGN TEMPLATE

Use this format when writing new talents for Exodus NDS.

TALENT NAME

Tier: 1-5

Type: Passive / Active / Reaction / Session / Encounter / Ranked

Trigger: When the talent can be used.

Cost: Action, Maneuver, Quick Action, Fortune Point, Strain, Boons, once per scene, once per session, etc.

Effect: Clear mechanical effect using Exodus NDS language.

Limits: What the talent cannot do.

Universe Notes: Rename, restrict, or expand as needed.

RECOMMENDED TALENT COST MODEL

Universes may define their own costs. A simple default model is:

TIER	SUGGESTED XP COST	ROLE
1	5 XP	Foundational utility
2	10 XP	Reliable competence
3	15 XP	Expert identity
4	20 XP	Master-level power
5	25 XP	Character-defining capability

Optional rule: Ranked talents cost +5 XP each time they are purchased after the first.

Characteristic-increase talents require extra XP spending.

Because raising a characteristic improves every skill tied to that characteristic, Growth and Greater Growth become automatic picks unless the cost gate is real.

Example: Growth is 15xp. Raising Might from 3 to 4 cost 40xp. In order to use Growth to increase Might from 3 to 4 will cost a total of 15xp + 40xp for 55xp.

Universes may raise these costs further, gate them behind milestones, or remove them entirely.

OPTIONAL SKILL NAME VARIANTS

Use these when a Universe needs a different tone.

DEFAULT	GRITTIER	HEROIC FANTASY	SCI-FI / MODERN	TOON / COMEDY
Fortitude	Grit	Fortitude	Conditioning	Tough It Out
Lore	Lore	Lore	Academics	Know-Stuff
Streetwise	Underworld	Low Roads	Contacts	Back-Alley Knowhow
Subterfuge	Larceny	Subterfuge	Infiltration	Sneaky Business
Operate	Drive	Ride	Pilot	Wheelwork
Readiness	Nerve	Vigil	Alertness	Ready-or-Not

QUARTER FIVE

RESOLVING CHECKS

ASSIGNING DIFFICULTY

Before rolling, the GM sets the **difficulty** of the check by adding negative dice to the pool. Most difficulty is expressed in **Trial Dice** . For especially dangerous or volatile situations, one or more Trial Dice may be **upgraded** to Crisis Dice , replacing a Trial Die with a Crisis Die.

DIFFICULTY	TRIAL DICE	DESCRIPTION
Simple	—	No check required; success is automatic
Easy		Routine tasks with minimal risk
Average	 	Standard challenges under pressure
Hard	  	Demanding tasks requiring real skill
Severe	   	Expert-level challenges
Extreme	    	Near-impossible feats

READING THE RESULTS

After rolling, resolve the pool in this order:

Step 1 — Account for Breakthroughs and Calamities. For each  add a ✓ to the results pool. For each  add a ✗ to the results pool. Remove any  and  from the pool before cancellation. They are resolved in Step 5. Their special effects are never cancelled by any symbol.

Step 2 — Cancel opposing symbols. Each ✓ cancels one ✗ and vice versa. Each + cancels one — and vice versa.

Step 3 — Determine Success or Failure. If at least one ✓ remains after cancellation, the check **succeeds**. If no ✓ remains, the check **fails**.

Step 4 — Count net Boons or Banes. Remaining + symbols are **Boons**; remaining — symbols are **Banes**. These represent secondary effects layered onto the primary result.

Step 5 — Apply Breakthroughs and Calamities. Breakthroughs and Calamities trigger their effects regardless of whether the check ultimately succeeds or fails. A Breakthrough on a failed check still produces its special effect. A Calamity on a successful check likewise triggers its effect. These effects are defined by the situation, the GM, or the Universe rules.

READING RESULTS QUICKLY

- Success? Look for net ✓.
- Secondary texture? Look for net + or —.
- Exceptional moment? Look for  or .

That's the whole read.

INTERPRETING BOONS AND BANES

While Universes define specific uses, the following guidelines provide a baseline for interpreting results:

- **1 Boon** — Minor benefit (recover Strain, small positional advantage, +1 to next related check)
- **2 Boons** — Noticeable benefit (assist an ally, gain useful information, reduce time required)
- **3+ Boons** — Significant advantage (alter the scene, bypass a complication, create a lasting benefit)
- **1 Bane** — Minor setback (lose position, suffer Strain, small delay)
- **2 Banes** — Complication (lose resources, expose vulnerability, grant enemy advantage)
- **3+ Banes** — Major complication (introduce new threat, escalate danger, worsen conditions)

These are guidelines, not restrictions. The GM should always interpret results in context.

If no clear narrative use for a Boon is available, spend 1 Boon with no stronger use to recover 1 Strain. This serves as a mechanical floor; Boons should never be wasted.

TIES FAIL

A check with no net Successes is a failure, even if no Failures were rolled.

EXAMPLE CHECK

A character attempts to climb a crumbling wall under pressure.

Dice pool:

- 2 Mastery Dice, 1 Ability Die
- 2 Trial Dice
- 1 Bane Die (poor conditions)

Roll results:

- ✓ ✓ + from positive dice
- ✗ — from negative dice

Step 1 — No Breakthroughs or Calamities rolled.

Step 2 — Cancel: 2 Successes cancel 1 Failure → 1 Success remains. 1 Boon cancels 1 Bane → none remain.

Step 3 — 1 net Success → the climb **succeeds**.

Step 4 — No remaining Boons or Banes.

The character successfully climbs the wall without additional benefit or complication.

BREAKTHROUGH AND CALAMITY EXAMPLES

The following examples clarify how Breakthroughs ☺ and Calamities ☹ interact with Successes ✓ and Failures ✗.

EXAMPLE 1 — BREAKTHROUGH AND FAILURE

Roll: ☺ ✗

Step 1 — Handle Breakthrough: Add ✓ to the result pool. Remove the ☺

Step 2 — Cancel: The ✗ and ✓ are removed.

Step 3 — Pending Effects (*set aside in Step 1*): ☺

Final result: **Failure**

The Breakthrough's special effect still triggers, even though the check fails.

EXAMPLE 2 — BREAKTHROUGH AND MULTIPLE FAILURES

Roll: ☺ ✗ ✗

Step 1 — Handle Breakthrough: Add ✓ to the result pool. Remove the ☺

Step 2 — Cancel: The ✗ and ✓ are removed.

Step 3 — Pending Effects (*set aside in Step 1*) + remaining symbols: ☺ + ✗

Final result: **Failure**

The Breakthrough effect still triggers, even though the check fails.

EXAMPLE 3 — BREAKTHROUGH AND CALAMITY

Roll: ☺ ☹

Step 1 — Handle both: Add ✓ ✗ to the result pool.

Step 2 — Cancel: The ✗ and ✓ are removed.

Step 3 — Pending Effects (*set aside in Step 1*): ☺ ☹

Final result: **Failure**

Both exceptional effects trigger:

- The Breakthrough produces a significant positive effect
- The Calamity produces a significant negative effect

This represents a dramatic mixed outcome: something goes very right and very wrong at the same time.

EXAMPLE 4 — CALAMITY AND SUCCESS

Roll: ✓ ✓ ☹

Step 1 — Handle Calamity: Add ✗ to the result pool. Remove the ☹

Step 2 — Cancel: One ✓ and one ✗ are removed.

Final result: **Success**

The action succeeds, but **the Calamity effect still triggers**.

KEY PRINCIPLES

- A Breakthrough always contributes **one Success** that may be cancelled, plus a Breakthrough effect **that cannot be cancelled**
- A Calamity always contributes **one Failure** that may be cancelled, plus a Calamity effect **that cannot be cancelled**
- Their special effects **always trigger**, regardless of success or failure
- If Successes and Failures are equal after all effects are applied, the check **fails**

INTERPRETING RESULTS CONSISTENTLY

Exodus NDS is designed to produce layered outcomes. The GM should always resolve results in the following order of importance:

1. **Did the action succeed or fail?**
2. **What secondary effects occurred? (Boons/Banes)**
3. **Did anything exceptional happen? (Breakthrough/Calamity)**

Each layer should meaningfully affect the outcome. Avoid ignoring any part of the result.



CHAPTER SIX

READING RESULTS

Every roll in Exodus NDS produces three layers of information: did the action succeed, what else happened along the way, and did anything exceptional break the scene open. Most rolls leave net Boons or Banes, and many produce Breakthroughs or Calamities. This chapter tells the GM and players what to do with those layered results.

It is the most important chapter for table fluency. Without it, players freeze on a successful roll with two leftover Boons and a Breakthrough, and the system stalls. With it, every roll resolves into a clear narrative beat.

THE RESOLUTION ORDER

Resolve every check in the same three-step order:

1. **Did the action succeed or fail?** This answers the main question. A roll either accomplished the task or it did not.
2. **What side effects landed?** Net Boons or Banes describe what *else* happened: favorable or unfavorable conditions that color the outcome but do not change whether the task was accomplished.
3. **Did anything exceptional happen?** Breakthroughs and Calamities trigger their effects regardless of whether the check succeeded or failed.

Each layer answers a different question. Mixing them, letting a Breakthrough decide success, letting Boons cancel a Bane that should have been a Calamity, collapses the three layers into one and loses the texture that defines the system.

THE ANTI-DUPLICATION RULE

Side effects should never duplicate the main result.

If a character succeeds at picking a lock, leftover Boons should not just mean *the lock opened harder*. They should mean something else changed: the character opened it quietly, opened it quickly, also noticed a faint scratch on the doorframe, or left no sign of forced entry.

If a character failed to pick the lock, leftover Boons should not mean *the lock partially opened*. They should mean something else went right: the character learned the lock is reinforced, avoided alerting the guard inside, or dropped a tool quietly enough that nothing was lost.

Ask “what else?” not “how much?”

SUCCESSSES VS BOONS: DIFFERENT AXES

Extra Successes and Boons describe different things. They are not interchangeable.

Extra Successes scale the action’s primary effect, whatever the roll itself is *for*. The primary effect is roll-type-specific:

- **Weapon attacks** scale damage. Each net Success above the first adds damage as defined by the weapon and combat rules. More Successes mean a harder hit.

- **Medicine and recovery checks** scale Wounds healed or treatment quality. More Successes mean a better outcome for the patient.
- **Extended Checks** count net Successes against a threshold. More Successes mean the task completes faster.
- **Most other skill checks** are binary: the first net Success means the task is accomplished. Additional Successes describe *how well* it was done, faster, cleaner, more precise, more impressive, but they stay on the same axis as the task itself.

Boons (and Banes) add separate texture, what else changed beyond the action’s primary effect. They live on the Eight Axes below and never reskin the primary effect as “more of itself.”

The same roll uses both. On a Stealth check, extra Successes mean you moved cleanly and precisely; a Boon means you also learned the patrol pattern, or saved a charge of your light source. On an attack, extra Successes mean more damage; a Boon means you also reloaded as a free action, or spotted the next threat. On a Medicine check, extra Successes restore more Wounds; a Boon means you also preserved scarce supplies, or identified the cause of the injury.

When in doubt: Successes answer “how well did the action itself succeed?” Boons answer “what else changed?”

THE RESULT SPENDING LADDER

Net symbols scale by count. Use this ladder as the default for any check.

