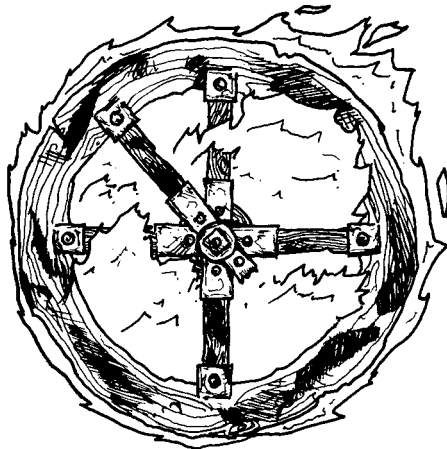


# *the Burning Wheel*



by Luke Crane

*extra rotam nulla salus*

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


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


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luke  
autumn.02  
NYC

This game is fondly dedicated to my brother, Hart.

*There is no greater joy than gaming with your little brother  
except playing your own game with your little brother...  
and having him get it.  
thanks, bro.*

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# Introduction



*...Need alone is not enough to set power free;  
there must be knowledge.*

—Ursula LeGuin



## Von Goten's Story Part II

*"The signal beacon!" Von Goten started in alarm. Through the dismal curtain of the downpour he could make out the shining white light glimmering atop the gate tower.*

*"Matthias!" He grabbed his Samagosian friend by the collar and pulled him down, so his mouth was level with his ear. "Matthias, the beacon! They are raiding," Von Goten had to scream to be heard over the din of the torrent. Rain ricocheted off the metal bowl of his helmet, he could barely hear himself shout. "Go fetch Tristam and Tomás. In the chapel, go!"*

*The barbarian knit his black brows together and chewed his lip in response. Hefting his broad-bladed spear, the Samagosian dashed off across the courtyard toward the tower from which they had begun their patrol. As he watched his friend disappear into the gloom, a splash of cold fear ran down Von Goten's spine; night made the tight of his helmet's confines even darker.*

*Casting aside fear, he pressed on toward the main bastion. He couldn't see a damned thing. After he had gone a short way, he stopped under the pitiful shelter of the cooper's awning. The man-at-arms set his lantern down and began to unbuckle his headgear. Something skittered in the dark and caught his eye. He quickly finished removing the bascinet, and unburdened his senses. But still the rain was thick and his lantern's light weak, he could see little. "Blasted rain," He swore to himself. It was the perfect night for a raid. At least the garrison wouldn't have to worry about fire. A small consolation.*

*A dull shock shook the squire's sturdy frame. His mail rattled from a sharp blow and his bones vibrated in tune—he knew this feeling well. But before he could fully register what had happened a wet weight landed on his back.*

*Von Goten staggered and cursed his luck. At first he thought the awning had buckled under the rain and collapsed onto him, but then he felt a hand grope across his face and grasp his beard. There was someone on him!*

*Instinct took over. He grabbed the searching hand and wrenched it away. Across his other shoulder a black blade darted down and slit his cheek open. A fetid voice crackled in his ear. Von Goten got his legs under him and violently swung his weight around, hurling his attacker into the wall of the cooper's shop. Barrels scattered and tumbled at the impact.*

*"Foul Orc!" Von Goten hissed to himself in alarm. "Trouble. Very bad trouble," he searched the darkness for his attacker and edged closer to his sputtering lantern. A shadow crossed the light, two glowing coals within it fixed his gaze. But before he could judge its attitude the inky form lunged out of the darkness and tackled him about the waist. Water sluiced around his feet and his steel spurs slid across the slick cobblestones, yet the squire kept his feet. "Thanks be," he muttered to himself, well aware of his dimming fate and small good fortune.*

*Then as he grappled with this new shadow, his first assailant careered out of the darkness and ploughed headlong into him as well. The blasted devils weren't hindered in the least by the night. Fortunately, the redoubtable soldier had his feet under him and he held his ground. The loathsome Orcs kicked and bit, trying desperately to drag him off, so that they might overpower him and slit his throat. A knife rebounded from his shoulder guard. Von Goten blindly grabbed one of the Orcs and heaved him down. The squire could barely pry him loose. The beast was wiry and starved, but with a tenacious and feral disposition.*

*One Orc was off, but the other fought on. A clawed hand clamped onto the neckward rim of Von Goten's breastplate and yanked hard. He wrestled with the goblin, warding off its blackened knife, as the other Orc regained his feet.*

*Hands and arms interlocked, Von Goten and the leathery goblin grappled. Using his superior weight to his advantage, the squire managed to pin his adversary—once he had the Orc's knife tied up, he took the opportunity to draw his own.*

*Before he could bring the weapon to bear, his legs were kicked out from under him. Hit from behind, Von Goten slipped, staggered, and fell. Wicked visions flashed before his benighted eyes: The memory of his cousin, a goodly knight, pulled down by Orcs and slain through his visor; the fortress captured and burning; a black flag draped on the altar of Tudomin.*

*The two jackals were on him, scrabbling and clawing their way toward his end. He cursed to himself; if he hadn't removed his helmet.... Now was not the time for regret though! He rolled onto his back and flailed his arms free so he could shield his face from the hungry knives of the ferocious Orcs. Much to his surprise, Von Goten had managed to keep hold of his own dirk when he fell.*

*In the light of his watch-lantern, the dim forms of his assailants resolved; their coal-red eyes, yellowed teeth and oily hair. Desperate, he lashed out with his blade at those very eyes and found purchase. As soon as his knife bit home he reached out with*

his other hand to brace his target and punched the blade deeper down. Unrelenting, he slammed his dirk to the hilt, once and then again. Something cracked most satisfactorily under his blows.

The squire was shocked from his murderous reverie by a bolt of white pain. The other goblin slashed savagely at Von Goten's face as the veteran soldier murdered the Orc's companion. Another blow cut clumsily across his scalp, he was blinded from the metal, rain and blood.

If he lived through this, his liege would never let him forget his misjudgment! His helmet would be a fixture on his head, like that of a statue!

Lashing out wildly, Von Goten landed a lucky blow, a hard cross to the Orc's ribs, and the wiry creature rolled off him. The pain of his own wounds sat like a veil across his vision, but a hot, murderous fire boiled within him now—it burned the shroud away. Von Goten could clearly see the silhouette of the goblin in the brass light, could see him tensing for the lunge.

Full of fire and fume, the burly squire put all he could into a bodily charge. Fate was kind and his formidable frame crashed full force into the black goblin, taking him by surprise. Before the twisted creature could recover, Von Goten slammed his dirk down, cracking its misshapen skull.

His heart beat a riot against his chest. Amazed at his luck, the squire heaved himself to his feet and dashed out of the lantern light in to the relative safety of shadow. Regaining his composure, he drew his bastard sword and returned his bloodied dirk to its home. Rain stung his tattered scalp.

The night loomed around him like wall of somber mourners. Cautiously, he cast about for more black-blooded creatures. As he peered out, his eyes came to rest on a small, slender object lying next to the lantern—a crossbow quarrel. He checked the dent in his hauberk, and indeed, it wasn't made by any hunting arrow or bodkin, it was puckered by the impact of a bolt. "Odd, Orcs don't use crossbows," he thought to himself. Edging closer he looked at the bolt again. Its flights were stamped with the eagle-rampant, the mark of the Empire, the flag of the fortress. "That's one of ours." His blood ran cold. Intuition leapt through him like a bounding stag. "They are in the gatehouse! Cursed Fate, they have taken the armory!"

Chilled and despairing, the squire stood numb in the hideous downpour: to go forward alone was suicide...but there might be survivors still holding out against the loathsome Orcs at the gatehouse. Grabbing his helmet, he pressed on into the storm-shattered night to meet his fate.

# Nature of the Game

Like the old grand-daddy RPG, *Dungeons and Dragons*, Burning Wheel is nothing more than a template—a trellis for the vines of imagination to grow on. But unlike its predecessors, this system is versatile and powerful; it can handle any fantastic situation with consistency and accuracy. The precise story is left open to the players to bring to the game, but whatever that story is, this system can handle it.

Gaming has always been more than a pastime to me; I choose to view it with an artist's eyes. Burning Wheel is the cathartic product of that passion—a channeling of energy and personal philosophy into a tangible form...a seed if you will. There are myriad other roleplaying games out there. This one is merely my contribution to the field, but I think I have come up with a game that is quite different, enjoyable, challenging, and, most importantly, fun to play.

My philosophy, a little ardor, and a lot of mania, drove me to build this system. If it's not entirely unique, at the very least it has a different perspective. Without being hokey or gimmicky, the system attempts to create an accurate portrayal of the model that inspired all of these games, epic fiction.

Initially my mission was only to build the proverbial "better system," but my true motive emerged as the system took root. I wanted to construct a game that could create *better stories*—something closer to the thrilling narratives that we all grew up on and that still grip our imaginations. So accordingly, I designed a game to fully encompass and exemplify story-arcs, whether they be heroic epics or down-and-dirty tales. And I incorporated details to foster character development and dramatic battles—elements that I, as a die-hard gamer, crave. With this game, we can get in on the action of everything we have watched, read and dreamed about—and finally get to the heart of what we love so much.

The introduction is no place to convince you, though. To know a game you have to play it. So, try it. I dare you; plant the seed and let it grow, and then you'll see.

## Voices in My Head

As you read through the rules you will encounter three little imps. These imps represent the author's voice and disposition in certain parts of the text.

Basic rules text isn't preceded by any of the imps. This "rules voice" is used to convey most of the information in the game. The imps offer comment on the rules.



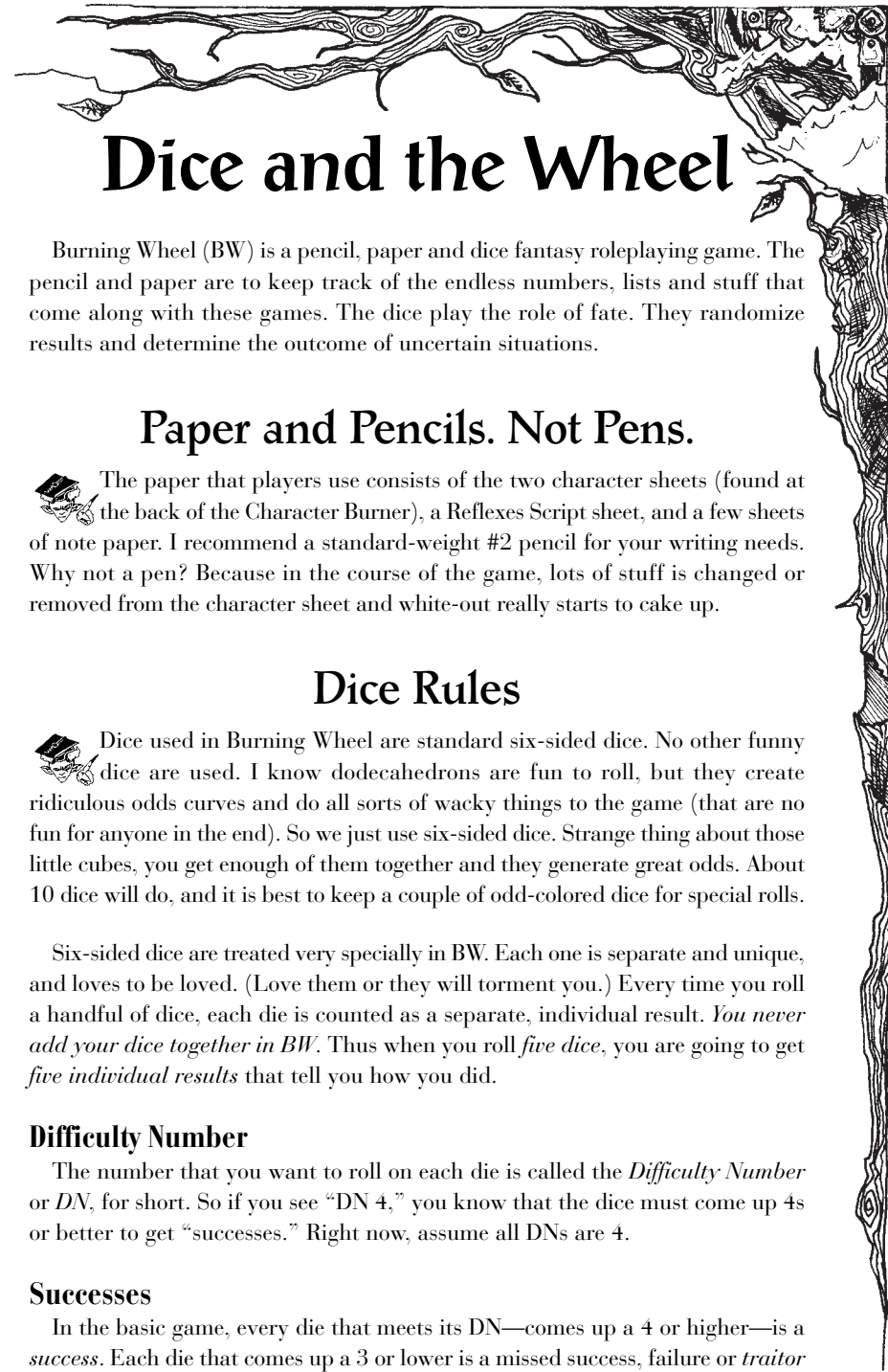
This character indicates that I am asking the reader to take note. The text following him is usually written in my voice, rather than the rules voice. I call this guy the *Instructor*.



This is the *Ranting Imp*. He rears his ugly head whenever I am yelling about something. This usually comes in the form of harsh advice or warnings.



The *Weeper* is a strange one, prone to outbursts of tears at the oddest times; sometimes tears of sadness, sometimes fear, and sometimes tears of joy. He frequently squirts when death or something else very, very scary is near.



## Dice and the Wheel

Burning Wheel (BW) is a pencil, paper and dice fantasy roleplaying game. The pencil and paper are to keep track of the endless numbers, lists and stuff that come along with these games. The dice play the role of fate. They randomize results and determine the outcome of uncertain situations.

### Paper and Pencils. Not Pens.



The paper that players use consists of the two character sheets (found at the back of the Character Burner), a Reflexes Script sheet, and a few sheets of note paper. I recommend a standard-weight #2 pencil for your writing needs. Why not a pen? Because in the course of the game, lots of stuff is changed or removed from the character sheet and white-out really starts to cake up.

### Dice Rules



Dice used in Burning Wheel are standard six-sided dice. No other funny dice are used. I know dodecahedrons are fun to roll, but they create ridiculous odds curves and do all sorts of wacky things to the game (that are no fun for anyone in the end). So we just use six-sided dice. Strange thing about those little cubes, you get enough of them together and they generate great odds. About 10 dice will do, and it is best to keep a couple of odd-colored dice for special rolls.

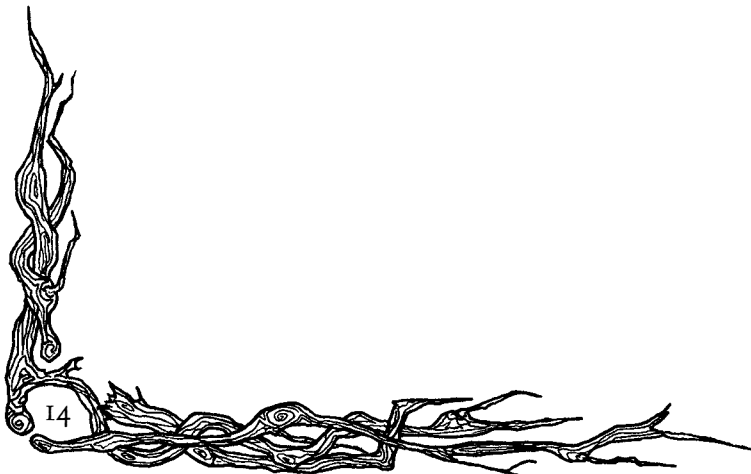
Six-sided dice are treated very specially in BW. Each one is separate and unique, and loves to be loved. (Love them or they will torment you.) Every time you roll a handful of dice, each die is counted as a separate, individual result. *You never add your dice together in BW.* Thus when you roll *five dice*, you are going to get *five individual results* that tell you how you did.

### Difficulty Number

The number that you want to roll on each die is called the *Difficulty Number* or *DN*, for short. So if you see "DN 4," you know that the dice must come up 4s or better to get "successes." Right now, assume all DNs are 4.

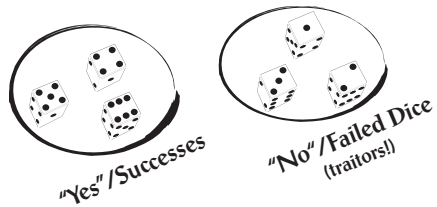
### Successes

In the basic game, every die that meets its DN—comes up a 4 or higher—is a *success*. Each die that comes up a 3 or lower is a missed success, failure or *traitor* as we like to call them.







So to start, you want to roll dice and get lots of them to come up 4 or higher; this means lots of successes; lots of successes means you are a good player. Players who are plagued with traitors are bad players. No one likes a bad player.



## When Do I Roll Dice?

 Do you leap the gap? Stop the door from slamming shut? Do you cook a decent meal? Smash your sword through your enemy's helmet and knock him unconscious? Save the dying man from bleeding to death? These are all examples of what we call *tests*.

### The Context of Tests

 A test is, most simply, *a time when you roll the dice to determine the outcome of a situation*. Why do you need to determine the outcome of a situation? To make the story move forward (or backward). A narrative is full of little decision points, and each one determines the direction of the story. Some are tiny, some are major.

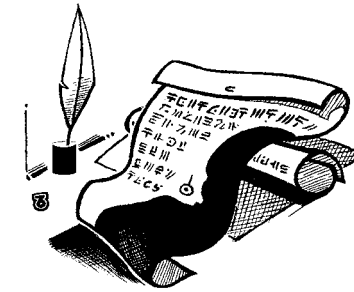
Take Ged from *The Wizard of Earthsea*. He fails a sorcery test and accidentally summons a shadow beast. This accident determines the course of the rest of the story. He could have passed his test and the story would have taken a very different direction.

Gandalf versus the Balrog: There were a series of tests going back and forth as they battled one another. The results of those tests sent them tumbling over the abyss into the darker warrens of Moria. There could have been different results. Gandalf could have annihilated the thing, or conversely, Gandalf could have fallen over the edge, lost the fight below and never been seen again. (I don't know about you, but I thought he was dead meat!) Either way, the outcome of those tests determined the course of the rest of the story. If Gandalf had died, Saruman would have reigned unchecked and joined forces completely with Sauron...and forever changed Middle Earth.


So, when there is a chance that your character could succeed or fail at a task, you test his ability—dice are rolled for the appropriate ability. The outcome of that roll determines where the story is going next.

*Your party is hosting delicate negotiations with a clan of very touchy bandits. It's your job to cook for the event. Did you fail that Cooking test? Well, bad cooking is an insult to your guests. Negotiations end in a disgusted huff and your guests leave shaking their fists; they will not stand for such contemptuous treatment. They will have their revenge!*

See how a simple skill can affect the course of the story? If you had cooked a good meal, then perhaps the bandits would have been receptive to your offers and agreed to help the party in some way.



## How Many Successes is "Success"? or What's My Obstacle?

 The "number of successes needed" is called the *obstacle* of the test. We usually just call it Ob, for short. (Some folks like to refer to the obstacle as: "The way the Game Master screws the players.")

*If the obstacle of the test is 3, you need three of the dice rolled to come up 4s or higher—three successes passes the test. So if you roll five dice against Ob 3 and they come up: 2, 3, 4, 4, 6—three successes passes the test.*


*If you roll five dice against Ob 3 and they come up: 1, 3, 3, 4, 5—that is only two successes and not enough to pass the test.*

When you see a notation like "Ob 4," that is shorthand for Obstacle 4. Also, you will occasionally see notations like +1 Ob. This indicates that there is a modifier to the obstacle of the test. A "+" means the test is more difficult, a "-" means the test is easier. For example, using "poor quality tools" is a +1 Ob to your Carpentry skill test.

## General Guidelines for Judging Obstacles


### Use the Following Guidelines for All Abilities:

- An Easy Task is .....Obstacle 1. Anyone can do it.
- A Routine Task is .....Obstacle 2. You do it every day.
- A Difficult Task is .....Obstacle 3. Hard, but not impossible.
- An Extremely Difficult Task ...Obstacle 4. Only masters can do this easily.
- A Master-level Task is .....Obstacle 5. Only masters can hope to do this at all.
- A Heroic Task is .....Obstacle 6. Yep.
- A Ludicrous Task is.....Obstacle 7. Ah, yep.
- An Impossible Task is.....Obstacle 8. Uh huh.

 *It doesn't matter what a character's ability rating is. What matters is the inherent difficulty of the task at hand.* For example, whether a character has an "2" Sword skill or a "4" Sword skill, it is an Ob 1 Sword test to hit a stationary opponent; Striking a moving opponent is an Ob 2 Sword test. Making horseshoes is an Ob 1 Blacksmithing test; Forging stirrups is an Ob 2 test. It doesn't matter if a character has a "3" or a "5" Blacksmithing skill.