NET RESULT	SCOPE OF EFFECT	EXAMPLES
1 + / –	Minor texture	Recover 1 Strain; small positional shift; brief delay; small clue or oversight
2 + / –	Named effect	Inflict or shed a condition; gain or miss a useful detail; expose or shore up a weakness; help or hinder an ally’s next check
3+ + / –	Scene-shifting	Alter the environment; bypass or introduce a complication; create a lasting benefit or threat
☑	Exceptional positive	Critical Injury inflicted; truth revealed; reversal in your favor; lasting advantage
☒	Exceptional negative	Critical Injury suffered; truth withheld or weaponized; reversal against you; lasting threat

A Breakthrough and a Calamity are *meaningfully* stronger than a 3+ Boon or Bane spend. They change the shape of the scene; they do not just stack more of the same effect.

WHO SPENDS WHAT

The default protocol:

- **Players propose positive spends.** Boons and Breakthroughs belong to the player who rolled them. The player suggests how to spend them, recover Strain, gain a clue, inflict a condition, learn a fact. The GM may approve, adjust, or offer alternatives if the proposal does not fit the fiction.
- **The GM applies negative spends.** Banes and Calamities are the GM's tool to shape the scene. The GM decides what complication landed, what was lost, exposed, alerted, or worsened. The player may suggest, but the GM has final authority.

This protocol is collaborative, not adversarial. A GM who never accepts a player's Boon proposal is being too tight. A player who tries to dictate Calamity narration is overstepping. Both sides are building the same scene.

THE UNIVERSAL MENU: EIGHT AXES OF CHANGE

When you have leftover symbols and no obvious narrative use, change one of these eight things. This menu works for any skill, any check, any context.

AXIS	+ BOON SPEND	– BANE SPEND
Time	Faster, sooner, in fewer rounds	Slower, delayed, takes longer than expected
Position	Better cover, advantage, footing, reach	Exposed, off-balance, cornered, vulnerable
Information	Learn an extra fact, see a detail, recognize a pattern	Misread the situation, miss a clue, recall something wrong
Resources	Save supplies, ammo, time, money, charges	Lose, expend, or damage supplies, ammo, gear
Attention	Stay unnoticed, avoid drawing notice, slip away cleanly	Draw notice, alert someone, leave a trail
Condition	Apply or remove a temporary condition	Suffer a temporary condition; lose composure
Future Rolls	Add 1 Boon Die to the next related check	Add 1 Bane Die to the next related check
Scene	Open a new path, opportunity, escape route, or pressure point	Introduce a new hazard, threat, complication, or pressure

Spend along whichever axis fits the fiction. A successful Stealth check with extra Boons may move along Attention (you slip past unseen) or Information (you noticed the patrol's pattern) or Future Rolls (your next ally has an easier time). A failed Lore check with Boons may move along Information (you don't know the answer, but you know who would) or Scene (your interest reaches the right ear).

SKILL-FAMILY EXAMPLES

The eight axes apply to every kind of check. The following examples show what they look like in different domains.

COMBAT

- **2 +** — inflict Disoriented; shove the target a band; reload as a Quick Action; take cover from your strike
- **3+ +** — bypass armor on the next hit; reposition allies; control the engagement
- **2 –** — drop a weapon, expose a flank, draw a worse threat's attention, suffer 2 Strain
- **☑ on a hit** — Critical Injury inflicted; major battlefield reversal
- **☑ on a miss** — your missed shot reveals an opening, breaks cover for an ally, or destroys a hazard
- **⊗ on a hit** — your weapon breaks; the room goes loud; a worse enemy notices; your hit also injures an ally
- **⊗ on a miss** — friendly fire; you fall; the enemy escapes; you create the opening you feared

SEARCH, PERCEPTION, AND INVESTIGATION

- **2 + on success** — find it quickly; find an additional related detail; preserve the search site
- **2 + on failure** — learn where *not* to look; rule out a false lead; spot a separate hazard
- **☑ on success** — uncover the hidden truth that reframes the scene
- **☑ on failure** — you don't find it, but you find something *more* important
- **⊗ on success** — you find it and trigger the ward, alarm, or watcher
- **⊗ on failure** — you miss it *and* alert whatever was guarding it

LORE, KNOWLEDGE, AND RECALL

- **2 +** — recall a related fact; remember the name of someone who would know; identify the maker, era, or origin
- **☑ on success** — the answer connects to something already in play: a known enemy, a missing person, a buried history
- **☑ on failure** — you don't remember, but you remember *who told you*, and where that person is

SOCIAL (CHARM, DECEPTION, NEGOTIATION, INTIMIDATION, LEADERSHIP)

- **2 + on success** — improve disposition; reduce future difficulty with this NPC; learn a motive
- **2 + on failure** — they refuse, but you learn what would work; they respect your nerve; they leave a future opening
- **2 – on success** — they agree, but demand a price; remember the imposition; tell someone else
- **⊗ on success** — they agree, and immediately betray, blackmail, or weaponize the agreement
- **☑ on failure** — they refuse, but reveal their actual fear, weakness, or true loyalty

STEALTH AND SUBTERFUGE

- **2 + on success** — leave no trace; learn the patrol pattern; place yourself for the next action
- **2 + on failure** — you're seen, but only briefly; you misjudged the angle, but the watcher dismisses it
- **☑ on success** — the entire route is mapped; you reach a vantage point you didn't expect
- **⊗ on success** — you got through, but left evidence that someone *will* find

MEDICINE AND RECOVERY

- **2 +** — preserve scarce supplies; reduce treatment time; identify the cause of the injury
- **☑** — the patient recovers far beyond expectation, or you spot a separate condition that would have killed them
- **⊗ on success** — the patient lives, but with a complication: a scar, a weakness, a debt of conscience

CRAFT, OPERATE, AND TECHNICAL

- **2 +** — finish faster; conserve materials; add a small feature or improvement
- **☑ on a successful repair** — the system works *better* than before
- **☑ on a failed repair** — you can't fix it, but you identify the exact part needed and where to find it
- **⊗ on a successful build** — it works for now, but is unstable, traceable, or compromised
- **⊗ on operating a vehicle** — you maintain control, but lose a system, attract pursuit, or expose a weakness

SPELLS, POWERS, AND UNIVERSE-SPECIFIC ABILITIES

The default Exodus NDS rules do not include magic or supernatural powers — those belong to the Universe. The spending pattern carries:

- **2 +** — reduce the cost; extend the duration; affect a second target; suppress the signature
- **☑ on success** — the effect exceeds normal limits or reveals a deeper truth
- **☑ on failure** — the spell fails, but you learn its true nature, open a future channel, or avoid the cost
- **⊗ on success** — the spell works, but warps, drains, attracts attention, or backlashes
- **⊗ on failure** — the spell fails *and* something else gets through: backlash, possession, attention, unintended targets

MIXED RESULTS: THE FOUR QUADRANTS

The most distinctive moments in Exodus NDS occur when the main result and the exceptional result point in different directions. Use this matrix to read them.

MAIN RESULT	+ ☑ BREAKTHROUGH	+ ⊗ CALAMITY
Success	Clean win plus major upside. The task is done and something significant goes your way, a revelation, a permanent advantage, or a turning point.	You succeed, but at a serious cost. The task is done and something major has gone wrong, a price, an exposure, a wound, a debt, a watcher.
Failure	You fail the task, but something major breaks your way. You did not accomplish the goal, but a different opportunity, truth, or advantage opens.	You fail and the situation worsens significantly. The task is undone and the scene escalates, a new threat, a lasting wound, a closed door.

Each cell is a distinct narrative moment. None is just *more* of the cell next to it.

EXAMPLES BY PILLAR

Combat — Success + Calamity: Your blow lands and the enemy falls. Your weapon shatters in the strike, or your shout draws a worse threat, or you slip and fall Prone next to the body.

Combat — Failure + Breakthrough: Your shot misses. It strikes the chandelier above, the support beam, or the lantern, and the room changes. The enemy is still standing. The battlefield is not.

Investigation — Success + Calamity: You find what you were looking for. Finding it triggered the ward, the alarm, or the watcher. You have the prize. Something now has you.

Investigation — Failure + Breakthrough: You don't find what you were looking for. You find something else, older, stranger, or more dangerous, that you weren't supposed to see.

Social — Success + Calamity: They agree. They will betray you the moment it suits them, and you can see in their eyes that you both know it.

Social — Failure + Breakthrough: They refuse. In refusing, they reveal their true motive, their fear, or their lord's name, something you came for that you weren't asking about.

Spell — Success + Calamity: The spell works. It also tears something, your reserves, the Veil, your reputation, an ally's resistance, or a binding you did not know was holding.

Spell — Failure + Breakthrough: The spell fails. The failure illuminates *why*, and the next attempt will be different.

Craft — Success + Calamity: The repair holds. It will fail again at the worst possible moment, and you suspect when.

Craft — Failure + Breakthrough: You cannot fix it with what you have. You now know exactly what you need, who has it, and what it will cost.

FLOOR RULES: WHEN THE TABLE STALLS

If a player has leftover symbols and cannot decide what to do with them, do not let the table stall. Use these defaults.

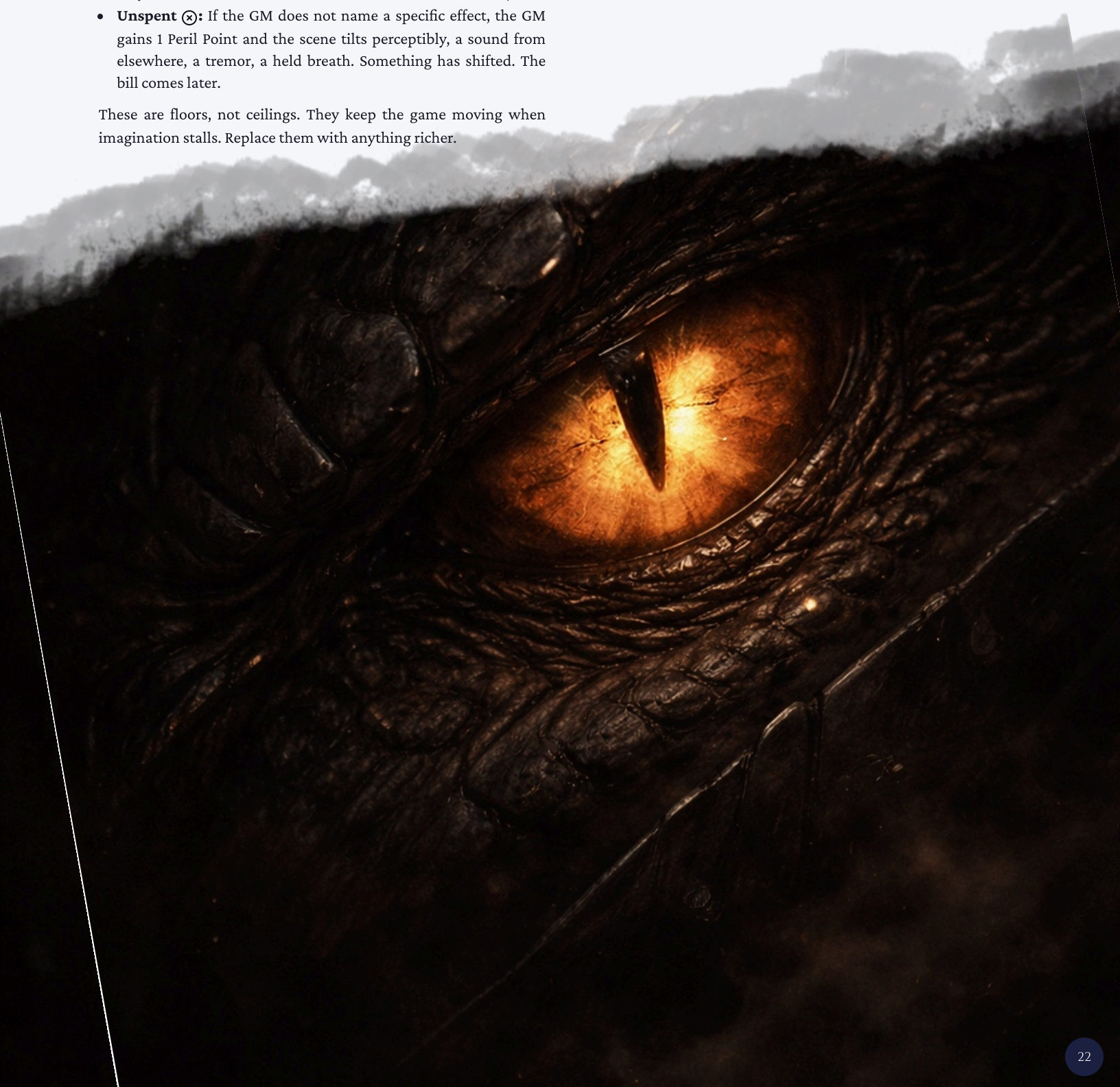
- **Unspent + (1):** Recover 1 Strain. Always available. Always sufficient.
- **Unspent + (2 or more):** Add 1 Boon Die to the next ally's check this scene.
- **Unspent ☺:** If no specific effect is chosen, the next ally to make a check this scene adds 1 Boon Die *and* the GM owes the table a moment of relief, a brief lull, a found item, a shorter watch.
- **Unspent —:** The character suffers 1 Strain per net Bane (the GM may instead translate to a fictional setback if one is obvious).
- **Unspent ☹:** If the GM does not name a specific effect, the GM gains 1 Peril Point and the scene tilts perceptibly, a sound from elsewhere, a tremor, a held breath. Something has shifted. The bill comes later.