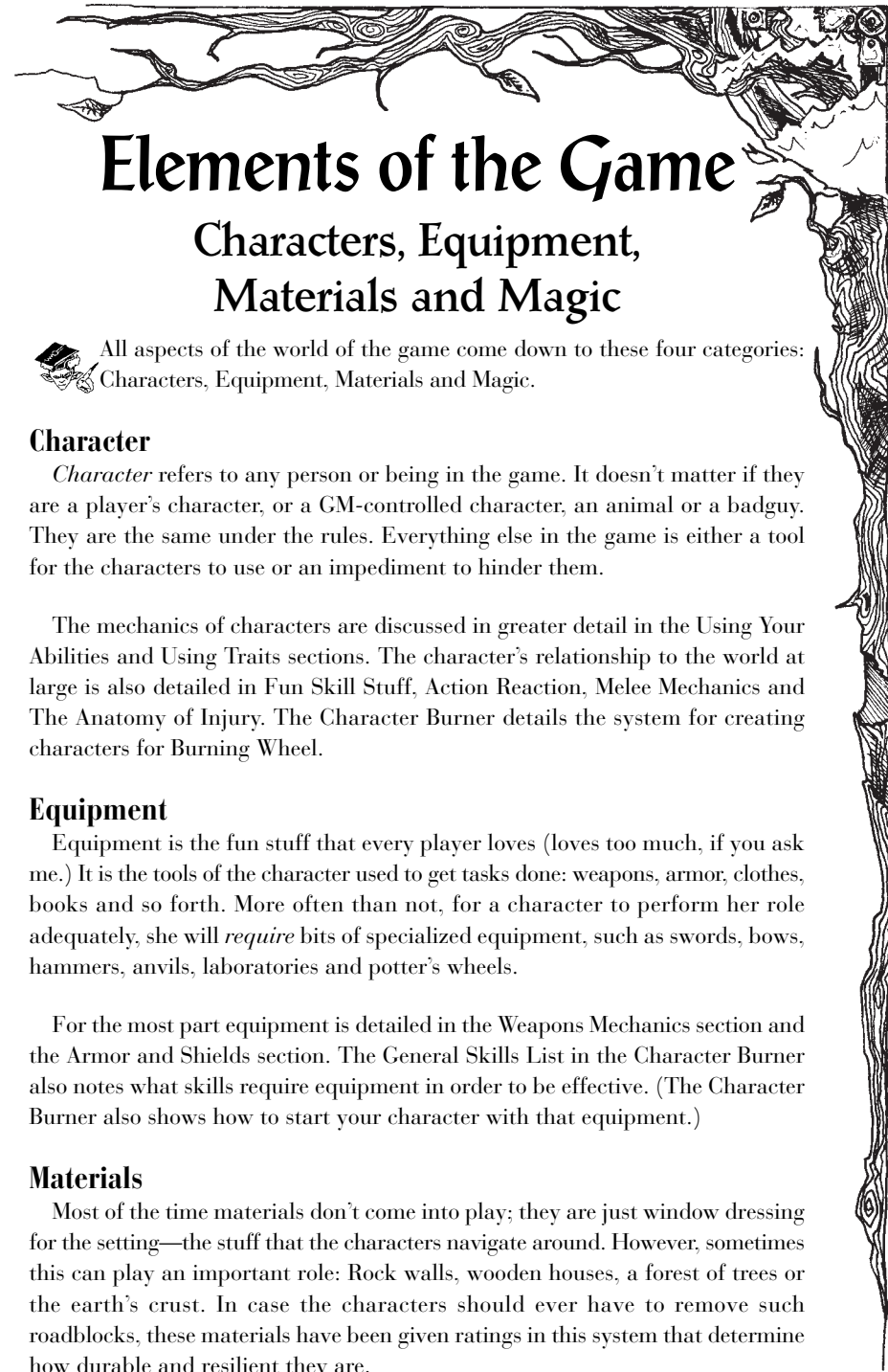
## How Many Dice Do I Roll?

### Exponent

 Every character is broken down into a series of abilities: stats, skills and attributes. These are rated with numbers called *exponents*. The exponent tells how many dice to roll when testing that ability, whether it is a stat, skill or attribute.


### Shade

There is a second component to stats, skills and attributes—a box that precedes the number. It is called the *shade* and indicates the level of potential for a particular ability. For now, assume everyone has the same shade, or potential—Black/mundane shade; we will talk more about different levels of potential later. As you read on, you will see stats, skills and attributes written like "B3" or "G6." The preceding letter indicates the shade, the number is the exponent.



# Elements of the Game

## Characters, Equipment, Materials and Magic

 All aspects of the world of the game come down to these four categories: Characters, Equipment, Materials and Magic.

### Character

*Character* refers to any person or being in the game. It doesn't matter if they are a player's character, or a GM-controlled character, an animal or a badguy. They are the same under the rules. Everything else in the game is either a tool for the characters to use or an impediment to hinder them.

The mechanics of characters are discussed in greater detail in the Using Your Abilities and Using Traits sections. The character's relationship to the world at large is also detailed in Fun Skill Stuff, Action Reaction, Melee Mechanics and The Anatomy of Injury. The Character Burner details the system for creating characters for Burning Wheel.

### Equipment

Equipment is the fun stuff that every player loves (loves too much, if you ask me.) It is the tools of the character used to get tasks done: weapons, armor, clothes, books and so forth. More often than not, for a character to perform her role adequately, she will *require* bits of specialized equipment, such as swords, bows, hammers, anvils, laboratories and potter's wheels.

For the most part equipment is detailed in the Weapons Mechanics section and the Armor and Shields section. The General Skills List in the Character Burner also notes what skills require equipment in order to be effective. (The Character Burner also shows how to start your character with that equipment.)

### Materials

Most of the time materials don't come into play; they are just window dressing for the setting—the stuff that the characters navigate around. However, sometimes this can play an important role: Rock walls, wooden houses, a forest of trees or the earth's crust. In case the characters should ever have to remove such roadblocks, these materials have been given ratings in this system that determine how durable and resilient they are.

Material Mechanics are in the Expanded Gameplay section in the latter half of this book. The section details rules for hacking through walls, shooting through cover and knocking down doors. All very important things!

## Magic

Character, Equipment and Materials pretty much cover the tangible “real” world. Magic is the catch-all category for the representation of the unseen, otherworldly or supernatural. This is a fantasy game, so a place has been built for sniveling wizards, faithful priests, magic cows and what have you.

Rules for magic stuff are in the Incantations, and Faith sections. Listings of spells can be found in the Character Burner.



## The Elements of Character

All characters have the same general abilities and are rated on the same scale. They all have a set of six stats, six attributes and a gaggle of skills. Each of these abilities is rated, but ratings differ from character to character.

Characters are the most important pieces in the game. Nothing gets done without a character deciding to do it, whether that be a player's character deciding that she is going to sneak into the bandits' camp and search for information about who is funding them, or whether it be a bandit non-player character (characters that the GM controls from behind his mysterious screen) deciding that someone has been asking too many questions about the “funding” and he is going to “talk” to her.

## The Scale of the Numbers: Exponent



The nominal scale for exponent ratings is from 1-10. 1 being the lowest possible exponent (number/rating) you can have for a stat, skill or attribute; 10 being the highest. However, don't start getting all drooly thinking about how your big, bad knight absolutely *needs* to have a 10 for his Power stat. That is not how it works. That 1-10 range has to encompass knights, Elves, Orcs, ogres, giants and dragons. It's really a pretty small scale. Judged from our little old “human perspective” the numbers read like this: 1 is feeble; 2 is slow, and weak; 3 is about average; 4 is the solid average; 5 is expert; 6 is master level; 7 is grand master; 8 is right out; 9 and 10? Forget it, the top tiers are for giants, dragons and demons only. See? So humans hover around 3 and 4, bad ass humans cling to their 5s and 6s, Elves swim in the seas of 6 and 7, etc. Thus what your big, bad knight *needs* is a Power of 5, a Forte of 5 and a Sword skill of 5—Expert and proficient in all the necessary areas.

This scale stands for stats, skills and attributes.

The whole system has been designed with humans in mind; humans set the average for the scale. Let's face it, most fantasy is told from a “human” perspective. That perspective is the most intuitive, the easiest way for the reader to be involved in the story. This doesn't mean that I have neglected the other denizens of the fantasy world—far from it. But, we all know what it means when I say “an average strength human.” What is “an average strength Orc”? I don't intuitively know, I have to think about it.

## Shade: What is that Box Next to My Stats and Skills for?

*Shade is the indicator of potential for a stat, skill or attribute.* In the game mechanics, the shade of an ability determines its DN; the *number* each die needs to roll in order *to be a success*.

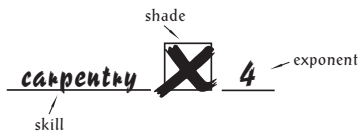
Shades are judged on a grayscale, black at the extreme left, gray in the center, and white at the extreme right. The left end of the scale is for people like us, the middle is for heroes and their enemies and the right end of the scale is for dragons, demons and gods.

For now, in order to keep things simple, we are going to assume that all abilities are mundane potential (Black shade).

The two shades beyond mundane: heroic (Gray shade) and supernatural (White shade), use a lower DN for the ability they are attached to. Thus you might have a heroic G5 skill, rather than mundane B5. Instead of needing 4s to get successes, you would need 3s on each die. Even worse, supernatural shade abilities only

need 2s for successes. See the Heroic and Supernatural section in Expanded Gameplay for more on shades.

Below is an example of how skills, shades and exponents are noted on the character sheet. A B4 Carpentry skill:



## Stats

Stats are the raw abilities of characters. All living things in Burning Wheel have them. These numbers tell how mentally adept, physically quick, and physically tough the character is. There are six stats: *Perception*, *Will*, *Agility*, *Speed*, *Power* and *Forte*. (Pronounced: “fort.”)

*Perception* determines how aware the character is of his surroundings. It is used to search, when looking for clues or hunting for hidden enemies. *Will* is the mental strength and empathy of the character. Also, *Will* is the social stat, it can be used to bend wills. *Agility* is the hand-eye coordination of the character. It is used when you need to quickly jam a key in a lock or throw a ball at a target. *Speed* is the movement stat—body control and metabolism rolled into one. It determines how fast you walk and how well you dive through windows. *Power* indicates how well the character uses his physical strength. *Forte* represents the physical endurance of the character. It isn't often rolled in the game, but it is very important nonetheless. Forte weighs heavily in factoring important attributes like Health and Mortal Wound.

Stats are also the basis of all skills. Each stat has a set of skills that grow from it. This is called the **roots** system. All skills are listed with their roots in the Character Burner Skill List.

## Attributes

*Reflexes*, *Health*, *Faith*, *Steel*, *Aptitude* and *Mortal Wound*. Attributes are additional characteristics that are inherent to every character, but are a bit more complex than basic stats. *Reflexes* and *Mortal Wound* are benchmarks that tell, respectively, how quickly a character reacts when the fur flies, and what it takes to cut a character down. *Health* determines how quickly the character recovers from injury. *Steel* dice represent the character's nerves. When things get hairy, does she run? Or does she steel herself and carry on? *Aptitude* determines how quickly a character learns new skills. Lastly, *Faith*—which is open to every

character, but not every character starts with it—represents the character's connection to the divine and her ability to enact miracles via that connection.

See the Character Burner for more on attributes.

## Skills


Skills are specific fields of knowledge; however, they are not too specialized. “Sword” is a good example of this. I could have made a general “Armed Combat” skill, but I felt it was unspecific. To me, the style of use of spear and sword were sufficiently different that they merited individual skills. On the other hand, I also could have easily broken the sword down into its myriad sub-categories: small sword, bastard sword, katana, scimitar and yataghan skills. But that seemed a little too specific (and ridiculous). It seems to me that a trained swordsman can pick up any of those weapons and have a fair idea how to use it to lop off his opponent's head. And, really, who wants their character sheet filled up with lots of minute variations of the same skill? Not me.

You might have noticed that there is no Intelligence or Charisma stat in Burning Wheel. Nope. *In this game your skills determine how smart you are.* And your ability to convince-someone-to-do-something-for-you-because-they-think-you-are-really-neat is a skill.

### Roots of Skills

Every skill is based on a stat; this is called its root. The root determines the starting shade and exponent of every skill. All stats can be roots: Perception, Will, Agility, Speed, Power, Forte or an average of two of them. After they are learned at their root, skills quickly take on a life of their own and tend to rise much higher and faster than a character's stats.

Typically, characters have many skills. This represents the various things a character has learned as they have journeyed through life: reading, writing, history, staying unnoticed in a crowd, brawling, persuading people, cooking, seducing someone, bargaining for a better price, fixing things...there are tons of skills.

 Characters are never stereotyped into a corner. They can never “not be able to learn” something. If your wizard wants to learn how to fight with a sword, all he has to do is pick it up and start practicing. (Ok, the reverse isn't necessarily true for folks who want to become wizards. If you want to throw lightning bolts you have to have a special trait. But that is an exception. You could still learn Sorcery, you just couldn't cast any spells!)

## Introduction

### Beyond Numbers: Traits, Instincts and Beliefs

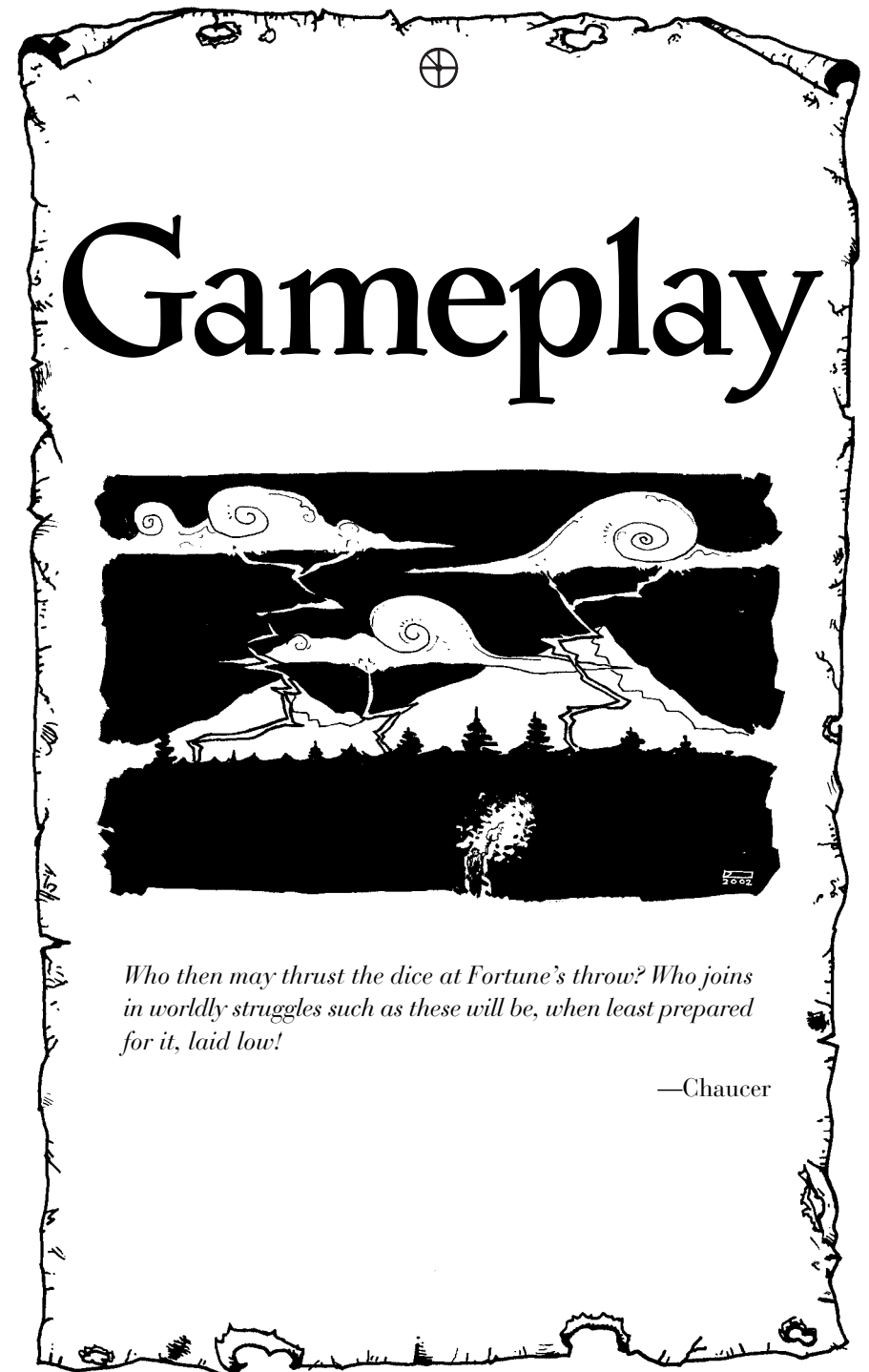
There are three more elements to the character beyond the numbers of rated abilities.

*Traits* are personality quirks, physical aberrations or just plain weird stuff that your character has—they can be good and bad. *Instincts* are a list of three of your character's gut reactions. They can be as simple as: "If someone shoots an arrow at me, I duck for cover." Or as complex as: "When someone throws something at me, I catch it and throw it back—at least I try to." *Beliefs* are a chance for you to expand on your character's personality. They are three things that your character believes in passionately. *Beliefs* can be anything from "God and Country" or "My dog is my best friend" to "All wizards are heretics and should be burned at the stake." They create a general sense of how a person would and should react to a certain situation. It doesn't mean they always do what's in their *Beliefs*, but that at the very least they are constantly fighting an internal struggle to do what they think is right.

Acquiring traits, Instincts and Beliefs is discussed in the Character Burner. Using them is discussed under Using Traits, Instincts and Beliefs in the Gameplay section of this book.

### The Rest of the Elements

The details of Magic, Materials and Equipment aren't nearly as important as the Elements of Character. In fact, it is necessary to understand the basics of the game and its characters before you can really understand where the other elements fall. So read on, immerse yourself in the die mechanics of the character, and everything will fall into place as you learn.




# Gameplay

*Who then may thrust the dice at Fortune's throw? Who joins  
in worldly struggles such as these will be, when least prepared  
for it, laid low!*

—Chaucer



# Using Your Abilities

 This section discusses the die mechanics for your stats, skills and attributes.

## Rolling Dice for Stats and Skills


A brief refresher: The exponent next to stats, skills and attributes tells how many dice you roll when testing that ability. The shade of the box next to the number tells you what number you need on each die for it to count—for it to be a success. The obstacle of a test is the number of successes needed from the stat or skill roll to pass.

*A fleeing sneak-thief has a B4 Speed and wants to leap over a swift stream to elude her pursuers. The GM sets the obstacle for the leap at 2. She rolls four dice (her Speed exponent), each one that comes up a 4 or better is a success (DN 4). She needs two successes to pass the test and leap over the stream (Ob 2).*

## Open-Ended Dice


When a test is indicated as “open-ended,” players are allowed to reroll dice that come up as 6s. The rerolled dice count as if they were additional dice for the stat, skill or attribute test—they can generate additional successes for the roll. Rerolled dice are not added onto the 6. If the reroll results in another 6, the player may count that as a success and roll again, and so on.

*Von Goten's out in the rainy dark. He needs to test his Perception to notice the approaching Orcs. Four dice are rolled, coming up 6, 3, 3, 2—1 success. However, the 6 is open-ended, so another die is thrown. The rerolled 6 comes up a 4—another success, for a total of two. Still not enough to see the lurking goblins.*

 When rolling open-ended 6s do not use the dice that came up successes. Leave those on the table and use the failed dice or additional dice to roll your open-ends. Doing this allows the GM to see exactly how many successes were rolled.

Perception tests, Steel tests, Faith tests, spell-casting, and Artha Luck are all examples of open-ended dice.

## The When and Why of Stats

 Perception, Will, Agility, Speed, Power, and Forte: These stats represent the physical (and mental) body of the character in the game world. So, technically, they are always in use. Every time the character walks, sits, stands or talks, the little stat muscles are pumping away.

But those are all aspects of the game that are behind the scenes, stuff that is just assumed to happen without interference of dice or GMs. When do you roll the dice for your stats? Should you roll your Will to see if you wake up in the morning? Should you roll your Forte to see if you can skip a meal? Should you roll your Speed every time you mount the stairs of the throne room? No, No and No. Those are simple acts which don't really require our interference (unless there are extenuating circumstances). Were you drugged in your sleep and your companions are trying to rouse you? That is an appropriate time to test Will.

Players test character's stats when a situation arises where the character has to perform a function important to the game and story that isn't (or doesn't absolutely have to be) governed by a Skill.



*A character sneaks into a bandit camp using her Stealthy skill. When she reaches to grab the satchel the GM could, by rights, call for the player to pass an Agility test (hand-eye coordination) to ensure that she doesn't drop the satchel or get the straps hung up on branches and thereby draw attention to herself. The bandits sitting around the campfire are entitled to a Perception test to see if they notice that satchel disappearing. Although, it would be a high obstacle Perception test, because the bandits think they are safe—they have sentries on duty—and are engrossed in their card game. Even so, they are entitled to a chance to notice.*

*Let's say that upon her exit our sneak-thief is spotted by a sentry who gives chase. He made a successful Perception test vs her Stealthy successes. The sentry gives a warning shout and dashes after her. Sprinting away, she wants to leap a stream to get to safety: Speed test. If she makes it, she will be safe on the other side. The bandit, if he wishes to pursue, must also make a Speed test to get quickly across. If he fails, then he is delayed as he plunges into the swift stream.*

*In this case, the bandit and our heroine both make the leap and the chase continues through the night-black forest. Branches snatch at loose clothing, leaves hiss and chatter underfoot, as the two breathlessly dash through the undergrowth. Our satchel-stealer tries to shake her pursuer. She ducks round a tree and quietly doubles back. That is a skill test on her part, for Stealthy; the bandit is entitled to a Perception test to see if he notices. Senses sharpened by adrenaline the bandit easily notices the simple trick and charges right for her. Seeing that her ploy failed, she sprints off again. The chase is on, the bandit is close, a hounding shadow in the inky dark. They run for minute ages. Speed tests are taken to see if one can gain ground on the other. Neither does. Hearts pound and lungs labor, legs turn leaden with exertion. Both are obliged to make Forte tests to see if they can maintain their breakneck pace. She passes and the bandit fails miserably. Panting and gasping, he stumbles to a halt and falls to his knees wheezing. Our satchel-stealing heroine careens off into the night, thankful that her luck held.*

## When Do I Use Skills?



Characters use skills in situations where it is hard to succeed without some specialized training and practice—such as making a porcelain bowl. If GMs are at a loss as to whether a test should be rolled against skills or stats use this guideline—if you are using more than one stat to accomplish a test than there should probably be a skill involved. For example to build a chair: GM: “Ok roll your Perception, now roll your Agility, now roll your Power...” Instead of all those needless stat tests, the character should be testing one skill, Carpentry.