These are floors, not ceilings. They keep the game moving when imagination stalls. Replace them with anything richer.

A NOTE FOR UNIVERSES

Every menu, axis, and example in this chapter is a default. Universes may rename the axes (Reputation, Heat, Charge, Veil), restrict the menus, expand the skill-family examples, or add entire new domains (mass combat, ritual, dueling, sailing). The protocol, three-step resolution, anti-duplication, players propose positive, GM applies negative, should remain stable across all Universes built on Exodus NDS.

Where a Universe rule conflicts with the defaults in this chapter, the Universe rule takes precedence.



CHAPTER SEVEN

TYPES OF CHECKS

SIMPLE CHECKS

The standard check: a character attempts a task against a fixed difficulty set by the GM. Roll the assembled pool and read the result. Additional Successes beyond the first increase the effectiveness of the action. As a general guideline:

- **1 Success** — The task succeeds as intended
- **2–3 Successes** — Improved outcome (faster, stronger, more precise, or more efficient)
- **4+ Successes** — Exceptional outcome (significant advantage, amplified impact, or superior positioning)

The exact effect depends on the situation and Universe, but additional Successes should always matter.

OPPOSED CHECKS

When two characters directly contest each other, both build their dice pools normally, including any  Boon or  Bane Dice from conditions, environment, or assistance, but neither character adds Trial or Crisis Dice for the other's opposition. Results are compared directly: the character with more net Successes wins. On a tie, the initiating character loses, the defender holds their position by default.

Remaining Boons and Banes are still read for secondary effects after the winner is determined. Ties intentionally favor the defender, reflecting the advantage of holding position. Defense ratings and other passive modifiers still apply to opposed checks unless a specific rule states otherwise.

ASSISTED CHECKS

Use an Assisted Check when one character is the primary actor and up to two characters help. The assistants must describe a concrete contribution and be in a position to help. The primary character builds and rolls the check; the assistants do not roll unless the GM calls for a separate setup check.

A meaningful assist adds 1 Boon Die  to the primary character's pool. If an assisting character has more ranks in the relevant skill than the primary character, the assist adds 1 Ability Die  instead of the Boon Die.

No check can gain more than two assisting dice total, and no more than one of those dice may be an Ability Die. The usual results are +1  Boon Die, +2  Boon Dice, or +1  Boon Die and +1  Ability Die. Extra helpers may justify the assist, reduce time, carry tools, watch for danger, or change the fictional position, but they do not add more dice unless a specific rule says otherwise.

Assisting carries risk. If the primary check generates — Banes, a  Calamity, or a serious consequence, the GM may assign part of that consequence to the assistant when the fiction supports it.

GROUP CHECKS

Use a Group Check when the characters share one outcome and the group succeeds or fails together, such as lifting a piano, forcing a heavy door, carrying a wounded ally, holding a barricade, or rowing through rough water. If every character's individual performance matters, each character rolls separately instead; moving silently, crossing a narrow ledge, resisting poison, or searching separate rooms are usually individual checks.

For a Group Check, choose the best-positioned character as the performer, usually the character with the strongest relevant pool. Compare that character's relevant skill rank to the lowest relevant skill rank among the necessary participants. Add Bane Dice  equal to the difference. If the task is mostly raw physical effort rather than trained technique, the GM may use the relevant characteristic instead of skill rank.

Characters who are not necessary to the effort do not increase the Bane Dice. A character who must be carried, protected, or managed may count as rank 0 or may create a separate complication, depending on the scene. The normal dice pool limits still apply.

EXTENDED CHECKS

Some tasks are too complex to resolve in a single roll. The GM sets:

- A **difficulty** (as normal)
- A **success threshold** — the total number of net Successes required
- A **time unit** — each roll represents a span of time (minutes, hours, scenes, etc.)
- An optional **attempt limit** — the maximum number of rolls before the task fails or the situation changes

Each roll, net Successes accumulate. When the threshold is met, the task is complete. Boons, Banes, Breakthroughs, and Calamities apply as normal on each roll and can alter the situation even before completion. Failure in an extended check should meaningfully change the situation, time is lost, resources are consumed, danger escalates, or the opportunity is no longer available.

If the attempt limit is reached without meeting the threshold, the task fails, the Universe or GM defines the consequence.

Extended Checks are also the default structure for chases, long cons, debates, investigations, and other contests that need more than one roll. For a chase, each roll usually represents one exchange of pursuit, escape, or positioning. For an extended social conflict, the threshold represents trust, doubt, leverage, public support, or another social position that changes over time.

CHAPTER EIGHT

STORY POINTS

Story Points are a shared narrative resource that flows between the players and the GM, representing shifting momentum, fortune, and dramatic pressure.

THE POOL

At the start of each session, the group generates a pool of Story Points.

The default pool is:

- **Fortune Points:** 1 per player
- **Peril Points:** 1 for the GM

Universes may change the size of the pool, how points are assigned, or how the pool refreshes.

SPENDING FORTUNE POINTS

A player may spend a Fortune Point to:

- **Upgrade** one ♦ Ability Die in their pool to a ◆ Mastery Die before rolling
- **Activate** a Breakthrough effect after rolling, in addition to any rolled
- **Introduce** a minor narrative detail favorable to the players (subject to GM approval)

By default, a player may spend a Fortune Point on their own check or on another player character's check if the table agrees the spend supports the scene. The one Story Point per check limit still applies.

When a Fortune Point is spent, it becomes a **Peril Point**, it flips to the GM's side.

SPENDING PERIL POINTS

The GM may spend a Peril Point to:

- **Upgrade** one ◆ Trial Die in the difficulty pool to a ◆ Crisis Die
- **Activate** a Calamity effect after a player rolls, in addition to any rolled
- **Introduce** a complication into the scene

When a Peril Point is spent, it becomes a **Fortune Point**, it flips to the players' side.

Nemeses spend from the GM's shared Peril Pool unless a Universe or encounter grants a private Nemesis pool. If a Nemesis uses the shared pool, the GM is choosing between that Nemesis's immediate pressure and other scene-level complications.

THE ECONOMY OF PRESSURE

Story Points create a rhythm of escalation and relief. When the GM spends Peril to make a scene harder, that pressure becomes a Fortune Point the players can spend back. The pool rarely sits still.

WHEN TO SPEND STORY POINTS

Story Points may be spent **before or after a roll**, depending on their use. Upgrades to the dice pool must be declared before rolling. Narrative effects, triggered abilities, and Breakthrough or Calamity activations may occur after results are known. A character may spend only one Story Point per check unless the GM explicitly allows otherwise.

EARNING STORY POINTS

Universes may define additional ways Story Points are earned during play, heroic acts, dramatic failures, or significant story moments. These always specify which side of the pool receives the point.



QUARTER NINE

STRUCTURED PLAY

Exodus NDS distinguishes between **narrative play**, free-form role-play and low-stakes action resolved by simple checks, and **structured play**, used when timing and sequence matter: combat, chases, high-stakes infiltrations, and similar situations.

The GM calls for structured play when the order of actions matters, when multiple parties are in active conflict, or when failure to act in time would itself have consequences.

STRUCTURED TURNS

Structured play proceeds in **rounds**. Each round, every participant takes a **turn**. On their turn, a character may:

- Take **one Action** — a significant activity requiring a check or meaningful effort
- Take **up to two Maneuvers** — minor activities that support or set up an action

A character may take one Maneuver freely. A second Maneuver costs either the character's Action or **2 Strain**. They may never take more than two Maneuvers in one turn.

Quick Actions — talking briefly, dropping an item, glancing around, do not cost actions or maneuvers but should be brief and reasonable. The GM has final authority on what qualifies as a Quick Action. See the Quick Actions section below for full details.

INITIATIVE

At the start of structured play, each participant makes an **Initiative check**. Use **Savvy + Perception** when the character is on watch, prepared, or had warning. Use **Willpower + Readiness** when the character is surprised, ambushed, or forced to react under sudden pressure. Results are ranked by net Successes.

Initiative slots are divided into **player slots** and **GM slots** based on who rolled them. Within each round, players and GM alternate claiming slots in ranked order. Players choose which character acts in each player slot; the GM chooses for each GM slot. Ties between a player slot and a GM slot favor the players. Ties within the same side (player or GM) are resolved in any order chosen by that side.

Initiative order remains fixed between rounds unless a specific ability or effect changes it. Universes may replace these Initiative pairings when the genre calls for different readiness skills.

INITIATIVE EXAMPLE

Rana and Kael face two raiders. Rana rolls 3 net Successes, Raider A rolls 2, Kael rolls 1, and Raider B rolls 1. The ranked slots are: player, GM, player, GM. Kael and Raider B tied, so the player slot ranks before the GM slot. On the first player slot, the players choose whether Rana or Kael acts; on the GM slot, the GM chooses which raider acts. The same slot order repeats each round, but either side may choose a different eligible character for its own slot.

SURPRISE

Surprise changes which Initiative check applies; it does not normally create a free round or automatically remove a character's first turn. A surprised character rolls **Willpower + Readiness**. If a character is completely unaware and has no plausible chance to react, the GM may also add  Bane Dice, start the character out of position, deny prepared equipment, or apply another immediate fictional consequence.

RANGE AND POSITIONING

Exodus NDS assumes an **abstract range band system** unless a Universe specifies otherwise.