## Obstacles and the Real World, or What’s My Obstacle to Run Up the Stairs?



This is a list of general (and sometimes silly) obstacles given to create a feel for how Burning Wheel “sees” the world. Use these to get a sense of what is hard and what is not, so that you can start judging your own obstacles when the time arises. It is nearly impossible to plan out what every obstacle will be in the course of an adventure, but by understanding the basics, a GM and players can fairly judge the difficulty of tasks and the likelihood of successfully completing them.

*Obstacles are not relative!* Do not make an obstacle higher just because a character has a higher skill. That completely defeats the purpose of the system. Simple acts can be bungled by normal people, but they are easy for “master-level”

folks. Seemingly impossible tasks are, well, near impossible for your average folks, but quite achievable for the highly skilled. When a player asks if his character can “do” something, try not to say flat out “No.” Instead, think about it a moment and set an obstacle for the task. The fact may be that the obstacle far outstrips the character’s abilities and the player will realize it is a foolish endeavor. Or it will create an opportunity for the character to attempt something heroic and daring...and let fate decide the situation.



Ultimately, the obstacle for a test is up to the GM. Quit complaining.

## Using Perception in the Game

Characters are assumed to be able see and hear on their own just fine. Even so, they will be called on to roll their Perception constantly. Perception is a filter that indicates what the character *understands* about their environment. For example, a swordsman is greeted on the street by an inquiring official. A successful Perception test would determine if he notices that the minister is wearing a small sword concealed beneath his tunic.

Perception is used to see Stealthy and Inconspicuous characters. Also, Perception is used to see through Sleight of Hand and detect traps.

### Sample Perception Obstacles

Noticing something obvious (like a piece of furniture) in a room:	Ob 1
Recognizing a friend:	Ob 1
Noticing something poorly hidden (under the bed):	Ob 2
Spotting a moth on a tree from 10' away:	Ob 3
Determining the source of a sound in an echoing cave:	Ob 4

## Using Will

Will isn’t often tested during the course of the game. Usually it stands as an obstacle for other characters to roll against, such as for social skills like Persuasion. Will is the root stat of the various social skills.

### Sample Will Obstacles

Not peeing your pants when you really have to go:	Ob 1
Not peeing your pants when you are drunk and really have to go:	Ob 2
The patience and understanding required to read these rules:	Ob 3
To stop smoking cold turkey:	Ob 4

### Using Agility

Agility represents the character's hand-eye coordination. It is the root for most combat-oriented skills. But it is also used for throwing, catching and snatching.

#### Sample Agility Obstacles

Drawing your sword:	Ob 0
Using a fork and getting it all in your mouth:	Ob 1
Key in lock:	Ob 1
Catching an easy toss:	Ob 1
Drawing your sword while dashing/jogging:	Ob 2
Catching a fast throw:	Ob 2
Throwing a ball and hitting a target 10 paces away:	Ob 2
Key in lock quickly:	Ob 2
Catching a fly:	Ob 3
Drawing your sword while <i>sprinting</i> :	Ob 4
Catching a fly with chopsticks:	Ob 5
Grabbing a pen out of someone's hand:	Ob equal to Agility of target.

### Using Speed

Speed is used for body control tests like jumping through windows or climbing trees. It is also used to determine the "movement rate" of the character.

#### Sample Speed Obstacles

Walking up stairs:	Ob 0
Jogging up stairs:	Ob 1
Jumping off the curb:	Ob 1
Carefully climbing over a low fence:	Ob 1
Sprinting up stairs:	Ob 2
Jumping over a ditch:	Ob 2
Running jump over a low fence:	Ob 2
Safely jumping down one story:	Ob 2
Jumping through a small, open window:	Ob 3
Safely jumping down two stories:	Ob 3
Safely jumping down three stories:	Ob 5
Running jump over the moat:	Ob 5
World record long jump:	Ob 6
Winning a race:	Speed versus Speed

#### Moving in Burning Wheel

In addition to allowing characters to perform graceful leaps and dives, Speed also governs how quickly a character moves. There are three modes of movement in the game: walking, jogging and sprinting.

Movement is thoroughly detailed in the Action Reaction section, but suffice it to say someone with a B2 Speed walks very slowly and can't run worth a damn. While a character with a B6 Speed is exceptionally fast on his feet and can sprint very quickly.

### Using Power

Power is tested when characters are lifting, hauling, pushing or pulling. It is used in other capacities where it is not rolled, rather it tells "how much." In melee combat, it determines "how much" damage; for throwing things around, it determines "how far."

#### Sample Power Obstacles

Taking candy from a baby:	Ob 1
Lifting two corners of the couch:	Ob 2
Flipping the small dining room table:	Ob 2
Dragging a full grown man:	Ob 2
Fireman's carry a full grown man:	Ob 3
Flipping over the food-laden heavy wooden dining room table:	Ob 3
Throwing the television <i>across</i> the room:	Ob 4
Lifting the couch over your head:	Ob 6
Carrying the refrigerator:	Ob 7
Moving pianos:	Ob 8

Some obstacles are really too high for anyone but the most heroically strong characters to accomplish by themselves. That is because you are supposed to get help, either from your friends or in the form of rope, winches and dollies.

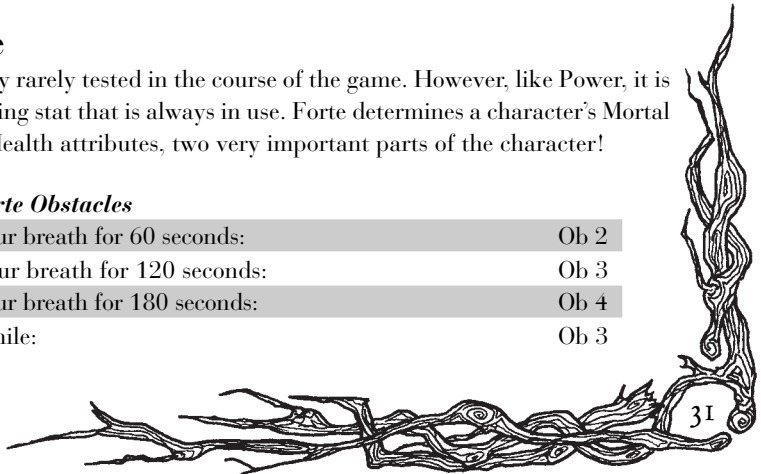
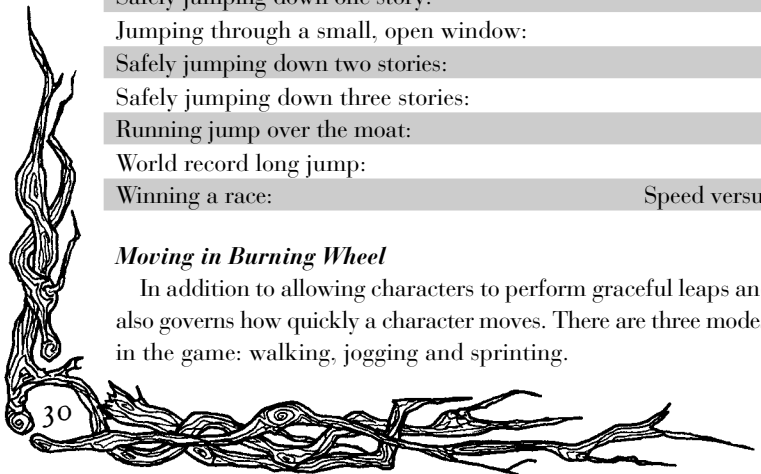
Also, notice there are no Power obstacles listed for punching through walls or hacking down doors with an axe. Obstacles for smashing and breaking things aren't so cut and dried as the simple acts detailed above. They actually have their own system under the Materials section in the Appendix.

### Using Forte

Forte is very rarely tested in the course of the game. However, like Power, it is an underpinning stat that is always in use. Forte determines a character's Mortal Wound and Health attributes, two very important parts of the character!

#### Sample Forte Obstacles

Holding your breath for 60 seconds:	Ob 2
Holding your breath for 120 seconds:	Ob 3
Holding your breath for 180 seconds:	Ob 4
Jogging a mile:	Ob 3





## I Can Do That Without Trying

It is assumed that under normal conditions certain tasks are accomplished without needing to roll the dice. Don't roll the dice to see if a character who is standing around successfully draws his sword. It is a waste of time. However, if the character is sprinting into a fight and trying to draw his sword, tack on the obstacle modifier to the "Ob 0" task and then roll the dice. Likely, in those circumstances, the character will not be able to draw his sword at all or he will drop it when he does.

## Using Attributes

### Reflexes

Do you have time to draw your sword before your opponent bears down on you? How quickly can you string your bow? This is the province of Reflexes. This attribute is determined by averaging Perception, Agility and Speed (see the Character Burner for more on this). It determines, literally, how many things a character can do during the course of a fracas.

The exact mechanics of Reflexes are meticulously detailed in the Action Reaction section of this book.

#### Notes on Reflexes

Reflexes are never "rolled" or tested in the manner that skills or stats are. However, Reflexes are modified by the effects of wounds.

### Health

Your character has been wounded badly, how long will it take for the wounds to close and for her to recover her strength? Test Health to find out. This very important attribute and is the combination of Will and Forte. Also, Health takes into account the character's "lifestyle." Smoking and boozing is fun, but it is murder on the Health.

Health is tested when recovering from injury. This process is meticulously detailed in the Post Trauma section.

#### Notes on Health Tests

Health tests are never modified by the effects of wounds.

### Steel

Do you flinch when you are wounded? Are you stunned when witnessing a brutal melee? Do you cower at the sight of *speakable* horrors? Steel is the measure of the character's nerves.

#### Steel Tests

When a character encounters the unexpected or something shocking, the GM may call for a Steel test. Players test Steel against a base obstacle equal to their character's Hesitation.

#### Hesitation


All characters have a "Base Hesitation" that is equal to *10 minus the character's Will exponent*.

*Thus a character with a Will of B4 has a Base Hesitation of 6.*

This is the number of *actions* (See Action Reaction) that the character might *hesitate* if he fails his Steel test. Subtract Steel test successes from the character's base Hesitation. The final result is the number of actions the character spends hesitating.

*A character with a Hesitation of 6 gets two successes on his Steel test. He will spend the next 4 actions hesitating.*

#### Failing Steel Tests: "I just stood there..."

 A character who fails his Steel test immediately stops what he is doing and momentarily loses control of his faculties. During the actions spent hesitating, players may have their characters do one of three things:

#### While Hesitating a Character May:

- *Stand and Drool.* Characters stand their ground, blink a bit and drool a little. They may not act or defend themselves in any way. They may not move; they may not speak.
- *Fall Prone.* Characters may fall face forward and fling their arms over their heads to protect themselves. They immediately hit the ground—it only costs one action. They may not act or defend themselves in any way. They may



not move; they may not speak. It costs two actions to rise from a prone position. See Action Reaction for more on this.

- **Run Screaming.** Characters may Sprint away from the source of the Steel test at full tilt. If they run, they must scream. I repeat: You must scream. Characters stop sprinting at the end of the *volley* in which they stop hesitating. They may not otherwise act or speak coherently until done running and screaming.

**Some Examples of when Steel is Tested:**

- Being surprised/unexpectedly attacked
- Seeing a ghost
- Seeing your friend killed
- Being wounded (see Anatomy of Injury)

“That’s Really, Really Scary:”

“Yeah.”

Sometimes something will be so shocking, painful or frightening that an obstacle modifier will be tacked onto the basic Hesitation Ob of the Steel test, thus adding to the potential amount of Hesitation a character could suffer in the face of evil fate.

**Sample Steel Obstacle Modifiers:**

Seeing your really tough friend beheaded in one stroke by a tall man in a black cloak:	+3 Ob
Seeing a zombie:	+2 Ob
Seeing your friend turned into a zombie:	+4 Ob
Seeing a ghost:	+4 Ob
Seeing a demon:	+6 Ob
Seeing a divinity:	+10 Ob

**Notes on Steel Tests**

All Steel tests are open-ended. (Reroll 6s as if they were additional dice.) Steel is modified by the effects of wounds. See Anatomy of Injury.

**Example of a Steel Test**

*A veteran soldier (Steel B5, Will B4, Hesitation: 6) is going to the latrine on a rainy night. He rounds the corner of a warehouse and sees a looming shape with a drawn blade shining dully in the darkness—an enemy samurai on the prowl (Steel B6, Will B5, Hesitation: 5). Uh-oh, this is a bit unexpected. Unfortunately, the rain is so thick that the prowling samurai doesn’t see his quarry until he is right on top of him. The GM calls for a Steel test. (For both characters, PC and NPC.) The soldier rolls 1, 1, 3, 4, 6—and then rerolls the 6 for a 4, another*

*success; three successes all together, not enough to overcome his Hesitation of 6. The veteran will Hesitate for 3 actions. The samurai rolls, 2, 2, 4, 4, 5, 5, for a total of 4 successes, enough to reduce his Hesitation of 5 down to 1 action.*

*Now the players decide how they will spend their Hesitating actions. The veteran decides to Run and Scream. He doesn’t even have a weapon drawn! (And he doesn’t know the samurai is Hesitating as well). The samurai opts to Stand and Drool for his single action of Hesitation.*

*So the veteran bolts screaming off into the night—he sprints to safety. The samurai blinks and freezes up for a fraction of a second, the drool barely escaping his lips before he recovers his wits. Too late though. His opponent has let loose a howl and has a few paces head start. He curses to himself and charges after his fleeing quarry.*

For more on actions and movement see Action Reaction.

**Mortal Wound**

Mortal Wound is a combination of the character’s Power and Forte and it is the indicator of what it takes to kill the character outright. It is the right-most tolerance on the Physical Tolerances Grayscale.

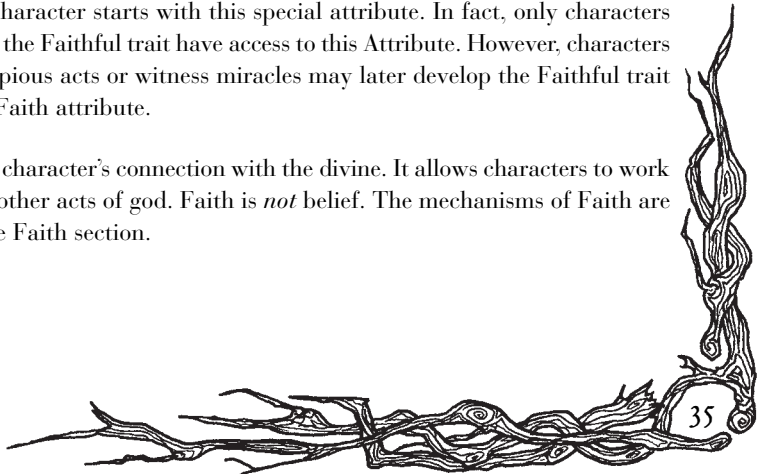
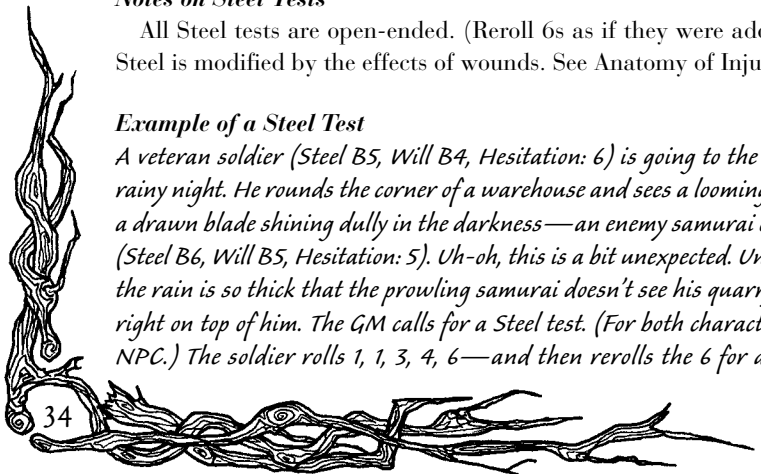
Mortal Wound is never tested and is never modified by the effects of wounds. Mortal Wound can be improved as Power and Forte advance or through certain traits.

For more on Physical Tolerances see Anatomy of Injury; for more on improving your character’s Power and Forte see Advancement; for more on traits see Using Traits in this book or the Trait List in the Character Burner.

**Faith**

Not every character starts with this special attribute. In fact, only characters who purchase the Faithful trait have access to this Attribute. However, characters who perform pious acts or witness miracles may later develop the Faithful trait and thus the Faith attribute.

Faith is the character’s connection with the divine. It allows characters to work miracles and other acts of god. Faith is *not* belief. The mechanisms of Faith are detailed in the Faith section.





## Gameplay

### *Grief and Blasphemous Hatred*

Elves and Orcs don't have Faith, they have a variation of the attribute. Elves have *Grief* and Orcs are fueled by *Blasphemous Hatred*. These are detailed in the Character Burner.

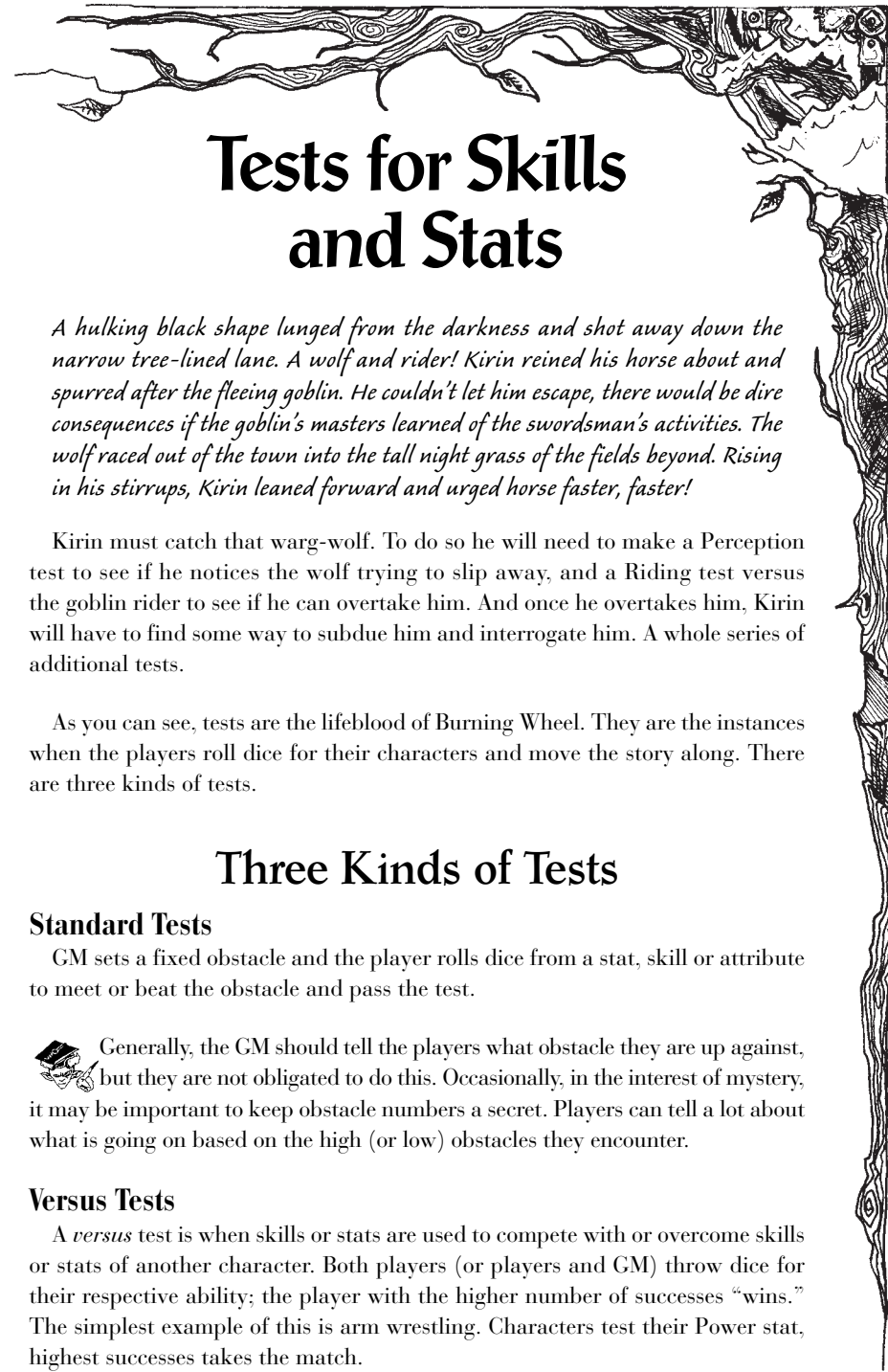
### Aptitude

Aptitude determines how quickly the character can learn something new. Characters learn new skills using the Aptitude for the *root* of that skill.

Aptitude is divided into a number of sub-attributes, one for each stat and combination of stats. Characters have a Perception Aptitude, Will Aptitude, Agility Aptitude, Speed Aptitude, Power Aptitude and Forte Aptitude.

Aptitude is never rolled or modified by the effects of wounds. Conversely, as stats improve so do Aptitudes.

Aptitude is only used when learning new skills. This process is detailed in the Advancement section.



# Tests for Skills and Stats

*A hulking black shape lunged from the darkness and shot away down the narrow tree-lined lane. A wolf and rider! Kirin reined his horse about and spurred after the fleeing goblin. He couldn't let him escape, there would be dire consequences if the goblin's masters learned of the swordsman's activities. The wolf raced out of the town into the tall night grass of the fields beyond. Rising in his stirrups, Kirin leaned forward and urged horse faster, faster!*

Kirin must catch that warg-wolf. To do so he will need to make a Perception test to see if he notices the wolf trying to slip away, and a Riding test versus the goblin rider to see if he can overtake him. And once he overtakes him, Kirin will have to find some way to subdue him and interrogate him. A whole series of additional tests.

As you can see, tests are the lifeblood of Burning Wheel. They are the instances when the players roll dice for their characters and move the story along. There are three kinds of tests.

## Three Kinds of Tests

### Standard Tests

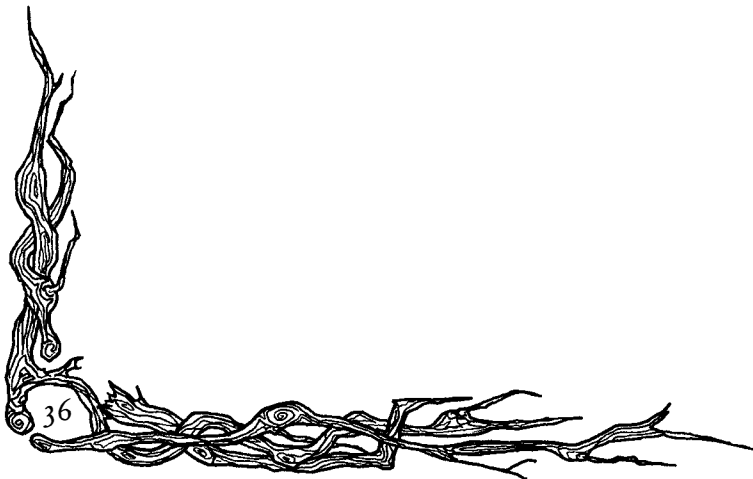
GM sets a fixed obstacle and the player rolls dice from a stat, skill or attribute to meet or beat the obstacle and pass the test.



Generally, the GM should tell the players what obstacle they are up against, but they are not obligated to do this. Occasionally, in the interest of mystery, it may be important to keep obstacle numbers a secret. Players can tell a lot about what is going on based on the high (or low) obstacles they encounter.

### Versus Tests

A *versus* test is when skills or stats are used to compete with or overcome skills or stats of another character. Both players (or players and GM) throw dice for their respective ability; the player with the higher number of successes "wins." The simplest example of this is arm wrestling. Characters test their Power stat, highest successes takes the match.



*Versus* tests are very common in Burning Wheel. Other examples include: Speed vs Speed, to win a race; Stealthy vs Perception, to hide from detection; Inconspicuous vs Perception, to escape notice in a crowd; Hagglng vs Will, to get a better price; Persuasion vs Will, to convince someone; Power vs Power, to grapple with someone; Sword Strike vs Sword Parry, to chop off the 'ead (or not).


## Open Tests

Perception tests are the most common example of open tests. The GM has a set range of information or results hidden behind the mysterious screen, the players test their characters' Perception, and the more successes, the more of that information they get.

An open test generally has no set obstacle. The GM asks the player to roll dice for a skill or stat—the more successes he gets, the better the result. Typically, open tests are the kind you can't necessarily fail—you just screw them up.

Craftsman and Academic skills occasionally use open tests as well. Basically, toss those dice, the better the result the better you have achieved your goal—the more info available to you or the better your product.

## Testing Skills

 For most skills (Peasant, Craftsman, Medicinal, Academic, Seafaring, Schools of Thought and Artist types) there are three ways to approach a task. These methods allow a character to improve on his work with more successes, or reduce his obstacle by taking more time. Unless the GM says otherwise, these methods are always available:

### Working Carefully

*Working carefully* reduces the obstacle for the test. Reduce obstacle by one and increase time for test by +50%. This must be announced before the dice are thrown. Physical skills may “*work carefully*,” it is possible to climb slowly and carefully.

### Working Diligently

*Working diligently* allows the character to add a degree of quality to his work. Extra successes can be used to add extra features, perks or durability to the final product. If this sounds vague, that's because it is. There are countless instances when a character needs to make something beautiful, nice or different. This catch-all category allows for those needs. These successes do not allow characters to craft “superior quality” items. That is a whole different story, to be detailed in the forthcoming Craftsman Appendix.


### Working Quickly

For each success over the base obstacle of the test, the character reduces the overall time for the task by -10%.

### Combining Methods

Characters may work Diligently and Carefully, or Quickly and Diligently. They may never work Carefully and Quickly. Extra successes (successes over the obstacle) may be divided between working Diligently and working Quickly after the test is made.

## What if I Don't Have the Skills? *aka Beginner's Luck*

 If a character attempts something that requires a specific skill *that she does not have*, she rolls dice for the *root stat* of the missing skill (the whole stat, not just half). Root stats are listed with each skill in the list in the Character Burner. There is a penalty for not having the proper skill for the test: *All unskilled obstacles are doubled*. We call this the (drum roll please): *Double obstacle penalty*.

*Rahtgash the Orc wants to put a bolt into Von Goten. Though he has a crossbow, Rahtgash doesn't have the crossbow skill. So he suffers a double obstacle penalty when trying use the crossbow to hit a target.*

*Or: A peasant with no sword skill and a B4 Agility trying to wield a sword would have a base Ob of 2 to hit his opponent, as opposed to the Ob 1 he would have if he had a Sword skill.*

### Double Obstacle Penalty for Versus Tests

If a character without a skill is competing against a skilled opponent, then the unskilled character must get twice as many successes as the skilled character.

*While on sentry duty the bandit rolls his Perception to keep a sharp eye out. A sneak-thief gets 2 successes on her Stealthy test, thus the bandit needs 4 successes to see her—he does not have the skill necessary for detecting stealthy opponents, Observation Training. Stealthy vs Perception is a versus test at a Double Obstacle Penalty.*

*Double obstacle penalty only applies to stats being tested as skills. It doesn't apply to stats being tested as stats. Only to stats being tested as skills. For example, if a character is trying to lift a piano she tests her Power, but she doesn't get a double obstacle penalty because there isn't a piano lifting skill.*

## Time and Tests



“How much time do I have?” asks the player. “How much time do you take?” asks the GM. Players always want to spend exactly the right amount of time doing something. Unfortunately, life and adventure aren’t always so accommodating.

GM should ask the player how much time she is willing to spend on the task at hand; and then should inform her of how much time the task should take. If she succeeds, it is no big deal, right? The character gets what she is after in the time she allotted.

But when a test is failed, players like to end the task at hand as soon as the dice stop bouncing. In actuality it takes time to fail a test as well. It takes time before the character realizes that she is doing something wrong and should start over. This is why the GM should ask how much time players are willing to spend.

*A player is researching a quote from an obscure manuscript. The GM knows what she is looking for is in the manuscript, but he also knows that it could take up to three years to decipher the manuscript. He asks the player: “How long do you want to spend reading through it?” The player answers: “A couple of weeks, I guess.” The player then throws the dice and happens to fail the test. The GM tells her: “You’ve spent 15 days reading through the text. It is incredibly dense and obscure—you don’t find what you are looking for just yet.” The player asks: “Have I read through the whole thing?” GM: “No, you have skimmed most of it, but read only very little.”*



Nothing pisses a player off more than a GM who says: “Ok, you’ve spent three years researching this manuscript and found nothing.” The player invariably says: “I was only going to spend a day on it!” And that in turn makes GMs mad, because the player didn’t say that at the outset...And so on, and so on. Try to get time out of the way beforehand!

## Failing Tests

Failure is not the end of the world. Usually, what it means is that a character has wasted his time and must start again. For example, if a character is sprinting up a staircase and fails his Speed test he doesn’t “not move.” Rather, he slips and stumbles as he runs, it takes him longer to get to the top.

A character leaping a gap who fails his Speed test is at a greater risk. The test is to get over the gap—if he fails that test he doesn’t get over the gap, he falls in.



There are two sides to the failure coin. First, *players* instantly know they have failed a test whereas *characters* do not necessarily know immediately. It usually takes time to realize you have made a mistake and go back and fix it. All too often, in life, we don’t realize we have screwed up until we are done...and we have to go back and start all over again.

The other side of the coin is that sometimes you just know that you have gone wrong. Sometimes a skilled bowman just knows, when that arrow is launched, if it is going to hit or not. He can feel the subtleties in the pull of the bow, the tension of the string, the dynamics of the release. Any variance in myriad factors immediately informs him: that one should find its mark, or that one is going to fly long. Skill failure can be a bit more obvious. Sometimes craftsmen just mess up. For example, if a blacksmith is pounding out his wares and he accidentally cracks a blade, he knows he has done wrong. Time to start over again.

The following examples are general guidelines for the time required to “fail” a test. Failure happens in degrees, just like success. When successful, a character can put extra successes into decreasing the time spent on the task. When failing, the closer the character came to achieving the actual obstacle, the less time he is bogged down in failure.



These are general guidelines. Use them with discretion—don’t punish your players even more harshly for failing something.

## Failure by Skill Category

### Academic

**No successes**—The investigation, reading, writing, (or whatever you were up to) is short and brisk, a few moments really. The character is utterly convinced she has discovered the heart of the matter—she has cut right to the chase, certain that she is right!

**Less than half the successes needed**—“What was it that we were looking for again? Hm? Oh, you see I found this poignantly interesting story on coopers. It is really quite interesting.” Test takes the full amount of time allotted.

**Half the successes needed**—“Ah yes, here it is! Take a look at this, Chumley. What do you think? Oh. Oh. That’s not it at all, is it? Well, back to the drawing board.” Test takes half the amount of time allotted.

**One less than what you needed**—“I am fairly certain I have found it. I think. I guess. I mean, I really can’t think of what else it should be. This should be it, I am certain. Or not.” The failed test takes the maximum amount of time allotted and the character should, if at all possible, be given some clue as to the “real deal.”

## Craftsman

**No successes**– You complete a magnificent work in painstaking detail. So much detail, in fact, that you require more time for your masterwork than originally anticipated. Character takes 125% of the full time allotted. In addition, the masterwork crumbles to junk when it is first put to the test.

**Less than half the successes needed**– Test takes half the amount of time allotted. The character is left with an obviously useless piece of junk.

**Half the successes needed**– The test takes a quarter of the amount of time allotted. The character gives up and disposes of his embarrassment.

**One less than what you needed**– Test takes full amount of time allotted, and character comes away with a serviceable piece...that fails at an appropriately dramatic point in the story.



## Artisan

**No successes**– The character constructs a gorgeous work of unimaginable splendor. So unimaginable that the work requires 125% more time and money than initially estimated. The splendiferous structure collapses as soon as the first important/significant character looks at it. Preferably, it waits for the character's rival or lady-love to pass by before heaving into itself.

**Less than half the successes needed**– Test takes half the amount of time allotted to produce a piece of structurally unsound, living artwork. Not at all what you intended.

**Half the successes needed**– Test takes half of the amount of time allotted...to produce a lot of broken rocks and wood and scribbles on parchment.

**One less than what you needed**– Test takes the full amount of time and resources set aside for it, the final product is serviceable construction with gaps in the floor boards, leaks in the roof, and drafts in the bedroom.

## Physical

Physical tests tend to be fairly instantaneous, jumping and throwing and such don't factor time too heavily in their doing. However, climbing and creeping about and what-not do use time. Therefore apply time penalties where appropriate and use other bad stuff when time isn't a factor.

**No successes**– You step on a cat, slip and fall, or some other equally disastrous thing. (Or it takes you at least 10 times as long to get where you are going.)

**Less than half the successes needed**– You can't do it. You spend a few minutes figuring this out before you back off. Requires double the time allotted for the task.

**Half the successes needed**– You slide, you slip, you stumble, you spin, you bounce, you tumble. Aside from a few scrapes and bruises, you are unhurt, but time is ticking. The test took 150% of the time required for the task.

**One less than what you needed**– You almost make it, but at the last minute get a very bad feeling about it. You retreat and decide to try again somewhere else. Test requires the full time allotted to the task.

## Martial

Generally, martial skill tests are rather instantaneous things in Burning Wheel. Failure can indicate a number of things, a missed shot, a weak shot, or a glancing blow. Please do not penalize your players with “fumbles” and critical misses.

## Sorcerous

Sorcerous skills have their own special failure rules. See Failed Casting in Incantations and Inscriptions for more on that.

## Social

Social skills tend to be roleplayed in real time, so the time factor of failure isn't a very big issue. However, below are listed some *possible* reaction results for the character's bumbling:

**No successes**– A hostile reaction.


**Less than half the successes needed**– A humorous reaction.

**Half the successes needed**– An incredulous reaction.

**One less than what you needed**– An indifferent reaction.

## Failure Notes


Obviously, these are general guidelines that do not override other more pressing effects of failure, such as: you get caught lying, you fall off the cliff, you get spotted sneaking around.

 However, if the character is not killed or run off by failure he may try again. *There is no rule in Burning Wheel that says you can't try again—just remember that failure takes time.*



## How Long Do Tests Count for? *aka, Lettin' em Ride*

### Frequency of Tests in Gameplay

 A common problem with GMs is that they are constantly asking players to test and retest their character's abilities for the same thing. Essentially, they are just begging the players to mess up, fail a roll, and let disaster run roughshod over the adventure. I can't tell you how many times I have heard this scenario:

**Player:** I want to sneak into the bandit's camp.

**GM:** Ok, you head off through the woods. Make a Stealthy test.

*The player tosses the dice and passes the test beautifully—all successes!*

**GM:** Ok, you come to a stream and start moving along it. Make a Stealthy test.

*The player frowns a bit (what about all those successes she just rolled?) and tosses the dice, getting just a few successes.*

**GM:** Turning away from the stream you head along a path. Make a Stealthy test.

*The player starts to sweat as the dice come up narrowly successful—1 success.*

**GM:** You “creep” up the path. *Snickering at the character's “lack of stealth.”* And you see a campfire ahead of you. Make a Stealthy test.

*Chewing her lip, the player tosses the dice and comes up...with plenty of successes!*

**GM:** You crawl to the edge of the campfire and look in. You see a few bandits awake and playing cards around the fire, the rest are asleep.

**Player:** I want to quietly grab one of satchels of a sleeping bandit and make off with it.

**GM:** Ok, make a Stealthy test.

*The player blinks in disbelief, nonetheless she tosses the dice—and gets no successes. (Of course.)*

**GM:** (Sighing). Well, you bumble into the camp and ham-handedly grab one of the bags hanging on a nearby tree. The three men sitting around the fire look up and, not recognizing you, grab their swords and charge you.

**Player:** I quit.

**GM:** What? Why? What the hell is your problem?

*Player rolls her eyes and her shoves dice down the GM's throat.*

This is not an extreme example. It happens all the time. (Except for the last bit, I imagine.)

In Burning Wheel, one test is made. One test counts for the whole situation, like so:

**Player:** I want to sneak into the bandit's camp.

**GM:** Ok, you head off through the woods. Make a Stealthy test.

*The player tosses the dice and passes the test beautifully—all successes!*


**GM:** Ok, you sneak through the forest, along a stream and down a path, easily avoiding the bandit sentries. You creep to the edge of the campfire and look in. You see a few bandits awake and playing cards around the fire, the rest are asleep.

**Player:** Alright, I want to know who's employing them. I'll quietly grab one of satchels of a sleeping bandit and make off with it.

**GM:** Ok, how many successes did you get on your Stealthy test?

**Player:** All successes: (*For the sake of example:*) 4 successes.

**GM:** Wow. No problem, you grab the bag and slip off.

 Do you see the difference here? The second scenario takes a lot less game time than the first. In the first example the player is bound to fail—roll enough dice, one of the rolls is going to come up bad. Failed test brings on bad juju. GMs love to nail players with failed tests, but what is really at stake here? The player stated her intentions at the outset: “I want to sneak into the bandit camp.” Let the character's skill and the dice decide how. If she fails that initial test, she goes crashing off into the forest and gets caught. If she passes that initial test, she succeeds. Don't roll dice for the sake of rolling dice. It only ruins games.

### Let it Ride


*Let one test stand for the scenario/situation.* Perception tests, Stealthy tests, Command tests—any skill or stat that is repeated being tested during a scenario—should be tested once at the beginning. The successes from that test count for the rest of the scenario. But, when conditions change, or players change their course of action, let/make them test anew.

*If a player gets three successes on her Perception test, then those successes count toward all instances where dice would be tossed for Perception for the duration of the scenario. Sometimes that means you will always notice things, whereas other times you will be a dunce.*



# Fun Skill Stuff

Skills are the second most important aspect of this game. They make the story go, they show what a character knows and can do. Listed below are various ways to use your skills in a more integrated manner during the story. This is much more than just “roll the dice, beat the obstacles and go.”

 By the way, the most important aspect of the game is, of course, roleplaying. Otherwise it would be called a Skills Playing Game.

## Helping Out

Characters with similar or related Skills may assist each other in certain tasks. Academic, Craftsman, Medicinal, Peasant, Seafaring, Schools of Thought and Sorcerous skills may all use the Helping Out rules.


In order to help and be helped one character must be designated as the “primary”—*the primary character tests his skill and rolls the dice for the test.* Before any dice are rolled the primary must accept the help being offered—this can be conscious or unconscious for the character, but the player must accept: “Ok, help me out.” If this is not the case, those trying to help just get in the way and foul up what the character is trying to accomplish.

There can only be so many helpers. The size of the task and thus how many helpers are allowed should be determined by the GM at the outset.

### Thinking, Discussing and Arguing

School of Thought, Academic and Sorcerous skills have special collaboration rules. When people come together to forge an idea, be it a design for a bridge or a formula for a golem, there is no limit to the number of helpers or secondaries. But if *one* player disagrees with the desired product of the project, then the time of the collaborative test is doubled. Each subsequent disagreement also doubles time. This disagreement is only manifest through roleplay and must be carefully watched for by the GM. Once the players have decided on their desired outcome, they cast the dice and the GM informs them how long they have been at it.


## Helping Dice

 Each helper with a *related* or similar skill adds one die, regardless of rank, to the primary’s skill. If the related skill is B+ or higher, add *another* die to the primary’s test. Each helper may only call upon one skill to help the primary.

*A soldier with Field Dressing is helping a midwife with Herbalism treat his wounded friend. They are trying to treat a Severe wound to the leg, (Ob 5 for Herbalism). The two players decide that the midwife is the primary for this test, the soldier will help. The soldier has a Field Dressing skill of B4 and thus adds two dice (1 for having a related skill, and another for having a related skill of exponent 4 or higher). The helping dice are handed over to the midwife and added to her Herbalism skill of B5 for the purposes of the test.*

## Fields of Related Knowledge: FoRK aka, Helping Yourself

The interrelated nature skills is called “Fields of Related Knowledge” (FoRK).

 A character may use his own related skills to help himself. For example, if a character has a Field Dressing and an Anatomy skill he can use the Anatomy skill to FoRK when dealing with wounds.

The die mechanics are similar to the Helping mechanics. The FoRK skill must be a “related” skill. When FoRKing, the character rolls an extra die for having the related skill. Only add a second die if the FoRK exponent is 7 or higher.

*If our educated soldier from the example above was on his own and needed to treat his wounded friend, he could test his B4 Field Dressing skill +1D FoRKed from his B2 Anatomy skill.*

Characters can never “help themselves” with a stat (a stat could be used as a “related skill” to help another character though).

Exactly which skills are related to which is really up to the GM and common sense. Largely it is a situational process. Skills that would help in some situations would not necessarily help in others—if the character was preparing bandages for future need, Anatomy skill wouldn’t help the Field Dressing skill. Skills are listed with suggested FoRKs in the Character Burner General Skill List, but these are by no means the final word on the matter. GMs should allow players to FoRK whenever and wherever they deem it appropriate.

## Following Directions

It is possible for a character with no experience in a skill to follow a set of instructions to complete a task. There are two ways to follow instructions: from a written set and from a person. Following instructions requires that the character be in contact with the set of instructions for the duration of the test, whether it be an instructor or a book.

### Written Instructions

Each set of written/illustrated instructions has an obstacle. This obstacle is based on the complexity of the task at hand plus the clarity of the instructions describing that task. The written/illustrated instructions usually *increase* the test obstacle. Obscure or bad instructions are +5 Ob; poorly written instructions are +4 Ob; instructions with bizarre or unclear illustrations are +3 Ob; adequately written and illustrated instructions are +2 Ob; clearly written and illustrated instructions are +1 Ob. Obviously, if you cannot read you cannot follow written instructions. (Yes, certain instructions may be illustrated and allow illiterate characters to follow along.)

*A peasant boy wants forge a sword. He has no skill, but he does have an instruction manual. The obstacle for forging a sword is 3 and the manual is a bit roughly written, for a +3 Ob. The total obstacle for the test is 6. Since the character doesn't have the Blacksmith skill the test is made against the root, which in this case is the average of Power and Agility.*

*Written instructions negate the double obstacle penalty for unskilled characters. The time for the test is four times that of a normal skill test. Successes can be used to work *carefully*, *diligently* and *quickly* as with normal skill tests.*

### Spoken Instructions

One character may tell another how to perform a task. This is not the same as helping. The “instructing” character does not participate in the test at all; rather, he tries to give verbal illustrations of what needs to be done. Most of the time this comes into play when characters are physically separated but able to communicate.

Before giving instructions, the instructor must first pass a skill test as if he was going to perform the test himself—the instructor visualizes the task at hand.

The obstacle for performing an action while being told what to do is the base obstacle for the task plus the difference between the teacher's and student's Will exponents. Test skill (or root stat) vs obstacle. Tests using spoken instructions take twice as long as normal tests. Characters may work *carefully*, *quickly* and *diligently*.

### Notes on Instructions

The above process assumes the characters are following instructions for tasks they wouldn't normally be able to perform. If, perchance, they have the skills to complete the task but choose to Follow Instructions, whether written or spoken, use the rules for *Helping Out*. *Spoken Instructions* are only effective if the instructor has a higher skill exponent than the instructee. Add +1D to the test plus an additional die if the instructor's exponent is 4 or higher. Following *Written Instructions* for a skill the character already possesses grants +1D.

## Training Skills

Some skills are listed as “Trainings.” Trainings are a kind of sub-skill which do not have their own rating shade or exponent rating. Rather, they are dependent on another stat or skill for their dice; they add a little something extra to a skill or stat—a little slice of knowledge that gives an edge.