Common range bands include:

- **Engaged** — within immediate reach (melee)
- **Short** — across a room or small area
- **Medium** — across a battlefield
- **Long** — distant but visible
- **Extreme** — at the limits of perception or capability

Characters in the Engaged range band are close enough to interact directly, including making melee attacks or physical contact. Moving between Engaged, Short, and Medium costs **one Maneuver per band**. Moving between Medium and Long, or between Long and Extreme, costs **two Maneuvers per band**, reflecting the greater distances involved. Terrain and conditions may modify these costs. Universes may replace or expand this system as needed.

ATTACK DIFFICULTY

Unless a Universe or weapon profile says otherwise, attacks use the following base difficulties:

ATTACK	DEFAULT DIFFICULTY
Melee or Unarmed at Engaged	Average
Ranged at Engaged	Easy + 1  Bane Die
Ranged at Short	Easy
Ranged at Medium	Average
Ranged at Long	Hard
Ranged at Extreme	Severe

A weapon's **Range** lists the bands where it is meant to attack. Attacking beyond the listed range is not normally possible unless the GM allows it; if allowed, add at least 1 Bane Die per band beyond the weapon's listed range or increase the difficulty. Defense, cover, conditions, talents, and situational effects apply after the base difficulty is set.

Unarmed attacks use **Might + Unarmed**. The default unarmed profile is Damage = Might, Crit 5, Range Engaged, no qualities. Universes may replace this with genre-specific unarmed, natural weapon, or martial arts profiles.

ACTIONS

Actions include, but are not limited to:

- **Making an attack**
- **Using a skill** under time pressure
- **Activating an ability or power** (Universe-defined)
- **Aiding an ally** (the Assisted Check rules apply)
- **Interacting with the environment** in a complex way

MANEUVERS

Maneuvers include, but are not limited to:

- Moving to a new position or range band
- Drawing, holstering, or readying an item
- Taking cover or dropping prone
- Opening a door, flipping a switch, or similar simple interaction
- Aiming (adds a  Boon Die to the next attack this turn)

A character may perform the same Maneuver more than once on their turn, provided it makes sense in the fiction (such as moving twice to cross a large space).

COVER

Cover protects against ranged attacks when it is between the attacker and the target. **Light cover** adds 1 Ranged Defense. **Heavy cover** adds 2 Ranged Defense. Cover does not usually protect against melee attacks unless the fiction clearly supports it.

Cover applies only while the character remains behind it. A character who moves out of cover loses its benefit. The GM may reduce or remove cover if the character exposes themselves, is flanked, or the cover is destroyed.

QUICK ACTIONS

Quick Actions are minor reflexive activities that require no significant time or effort. Examples include speaking a short phrase, dropping a held item, glancing around a corner, or pressing a simple switch. A character may perform any number of Quick Actions during their turn, at any point before, during, or after their Action and Maneuvers.

Quick Actions cannot substitute for meaningful effort. If an activity requires a check, concentration, or more than a moment of attention, it is an Action or Maneuver instead. Quick Actions also cannot be repeated in rapid succession to generate mechanical advantage, dropping ten items to trigger ten effects, or shouting multiple commands to bypass an Action, are not valid uses. The GM has final authority on what qualifies as a Quick Action.

EXAMPLE TURN IN STRUCTURED PLAY

The following shows one complete player turn and one GM turn, demonstrating how the action economy flows at the table.

The situation: Kael is facing a security officer across a warehouse floor. The officer is at Short range. It is Kael's initiative slot.

Kael's turn.

Kael's player announces a Maneuver to close distance, moving from Short range to Engaged. Kael then uses their Action to attack, rolling their combat pool against Average difficulty. The roll produces 2  and 1  against 1 . After cancellation: 1 net Success, 1 net Boon.

The hit lands. The player spends the Boon to knock the officer off-balance; the GM notes they'll start their turn Disoriented.

As a Quick Action, Kael shouts a warning to her ally across the room. No roll, no cost.

The officer's turn (GM's slot, immediately after).

The officer is Disoriented; he adds one  to his pool. He spends his Maneuver to back away to Short range and his Action to return fire. The added Bane cancels one of his Boons. He hits but generates no secondary effects.

The round ends. Both sides have used their slots. A new round begins; initiative order stays the same.

THE ECONOMY IN BRIEF

Each turn: **1 Action + 1 Maneuver** by default. A second Maneuver costs either your Action or **2 Strain**. Universes may offer additional Strain uses or modify this cost.

COMBAT BOON SPENDS

COMMON BOON SPENDS DURING COMBAT INCLUDE:

COST	EFFECT
+	Recover 1 Strain if there is no stronger use
+	Gain a small positional advantage, keep hold of an item, or set up an ally
++	Inflict a fitting temporary condition, such as Disoriented or Prone
++	Activate Blast, Burn, Burst, or Stun if the weapon has that quality
++	Notice an additional detail, danger, or opening
Crit rating	Inflict a Critical Injury if the attack uses a weapon with a Crit rating
	Inflict a Critical Injury when spent on the attack

DAMAGE AND RESISTANCE

When an attack succeeds, it deals **damage**. A successful hit deals the weapon's base damage as defined by the Universe. Each additional Success beyond the first adds 1 to that total, the first Success confirms the hit, extras determine how hard it lands.

Resistance reduces damage before it is applied to a character's Wound Points. Resistance equals half Might, rounded up, plus any armor or protection. Wounds suffered equal: **Damage – Resistance = Wounds suffered** (minimum 0)

If a hit causes 0 Wounds after Resistance, it still connects but causes no meaningful injury.

Use damage wording consistently: a source **deals damage** before Resistance; a target **takes damage** by applying Resistance to that incoming amount; a target **suffers Wounds** or **suffers Strain** when the listed amount is applied directly to that track unless the effect says otherwise.

CRITICAL INJURIES

A Critical Injury is triggered when:

- A character suffers a hit while already incapacitated
- An attacker spends a ☹ **Breakthrough** on the attack to inflict one
- An attack generates net + Boons equal to or greater than the weapon's **Critical** rating, and those + Boons are spent to inflict a Critical Injury

To resolve a Critical Injury: roll percentile dice (d100) and add **+10 for each Critical Injury the target already has**. Consult the Critical Injury table in the active Universe, or use the default Critical Injury table in the Recovery chapter if no table is available. Each Critical Injury continues adding +10 to future Critical Injury rolls until that specific injury is removed through medical care.

When a single attack triggers more than one Critical Injury, resolve them in order. The second Critical Injury from that attack adds **+10** to its roll; the third adds **+20**; and so on, with each subsequent crit adding +10 more than the one before it. This bonus is in addition to the +10 per existing Critical Injury already on the target. **Critical Injuries compound**. A character with multiple untreated Critical Injuries is in real danger; removing them should be a recovery priority.

ATTACK EXAMPLE

Rana fires a pistol at a guard at Short range. The base difficulty is Easy. Rana has Agility 3 and Ranged 1, so her positive pool is 1 Mastery Die and 2 Ability Dice. The guard has Ranged Defense 1 from cover, so Rana adds 1 Bane Die.

The roll leaves 2 net Successes and 1 net Boon. The first Success hits; the second adds +1 damage. If the pistol has Damage 5, the total damage is 6. The guard has Resistance 3, so the guard suffers 3 Wounds. Rana spends the Boon to keep pressure on the guard, giving an ally 1 Boon Die on their next check against him.

EQUIPMENT AND WEAPON PROFILES

Equipment belongs to the active Universe. A fantasy kingdom, a diesel-punk war story, a modern thriller, and a space opera may all use the same core rules while offering very different tools.

The core rules do not use a fixed technology-age ladder. Swords, bows, firearms, powered armor, and energy blades can all exist in the same Universe if the fiction supports them. Instead, Universes should describe where an item belongs using plain availability and context.

COMMON EQUIPMENT TAGS INCLUDE:

TAG	USE
Common	Widely available to ordinary people in the Universe.
Restricted	Legal, social, or institutional permission is required.
Military	Intended for soldiers, security forces, or organized conflict.
Rare	Difficult to find, expensive, lost, or culturally limited.
Prototype	Experimental, unstable, unique, or not broadly available.
Relic	Old, sacred, historical, alien, magical, or otherwise exceptional.

WEAPONS NORMALLY USE THE FOLLOWING PROFILE:

FIELD	MEANING
Damage	Base damage dealt on a successful hit before additional Successes.
Range	The range bands where the weapon is effective.
Critical	The number of net Boons that must be spent to inflict a Critical Injury. Often abbreviated Crit . A Breakthrough may also be spent to inflict one.
Qualities	Special rules such as Accurate, Blast, Burn, Burst, Defensive, Inaccurate, Limited Ammo, Overheat, Pierce, Slow-Firing, Stun, or Vicious.
Availability	Common, Restricted, Military, Rare, Prototype, Relic, or a Universe-specific tag.

ARMOR AND PROTECTION NORMALLY LIST:

FIELD	MEANING
Resistance Bonus	Added to Resistance after half Might is calculated.
Defense	Added to Melee Defense, Ranged Defense, or both.
Qualities	Special rules such as bulky, sealed, powered, reflective, ablative, or Universe-specific effects.
Availability	How easy the item is to acquire in the Universe.

COMMON WEAPON QUALITIES

These qualities are genre-neutral examples. Universes may rename, remove, or replace them.

QUALITY	EFFECT
Accurate X	Add X  Boon Dice to attacks made with the weapon.
Blast X	Spend 2 + Boons to deal X damage to other targets Engaged with the original target.
Burn X	Spend 2 + Boons to ignite or afflict the target; the target suffers X Wounds at the start of each of its turns. The target or an Engaged ally may spend an Action to end Burn. The GM may require an Easy or Average check if the fire, acid, corruption, or other effect is especially severe.
Burst X	Spend 2 + Boons to hit one additional target within range for X damage, before Resistance.
Defensive X	Add X Melee Defense while the item is readied and usable.
Inaccurate X	Add X Bane Dice to attacks made with the weapon.
Limited Ammo X	The item can be used X times before it must be reloaded, recharged, replaced, or resupplied.
Overheat	If the attack generates 2 or more — Banes or a ☒ Calamity, the weapon overheats, jams, vents, or becomes unsafe until an Action is spent clearing it.
Pierce X	Ignore X points of Resistance.
Slow-Firing X	After attacking, the weapon cannot be fired again for X rounds or until X appropriate actions are spent readying it.
Stun X	Spend 2 + Boons to inflict X Strain instead of or in addition to the weapon's normal effect, as defined by the weapon.
Vicious X	Add +X to Critical Injury rolls caused by the weapon.

Crit appears on the weapon profile, not as a weapon quality. See Critical Injuries for how Crit ratings are spent.

WOUND POINTS AND STRAIN POINTS

Characters have two damage tracks:

Wounds represent physical injury. When a character's total accumulated Wounds meet or exceed their **Wound Points**, they are **incapacitated**, unconscious, helpless, or otherwise out of the fight until current Wounds fall below Wound Points.

Strain represents mental and physical exertion: stress, fatigue, and pushing beyond limits. When accumulated Strain meets or exceeds the **Strain Points**, the character is also incapacitated. Characters may voluntarily suffer Strain to gain minor advantages. The default core use is suffering **2 Strain** to take a second Maneuver

instead of giving up an Action. Universes may offer additional Strain uses or modify this cost.