*Observation cancels the Double Obstacle Penalty to spot characters using Stealthy, Inconspicuous or Sleight of Hand. Characters roll Perception vs Stealthy, etc. as usual, but the test is a straight Versus test.*

*Armor Training mitigates the obstacle penalty for wearing heavy armor.*

*Shield Training allows characters to use the rules described under Shields for Blocking. Characters using shields without Shield Training must use an action to Block with their shields.*

*Mounted Combat gives a whole range of abilities detailed in the Riding Section.*

Many Trainings just indicate that a character “knows how to do it,” and no roll is necessary. Take Rowing Training for an example. Unless the characters are in some dire boat race of cosmic proportions, the skill should be enough indicate that the character knows what he is doing when rowing a boat or ship.



# Advancement

A character's starting stat, skill and attribute exponents are not set in stone. Each is a separate entity which grows with experience and advances according to its frequency of use. *There are no points awarded for advancement and there is no overarching hierarchical achievement system.*

When a situation finds a character lacking, new skills can be learned. It's a simple and organic process, a player need only have the desire to learn something new and the character need only have the time and the willingness to learn it.

Lastly, in order to stay "on top of the game," skills must be maintained. Practice keeps skills from getting rusty and will help the character master his abilities.

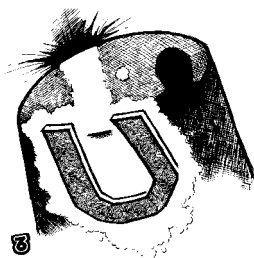
## Routine, Difficult and Challenging Tests

Characters improve by testing their abilities in game. To advance, players must push their characters' limits using three levels of skill tests: Routine, Difficult, and Challenging.

*Tests do not have to be successful. Pass or fail, tests count toward advancement. Even so, they must be game/story relevant.*

### Was that a Routine or a Difficult Test?

The level of a test depends on the obstacle of the test vs the exponent being tested. Difficult tests are not the same for B2 skills and B5 skills. A Difficult test for advancement of a B2 skill is Ob 2, while a Difficult test for advancement of a B5 skill is Ob 4 or 5. It is all relative: The better you are at something the harder it is to improve yourself. See the following chart to compare obstacle of the test vs the ability's exponent to determine the level of the test.




**If the Skill Being Tested or Total Dice Thrown is...**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
0	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
1	D	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
2	C	D	D	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
3	C	C	D	D	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
4	C	C	C	D	D	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
5	C	C	C	C	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
6	C	C	C	C	C	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
7	C	C	C	C	C	C	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	R	R
8	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	D	D	D	D	R	R	R	R
9	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	D	D	D	D	R	R	R
10	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	D	D	D	D	R	R
11	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	D	D	D	D	D
12	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	D	D	D

...the task at hand earns this Skill Test for purposes of Advancement:  
**R= Routine Test; D= Difficult Test; C= Challenging Test.**

Generally, the GM will inform the players of the obstacle of a task before the dice are thrown. Using the chart, players should be able to easily determine the level of a test for advancement. Compare the obstacle of the test vs the exponent of the ability tested to determine the "level" of the test.

 If you don't know the level of the test make a note and be sure to ask the GM about it after the session. Don't be afraid to ask, but don't interrupt the flow of the game!

### Skill Exponent vs Actual Number of Dice Rolled for the Test

When consulting the chart above, remember to always use the *actual number of dice* rolled. This number is not necessarily the same as the exponent of the stat, skill or attribute.

*A character with B4 Boxing is at a -1D penalty, while she is wounded she only rolls 3 dice for tests rather than her normal 4. Easy things seem harder, so the obstacles for difficulty drop accordingly, Difficult tests are Ob 2-3, rather than Ob 3-4, and Challenging Tests are Ob 4 rather than Ob 5. (See Anatomy of Injury for wound penalties.)*

The reverse counts as well, if a character is using bonus dice, like *traits, stances, FoRKed skills or equipment dice* then it is harder for him to advance.

*A character using a magic spear adds +1D to his B4 Spear skill. While his is wielding the spear his skill is considered exponent 5 for determining what*

obstacles of what tests count for advancement. Thus Routines wouldn't count and Difficult tests would be Ob 4-5 rather than 3-4.


**FoRK Dice and Advancement**

Cross-pollination of knowledge can aid characters in passing tests. However, for the purposes of advancement, the actual number of dice rolled counts as the current skill exponent.

If a character has an Herbalism of B4 and FoRKs in an additional die from Anatomy to pass a test, he would count this test as if he had a B5 skill; Routines wouldn't count and the Obstacle for a Difficult test would be 4-5 and a Challenging test Ob 6+. The normal requirements for advancement for a B4 ability are: Routines count (Ob 1-2), Difficults are Ob 3-4 and Challenging tests are Ob 5+. So if he was trying to pass a Obstacle 5 test, he would earn a Difficult test for advancement. Whereas if he rolled 4 dice against Ob 5, he would earn a Challenging test.

## Number of Tests Required for Advancement

### Number of Tests Needed to Advance

 Characters need a certain number of tests to advance stats, skills and attributes. The exact number of tests required depends on the ability's current exponent. See the chart below for the actual requirements.

Skill Exponent	TYPE OF TEST:				
	Routine	Difficult	Challenging		
1	1	and	(1	or	1)
2	2	and	(1	or	1)
3	3	and	(2	or	1)
4	4	and	(2	or	1)
5	n/a		3	and	1
6	n/a		3	and	2
7	n/a		4	and	2
8	n/a		4	and	3
9	n/a		5	and	3

NUMBER OF TESTS REQUIRED

### Pumping Up the Numbers: Raising Stats, Skills and Attributes

If a character has a B3 skill, she must get 3 Routine tests. The Difficult and Challenging test requirements are interchangeable—after she has acquired her Routine tests she needs either 2 Difficults or 1 Challenging test. So she could advance with 2 Routines and 2 Difficults or she could advance with 2 Routines and 1 Challenging test.

Once a skill is at B5 or higher, Routine tests no longer count towards advancement. Only Difficult and Challenging tests count. For a B5 skill, tests with an Obstacle 3 or lower are too easy and the character doesn't really learn anything from them.

A B6 skill requires 3 Difficult and 2 Challenging tests in order to advance to the next exponent. Routine tests don't count toward the advancement of this skill exponent.


## I Just Learned Something!

Advancement happens immediately. As soon as the character has filled his requirements, his exponent jumps up to the next level. So yes, that means a character could conceivably raise his skill in the middle of an adventure, in the middle of a fight, or in the middle of a debate.

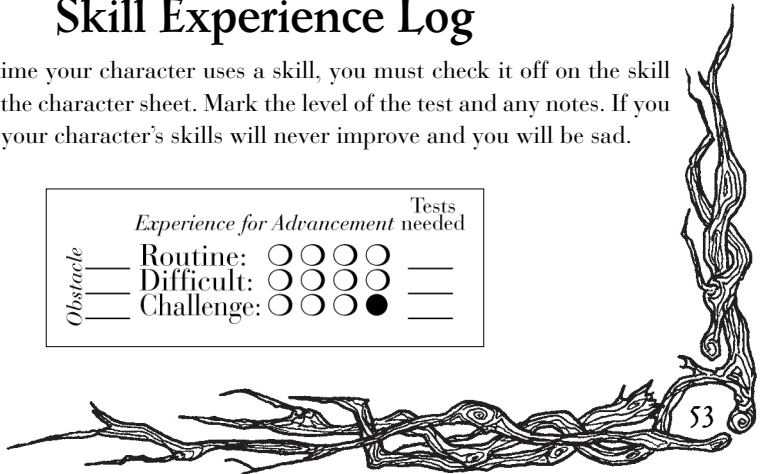
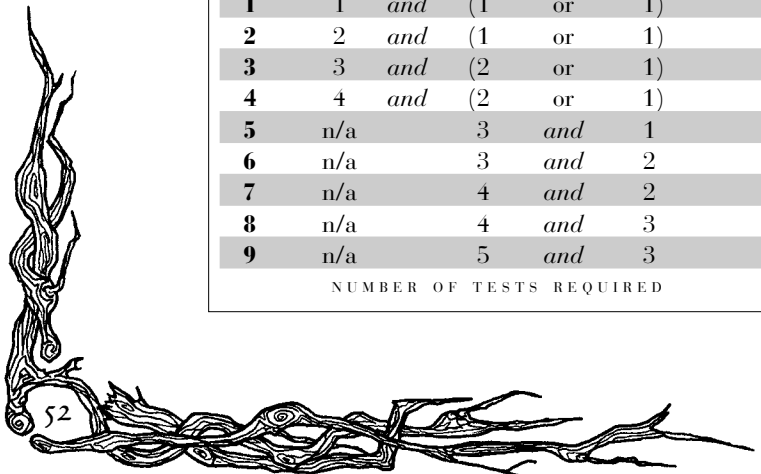
When a character fills a requirement for a skill, the player informs the GM and then advances the exponent for that skill by one. *All of the attempts she has listed so far, even extra ones*, are erased and the character begins anew her quest for betterment.

Learning is a wonderful thing.

## Skill Experience Log


 Each time your character uses a skill, you must check it off on the skill log on the character sheet. Mark the level of the test and any notes. If you don't do this, your character's skills will never improve and you will be sad.

Experience for Advancement		Tests needed
Obstacle	Routine: ○○○○	—
	Difficult: ○○○○	—
	Challenge: ○○○●	—





## Advancement and Roleplaying


 Not all tests come with the throw of the dice. Many skills will be tested in the course of roleplaying. This is especially true of social skills. The GM should make a note of a player's attempts to bluff her way through situations or otherwise play out her skills and should reward her with skill tests (and the difficulty level of said tests) for the purposes of advancement.

In Burning Wheel roleplaying should always come before the dice. Dice just get in the way.

## Advancement Bits

### Multiple or Series Tests

*Multiple tests to accomplish one goal only earn one test, whether that be surviving a fight or picking a lock.*

 When testing skills repetitively do not write down each test. Only the hardest test counts for any given encounter. If a character is in a whirling fistfight atop a building, many tests will be made against his Boxing skill. *Do not log each blow, note only the test with the highest difficulty level.*

The same goes for more technical matters. If a character is attempting to pick an extremely complicated lock, he has the option of testing his Lockpicking until he succeeds. If the character made six tests to open an Ob 5 lock, he does not earn six tests for his skill. *He earns one.*

### Helping and Skill Advancement


A character who is *helping* another can learn from this experience. He earns a test as if he were normally testing his skill. However, if a character is helping with a *related* skill, the player can choose to put that test toward the skill or the Aptitude requirement for learning the primary's skill. Thus, a character can reinforce what he knows or use his experience to start learning something new. Aptitude is discussed more in the Character Burner.

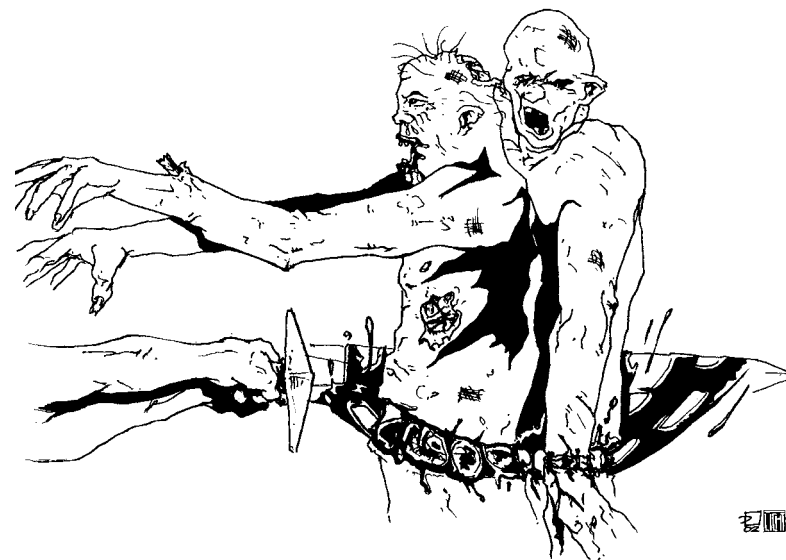
*A soldier helping a midwife tend to his friend learns from the experience. He may take a Difficult test toward his Field Dressing skill (Ob 4 test vs his B4 skill) or he may choose to start an Herbalism skill and count this test towards his Aptitude requirement.*


### Advancing Training Skills

Training skills do not advance like other skills. They are completely dependent on their parent stat. *Tests taken on the root stat of a Training skill count as tests for advancement for that particular stat.* See the Character Burner General Skill list for Training skills.

### Exemplary Tests

 Dice are our worst enemies and our best friends. All too often dice fail us at the worst possible moments, creating definite lows in gameplay. However, those pesky little cubes can turn right around and succeed in such a way that we didn't think statistically possible.



 In this system it doesn't matter if you roll one billion 6s or just a bunch of 4s and 5s, the test is passed so long as the obstacle is met. But sometimes a player is just darn lucky with the dice and affects his idiom with verve and panache supported by lots of sets of six dimples. When a player rolls really, really well for a test, note it as an "exemplary test." In the scheme of the rules, these tests are counted the same as all others. But when it comes time to tally up skill tests to advance, and the character is one Routine short to advance his Oratory skill, but he has an exemplary test noted, give him the Routine and let the skill advance.

This "gift" should be used infrequently and cautiously. *Don't let the dice rule the game, but sometimes it is fun to imagine that luck can be a great teacher!*



## Advancing Statistics

*Stats never count Routine tests for advancement.* Aside from that, stats are advanced the same way as skills. Use the same chart as skills to determine the number of tests needed to advance a stat.

### Advancing Perception

Perception advances a little differently than other stats: *Only successful Perception tests count toward advancement.*

## Advancing Attributes

*Reflexes* are advanced by raising the stats it is dependent on.


*Health* is governed by the stats it is factored from; if a character raises both Forte and Will then Health follows. However, Health can also be raised like a skill—log tests for advancement when taking Health tests. Finally, Health is affected by outside factors, such as lifestyle and living conditions. These factors can be roleplayed by a player. The outcome of such roleplaying can give the GM cause to raise or lower Health as well.

*Aptitude* decreases as the governing stats increase. (Lower Aptitude is better in Burning Wheel.) *Mortal Wound* is raised as Power and Forte are raised. When Mortal Wound is raised, the other tolerances may be moved one step to the right, so long as they are in accordance with the rules as described in the Character Burner. *Steel* is raised with experience, and acts like a skill for advancement.

*Faith* is raised like a skill, but it is also like Perception: Only successful Faith tests count toward advancement.

## Practice and Training

Practice is absolutely essential for someone striving to be at the top of her game. In Burning Wheel, practice will aid characters: A healthy practice regimen will prevent a character from losing her edge and can improve skills and stats. Also, a master of the arts will one day realize that life doesn't provide enough Challenging tests, she must practice intensely in order to better herself.

 Practice time comes in many forms: exercising, studying, and even trying out your skills on your friends. Listed below are the necessary practice cycles for the different categories of skills. *Cycle* is the length of time that a

character needs to practice in order to earn a test. *Hours/day* indicates the actual time per day that the character must spend practicing during the cycle.

### Skill Practice Times

Skill Category	Cycle	Routine	Difficult	Challenging
Academic	6 months	2 hours/day	4hrs/day	8hrs/day
Artist	6 months	3 hours/day	6hrs/day	12hrs/day
Craftsman	1 year	3 hours/day	8hrs/day	12hrs/day
Forester	6 months	3 hours/day	6hrs/day	12hrs/day
Martial	1 month	2 hours/day	4hrs/day	8hrs/day
Medicinal	1 year	4 hours/day	8hrs/day	12hrs/day
Military	6 months	2 hours/day	4hrs/day	8hrs/day
Musical	1 month	2 hours/day	4hrs/day	8hrs/day
Peasant	3 months	1 hour/day	4hrs/day	12hrs/day
Physical	1 month	2 hours/day	4hrs/day	8hrs/day
School of Thought	6 months	3 hours/day	6hrs/day	12hrs/day
Seafaring	3 months	2 hours/day	4hrs/day	8hrs/day
Social	1 month	2 hours/day	4hrs/day	8hrs/day
Sorcerous	1 year	5 hours/day	10hrs/day	15hrs/day
Special/Misc	3 months	3 hours/day	6hrs/day	12hrs/day

If a character maintains the daily hours time requirement for one practice cycle, he earns the appropriate test for that skill for the purpose of advancement.

*Yes, eventually practice makes perfect.*

*A recluse sorcerer sits in his tower all day and studies Sorcery. If he studies for 5 hours a day for one year he will earn one Routine test for his trouble. This counts toward skill advancement like any other skill test.*

*If he reads for 10 hours a day for a year, then he gets a Difficult test for his trouble.*

*If he reads for 15 hours a day for a year, then he gets a Challenging test for his trouble. And Challenging tests are very hard to come by.*

*So let's say our recluse sorcerer has a Sorcery skill of B5. He sits in his tower for four years. The first three years he reads for 10 hours a day. He gets three Difficult tests for practice. On the dawn of the fourth year he realizes he is on to something so he spends the next 365 days studying 15 hours a day. At the end of the fourth year he earns a Challenging test and his B5 Sorcery skill is raised to B6. Of course he has no friends now, and his cats have long since abandoned him.*

### Stat Practice Times

Stat	Cycle	Routine	Difficult	Challenging
Perception	6 months	3 hours/day	6hrs/day	12hrs/day
Will	1 year	4 hour/day	8hrs/day	16hrs/day
Agility	3 months	2 hours/day	4hrs/day	8hrs/day
Speed	3 months	2 hours/day	4hrs/day	8hrs/day
Power	1 month	2 hours/day	4hrs/day	8hrs/day
Forte	2 months	4 hours/day	8hrs/day	16hrs/day

It is very hard and time consuming to practice some stats. In order to gain the full benefit of practice, the player must describe exactly what his character is doing to hone his abilities. The GM has the final say whether or not it counts as viable practice. More often than not, experience is the best teacher.


### Maximum Practice

Time limits practice. A character may only practice as much as he has time for, outside of sleeping, eating and adventuring. *Don't you have anything better to do?*


### Unpractice

It is possible for skills to drop due to lack of use. If a character goes through one whole practice cycle without testing or practicing a skill, then that skill drops by one exponent point. Lost points can be regained through experience.

*A skill will never fall below half its "highest" rating or its root, which ever is higher.*

 These are guidelines. Use them to your best judgment. But remember an old marksman who has gotten rusty from leading a farmer's life is a roleplaying bonanza. And think about the possibility of a doctor who became a diplomat five years ago, suddenly captured as prisoner of war and thrown in with the sick and dying. Imagine his joy as he starts to recall his forgotten skills....


### Notes on Practice and Maintenance


 These rules are definitely not for one-off adventures. Practice rules are really meant for campaign-length games.

The practice rules are presented here to allow characters to come home after a long adventure and fill in the gaps in their knowledge. Let's say a swordsman comes back from a long adventure one Difficult test short of a B6 skill. The player tells the GM that he spends a month training all day, every day, and voila, he earns his B6 skill. Of course, that means he has given his enemies a whole month to track him down and learn of his activities, but that's another matter entirely.

## Beginner's Luck: Learning New Skills

To start the process of learning a new skill a character only has to try it once in game *in an applicable situation*, either a moment where the character is called upon to use the ability/skill they don't have (and thus start learning), or a situation where one character instructs another.

 Let me stress applicable situation again. The character attempting to learn the skill must have some kind of model to go by. The model can be as straightforward as a book or an instructor. Or it can be something a bit more complex, like actually trying to sneak up on a bandit camp. ("If I am quiet, I stay alive; If I am a noisy rhinoceros the bandits are going to wake up and kill me.")

 A character can *not* walk around an empty room on his tiptoes saying, "I will learn Stealthy and then practice until I have a B10."

### Beginner's Luck


When players need to use skills that their characters don't have they rely on a phenomenon known as *Beginner's Luck*. The player tests with the full dice from the root stat (or average of stats rounded down). Root stats are listed with their respective skills in the Character Burner. Don't forget: There is a *double obstacle penalty* for using Beginner's Luck.

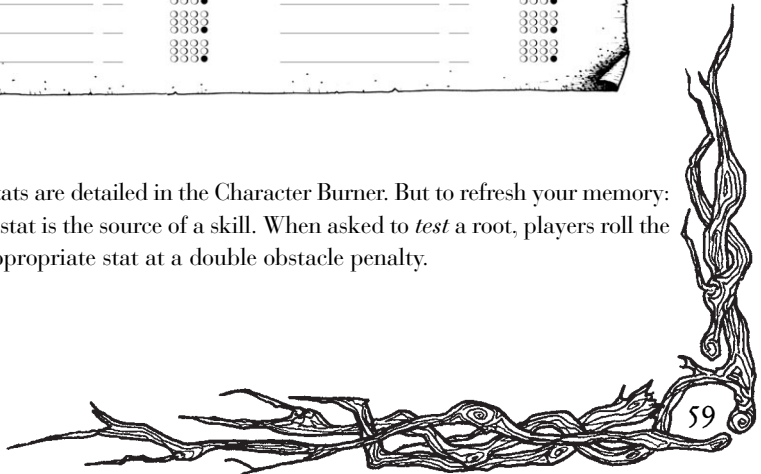
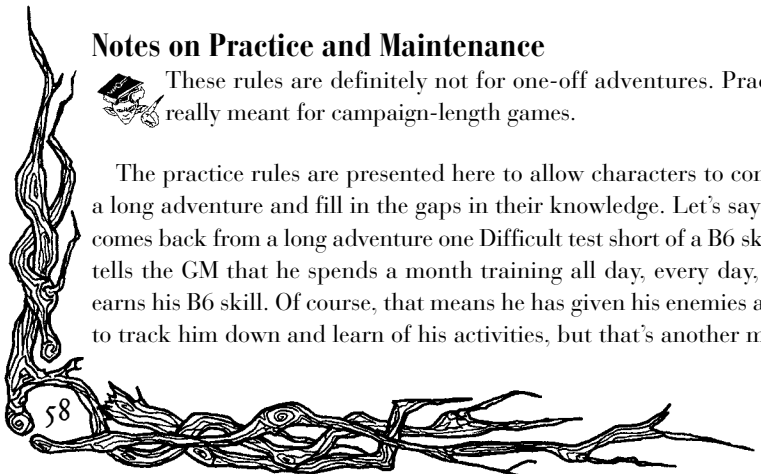
At the bottom of the fourth page of the character sheet there is a section called "Skills Being Learned." This is where players should note down Beginner's Luck tests.