Effects that inflict Strain do not subtract Resistance unless a specific effect says otherwise. Minions and Elites do not have Strain Points; when they suffer Strain, convert it to Wounds at a rate of **1 Strain = 1 Wound**.

CONDITIONS

The following conditions are universal. Universes may add additional conditions or modify these.

Staggered — The character cannot perform Actions this turn. They may still take Maneuvers. Staggered ends at the start of the character's next turn unless a specific effect says otherwise.

Disoriented — Add one Bane Die  to all checks the character makes. Disoriented ends at a time specified by the effect that caused it.

Immobilized — The character cannot perform Maneuvers that involve movement. They may still act in place.

Prone — The character is on the ground. Ranged attacks against them add one  Bane Die. Melee attacks against them add one  Boon Die. Standing up costs one Maneuver.

Silenced — The character cannot speak or communicate vocally. Relevant checks that require communication automatically fail.

Restrained — The character is physically bound, pinned, grappled, or otherwise held in place. They are Immobilized and add 1  Bane Die to checks that require free movement until they escape or the restraint ends.

Bleeding — The character suffers ongoing Wounds at the time specified by the effect that caused Bleeding. If no amount is listed, suffer 1 Wound at the start of each turn. An Action and an Average Medicine check, or other appropriate aid, ends Bleeding.

Burning — The character suffers ongoing Wounds from fire, acid, corruption, or a similar effect. The amount is defined by the effect that caused Burning. The character or an Engaged ally may spend an Action to end Burning; the GM may require an Easy or Average check if the source is severe.

Hidden — The character is not currently detected by a relevant observer. Attacks against a Hidden character add 1  Bane Die, and the Hidden character may add 1  Boon Die to their first attack or escape check made from concealment. Hidden ends when the character reveals themselves, attacks, makes obvious noise, or is discovered.

Universes may rename conditions when setting terminology requires it. Use the local Universe's condition name when it is explicitly defined.

Conditions do not stack unless explicitly stated. Applying the same condition multiple times extends its duration rather than increasing its effect. If a condition does not specify a duration, it lasts until the end of the affected character's next turn.

ADVERSARIES

Non-player characters and creatures are divided into three tiers reflecting their narrative significance and mechanical complexity.

The example stat blocks below may include armor, protection, natural toughness, or other built-in defenses. Their listed Resistance is the final value used in play, not only the value from half Might.

Stat Block Format: Characteristics are listed as Might / Agility / Intellect / Savvy / Willpower / Charisma. Defenses and durability are listed as Resistance / Wound Points / Strain Points where applicable / Melee Defense / Ranged Defense.

MINIONS

Minions are low-tier adversaries, guards, wildlife, untrained combatants. They operate in **groups**, sharing a single pool of Wounds as a unit.

- A Minion group's Wound total equals the **Wound Points of one Minion × the number of Minions** in the group.
- Each time the group suffers Wounds equal to one Minion's Wound Points, one Minion is eliminated.
- Minions do not have Strain Points. Strain-causing effects remove Wounds instead at a rate of **1 Strain = 1 Wound**.
- A Minion group acts as a single entity on its initiative slot. It makes one check per round.
- Minions **cannot** spend Story Points and **do not** suffer Critical Injuries, they are simply eliminated when their Wounds are exhausted.

MINION NAME (MINION)

MIG	AGI	INT	SAV	WIL	CHA
2	2	1	2	1	2

RES	WND	MDEF	RDEF
1	8	0	0

- **Group Size:** 4
- **Skills:** Melee 1, Ranged 1
- **Abilities:** None
- **Equipment:** Dagger, Slingshot

ELITES

Elites are mid-tier adversaries, skilled opponents, dangerous beasts, significant threats. They act as individuals.

- Elites have **Wound Points** but **no Strain Points**. Effects that would cause them Strain cause Wounds instead at a rate of **1 Strain = 1 Wound**.
- Elites **can** suffer Critical Injuries.
- Elites **cannot** spend Story Points.

ELITE — EXAMPLE: VETERAN GUARD

MIG	AGI	INT	SAV	WIL	CHA
3	3	2	2	2	1

RES	WND	MDEF	RDEF
5	14	0	1

- **Skills:** Melee 2, Ranged 2, Stealth 1, Perception 2
- **Abilities:** Quick Draw
- **Equipment:** Pistol, Combat Knife

NEMESSES

Nemeses are top-tier adversaries, major antagonists, boss-level threats, unique creatures. They are full characters in mechanical terms.

- Nemeses have both **Wound Points** and **Strain Points**.
- Nemeses **can** suffer Critical Injuries.
- Nemeses **can** spend Peril Points from the GM's shared Peril Pool as if they were a player spending Fortune Points, to upgrade their own dice, activate Breakthroughs, or introduce complications. Universes or encounters may grant a Nemesis a private Peril reserve.

NEMESIS — EXAMPLE: CRIME LORD

MIG	AGI	INT	SAV	WIL	CHA
2	3	4	4	3	4

RES	WND	STR	MDEF	RDEF
4	15	16	0	2

- **Skills:** Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 4, Ranged 4
- **Abilities:** Cool Head,
- **Equipment:** Pistol, Grenades x3

DEFENSE

Adversaries (and characters with certain abilities or equipment) may have **Melee Defense** and **Ranged Defense** ratings. Each point of defense in the relevant category adds one Bane Die  to attack checks made against them.

Defense from different sources stacks, including armor, cover, talents, equipment, and conditions. Unless a Universe or specific effect says otherwise, final Melee Defense and Ranged Defense are each capped at 3. Higher values are possible but should be rare and deliberate.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

VEHICLES

Vehicles use the same dice resolution system as characters, with a separate set of characteristics reflecting their physical properties rather than the operator's.

VEHICLE CHARACTERISTICS

CHARACTERISTIC	DESCRIPTION
Scale	Physical size category, rated 0 to 10 (0 = tiny; 1 = person-sized; 2 = small craft; 3 = medium vehicle; 4 = large vehicle; 5 = massive vehicle; 6 = capital ship; 7 = flagship; 8 = small installation; 9 = super-capital or installation; 10 = titanic)
Speed	Maximum rate of movement per maneuver; higher Speed allows covering more ground
Handling	Agility and responsiveness; adds or subtracts from Operate checks (range: -5 to +5)
Armor	Reduces incoming damage like Resistance; does not stack with personal Resistance
Defense	Adds  Bane Dice to attack checks made against the vehicle
Hull Points	Structural integrity; vehicle is disabled when Hull Damage reaches this value
System Points	Operational capacity; vehicle loses control when System Damage reaches this value
Crew & Passengers	The normal crew needed to operate the vehicle and the number of passengers it can carry

OPERATING A VEHICLE

Most vehicle actions are resolved by the **operator** making an Operate check using their own dice pool, modified by the vehicle's Handling. Positive Handling adds Boon Dice; negative Handling adds Bane Dice. Vehicle attacks are typically resolved using the operator's relevant combat skill, modified by the vehicle's Handling unless the Universe specifies otherwise.

Vehicles act within structured play using the same initiative and turn rules as characters, unless a Universe specifies otherwise. In multi-crew vehicles, one character typically acts as the primary operator each round. Other crew members may assist the operator, man weapons, operate sensors, make repairs, handle cargo, or perform other vehicle actions with their own checks.

The default skill for operating vehicles, mounts, ships, machines, mechs, or similar controlled systems is Operate. Universes may define different characteristics, skills, or specialties for specific vehicle types.

VEHICLE DAMAGE

Attacks against vehicles deal **Hull Damage** (structural damage) or **System Damage** (system/crew damage), depending on the attack type. Universes define which weapons deal which type.

- When Hull Damage meets or exceeds the **Hull Points**, the vehicle is **disabled**, unable to move or act until repaired.
- When System Damage meets or exceeds the **System Points**, the vehicle **loses control**, it may crash, drift, or otherwise become a hazard as determined by the GM.

REPAIRING VEHICLE DAMAGE

Vehicle damage does not recover on its own. A character repairing a vehicle makes a **Craft** check with appropriate time, tools, parts, and access to the damaged system. Each net Success removes 1 Hull Damage or 1 System Damage. + 2 Boons may remove 1 additional damage, preserve parts, reduce repair time, or keep the work quiet.

Use the following default difficulties unless the Universe defines its own repair rules:

DAMAGE STATE	REPAIR DIFFICULTY
Minor field damage	Easy Craft check
Disabled vehicle or lost control	Average Craft check
Heavy damage, missing parts, hostile conditions	Hard Craft check
Destroyed, catastrophic, exotic, or impossible damage	Severe Craft check, special resources, or story resolution

Emergency repairs made during structured play normally require an Action, restore function rather than fully repairing the vehicle, and last until the end of the encounter or until the fiction says they fail.

SCALE IN COMBAT

Scale matters when vehicles of different sizes engage each other. When attacking a target of significantly higher Scale, remove  Bane Dice from the attacker's pool up to the Scale difference (minimum zero). When attacking a significantly smaller target, add Bane Dice equal to the difference.

For example, a Scale 2 vehicle attacking a Scale 4 target removes up to 2  Bane Dice from its pool, reflecting the difficulty of missing a much larger target.

If a Universe does not define a specific threshold, a difference of 2 or more Scale is considered significant.

ASH RUNNERS COLLECTOR HAULER

SCALE 4	SPEED 3	HAND 0	
ARMOR 2	DEF 0 / 0	HULL 20	SYS 12
CREW 6 Wannabes - 2 Captives		SKILL Operate	

Consumables: 1 month

Cargo Capacity: 200 encumbrance units, or equivalent Universe-defined cargo

Cost/Availability: 40,000 Universe currency / Restricted, Rare

WEAPONS

- 1 Forward-Mounted Scrap Cannon (Damage 5; Crit 4; Range [Short]; Inaccurate 2, Slow-Firing 1)
- 1 Jury-Rigged Plasma Turret (Damage 6; Crit 3; Range [Short]; Overheat, Limited Ammo 5)

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

- **Implant Detonator Node** — Command system tied to crew collars. If triggered, kills the entire crew instantly.

CRITICAL HITS ON VEHICLES

A vehicle suffers a **Critical Hit** when:

- It suffers a hit while already disabled or at maximum System Damage
- An attacker spends + Boons equal to the attacking weapon's **Crit** rating
- An attacker spends a ☑ **Breakthrough** to trigger one

If the attacking weapon has no listed Crit rating, the default cost is **3 Boons** unless the Universe defines a different threshold.

Roll percentile dice (d100) and add +10 per existing Critical Hit on the vehicle. Consult the vehicle Critical Hit table in the active Universe, or use the default table below if no Universe table is available. Each existing Critical Hit continues adding +10 to future vehicle Critical Hit rolls until that specific hit is repaired.

To repair a vehicle Critical Hit, a character makes a Craft check with appropriate time, tools, parts, and access to the damaged system. The difficulty is based on severity: Minor is Easy, Moderate is Average, Severe is Hard, and Deadly is Severe or requires special resources, a safe facility, or story resolution. On success, the Critical Hit is removed and no longer adds +10 to future vehicle Critical Hit rolls. On failure, the Critical Hit remains. — Banes or a ☒ Calamity may consume parts, increase repair time, damage another system, or create a new complication.