#### Skills Being Learned

Skill Name	Aptitude	Test (roll aptitude)	Skill Name	Aptitude	Test (roll aptitude)
_____	_____	○○○○○●	_____	_____	○○○○○●
_____	_____	○○○○○●	_____	_____	○○○○○●
_____	_____	○○○○○●	_____	_____	○○○○○●
_____	_____	○○○○○●	_____	_____	○○○○○●
_____	_____	○○○○○●	_____	_____	○○○○○●
_____	_____	○○○○○●	_____	_____	○○○○○●


### Root Stats

 Root stats are detailed in the Character Burner. But to refresh your memory: A root stat is the source of a skill. When asked to *test* a root, players roll the dice for the appropriate stat at a double obstacle penalty.



What is the root? All skills are listed with their roots in the Character Burner. For example, Sword's root is Agility; Carpentry's root is Agility/Perception (the average of those two stats rounded down).

### Advancing Beginner's Luck Level Skills

 A character must test his Beginner's Luck a number of times equal to his appropriate Aptitude. Once a character has done this, the skill has been "learned" and the character no longer has access to Beginner's Luck—he now has a root level skill.

When advancing a skill via the character's Aptitude, Difficult and Challenging tests count for more than Routine tests. A Difficult test counts as *two* tests toward the Aptitude requirement, and Challenging counts as *three*. Judge the obstacle of the test against the root stat.

*A peasant picks up a sword and sets off to war with the king's army. The Peasant has an Agility of B4, so his Aptitude for the sword is 6 (10 minus B4 Agility). For the first six skirmishes our boy manages to get in a swing or two with his Beginner's Luck and earns tests for advancement. After the sixth battle his Beginner's Luck runs out and the peasant will earn a root level Sword skill.*

### After Beginner's Luck Runs Out: Root Level Skills

Once a character has worked through his Beginner's Luck, he acquires his new skill at its root level—half of the root stat or average of root stats.

The shade of a root skill is that of its source. If the root is made of two stats, then the root skill is the shade of the darker one.

*The governing stat for Sword is Agility. The conscripted peasant's is B4, thus his Root for Sword is B2 (1/2 his root stat. The shade is the same as the root stat, Black). This is his starting Sword skill. As he progresses his skill will advance from his root skill of B2 and he will join the ranks of professional soldiery.*

### Learning Training Skills

A character may learn Training skills, such as Armor Training, Observation Training and Formation Fighting, in the course of his life. Aptitude requirements are the same as for normal skills, but *tests can only be earned via practice or instruction*. In-game tests against a Training do not count.

### Learning From Another, aka Instruction.

A teacher can create "applicable situations" for his students and thereby teach them a new skill, or hone skills they may already have. Essentially, an instructor *tests* students.

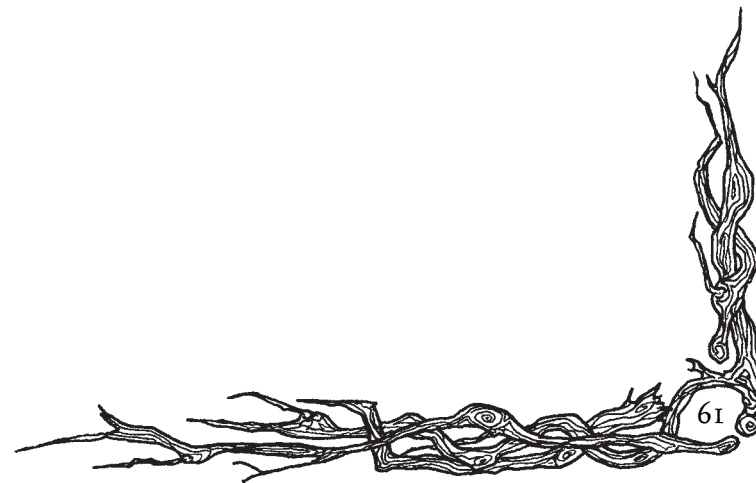
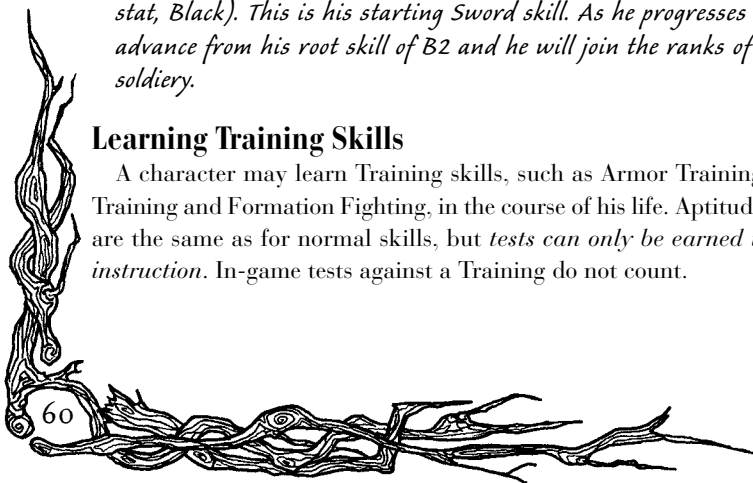
An instructor can only offer tests with obstacles equal to or less than his skill level.

It takes time to teach. Some students require longer to grasp a concept than others and, conversely, some teachers are better than others. To determine time of the instruction, subtract the instructor's Will from 10, then subtract the student's Will from 10. Add the results to get the number of days required for each test.

*Tests from an instructor can count as tests against Aptitude for starting a new skill.*

### Teaching is Learning

An instructor can learn about his strengths and weaknesses from teaching his students. Teaching another earns tests for advancement: If the student has no skill or the skill exponent is two less than the instructor's, then the test is Routine. If the student's skill is one less, then the test is Difficult. It is not possible to get Challenging tests from Instruction.



# Using Traits

## Roleplaying Traits

Traits must be personified. Sure it's nifty to have all these odds and ends that you can pull out of nowhere to save your arse, but they are more than just notes on the page. Players must weave them into the fabric of their characters or risk losing them. My favorite example of this is characters with *Affinity for Bows*. Players love to take this trait because it makes them a bad-ass with a bow. But they never play it. They just whip out the bow when it's convenient and shoot down the baddies. Their characters never talk about their bows, never clean the bows, never even *thinks* about the bows until it's time to pop it out and whoop-ass. Players tend to forget what the nature of "Affinity" is, an overriding fondness or love for something. Characters with affinities should live, eat and sleep their affinity. It doesn't have to be ridiculous or stereotypical, but it should be roleplayed. And if it's not, the GM has full rights to strip the character of his trait. In fact, this stands for all traits, all the time.

For more on gaining and losing traits see the Campaigning section of this book.

## Character Traits

Booming Voice, Stinky, Bottomless Stomach, Comely, Ornery, Paranoid, etc. are all *character traits*. They don't modify the character per se, but they modify the way the character is played in the game and, more often than not, the way the character is perceived.

Even though character traits do not modify die rolls, they are still the most important traits in the game. They are the flesh over the bones of the numbers. Playing character traits helps other players (not to mention yourself) get an understanding of what that character is all about. Playing in a consistent and believable manner will earn players no end of Artha from the GM. (See Campaigning for more on Artha.)

## Die Traits

*Die traits* modify die rolls. Usually this means adding or subtracting dice, but some die traits can also lower obstacles for certain tests and, rarer still, some die traits permanently modify a stat or skill.

Characters use die traits whenever the stat, skill, attribute or specific die roll comes up, they are "always on." The die roll is modified by the trait as indicated in the specific description.

*Affinity for Bows* is a good example of a die trait. Whenever the character uses a bow he gets a bonus die to his skill test.

## Special Die Traits

Gifted and Faithful are two special die traits that don't modify existing dice per se. Rather they give characters access to skills and abilities that they would not otherwise be able to use without these traits.

## Call-On Traits

*Call-on traits* are by far the most fun—weird little abilities or kernels of knowledge that are only any good in bizarre circumstances. Of course bizarre circumstances tend to be pretty common in roleplaying games, so call-on traits get a fair bit of use.

As the name suggests, these traits must be "called on" during the game to have any effect or use. Generally, it is the player who must call on his or her appropriate traits. It is not up to the GM to remember what a freak you are, but occasionally a GM will be nice and remind you, "Don't you have the Fleet of Foot trait?"

Call-on traits allow the player to make a test where none would have been allowed before, or to be able to break a tie between two numbers, or be able to gain special consideration for a situation.

*Two characters are racing and they both have BS Speed, but one has the Fleet of Foot Trait. It is that Character who wins the race by a hair. (Unless of course the other racer has a trait to counter Fleet of Foot!) If two characters are in an arm wrestling match and the dice come up a tie—same successes—but one of the characters has the Fortitude Trait, then that character wins the match. She holds her opponent at the top and slowly wears him down with her superior endurance. Or two characters in a contest of wills to see who will flinch first: One character comes up 1 success short, normally he would be the loser. However, he calls on his Iron Will trait, saying, "I have an Iron Will, I will not flinch!" The GM smiles and says, "Ok, let's test Will vs Will again and see if you really mean it."*


Call-on traits go beyond dice. They should, whenever possible, completely supersede dice, but they are not ultrapowerful. From the arm wrestling example

above, if one character has a Pow B6 and the other a Pow B5 plus the Fortitude trait, the trait does not automatically beat the stat. Dice are rolled, a versus test, and if the Fortitude-y character can tie her opponent then she can “call on” her trait to push her over the edge and win a seemingly impossible match up!

The racing example from above was decided by the trait before the throw of the dice because both characters had the same dice to throw, the trait being the only difference between them.

Rarely, very rarely, a player may find himself in a situation where one of his character's *character traits* can be used as a *call-on trait*. For example, if the character has the Secretive trait he is more likely to hide his valuables, or perhaps even to know where another Secretive person would hide hers....

## Interpreting Traits

 Traits are open to interpretation. Some traits will have multiple forms, a call-on form and die form or a call-on form and character trait form. It is up to the GM and the player to decide exactly what the traits do and when. Ultimately the GM has final say on whether or not a trait is applicable to a given situation. That being said, it is up to the players to use their traits creatively and in interesting ways that add to the story. Many a campaign has been saved by a player calling on the right trait at the right time.

### Lifepath Traits

Many lifepaths come with odd bits of traits not described in the Lists. These have been deliberately left open to interpretation. Most of them are obviously character traits, but some could easily be call-on traits or even die traits. It is up to the players and the GM to decide exactly what they do.


## Using Instincts

Instincts are very similar to call-on traits. They are little bits and pieces of character that the player can summon to save his butt at odd times during the course of the game.


Usually these are gut reactions that have been drilled into the character. Instincts, like call-on traits, should supersede game mechanics whenever possible.

Instincts also allow the players to sketch out some basic (and reliable) behavior for his characters, something that his character always does, so that he doesn't have

to repeat himself or get into arguments with the GM: “You didn't say you drew your sword!” “But my top Instinct is to ‘Draw my sword at the first sign of trouble.’”

 By and large, if the character has the instinct written down there should not be a test involved, the act should just be considered done. For example: Always start a fight in aggressive stance; Draw sword at first sign of trouble; Dive for cover at first sign of bow fire. Or (my favorite), scream for help if surprised/hesitating/stunned.

No tests are required to activate these instincts, they are pre-programmed gut-reactions. However, if a player decides to get a complicated, like, “If something is thrown at me I try to catch it and throw it back,” then a test is in order. However, the character should be able to act out his instinct even if it comes up out of the normal sequence of play (especially in the action script). The instinct lets the character give it a shot, but he still must make the test to see if he pulls it off.

 In general, instincts are so niche-y that they rarely come up and when they do it is fairly significant and fun. If a character has an applicable instinct written down, then give him the benefit of the doubt and let him at least try.

## Using Beliefs

Beliefs are never rolled and always tested. They don't provide extra dice, bonuses or penalties. Rather, they provide a guide for how the character might react to certain situations. If a character's one Belief is: “My dog, Angus, loves me. He is my best friend,” and, during the course of the adventure, the character and the dog become separated, when the chaos has momentarily subsided, the first thing out of that character's mouth should be, “I've got to go back for Angus!” The adventure takes another turn as the party agrees that Angus is worth saving, and they rush back into the fire to help.

*These are guidelines.* They do not have to be fanatical tenets in your own personal religion. Playing up your characters' Beliefs, no matter how subtle or overt, will help you better understand your character, because once played, Beliefs then can be questioned and challenged. *Those* challenges are what truly drive character growth.

On the more pragmatic side of gaming, the GM will award more Artha to players who best embody their Beliefs. See Campaigning for Artha and Changing Beliefs.




# Action Reaction

Time is broken down in a very specific way when the action starts rolling in Burning Wheel—everything a character does is planned out in metered segments, then resolved in turns.

Even though it is a very structured process, action tends to be very wild in this game. Characters are all acting at once, trying to survive the mayhem. Players are forced to think ahead in order to outwit their opponents and gain the upper hand in the melee; because when it comes time roll the dice if your character is *reacting* to what is going on, then he is a step behind (and most likely in trouble).

*Reflexes* determine how many *actions* a character has, or how many times a character may act in the “turn.” The game turn is called the *exchange*. In order to keep things simple in gameplay, the exchange is broken down into three segments, called *volleys*. Lastly, players must plan ahead, moment to moment, what their characters will do in the exchange. This is done by writing a *script* of the characters’ actions.

 I am now going to walk you through the basics of the Action Reaction terms, if you see something don’t understand, be patient it will be explained as we go.

## The Exchange

An exchange is a small chunk of time where everyone—characters and their opponents—may act, move and speak.

### Reflexes in the Exchange

Characters can act in the exchange a number of times equal to their Reflexes.

### Writing Out the Exchange

When it is time to fight a combat, all players (and the GM) write out their *actions* for the *exchange*. This is called writing a *script*.

## Volleys

An exchange is broken down into three smaller segments called *volleys*. When writing a script a character’s Reflexes are divided evenly between the three volleys. The results of the volleys are then resolved in order, 1-2-3.

After the third volley has been resolved, a new exchange begins; the players and the GM write new scripts.

## Actions

An *action* is a brief interval of time wherein a character can perform a simple, physical or mental feat. The benchmark for most actions is the quick swing of a sword.

Of course some acts are more complicated than others—it is more complicated to open a door than it is to close it, for example. Thus, some acts cost more actions in the exchange.

*Actions include: Strike, Feint, Block, Counterstrike, Avoid, slamming a door, Glancing into a room, Lobbing a ball, Incanting two syllables of a spell and Acquiring a target.*



Regardless of what they are, all actions are considered to absorb the full attention of the character for that moment. Therefore, characters may not do “two things at once.” For example, a character may not Strike and Assess on the same action.

### Tandem Actions

Obviously, some things can be done simultaneously, such as moving and speaking. Movement and Speech are tandem actions, they may be performed while the character is undertaking another action, like swinging a sword.

Spell-casting is not considered “speech;” it is an action unto itself and thus obeys the standard rules for actions during the exchange, in addition to its own special strictures. Movement-like actions, such as diving through a window, are not tandem actions and *require actions to perform in the volley*.

## Reflexes

Consult the chart below to see how many actions a character gets per exchange and how that divides into the three volleys.

Most Reflexes don't divide evenly by three, a player has three options for his character's "extra action(s)." The chart shows how a player may place his character's odd actions.

Reflexes	Actions Per Exchange	Volleys and Action Combinations
B1	1	1/-/- or -/1/- or -/-/1
B2	2	1/1/- or -/1/1 or 1/-/1
B3	3	1/1/1
B4	4	2/1/1 or 1/2/1 or 1/1/2
B5	5	2/2/1 or 2/1/2 or 1/2/2
B6	6	2/2/2
B7	7	3/2/2 or 2/3/2 or 2/2/3
B8	8	3/3/2 or 3/2/3 or 2/3/3
B9	9	3/3/3
		V1/V2/V3

If a character has B4 Reflexes, she gets one action each volley with one left over. She can put that remainder action in the first, second or third volley. For Reflexes of B5, the character has two actions in two volleys and a single action in the third volley. In each exchange, players are allowed to chose which volleys are loaded with "extra" actions.

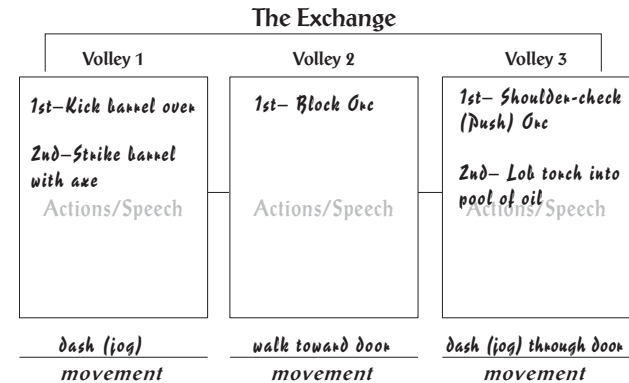
## Scripts

Scripting is designed to simulate the hectic and unpredictable nature of combat. You might be able to guess what your opponent will do next, but you can never be sure.

All players must *write out* their characters' actions for the entire exchange. Actions must be written down in the order they are to be performed, and they must be properly divided between the volleys according to the *Reflexes: Actions Per Volley Chart* above. *Scripts must be written in private, without consulting the other players.* Of course, the players are allowed to ask the GM reasonable questions and requests.

## What Do I Write?

Be simple and direct. Remember, each action is a mere moment in time. Sequences should be broken down into component actions and spanned out across the volleys. Here is an example of a script for a character with B5 Reflexes: *Kick barrel over, Strike barrel (with axe), Block, Shoulder-check Orc, Toss torch into pool of oil.* See the sample script below:



## Targets of Opportunity

A player doesn't have to be too specific in his script when it comes to targets and such. If a player scripts a "Strike" action and there is an enemy within reach, then the character may act whether or not the enemy was his intended target.

*For example, if a melee involves several Orcs and the player has his character go on a mad hacking spree: "Strike, Strike, Strike, Strike," he can choose which target he is attacking when he rolls the dice. He doesn't have to write it into the script unless he is going for a specific effect. (Like the Orc captain's head).*

## Enacting Scripts

Even though players are required to script all three volleys at once, each volley is announced and resolved one at time. This is to keep combat orderly and relatively manageable. So after everyone is done scripting, each player reads off all of his actions for Volley 1. After all the tests and decisions from Volley 1 are sorted out, then move on to Volley 2. Everyone, including the GM and his NPCs, declares their actions for the volley. After everyone has read their script for the volley, all die rolls are made and tests resolved. Once the current volley has been acted out, then the next volley is announced.

## Sequence of Action in Scripts, or *Who Goes First?*

When a player scripts a volley, he writes his character's actions in a list, top to bottom, first to last. When actions are announced, all players have a *first action*

for that volley, some will have a *second action* and a (very) few will have a *third action* for the volley. First actions happen at the same time, then second actions, and so on.



No one really “goes first” in the normal sequence of play: All first actions happen at the same time, all second actions happen at the same time, etc. Characters with higher Reflexes have the advantage because they will be able to act when other characters cannot. Thus they may defend themselves from attack and strike after their opponents have spent their impetus.

**What If My Character Doesn’t Have an Action (and Somebody Else Does)?**

Characters are only considered to be actively defending (or attacking) on the actions they have scripted. The system is very literal. So if your first (and only) action is Block and your opponent has two actions scripted, Strike and Strike, then your character may attempt to defend herself from the first blow, but not the second. See the Melee Mechanics section for more on martial actions.

**Movement**

The *pace* is the standard measure of distance in Burning Wheel. A character’s Speed exponent equals the number of paces he can walk in one exchange. Speed x2 is the number of paces a character can jog in one exchange. Speed x3.5 is the number of paces a character can sprint in one exchange.

**Movement in Volleys**

See the chart below to determine how far a character moves at each of the three rates during a volley.

Paces Moved per Volley			
Speed	Walking	Jogging	Sprinting
B1	1p*	2p*	1p
B2	1p*	1p	2p
B3	1p	2p	3p
B4	1p	2p	4p
B5	1p	3p	6p
B6	2p	4p	7p
B7	2p	4p	8p
B8	2p	5p	9p
B9	3p	6p	10p

\*Slowpokes with a B1 Speed only walk-move in one volley out of the exchange (player’s choice) and only jog-move in two volleys out of the exchange. They may sprint in all three volleys. Pokeys with a B2 Speed walk-move 1 pace in two volleys out of the exchange.

The numbers listed in the chart above are the *paces* moved at that rate in one volley.

*Thus if a character with a B3 walks in Volley 1 he moves one pace during that volley; if he jogs in Volley 2 then he moves two paces, if he then sprints in Volley 3 then he moves three paces in that volley.*

**Movement in Exchanges**

If a character moves the same rate for a whole *exchange*, then he uses the distances listed below.

Paces Moved per Exchange			
Speed	Walking	Jogging	Sprinting
B1	1p	2p	3.5p
B2	2p	4p	7p
B3	3p	6p	10.5p
B4	4p	8p	14p
B5	5p	10p	17.5p
B6	6p	12p	21p
B7	7p	14p	24.5p
B8	8p	16p	28p
B9	9p	18p	31.5p

*A character with a B5 Speed walking in all three volleys would move five paces total. Two paces in the first volley, one in the second and two in the third.*

**Scripting Movement**

Most of the time a player will not know exactly how far they want or need to move. The GM should feel free to help the players by telling them how long it will *probably* take their characters to move from point to point.

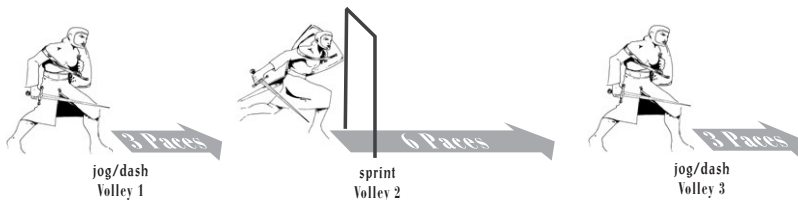
*For example, “I want to get to the tree quickly.” The GM measures the distance on his map and checks the character’s Speed, “Ok, it will take you two exchanges sprinting.” The player can then plan accordingly.*

*Or, “I run to the door, stop, and look in.”*

*“Ok, you will be there in the middle of Volley 2.”*

This information should be provided to the players before scripts are written, so that their actions are based on where they will be and how long it will take them to get there.

A hunting heroine with a Speed of B5 sees an Orc flee through a door in the corridor ahead of her. In the next exchange she scripts her moves thus, V1: Jog, V2: Sprint, V3: Jog. She moves 3 paces to the door, sprints 6 paces through the door (hoping to avoid ambush) and then, as she takes in the situation, jogs another three paces for the last volley. In this example she moves a total of 12 paces—faster than if she had just jogged the whole exchange, but not as fast as if she had sprinted.



Remember, movement counts for the whole volley, not just one action. So if a jogging character has two actions in a volley, he is considered to be moving for both actions.

## Speech

Characters may speak two syllables per action in the exchange. Speech is a tandem action and may be done at the same time (during the same action) as swinging a sword and moving. Speech must be scripted.

## Learning the Script Language

In Burning Wheel there is a basic language to scripting. The following list are the core verbs and nouns of that language. Learning and using these actions puts players and GM on common ground and facilitates gameplay.

### Acquire

*Acquire* (Target) is the breath, focus and aim a character takes in order to make someone or something the object of her attack with a shooting or thrown weapon. It is not necessary to *Acquire* something to shoot at it, but doing so will greatly reduce the obstacle. Once a target is *Acquired* it remains so until the target moves out of view or the attacker changes targets. When scripted, an *Acquire* does not need to be specific. Upon entering a room, a crossbowman could state “*Acquire nearest orc*” in his script. This would allow him to fire immediately on his next action (without penalty) even though he is not apprised of the full situation in the room. *Acquire* does not apply to martial arts or melee. Bows and longbows have special *Acquire* rules. See *Draw Bow* below.

### Aim

A character using a bow, crossbow, gun or thrown weapon may *Aim* his shots. Aiming is done in intervals of actions. Each action spent Aiming reduces the character’s obstacle to hit. See Combat Obstacle Modifiers for more on this.

### Assess

*Assess* is the term used for when a character wishes to stop and look. There are three degrees of *Assess*: *Glance*, *look*, and *search*. A *glance* is a quick look in one particular direction: ahead, behind, left or right. If a character wants to *glance* down a hallway, it takes one action, but if they want a quick *glance* around a room (left, right and ahead), that takes three actions. *Look* absorbs two actions in the script. *Looking* assumes the character is examining something a bit more carefully. The third type of *assess* is the *search* action, which requires three actions of the script. The character dedicates a moment to thoroughly examining something before moving on.

### Draw Bow

It requires 2 actions to *Draw* a hunting bow, 4 to Draw a long or greatbow. As he draws the bow the archer gets a “free” *Acquire Target*—choosing a victim for the shot is just a natural part of using the bow. This action does not include nocking an arrow. A character may hold a bow drawn for actions equal to his Power.

A Bowman may reduce his draw time by one action if wishes to fire an unacquired “snapshot.”

### Draw Weapon

Two actions are required to unsheath/unsling a handheld weapon. This includes sheathed swords, throwing knives, slung crossbows, etc. It does not apply to concealed weaponry on the character. Concealing a weapon will usually increase the amount of actions required to draw it.

### Get Up

Characters are always getting knocked down. It requires two actions for a character to get back on her feet from being laid flat. The first action is spent entirely on getting one’s feet under oneself. However, characters may begin to move on the second action of Get Up.

### Incant Spell

Spells are difficult to cast and require concentration, thus only *two syllables per action* may be incanted. Spells are not speech, but a full act on their own and abide by all the rules for actions, just like swinging a sword. (All shades of Reflexes cast spells at the same rate.)

### Lob, Throw, Hurl

The farther the distance, the more actions it takes to “throw;” *Lob* costs one action, *Throw* takes two actions and *Hurl* is three actions. See Thrown Weapons in the Weapons Mechanics section for the exact distances of a particular throw.



GM's should also consider that this action only represents the time it takes to launch an object and does not take into account the time required to bring the object to hand, nor the air time of the object. Generally, travel time is negligible, but for long *Hurls* the GM may wish to have the object strike in a later volley or exchange.

### Martial Actions

Strike, Block, Counterstrike, Avoid, Get Inside, Push, Throw, Lock, Disarm, Feint, etc. all cost one action in the script. The specifics of these actions are discussed in detail in the Melee Mechanics section.

### Movement

See the Movement heading in this section.

### Noek Arrow

When using a hunting or long bow it takes 3 actions to pull an arrow from the quiver and noek it. (This action does not include drawing the bow or releasing the arrow. See *Draw Bow* and *Shoot*.) Characters may *prep* a shot using this action; nocking an arrow but not drawing the bow. To noek, draw and fire a hunting bow requires a total of 6 actions in the script, a longbow requires 8 actions total.

### Physical Act

This category of actions covers everything from overturning a table to opening a door to climbing through a window. Most *physical acts* eat up two actions.

### Reload Crossbow

Crossbows require 16 actions to draw and load, heavy crossbows require 32 actions. Crossbowmen must Acquire Targets after loading.

### Set (Conditional Action)

Set (condition) allows a character to ready and action and wait. The player must set a condition for what will trigger his action. While waiting a character may not do anything else (aside from tandem actions), all energies are devoted to the concentration of preparation and readiness.

*Sir Tristam is protecting Brother Thomas as he prays for divine intervention. Tristam's player scripts: Set Strike—“If a zombie gets close to Thomas I Strike it.”*

The “set of conditions” must be very specific, otherwise the action will either be blundered or set off by unspecific goals. Conditionals may only be maintained for a number of actions equal to the character’s Will. If the conditions are not met after this time, then the character spends his next action hesitating as he blinks, scratches or burps.

### Shoot/Release

1 action is required to release, trigger or launch a bow, crossbow or handgun.

### Speech

Only two syllables may be spoken per action.

## Surprise and the Unexpected

A character caught off her guard tests her Steel to see if she Hesitates from the surprise. It has got to be really unexpected, not just a clever attack. Something like a giant spider dropping on your head while you are standing in a tunnel giving a speech about which direction the party should go in.

Sometimes an exchange will be initiated with a surprise attack. In this case, the victim of the surprise should test her Steel before the scripts are written. The results of the Steel test—how many actions she hesitates, if any—will greatly effect how she scripts his actions for the coming exchange. See Steel in Using Your Abilities for the basic mechanics of Hesitation.


*A Witchhunter has retired to her home for the evening. Entering the dim confines of the apartment, she hangs her cloak on a hook. Suddenly, a shadow shifts and breaks away from the others, lunging toward her—a demon-assassin sent by one of her many enemies! The Witchhunter must make a Steel test before the script is written. Her Steel is B6 with a Hesitation of 5 Actions. She rolls 4 successes, thus her first action of the coming exchange is lost to Hesitation as she recovers from surprise. After she has hesitated the applicable actions, the Witchhunter may act out the rest of the exchange with her remaining actions. Her Reflexes are B5, so she scripts her actions like so: V1: Hesitate, Avoid; V2: Avoid; V3: Avoid, Avoid.*

## Forfeiting Actions

Players may *forfeit* actions in the middle of an exchange if they deem them unusable or foolish. When forfeiting, the player changes one action and then crosses off a second from his script (which hasn’t been played yet). The action lost is replaced with a Hesitation action. So when forfeiting, a character loses one



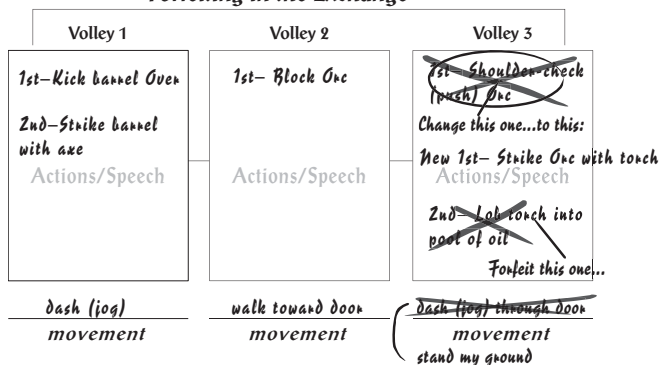
action completely and changes another to a new, desired action. A player may forfeit as many times as they see fit, providing they have one action to forfeit—knock off—and one to trade in for the new action.

 A player may forfeit at the start of any volley before anything has been declared to the other players or the GM. If actions for the volley have already been declared, then players may not forfeit—the actions must be acted out. If the script for the first volley has already been read and you realize that your second action is a waste, you are stuck with it—it has been announced!


Any action may be forfeited to an Assess without losing a second action.

An intrepid adventurer gets thrown for a loop. On her second volley she goes to Block an anticipated Strike from her Orc foe. But instead of Striking, the Orc uses the Get Inside action (and is successful). Now, before the third volley is announced, the player tells the GM, “I am forfeiting an action,” and quickly scribbles the changes on her script. She forfeits her Lob action and changes her Push action into a Strike. An Orc on the inside is very dangerous, so she wants to jam her torch into the bastard and get him off!

Forfeiting in the Exchange



Forfeiting Movement

 Players may not forfeit movement for the volley they are currently acting in. If a character is sprinting through Volley 1, and on her second action she realizes that she wants to stop, she is out of luck. She must complete her sprint for that volley.


Players may forfeit one action from their script to change their movement rate in an upcoming volley.

Think ahead.

Forfeiting Tandem Actions

If a character using the *Chow Yun Fat* trait or another similar trait forfeits the action that he has linked to his tandem Assess/Acquire, he loses the trait bonus for that exchange.


Initiative

 As discussed at the beginning of this section, everyone essentially goes at the same time in the exchange. Higher Reflexes give more actions, but don't instantly put you first. In order to go first, to act before your opponent, players must bid for initiative.

Bidding for Initiative

A player can bid his last action of the yet to be scripted/declared exchange in order to insure that he has the initiative. This bid allows the player to act first in the volley. All bids must be announced by the bidding player to the other players/GM prior to writing the script. Once announced, anyone can enter a bid.

To bid, a player announces, “I bid for initiative.” Each bid costs an action. Other players may raise the bid, highest number of actions bid “wins.”

 The winning bid is allowed a single “lightning” or “quick draw” action that is resolved at the very top of the exchange before any of the actions of any other scripts are resolved. After the bid action is resolved, the remainder of the character's actions are played out in the exchange as normal. Also, all other scripts proceed as normal after the bid has been resolved.

Characters who spent actions bidding divide their remaining actions evenly among the three volleys.

Swordsman with a B5 Reflexes wants to outdraw Witchhunter with Reflexes of B6. Swordsman bids one action to draw first. This action is removed from Swordsman's script for the exchange, it is used up bidding to be first. (Essentially, Swordsman's Reflexes drops to B4, but his first action of those four would go before all others.)

Swordsman now has four actions this exchange. His first action, the bid action, coming at the head of the script before anyone else's. The remaining three actions fall on the intervals V1: Action 1, V2: Action 1, V3: Action 1. Due to the great expenditure of energy and concentration Swordsman exerted to go first, he does not have access to his full Reflexes this exchange.

### Counter-Bidding Actions Example

*When Swordsman announces his initiative bid, Witchhunter can counter-bid. By doing this, Witchhunter negates Swordsman's edge and the exchange is acted out in the traditional manner. If Swordsman so desires he can bid another action to take the lead. This does not mean that he gets two quick-draw actions. It means that Swordsman has outbid Witchhunter and now he once again has the initiative. If Witchhunter bid another action she would once again tie up Swordsman's bid and both characters would act simultaneously in the exchange (but with two less actions).*

### Slow Bids

Rather than bidding for initiative a player can have his character bid to go last in the exchange. The mechanics are the same as bidding for initiative except that the character's action would come after all others have finished their actions.

### Winning the Bid

Only the winner of the bid is allowed to take the first, or lightning, action. Everyone who bid loses the actions they bid and acts with their Reflexes reduced by that number of actions. Even if it is a tie, the bidding characters lose those actions.

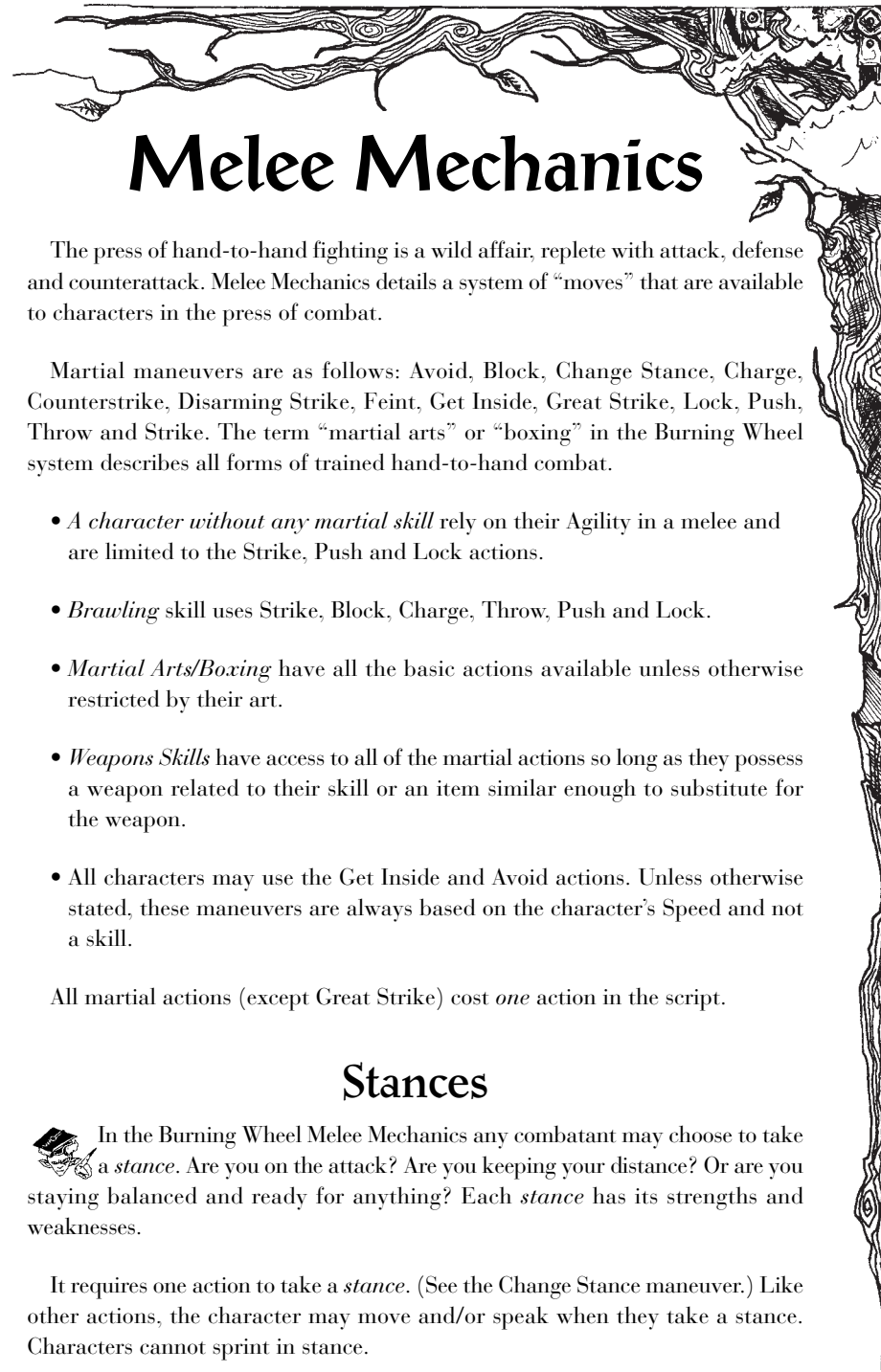
### Bidding Artha

Another method of winning initiative is by bidding Artha. Rather than bidding an action, a character may instead pay a point of Artha to go first. Bid Artha trumps bid actions. Of course, the only way to outbid Artha is to bid more Artha. There is no limit to the amount of Artha that can be bid.

See Campaigning for more on Artha.

### Upping the Ante

Once Artha is bid all previously bid actions are returned to each player. In order to counter-bid the opposing character must spend a point of Artha. The mechanics are the same as for bidding. If it is an Artha tie, then all points spent are lost, but no one Hesitates actions. If more than two characters are bidding and Artha is bid, the process can start again—actions may be bid under the Artha bid. In that case, the highest bid Artha goes first and then the highest bid number of actions.



# Melee Mechanics


The press of hand-to-hand fighting is a wild affair, replete with attack, defense and counterattack. Melee Mechanics details a system of “moves” that are available to characters in the press of combat.

Martial maneuvers are as follows: Avoid, Block, Change Stance, Charge, Counterstrike, Disarming Strike, Feint, Get Inside, Great Strike, Lock, Push, Throw and Strike. The term “martial arts” or “boxing” in the Burning Wheel system describes all forms of trained hand-to-hand combat.

- *A character without any martial skill* rely on their Agility in a melee and are limited to the Strike, Push and Lock actions.
- *Brawling* skill uses Strike, Block, Charge, Throw, Push and Lock.
- *Martial Arts/Boxing* have all the basic actions available unless otherwise restricted by their art.
- *Weapons Skills* have access to all of the martial actions so long as they possess a weapon related to their skill or an item similar enough to substitute for the weapon.
- All characters may use the Get Inside and Avoid actions. Unless otherwise stated, these maneuvers are always based on the character's Speed and not a skill.

All martial actions (except Great Strike) cost *one* action in the script.

## Stances

 In the Burning Wheel Melee Mechanics any combatant may choose to take a *stance*. Are you on the attack? Are you keeping your distance? Or are you staying balanced and ready for anything? Each *stance* has its strengths and weaknesses.

It requires one action to take a *stance*. (See the Change Stance maneuver.) Like other actions, the character may move and/or speak when they take a stance. Characters cannot sprint in stance.

There are three *stances*:

## Neutral Stance

This stance keeps the character balanced and ready for anything. No bonuses or penalties. *All characters are considered to be in neutral stance unless they use the Change Stance action, an Instinct or a trait.*

### Neutral Moves

Some martial maneuvers can be done in any stance without penalty. These moves are listed in the Martial Actions section with the <sup>nm</sup> notation. Get Inside, Push, Lock, Throw, Charge are neutral actions. They do not benefit from stance bonuses nor are they penalized by stance restrictions. You can conduct “neutral” maneuvers without modifiers in all Aggressive or Defensive stance.

## Aggressive Stance

This stance focuses on the attack. All martial maneuvers listed with an <sup>agg</sup> are performed at 1.5 times the character’s martial skill (or root) when in Aggressive stance. (Bonus equals half the character’s skill rounded up; Add these dice to the character’s base skill.)

*If a character with a B4 Sword skill goes into Aggressive Stance and Strikes, the player rolls six dice for the maneuver.*

- Any maneuvers with a <sup>def</sup> listed next to them are performed at half the character’s Martial Arts/Weapon skill exponent rounded down. Thus if a character with a B4 Sword skill is in Aggressive Stance and wants to Block, the player rolls two dice for the maneuver. (Half of B4 is two.)
- No Avoid. *Characters in Aggressive Stance may not Avoid at all.*
- Neutral maneuvers and Natural Defenses are not effected by Aggressive stance bonuses or penalties.

## Defensive Stance

Characters can take a defensive posture that focuses on evasion and counterstriking. All martial actions listed with a <sup>def</sup> are performed at 1.5 times the character’s skill when in Defensive stance. Round up.

*Thus if a character with a B5 Spear skill goes into Defensive Stance and Blocks, the player would roll eight dice for the maneuver—Half of five rounded up is three dice, added to the character’s skill of B5.*


- The Defensive Stance bonus applies to a characters’ Speed for Avoid actions. Thus a character with a B4 Speed in Defensive Stance Avoids with six dice.
- Characters count as *Blocking* during the *Change Stance: Defensive stance* action. *Characters do not get the Defensive Stance bonus during the Change Stance action, they Block at their normal skill dice.*
- Actions listed with an <sup>agg</sup> are performed at half the character’s skill dice while in Defensive stance. Rounded down. Thus if a character with a B5 Spear skill in Defensive stance wants to Strike his opponent he rolls two dice.

*Once in Defensive stance, all applicable skills and stats get the bonus/penalties. A character with a B4 Spear skill, a B3 Brawling and a B4 Speed has: 6D to Block and Counterstrike (Spear +2D). He has 2D for Strikes, Great Strikes and Disarming Strikes (Spear -2D). His Brawling skill is B5 for Blocks and Counterstrikes, and it is B1 for Strikes, Great Strikes and Disarming Strikes. His Speed counts as 6D for Avoids (B4 Speed +2D).*

- Neutral maneuvers and Natural Defenses are not effected by Defensive stance bonuses or penalties.

## Natural Defenses

Occasionally during a combat situation, an attack will hit a character in a way that she was not prepared for. Even so, she would not just sit idly and let herself be molested. There are natural, defensive reactions a body will take without being told to. For example, if a person is knocked off balance the feet and legs involuntarily shift position to try to remain standing. Or if a person is grabbed it is basic instinct to pull away. Thus, if a character is Thrown, Locked, Pushed, Got Inside of, or Charged she is allowed a *Natural Defenses* roll to resist the attack. The *Natural Defenses* are listed with the individual descriptions.