DEFAULT VEHICLE CRITICAL HIT TABLE

DI00 RESULT	SEVERITY	HIT	EFFECT
01-05	Minor	Shaken Crew	All crew suffer 1 Strain.
06-10	Minor	Cosmetic Damage	The vehicle leaves obvious debris, smoke, sparks, or a trail until repaired. Tracking it adds 1 Boon Die.
11-15	Minor	Jolt	The operator adds 1 Bane Die to their next Operate check before the end of their next turn.
16-20	Minor	Loose Cargo	One unsecured item, passenger, or cargo group is thrown around. The GM may move it, damage it, or require a check to keep control of it.
21-25	Minor	Sensor Glitch	Until the end of the encounter, checks using the vehicle's sensors, comms, targeting, or awareness systems add 1 Bane Die.
26-30	Minor	Armor Scored	Until repaired, reduce vehicle Armor by 1, minimum 0.
31-35	Moderate	Control Lag	Until the end of the encounter, negative Handling is worsened by 1 or positive Handling is reduced by 1.
36-40	Moderate	Weapon Disrupted	One weapon chosen by the GM cannot be used until a crew member spends an Action to clear, reset, reload, or reroute it.
41-45	Moderate	Drive Strain	The vehicle suffers 2 System Damage.
46-50	Moderate	Hull Breach	The vehicle suffers 2 Hull Damage. If the fiction calls for it, atmosphere, fuel, cargo, or passengers are exposed.
51-55	Moderate	Systems Flicker	Until the end of the encounter, the vehicle loses one nonessential system chosen by the GM.
56-60	Moderate	Exposed Profile	Until the start of the operator's next turn, attacks against the vehicle add 1 Boon Die.
61-65	Severe	Steering Damage	Until repaired, all Operate checks with the vehicle add 1 Bane Die.
66-70	Severe	Engine Hit	Reduce Speed by 1, minimum 0, until repaired.
71-75	Severe	Defensive Systems Down	Reduce vehicle Defense by 1, minimum 0, until repaired.
76-80	Severe	Weapon Disabled	One weapon chosen by the GM is disabled until repaired.
81-85	Severe	Structural Fracture	Until repaired, Hull Damage recovery and repair restore half the normal amount, rounded down, minimum 1.
86-90	Deadly	Systems Crash	The vehicle immediately loses control and suffers 3 System Damage. The operator may make a Hard Operate check to prevent a crash, spinout, stall, or equivalent disaster.
91-95	Deadly	Catastrophic Breach	The vehicle suffers 3 Hull Damage. Crew and passengers are exposed to an immediate hazard appropriate to the Universe.
96-100	Deadly	Power Failure	The vehicle is disabled until a crew member succeeds on a Hard Craft or Operate check to restore emergency function.
101-110	Deadly	Breaking Apart	The vehicle is disabled and loses control. It will be destroyed unless stabilized, landed, stopped, or otherwise rescued immediately.
111+	Deadly	Catastrophic Loss	The vehicle is destroyed, crashes, explodes, tears apart, or otherwise becomes unsalvageable unless a major narrative rescue or extraordinary intervention prevents it. The GM should make the danger clear and give the crew a chance to act.

RECOVERY

CHAPTER TWELVE

Strain recovers quickly during play, while Wounds represent more serious injury and recover more slowly over time. The following are the default recovery rates. Universes may adjust recovery pacing to match genre, tone, danger level, available supplies, and access to care.

RECOVERING WOUNDS

Wounds do not heal quickly on their own. After a full night's rest or equivalent, recover Wounds equal to **Might**.

If receiving medical care, the caregiver makes a Medicine check. Difficulty is based on conditions, supplies, and severity. Each net ✓ Success restores **1 additional Wound**. + 2 Boons may restore **1 extra Wound**, preserve supplies, or reduce recovery time.

FIELD TREATMENT

During structured play, a character may use an Action to provide urgent medical aid to an Engaged character. The caregiver makes a Medicine check using the difficulty named by the injury, condition, or GM. If no difficulty is listed, use **Average** for battlefield care.

Field treatment can stop bleeding, prevent an immediate worsening effect, allow a character to remain alive long enough for proper treatment, or satisfy a Critical Injury entry that calls for medical aid. It does not remove the Critical Injury itself unless that entry or the GM specifically allows it. Improvised tools, unsafe surroundings, or rushed work add ■ Bane Dice.

RECOVERING STRAIN

Strain recovers rapidly. At the end of any **structured encounter**, characters recover Strain equal to **Willpower**. During a full night's rest, recover **all** Strain unless the character was incapacitated by Strain.

As a Maneuver once per encounter, any character with Strain Points may **Catch Breath** and recover **1 Strain**. Minions and Elites do not have Strain Points and cannot Catch Breath. The **Catch Breath** talent improves the recovery to **2 Strain** once per encounter without changing the Maneuver type or limit. Spend + 1 Boon with no stronger use to recover **1 Strain**.

RECOVERING FROM INCAPACITATION

A character incapacitated by Wounds is out of the encounter. After the encounter ends, they stabilize unless another character or effect specifies otherwise. Universes define long-term consequences of incapacitation.

A character incapacitated by Strain does not recover all Strain from a full rest. Instead, after a full rest, reduce current Strain to half the character's Strain Points, rounded down. The character may still carry ongoing effects from any Critical Injuries or conditions accumulated.

RECOVERING CRITICAL INJURIES

Critical Injuries require active treatment. The immediate effect of a Critical Injury may be temporary, such as falling prone, losing a Maneuver, dropping an item, or adding Bane Dice for a short time. The **Critical Injury itself remains** until removed through medical care.

Each existing Critical Injury adds +10 to future Critical Injury rolls. This +10 effect remains until that specific Critical Injury is removed.

If a Universe does not provide a full Critical Injury table, use the following severity bands as the default structure:

DI100 RESULT	SEVERITY
01-30	Minor
31-60	Moderate
61-85	Severe
86-100+	Deadly

To remove a Critical Injury, a caregiver must make a Medicine check with appropriate time and tools. The difficulty is based on the injury's severity:

SEVERITY	TREATMENT REQUIREMENT
Minor	Easy Medicine check; full rest or simple care
Moderate	Average Medicine check; proper supplies and time
Severe	Hard Medicine check; extended care, proper tools, and a safe place to work
Deadly	Severe Medicine check; specialist care, rare resources, surgery, magic, advanced medicine, or story resolution

On success, the Critical Injury is removed and no longer adds +10 to future Critical Injury rolls. On failure, the Critical Injury remains. — Banes or a ☒ Calamity may consume supplies, worsen the condition, increase recovery time, or create a new complication.

Untreated Critical Injuries may worsen over time if the fiction calls for it. Universes may adjust treatment requirements to match tone, technology, magic, and access to care.

FOR UNIVERSES

Recovery rates, timescales, and specific mechanics are intentionally left flexible here. A gritty survival Universe might make Wound recovery brutal and slow. A cinematic action Universe might allow characters to shrug off wounds between scenes. Both are valid; calibrate recovery to the tone of your Universe.

DEFAULT CRITICAL INJURY TABLE

Use this table when the active Universe does not provide its own Critical Injury table.

DI00 RESULT	SEVERITY	INJURY	EFFECT
01-05	Minor	Rattled	Suffer 2 Strain.
06-10	Minor	Knocked Down	You fall Prone.
11-15	Minor	Guard Broken	Until the start of your next turn, reduce Melee Defense and Ranged Defense by 1, minimum 0.
16-20	Minor	Pain Spike	Add 1 Bane Die to your next check before the end of your next turn.
21-25	Minor	Shaken Grip	Drop one held item, or spend one Maneuver to keep hold of it.
26-30	Minor	Open Cut	At the end of the encounter, suffer 1 Wound unless you or an ally spends an Action to bind the injury.
31-35	Moderate	Hampered	You are Immobilized until the end of your next turn.
36-40	Moderate	Staggering Hit	You are Staggered until the end of your next turn.
41-45	Moderate	Cracked Rib	Until the end of the encounter, suffer 1 Strain whenever you take a Maneuver after your first Maneuver on a turn.
46-50	Moderate	Wrenched Limb	Until the end of the encounter, add 1 Bane Die to checks that rely on the injured limb.
51-55	Moderate	Blood in the Eyes	Until the end of the encounter, add 1 Bane Die to Perception checks and ranged attacks.
56-60	Moderate	Nerve Shock	Until the end of the encounter, you cannot voluntarily suffer Strain to gain an extra Maneuver or activate an ability.
61-65	Severe	Deep Wound	At the start of each of your turns, suffer 1 Wound until you or an ally succeeds on an Average Medicine check to stop the bleeding. The Critical Injury remains after the bleeding stops.
66-70	Severe	Disabled Arm	One arm cannot be used effectively until the end of the encounter. Checks requiring both hands add 2 Bane Dice.
71-75	Severe	Damaged Leg	Until the end of the encounter, you cannot take more than one Maneuver on your turn.
76-80	Severe	Concussed	Until the end of the encounter, downgrade one positive die on Intellect, Savvy, and Willpower checks.
81-85	Severe	Internal Injury	Until this Critical Injury is removed, Wound recovery from rest is halved, rounded down, minimum 1.
86-90	Deadly	Crippling Blow	You are Staggered and Immobilized until the end of your next turn. One limb is unusable until this Critical Injury is removed.
91-95	Deadly	Hemorrhage	At the start of each of your turns, suffer 2 Wounds until you or an ally succeeds on a Hard Medicine check to stabilize you. The Critical Injury remains after stabilization.
96-100	Deadly	Mortal Shock	After your next turn, you are incapacitated unless you receive medical aid or recover at least 1 Wound before then.
101-110	Deadly	Broken	You are immediately incapacitated. You remain helpless until you receive medical aid and current Wounds fall below Wound Points.
111+	Deadly	Death's Door	You are immediately incapacitated and will die without urgent medical intervention, powerful healing, or a major narrative rescue. The GM should make the danger clear and give allies a chance to act.

GLOSSARY

The following terms are used throughout Exodus NDS and its Universes. Entries are listed alphabetically for quick reference.

Ability Die  — A positive d8 representing untrained or partially trained capability. Forms the base of a dice pool before skill upgrades are applied.

Action — The primary activity a character takes on their turn in structured play. Each character may take one Action per turn. Examples include attacking, using a skill under pressure, or activating an ability.

Agility — One of the six core characteristics. Represents speed, coordination, and precision. Governs athletic movement, fine motor control, and reaction time.

Assisted Check — A check in which one character is the primary actor and another character provides concrete help. A meaningful assist adds a  Boon Die to the primary pool; an assistant with more relevant skill ranks may also add one  Ability Die, within the normal assisting dice limit.

Average — Difficulty level: two Trial Dice  . Standard challenges under pressure.

Background — A character's life before play began, where they grew up, what they did, who they trusted. Combined with Career, Background determines which skills are profession skills and therefore cheaper to advance. Universes provide their own Background lists; the core book offers generic examples.

Bane — A negative secondary symbol. Banes cancel Boons; remaining Banes after cancellation produce secondary negative effects in the narrative.

Bane Die  — A negative d6 representing situational disadvantage. Added to a pool for unfavorable conditions, injury, or environmental hazards.

Boon + — A positive secondary symbol. Boons cancel Banes; remaining Boons after cancellation produce secondary positive effects. Spend 1 Boon with no stronger use to recover 1 Strain.

Boon Die  — A positive d6 representing situational advantage. Added to a pool for favorable conditions, superior equipment, or momentum.

Breakthrough  — An exceptional positive result. Contributes one Success to the pool (which may be cancelled by opposing Failures) and triggers a significant additional effect that cannot be cancelled. Appears on one face of the Mastery Die only.

Bleeding — Condition. The character suffers ongoing Wounds at the time specified by the effect that caused Bleeding. If no amount is listed, suffer 1 Wound at the start of each turn. An Action and an Average Medicine check, or other appropriate aid, ends Bleeding.

Burning — Condition. The character suffers ongoing Wounds from fire, acid, corruption, or a similar effect. The amount is defined by the effect that caused Burning. The character or an Engaged ally may spend an Action to end Burning; the GM may require an Easy or Average check if the source is severe.

Calamity  — An exceptional negative result. Contributes one Failure to the pool (which may be cancelled by opposing Successes) and triggers a significant negative effect that cannot be cancelled. Appears on one face of the Crisis Die only.

Career — A character's current trade, profession, or active role. Combined with Background, Career determines which skills are profession skills. Universes provide their own Career lists; the core book offers generic examples.

Catch Breath — A Maneuver, available once per encounter, that recovers 1 Strain. The Catch Breath talent improves the recovery to 2 Strain without changing the Maneuver type or the once-per-encounter limit. A character must be able to pause and steady themselves; a character who is Staggered, unconscious, or otherwise unable to recover cannot use it.

Charisma — One of the six core characteristics. Represents force of personality, social influence, and leadership. Governs persuasion, intimidation, and inspiring or commanding others.

Check — Any dice roll made to resolve an uncertain action. Involves assembling a pool, rolling, cancelling opposing symbols, and reading the result.

Conditions — Ongoing mechanical states affecting a character's capabilities. Standard conditions: Staggered, Disoriented, Immobilized, Prone, Silenced, Restrained, Bleeding, Burning, and Hidden. Conditions do not stack; if no duration is specified, a condition ends at the close of the affected character's next turn.

Cover — Physical protection between an attacker and a target. Light cover adds 1 Ranged Defense; heavy cover adds 2 Ranged Defense. Cover usually applies only against ranged attacks.

Crisis Die  — A negative d12 representing upgraded or especially dangerous difficulty. Upgraded from a Trial Die. Contains a Calamity face.

Critical — A weapon profile stat (often abbreviated **Crit**) listing the number of net + Boons that must be spent on an attack with that weapon to inflict a Critical Injury or Critical Hit. A  Breakthrough may also be spent for the same purpose. If a weapon has no listed Crit rating, the default cost is 3 + Boons.

Critical Hit — A significant damaging event applied to a vehicle, triggered when a vehicle is already disabled, at maximum System Damage, when + Boons equal to the attacking weapon's Crit rating are spent, or when a  Breakthrough is spent. If no Crit rating is listed, the default cost is 3 + Boons. Resolved by rolling d100 and adding +10 per existing Critical Hit; that +10 remains until the specific hit is repaired.

Critical Injury — A lasting wound applied to a character. Triggered when a character is hit while incapacitated, when a Breakthrough is spent on an attack against them, or when sufficient Boons are spent on an attack to inflict one. Resolved by rolling d100 and adding +10 per existing Critical Injury; that +10 remains until the specific injury is removed through medical care.

Damage — Incoming harm before Resistance. A source deals damage; a target takes damage by applying Resistance to that incoming amount. If an effect says a target suffers Wounds or suffers Strain, apply that amount directly to the named track unless the effect says otherwise.

Defense — A rating representing how difficult a target is to hit. Each point of Melee or Ranged Defense adds one  Bane Die to attack checks against that target.

Difficulty — The number and type of negative dice added to a pool to represent task complexity. Levels: Simple (—), Easy (◆), Average (◆◆), Hard (◆◆◆), Severe (◆◆◆◆), Extreme (◆◆◆◆◆). **Disoriented** — Condition. Add one Bane Die to all checks made by this character.

Downgrading — Replacing a higher-tier die with a lower-tier die. Converts a Mastery Die to an Ability Die, or a Crisis Die to a Trial Die. The reverse of upgrading. If no eligible die exists, the effect has no impact.

Easy — Difficulty level: one Trial Die ◆. Routine tasks with minimal risk.

Elite — A mid-tier adversary acting as an individual. Has Wound Points but no Strain Points; Strain effects cause Wounds instead. Can suffer Critical Injuries. Cannot spend Story Points.

Engaged — The closest range band. Characters who are Engaged are within immediate reach for melee attacks and direct physical interaction.

Experience Points (XP) — The currency used to advance characters. Starting characters receive 110 XP. After play begins, the GM awards XP at the end of each session, typically 10–25 XP. XP is spent on skill ranks, talents, and (during character creation) characteristic increases.

Extended Check — A multi-roll check used for complex tasks. The GM sets a difficulty, a success threshold, a time unit per roll, and an optional attempt limit.

Extreme — Difficulty level: five Trial Dice ◆◆◆◆◆. Near-impossible feats.

Failure ✕ — The primary negative symbol. Net Failures remaining after cancellation mean the check fails. A check with no net Successes is a failure regardless of Failures rolled.

Field Treatment — Urgent medical aid provided during structured play. The caregiver uses an Action to make a Medicine check (Average difficulty if no specific difficulty is given). Field treatment can stabilize, prevent worsening, or satisfy a Critical Injury entry that calls for medical aid. It does not remove a Critical Injury unless the entry or the GM specifically allows it.

Fortune Points — Player-controlled Story Points. Spent to upgrade a positive die, activate a Breakthrough effect, or introduce a favorable narrative detail. When spent, a Fortune Point becomes a Peril Point.

Full Rest — An eight hour rest time, sleeping or restful activities. Any skill use that requires physical involvement is generally not considered rest.

GM Slot — An Initiative slot generated by a GM-controlled Initiative roll. The GM chooses which adversary acts in each GM slot. See **Initiative**.

Handling — A vehicle characteristic representing agility and responsiveness. Positive Handling adds Boon Dice to Operate checks; negative Handling adds Bane Dice. Ranges from –5 to +5.

Hard — Difficulty level: three Trial Dice ◆◆◆. Demanding tasks requiring real skill.

Hidden — Condition. The character is not currently detected by a relevant observer. Attacks against a Hidden character add 1 Bane Die, and the Hidden character may add 1 Boon Die to their first attack or escape check made from concealment. Hidden ends when

the character reveals themselves, attacks, makes obvious noise, or is discovered.

Hull Damage — Structural damage sustained by a vehicle. When Hull Damage equals or exceeds Hull Points, the vehicle is disabled.

Hull Points — A vehicle's structural integrity rating. The maximum Hull Damage it can sustain before being disabled. Equivalent to Wound Points for characters.

Immobilized — Condition. The character cannot take Maneuvers involving movement. They may still act in place.

Incapacitated — A character is incapacitated when accumulated Wounds meet or exceed their Wound Points, or when accumulated Strain meets or exceeds their Strain Points.

Initiative — The system for determining turn order in structured play. Characters normally use Savvy + Perception when on watch or prepared, and Willpower + Readiness when surprised or under sudden pressure. Results are ranked by net Successes and divided into player slots and GM slots.

Intellect — One of the six core characteristics. Represents reasoning, memory, and analytical thinking. Governs knowledge, technical skill, and problem-solving under pressure.

Languages — The tongues a character can speak, read, or write. By default, every character knows the common tongue of the land they grew up in, fluently and literately. Additional languages, dialects, secret tongues, or technical jargon are defined by the active Universe.

Maneuver — A minor activity on a character's turn. Characters may take up to two Maneuvers per turn; taking a second requires giving up the Action or suffering 2 Strain. Examples: moving a range band, drawing a weapon, aiming, taking cover.

Mastery Die ◆ — A positive d12 representing expert-level capability. Upgraded from an Ability Die based on skill rank. Contains a Breakthrough face.

Might — One of the six core characteristics. Represents physical power, toughness, and endurance. Governs feats of strength and physical resilience. Contributes to base Resistance.

Minion — A low-tier adversary. Minions operate in groups sharing a single Wound pool. They do not have Strain Points; effects that would cause Strain remove Wounds instead. They do not suffer Critical Injuries and cannot spend Story Points.

Narrative Play — Free-form roleplay and lower-stakes action resolved through simple checks, without the structured turn-by-turn initiative system.

Nemesis — A top-tier adversary treated as a full character. Has both Wound Points and Strain Points. Can suffer Critical Injuries and spend Peril Points.

Opposed Check — A check in which two characters roll against each other. Both build their dice pools normally, including situational Boon and Bane Dice, but neither adds Trial or Crisis Dice for the other's opposition. The higher net Successes wins; ties favor the defender.

Peril Points — GM-controlled Story Points. Spent to upgrade a difficulty die, activate a Calamity effect, or introduce a complication. When spent, a Peril Point becomes a Fortune Point.

Player Slot — An Initiative slot generated by a player-controlled Initiative roll. Players choose which player character acts in each player slot. See **Initiative**.

Pool Construction — The process of assembling a dice pool for a check. Start with Ability Dice equal to the higher of characteristic or skill rating, then upgrade a number of those dice equal to the lower rating. Add situational Boon or Bane Dice as applicable.

Profession Skill — A skill that appears on a character's Background or Career list. Profession skills cost less XP per rank than out-of-profession skills. Skills appearing on both lists are still simply profession skills; the duplicate listing does not reduce cost further unless a Universe says otherwise.

Prone — Condition. The character is on the ground. Ranged attacks against them add one Bane Die; melee attacks add one Boon Die. Standing costs one Maneuver.

Quick Action — A minor reflexive activity requiring no significant time or effort. Examples: speaking briefly, dropping an item, pressing a simple switch. May be performed freely during a turn but cannot substitute for an Action or Maneuver, and cannot be repeated to generate mechanical advantage.

Range Band / Range Bands — An abstract system of distance used in structured play. From closest to farthest: Engaged, Short, Medium, Long, Extreme. Moving between Engaged, Short, and Medium costs one Maneuver per band; moving between Medium and Long, or between Long and Extreme, costs two Maneuvers.

Resistance — Damage reduction applied before Wounds are calculated. Equals half Might, rounded up, plus any armor or protection. **Damage – Resistance = Wounds suffered (minimum 0)**.

Restrained — Condition. The character is physically bound, pinned, grappled, or otherwise held in place. They are Immobilized and add 1 Bane Die to checks that require free movement until they escape or the restraint ends.

Round — The basic unit of time in structured play. Each round, every participant takes one turn in initiative order.

Savvy — One of the six core characteristics. Represents perception, cunning, and situational awareness. Governs reading people and situations, practical instincts, and navigating the world effectively.

Scale — A characteristic representing physical size, rated 0 to 10. Scale 0 = tiny; Scale 1 = person-sized; Scale 10 = titanic; see the Vehicles chapter for the full size bands. A difference of 2 or more Scale is considered significant for combat targeting purposes.

Severe — Difficulty level: four Trial Dice . Expert-level challenges.

Silenced — Condition. The character cannot speak or communicate vocally. Checks requiring vocal communication automatically fail.

Simple — Difficulty level: no dice required. Success is automatic; no check is needed.

Simple Check — The standard check type. A character attempts a task against a GM-set difficulty. The first Success confirms the attempt succeeds; additional Successes improve the outcome.

Skills — Trained areas of knowledge and practice, rated 0–5. Each skill links to one of the six characteristics unless a Universe changes that pairing. Skill rank determines how many Ability Dice are upgraded to Mastery Dice when building a pool.

Speed — A vehicle characteristic representing maximum movement. Higher Speed allows covering more distance per Maneuver.

Staggered — Condition. The character cannot perform Actions this turn. They may still take Maneuvers. Ends at the start of the character's next turn.

Story Points — A shared narrative resource split between Fortune Points (players) and Peril Points (GM). Flow back and forth as each side spends them. Only one Story Point may be spent per check unless the GM allows otherwise.

Strain — A measure of mental and physical exertion. Suffered from pushing limits, harsh environments, or other sources. When Strain meets or exceeds Strain Points, the character is incapacitated. Recovers faster than Wounds.

Strain Points — A character's exertion capacity. The maximum Strain sustainable before incapacitation. Equivalent to System Points for vehicles.

Structured Play — A mode of play using initiative, turns, and rounds. Used when timing and action order matter: combat, chases, infiltrations. Contrasts with Narrative Play.

Success ✓ — The primary positive symbol. At least one net Success after cancellation means the check succeeds. A Breakthrough also contributes one Success that may be cancelled by opposing Failures; the Breakthrough effect itself cannot be cancelled.

System Damage — Operational damage sustained by a vehicle. When System Damage equals or exceeds System Points, the vehicle loses control.

System Points — A vehicle's operational capacity rating. The maximum System Damage it can sustain before losing control. Equivalent to Strain Points for characters.

Talent — A purchased ability that grants a clear, targeted mechanical or narrative effect. Talents are organized into five Tiers and may be Universal (available in every Universe by default) or Universe-specific. A talent should add or remove a Boon/Bane Die, upgrade or downgrade a die, change how Boons or Baness may be spent, interact with Breakthroughs, Calamities, Fortune, or Peril, change action economy in a narrow way, or grant clear narrative permission in a specific situation.

Tier — The rank of a talent on the 1–5 scale. Tier 1 talents are foundational and broadly accessible; Tier 5 talents are rare and character-defining. The Recommended Talent Cost Model lists default XP costs by Tier; Universes may adjust them.

Trial Die  — A negative d8 representing base difficulty. The primary die used to express task difficulty levels. Can be upgraded to a Crisis Die for more volatile situations.

Universe — A setting or rules package built on Exodus NDS that defines a specific genre, world, and ruleset. Universes define equipment, expanded character options, species packages, magic, technology, and Universe-specific mechanics.

Upgrading — Replacing a lower-tier die with a higher-tier die. Converts an Ability Die to a Mastery Die (positive pool) or a Trial Die to a Crisis Die (difficulty pool). If no eligible die remains to upgrade, the effect has no impact.

Willpower — One of the six core characteristics. Represents mental fortitude, discipline, and resolve. Governs focus under pressure, resistance to stress, and recovery from exertion. Contributes to base Strain Points.

Wound Points — A character's physical injury capacity. The maximum Wounds sustainable before incapacitation. Equivalent to Hull Points for vehicles.

Wounds — Physical harm tracked after damage gets through Resistance, or when an effect directly causes a character to suffer Wounds. When accumulated Wounds meet or exceed Wound Points, the character is incapacitated.

QUICK REFERENCE

DICE & SYMBOLS AT A GLANCE

THE SIX SYMBOLS

Symbols cancel within their pair. Breakthrough and Calamity effects **always trigger**, their contributed Success or Failure may still be cancelled normally.

SYMBOL	NAME	CANCELS
✓	Success	✗ Failure
✗	Failure	✓ Success
+	Boon	— Bane
—	Bane	+ Boon
☑	Breakthrough	Effect never cancelled; contributes 1 ✓
⊗	Calamity	Effect never cancelled; contributes 1 ✗

READING THE ROLL

- Set aside ☑ and ⊗ before cancellation. Add ✓ for each ☑ and ✗ for each ⊗.
- Cancel ✓ vs ✗, then + vs —.
- Net ✓ remaining? **Success**. Otherwise **Failure**.
- Count net + or —; these are secondary effects.
- Apply ☑ and ⊗ effects. They trigger **regardless of whether the check succeeds or fails**.

BOON & BANE GUIDE

COUNT	+ BOON	— BANE
1	Minor benefit; or recover 1 Strain with no stronger use	Minor setback; lose position
2	Assist an ally; gain information	Lose resource; expose weakness
3+	Alter the scene; lasting benefit	New threat; escalate danger

THE SIX DICE

DIE	SHAPE	ROLE
■ Boon Die	d6	Add for advantage
■ Bane Die	d6	Add for disadvantage
◆ Ability Die	d8	Base positive pool
◆ Trial Die	d8	Base difficulty
◆ Mastery Die	d12	Trained positive pool
◆ Crisis Die	d12	Upgraded difficulty

BUILDING YOUR POOL

Identify your **characteristic** and **skill** (characteristics are rated 1–5; skills are rated 0–5).

During character creation, characteristics cannot begin above 4, and skills cannot begin above rank 2 unless the Universe allows one profession skill to begin at rank 3.

Start with **Ability Dice** equal to the **higher** of the two. Upgrade a number of those equal to the **lower** rating, replacing Ability ◆ with Mastery ◆.

Add **Boon** ■ or **Bane** ■ dice for conditions. The GM adds difficulty dice.

EXAMPLE

Characteristic 3 / Skill 2 → ◆◆◆ vs ◆◆

DIFFICULTY

LEVEL	DICE
Simple	— No roll needed
Easy	◆
Average	◆◆
Hard	◆◆◆
Severe	◆◆◆◆
Extreme	◆◆◆◆◆

Upgrade a Trial ◆ to Crisis ◆ for especially volatile situations.

COMBAT & RECOVERY AT A GLANCE

ACTION ECONOMY

Each turn: **1 Action** + **up to 2 Maneuvers**, with the second Maneuver costing the Action *or* 2 Strain.

- **Action:** an attack, a skill check under pressure, an ability activation, an assist, or a complex interaction
- **Maneuver:** move a band, draw or stow gear, take cover, drop prone, aim, or interact briefly
- **Quick Action:** speak briefly, drop an item, glance, free, but cannot replace an Action or Maneuver

RANGE BANDS

Engaged → Short → Medium → Long → Extreme.

- Engaged ↔ Short ↔ Medium: **1 Maneuver per band**
- Medium ↔ Long ↔ Extreme: **2 Maneuvers per band**
- Light cover: +1 Ranged Defense; heavy cover: +2 Ranged Defense

DAMAGE AND RESISTANCE

Damage – Resistance = Wounds suffered (minimum 0)

Resistance = half Might (rounded up) + armor or protection.

Each Success beyond the first on an attack adds **+1 damage** before Resistance.

Deals damage = incoming amount before Resistance. Takes damage = apply Resistance. Suffers Wounds/Strain = direct track loss unless stated otherwise.

ATTACK DIFFICULTY

ATTACK	DIFFICULTY
Melee/Unarmed at Engaged	Average
Ranged at Engaged	Easy + 1 — Bane
Ranged at Short	Easy
Ranged at Medium	Average
Ranged at Long	Hard
Ranged at Extreme	Severe

Defense and cover add  Bane Dice after base difficulty is set.

CRITICAL INJURY TRIGGERS

A Critical Injury is inflicted when:

- An attacker spends a  **Breakthrough** on an attack against the target
- An attacker spends net + Boons equal to the weapon's **Crit** rating (default 3 if no rating is listed)
- The target is hit while already **incapacitated**

Roll d100 + 10 per existing Critical Injury on the target.

D100 RESULT	SEVERITY
01-30	Minor
31-60	Moderate
61-85	Severe
86-100+	Deadly

COMBAT BOON SPENDS

Common Boon spends during combat. Spending Boons does not require GM approval if a listed effect fits the situation.

COST	EFFECT
+ 1 Boon	Recover 1 Strain
+ 1 Boon	Activate a weapon quality with no listed cost (where applicable)
+ 2 Boons	Inflict a status (Disoriented, Prone, etc., per weapon or fiction)
+ 2 Boons	Activate Blast, Burn, Burst, or Stun (where the weapon has the quality)
+ 2 Boons	Notice an additional detail or warning
+ Crit Boons	Inflict a Critical Injury (see weapon's Crit rating)
 Breakthrough	Inflict a Critical Injury automatically when spent on the attack

RECOVERY AT THE TABLE

Strain

- End of structured encounter: recover Strain equal to **Willpower**
- Full rest: recover **all** Strain unless incapacitated by Strain
- Catch Breath (Maneuver, once per encounter): recover **1 Strain** or **2 Strain** with the Catch Breath talent
- Spend 1 Boon with no stronger use: recover 1 Strain

Wounds

- Full night's rest: recover Wounds equal to **Might**
- Medicine check: each net  Success restores 1 additional Wound; + 2 Boons can restore 1 extra Wound, preserve supplies, or shorten time
- Field Treatment (Action, structured play): Average Medicine check by default

Critical Injuries

- Removed by Medicine check; difficulty by severity (Easy / Average / Hard / Severe)
- Untreated, each adds +10 to future Critical Injury rolls

QUICK REFERENCE

READING RESULTS AT A GLANCE

RESOLUTION ORDER

1. **Did it succeed or fail?** Net ✓ after cancellation = success.
2. **What side effects landed?** Read net + or –.
3. **Did anything exceptional happen?** ☑ and ☒ trigger regardless of success or failure.

THE SPENDING LADDER

RESULT	SCOPE
1 + / –	Minor texture
2 + / –	Named effect
3+ + / –	Scene-shifting
☑	Exceptional positive
☒	Exceptional negative

THE ANTI-DUPPLICATION RULE

Side effects should never duplicate the main result. Ask “**what else?**” not “**how much?**”

WHO SPENDS WHAT

- **Players** propose Boon and Breakthrough spends.
- **GM** applies Bane and Calamity effects.
- Both sides build the same scene.

FLOOR RULES

UNSPENT SYMBOL	DEFAULT EFFECT
1 +	Recover 1 Strain
2+ +	+1 Boon Die to next ally's check
☑	Next ally +1 Boon Die; GM grants a beat of relief
–	Suffer 1 Strain per net Bane
☒	GM gains 1 Peril Point; the scene tilts

EIGHT AXES OF CHANGE

When stuck, change one of these:

AXIS	+ BOON	– BANE
Time	Faster	Slower
Position	Better footing, cover	Exposed, off-balance
Information	Learn more	Misread, miss a clue
Resources	Conserve supplies	Lose, spend, damage
Attention	Stay unseen	Draw notice
Condition	Inflict / clear	Suffer condition
Future Rolls	+1 + on next check	+1 – on next check
Scene	Open opportunity	Introduce hazard

MIXED RESULTS

MAIN	+ ☑ BREAKTHROUGH	+ ☒ CALAMITY
Success	Clean win + major upside	Win at serious cost
Failure	Fail, but a major break in your favor	Fail and the situation worsens

QUICK SKILL CUES

- **Combat** — 2 + : condition or shove. ☒ on hit: weapon breaks, ally hit, worse threat notices.
- **Search** — ☑ on failure: you find something *more* important. ☒ on success: you trigger the ward.
- **Social** — 2 + on failure: they refuse, but reveal what would work.
- **Stealth** — 2 + : leave no trace; learn the patrol pattern.
- **Craft** — ☑ on failure: you can't fix it, but you know what you need.
- **Spell** — ☒ on success: it works, but warps, drains, or attracts attention.

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- The six die types (Boon Die, Bane Die, Ability Die, Trial Die, Mastery Die, Crisis Die) and their face distributions as described herein
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