 *These Natural Defenses do not cost an action in the script.* They only happen when another character tries to Get Inside, Lock, Push, Throw or Charge your character. Natural Defenses are not penalized by nor benefit from Aggressive or Defensive stance.

*Natural Defenses is always a versus test.* If the attacking player generates more successes, then the maneuver is successful—the victim is pushed, locked, thrown or what have you. If the defending player rolls more successes, then the attack is warded off. Ties go to the defender.



## Martial Actions

### Avoid<sup>def</sup>

A defender may attempt to get his body and limbs completely out the way of an attack. This move involves taking a retreating or side step. It is a *versus test* pitting the defender's Speed against the attacker's skill. Avoiders move away or to the side a number of paces equal to their dash rate. (When Avoiding a character is always considered to be moving at his jog/dash rate for the volley, regardless of what other movement is scripted.) Avoiders must retreat.

*Witchhunter fears the Swordsman's blade. So she scripts an Avoid, the Swordsman scripts a Strike. Witchhunter's Speed is B5, she rolls 3 successes. Swordsman's expert skill is a B5, he also rolls three successes—but Witchhunter's Avoid knocks off three of his successes. It is at least an Obstacle 1 to strike an opponent, thus Swordsman's strike successes have been reduced below the needed obstacle by Witchhunter's Avoid. Therefore Witchhunter evades the hit. However, she is forced back a pace...towards the edge of a looming cliff!*

Unlike Blocks and Counterstrikes, Avoids happen whether the opponent Strikes or not. (Thus a character always makes a retreating dash move when an Avoid is scripted.)

### Avoiding In<sup>def</sup>

Sometimes a savvy player will have his character Avoid *into* a Strike to get him closer to or past his opponent. This is acceptable. However, doing so is a difficult and dangerous maneuver. The GM should raise the obstacle for the Avoid by at least one. (The first success of the avoid is discounted. The rest are counted against the incoming Strike.) If the character fails to Avoid in, then he is forced to take a retreating step.

### Block/Parry<sup>def</sup>

To block or parry, the defender makes a versus skill test against the attacker's Strike. Each Block success knocks off one Strike success. To completely ward off a Strike, the defender must roll an equal number of successes to the attacker's Strike. (Or reduce the attacker's successes below the obstacle for the Strike.) Any attacking successes not Blocked are considered to hit the character in the form of a partially blocked Strike.

*Swordsman and Witchhunter are going at it again. Swordsman has a Strike scripted and Witchhunter has a Block in her script. Swordsman has a B5 Sword skill, he rolls three successes on his Strike. Witchhunter has a B4 Sword skill, she rolls two successes on her Block. Two successes are knocked off the incoming Strike, leaving one remaining. The Strike obstacle is 1—the attack gets through Witchhunter's defenses.*

### Blocking with Two-Handed Weapons

Blocking with two-handed weapons is different from parrying with a sword or blocking with a fist. Axes, hammers and other polearms can raise a block like any other weapon/martial skill. However, if a wielder of a two-handed weapon does raise a Block, on their next action they may not Strike with the main element of the weapon. Rather, characters may Hilt-Strike, set for a Great Strike, or use another non-Strike action. If the character chooses to Block again, he is still limited to the above options. This limit does not apply to spears and staves.

### Change Stance

Each stance affects the character's performance in combat. Characters remain "in stance" until they script an action to drop it, change it, or sprint. It requires one action to change stance.

- Characters cannot change or maintain stance while sprinting. If a character sprints from a stance, his stance reverts to neutral. Of course he may choose to Change Stance again when finished sprinting.
- *Stance bonuses are not applied until the action following the Change Stance action.*

*Witchhunter decides she would fare better against Swordsman using defensive maneuvers and clever stratagem. She scripts, Change Stance: Defensive. (During that action she counts as Blocking at her basic skill dice.) After that action she is considered in Defensive Stance.*



**Charge<sup>neu</sup>**

With this action the attacker runs and throws his body into his target with the intent of moving the target with the force of impact. *Characters must be sprinting for the volley they have the Charge action scripted.* Charger tests Power (+1D for every volley sprinted after the first, up to a maximum bonus equal to half his Speed) vs opponent's Speed or Power. The attacker knocks his target back one pace for each success he generates over the target's Natural Defenses. If the attacker knocks the defender back *more than one pace*, then the defender is knocked down. If the *defender* wins the versus test, the attacker stops and must spend an action hesitating. This maneuver does not do any damage. However, if the defender is knocked into a wall or is charged by something spiky the GM should consider damage for the attack.

Most character's will resist a Charge with Speed, it is the natural inclination to get out of the way of a charging bull. However, a character who is physically bigger, or just more solid, than his attacker may use Power for his Natural Defenses.

*Swordsman leads off with a Charge. He rolls his B4 Power plus 1D for each volley he has been sprinting, in this case two, for a total of six dice! He gets 3 successes as he plows into Witchhunter. Witchhunter now tries to keep her feet. She rolls her Natural Defenses dice—her B5 Speed versus a Charge—and gets one success. This reduces Swordsman's successes to two, but that is still enough to knock Witchhunter to the ground.*

**Tackle: Get Inside on the Charge**

A character may opt to use the Charge action as a sort of Get Inside, or Tackle as we like to call it. Tackles must be scripted, a player must state if he wants his character to Get Inside on the Charge. If not stated, the character is assumed to be performing a normal Charge. An attempt to Tackle means that the Charging character opts to go down with his opponent and stay on her. The mechanics are exactly the same as for a Charge. If the Charger wins, then he is on the Inside. (If the defender is knocked/back down by the Charge, the attacker goes with her.) If the defender wins the versus test, then she may decide whether or not to allow the Charger on the Inside—remember, a failed Charge causes one action of hesitation.

**Counterstrike<sup>def</sup>**

Using this maneuver, a defender divides his skill dice between Block and Strike in one action. A player must declare how he will divide his dice between the Strike and Block before any dice are rolled.

*Swordsman scripts a Counterstrike to Witchhunter's incoming Strike. His Sword skill is B5, he chooses to allot 3D to Block and 2D to Strike. When*

*Witchhunter Strikes, he rolls to Block first and then may roll his riposte—even if he failed his Block.*

*If Swordsman was in Defensive Stance, he would have B5 + 3D for his Stance bonus; in that case he could use 4D to Block and 4D to Strike back.*

A player may favor the Block or Strike half as he sees fit. A Counterstrike only works against the Strike, Great Strike, Disarming Strike, Push or Grab actions. It does not count against Get Inside, Feint or Charge. The “block” half of Counterstrike is only called thus for demonstrative purposes and does not count as a Block in any other way.

**Disarming Strike<sup>agg</sup>**

The attacker attempts to knock a weapon or object out of defender's hand by striking at the hand or arm. Obstacle is target's skill or Agility exponent (depending on the circumstance). If the attacker is successful he knocks the target item away. This maneuver does not do any damage.

*Swordsman has had enough of Witchhunter's pathetic antics. He is in Aggressive Stance and scripts a Disarming Strike. Swordsman's Obstacle is 4 (Witchhunter's Sword skill) he rolls four successes, meeting his obstacle! Witchhunter's sword clatters to the ground.*

**Expanded Disarming Strike Example**

*Witchhunter has scripted a Counterstrike to Swordsman's Disarming Strike. she allocates two dice to Block, two dice to Strike. Witchhunter's Counterstrike is triggered by the incoming Disarming Strike. She rolls one success on her Block, reducing Swordsman's total successes to three, one below his obstacle. Swordsman was so close. Now, Witchhunter rolls two dice for the riposte of her counterstrike. She scores two successes and hits Swordsman!*

**Feint<sup>neu</sup>**

Feint draws the defender out from a Counterstrike or Block. Defender is faked out of position and attacker hits him while he is vulnerable. *Feint automatically foils Counterstrike or Block.* In addition, the Feinter may attack the defender as if he had scripted a Strike. Defender may not defend in anyway. If no Block or Counter is thrown by the defender on the action the Feint is scripted, then the *Feinter* hesitates and does not act. Feint is a neutral maneuver that can be used equally well in either stance.

*Swordsman opts to Feint. Witchhunter has scripted a Block—Swordsman catches her out of position. Feint beats Block. Swordsman then rolls his B5 Sword skill as if he had landed an unopposed Strike on his opponent. Very nasty!*



**Get Inside<sup>neu</sup>**

This maneuver is not an attack in and of itself; rather it is the first step in a series of attacks. Anyone, skilled or unskilled, can attempt to “get inside an opponent’s striking distance.” Test Speed (or applicable skill) vs Natural Defenses Speed.

This action represents the character quickly closing the distance between him and his opponent, getting inside her reach and quite possibly getting his arms around her.

If the attacker wins the test, he is *inside* his opponent’s “striking distance.” From this position, he can use the Throw or Lock actions. Weapons are very restricted on the inside: polearms are all but useless, axes unwieldy, and swords difficult to use. However, knives, garrotes, fists, knees, elbows, weapon hilts and pommels are just the trick and can be used to Strike with little penalty. Also, there are no “called shot” penalties on the inside.

*Witchhunter knows just how to deal with Swordsman. She scripts a Get Inside. Swordsman was expecting Witchhunter to defend herself, so he scripted a Feint. Feint only works against Blocks or Counterstrikes, so Swordsman is outmaneuvered while the Witchhunter Gets Inside. Witchhunter rolls her Speed (B5) to Get Inside, and she rolls three successes. Even though he was outmaneuvered in the script, Swordsman is still allowed to use his Natural Defenses. In this case it is his Speed; he rolls two successes. Witchhunter wins the Versus Test. Now she is on the inside and reaching for her knife.*

**Get Outside!**

Once Inside, characters are stuck together like glue. Even if one moves, the two stay tangled together. They can only disengage in one of two ways: The Get Outside action or being Thrown or Pushed off. For the Get Outside action the acting character tests his Speed. Obstacle is equal to the successes of the Get Inside action. Natural Defenses aren’t used to resist this, rather the acting character is trying to beat the extra successes left over from the Get Inside.

*Witchhunter is very dangerous on the Inside and Swordsman wants out. He’s scripted Get Outside as one of his actions and rolls his Speed vs Obstacle 1. (Witchhunter got Inside of him with 1 additional success, see above). Witchhunter does not get to roll her Natural Defenses against the Get Outside. If Swordsman’s test is successful then he dislodges Witchhunter and the characters are back at standard striking distance. If not, they are still considered Inside.*

Characters may also be Thrown “outside” or Pushed off. In either of these cases remaining Get Inside successes don’t count. But Natural Defenses are used against the move. If the defending character resists the Throw or Push, then the two are still stuck together.

**Scripting “Get Inside, Lock”**

Often, a player will script the sequence “Get Inside, Lock” in a single volley. If the character fails his attempt to Get Inside he is seemingly left flailing out in nowhere—his next action is useless. The same is true if a character is already Inside and has scripted “Lock, Lock” for her volley. If she is fended off and pushed “Outside,” then her second action is useless. The rules of Action Reaction in Burning Wheel clearly state that the character must forfeit actions to rescript because she is forced out of position. Unfortunately, this makes it inordinately difficult to Get Inside and Lock opponents.



Since these actions are very similar, there is a special consideration for the case of Lock and Get Inside. In my experience running this game, I have found it acceptable to allow the player to “devolve” a Lock to a “Get back Inside” without forfeiting. Consider the “Get Inside” action to be the first stage of a two-action maneuver consisting of sliding into your opponent, getting your arms around him, and then attempting to apply pressure to subdue him. With this in mind it makes perfect sense to allow players to “devolve” Locks into “Get back Inside” maneuvers as they grapple with an opponent, shift grips and vie for position.

**Great Strike<sup>agg</sup>**

Certain weapons are capable of being used to attack with greater force than a standard Strike: axes, *katana*, bastard swords and so forth are a few examples. A Great Strike takes one action to *set* and another to deliver. Readyng a Great Strike indicates that the wielder is shifting his grip on his weapon and getting it over his head. He may not do anything else on that action except move and speak. A Great Strike adds one pip of damage to the Incidental, Mark and Superb results of the character’s damage potential. See Weapons Mechanics for more on IMS. See the Weapons Appendix for a list of weapons that may Great Strike.

- A character can deliver the Great Strike while moving.
- A Great Strike may not be Blocked.

**Lock<sup>neu</sup>**

*Lock can only be executed on the Inside.* See Get Inside, above. Once the attacker is inside she may attempt to apply a Lock. Test attacker’s Power (or skill if applicable) vs the defender’s Natural Defenses Agility or Power (defender’s

choice). Each success the attacker gets over the defender is a -1D penalty to the defender's skills and stats until the Lock is broken. *Power is not affected for the purposes of Natural Defenses or Escaping vs the Lock.*

If the defender gets more successes, then he has fended off the attacker and is not affected by the Lock attempt.

After making a successful Lock, the attacker may then choose, on subsequent actions, to hold the lock or increase the pressure. If she "holds," then the Lock stands at the number of successes at which it was originally applied. If she increases the pressure there is another versus test: Power or skill vs Natural Defenses Power.

*Witchhunter is on the Inside. She wants to apply a Lock to Swordsman. She tests her phenomenal Brawling skill of B5 vs Swordsman's Power of B4. She gets three successes to Swordsman's one. Uh-oh. Swordsman's dice are now all reduced by 2 (Three Lock successes minus one Natural Defenses success). The two dice remain off for as long as Witchhunter holds him there.*

### Escape!

To break the Lock, the defender must generate more successes on his Power test than the current total successes of the Lock. A defender does not have to beat all of the successes in one action. Each success reduces the Lock's effectiveness/rating and makes it easier for the next escape attempt. But remember, the attacker may attempt to reassert the Lock as described above.

*Once she has her grip on Swordsman, Witchhunter uses her free hand to draw her knife. Swordsman realizes that he is in trouble, he forfeits his last action and changes his next to Escape/Break Lock. He tests his Natural Defenses Power vs obstacle of the current successes of the Lock—Witchhunter previously beat him by two successes, so his obstacle is 2. Even though Swordsman is in a 2D lock he still gets access to his full Natural Defenses for Escaping. He rolls miserably: 1 success. Agh! Even so he reduces the Lock by one die, from 2 to 1, but he is still locked up. Swordsman may try to Break the Lock again on his next free action or he may try something else, like bashing Witchhunter's face in.*

### Immobilized

A defender is completely immobilized and incapacitated when his Agility, Speed, Power or Forte is reduced to zero by the a Lock. No "damage" is done, however this does not mean that a Lock is not a painful affair. The damage of the Lock is reflected in the dice subtracted from the defender's stats and skills. He is in pain, having the air squeezed from his lungs, a joint twisted or a nerve pinched, and is extremely uncomfortable!

### Damaging Locks

If an attacker manages to completely immobilize his opponent by reducing one of his stats to zero, then he may attempt to damage his victim. Once immobilized, roll to apply pressure (Power/skill vs Natural Defenses), only now additional successes count as if the attacker had *struck* his victim. Use the attacker's IMS for unarmed attacks. See Weapons Mechanics for more on damage.

### Push<sup>neu</sup>

Rather than lash out to do damage, an attacker may attempt to Push or check his opponent. It is a maneuver generally done with the arms or upper-body. Test Power or applicable skill vs Power or Speed. For every success the attacker wins by, the defender is pushed back one pace. If the defender is pushed more than two paces he falls prone.

- Push cannot be Blocked but may be Avoided or Counterstruck. Push counts as a Strike for the purposes of Counterstrikes. Push is a neutral move and can be made in any stance, from standard striking distance or from the Inside.

*Witchhunter attempts to Push Swordsman off his feet. She rolls her B5 Brawling skill vs Swordsman's B4 Forte. Witchhunter gets four successes to Swordsman's two. Swordsman staggers back 2 paces but does not fall over.*

### Strike<sup>agg</sup>

Strike is the term used to describe an attacker's assault. It does not necessarily mean one single punch. It can represent a single blow or a series of quick blows. It is up to the striker's idiom. Attacker tests martial arts, Brawling or a weapons skill; base obstacle is 1 plus any modifiers such as moving or lunging.

*Swordsman hacks away at Witchhunter with his broadsword. His Sword skill is B5 so he rolls 5 dice vs his obstacle. The more successes he gets the more likely he is to get through Witchhunter's defenses; the more successes that get through the more damage he does.*

### Hilt Strike

Many weapons cannot Strike consecutively due to their *weapon speed*. However, these weapons may use their hilt, pommel or butt to strike rather than the "blade edge." Thus, *Strike, Hilt Strike, Strike* is an acceptable script for Slow weapons. (See Weapons Mechanics for more on weapon speed.)

## Gameplay

### Throw<sup>neu</sup>

A character must be on the Inside to Throw his opponent. Characters must have Brawling, Boxing or a martial arts skill to throw.

Once Inside, a Throw is a *versus test* between the thrower's skill and the defender's skill, Agility or Speed (defender's choice). The attacker throws the defender one pace for every success in excess of the defender's successes. Ties go to the defender. If a character is thrown more than one pace, she is knocked off her feet.


*Witchhunter Gets Inside on Swordsman. Swordsman is angry about this and attempts to Throw her off. He tests his B3 Brawling skill vs Witchhunter's B5 Speed. Swordsman rolls three successes! Witchhunter botches it and rolls one success. She is tossed two paces away and lands on her arse. She's in big trouble now!*

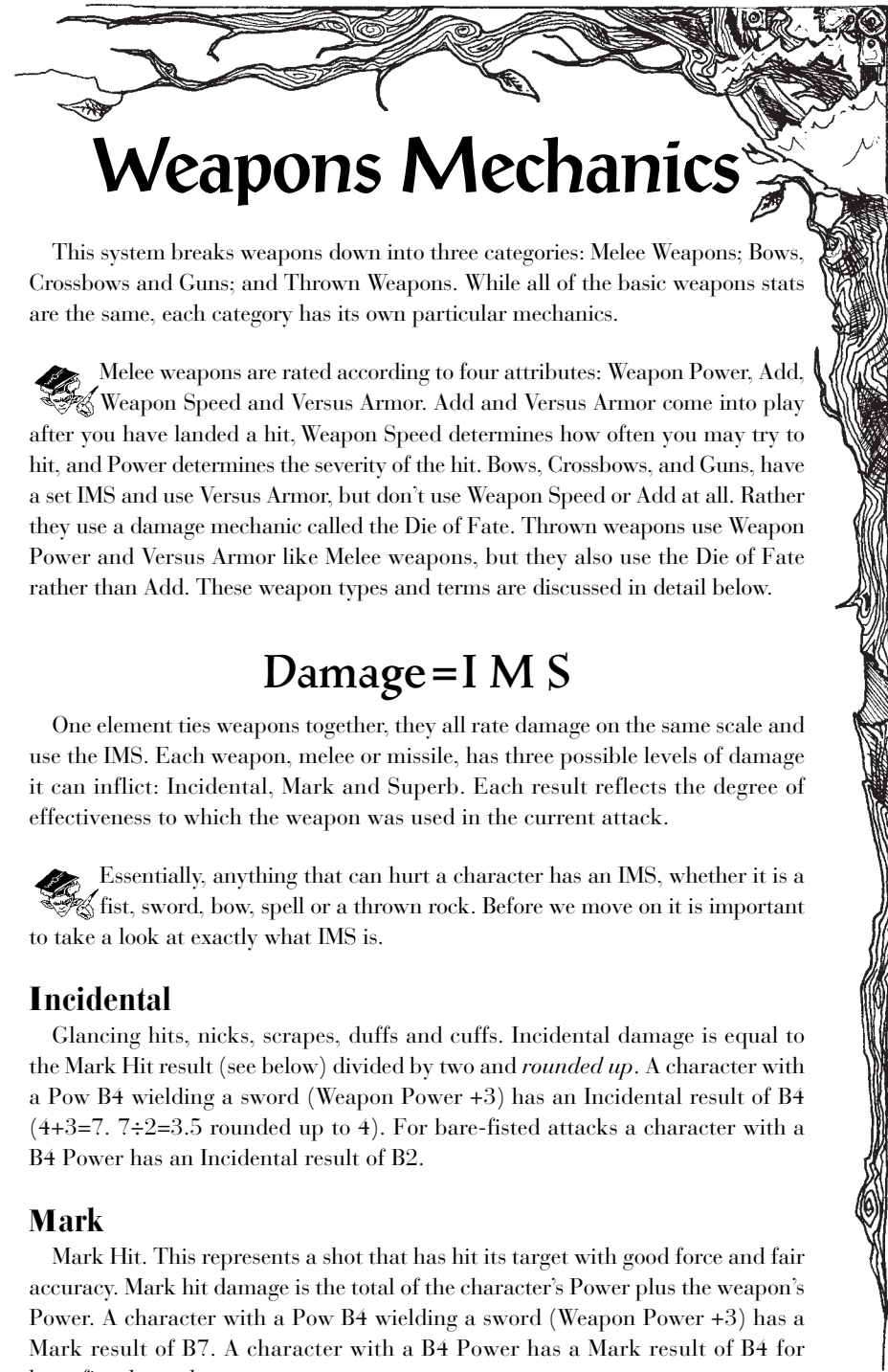
- Throwing an opponent into a wall, a door or the ground can really hurt. See Materials and Structures, *Thrown into a Wall* in Expanded Gameplay for more on damage from Throws.

## Martial Move vs Move

Here is a breakdown of which moves work against which:


- *Counterstrikes* work against *Strikes*, *Great Strikes*, *Disarming Strikes*, and *Pushes*
- *Feints* only work against *Counterstrikes* and *Blocks*.
- *Blocks* work against *Strikes* and *Disarming Strikes*.
- *Avoids* work against all offensive maneuvers.

 If a character raises a Block and his adversary Counterstrikes *nothing happens*. The opponents glare at each other over raised fists.




# Weapons Mechanics

This system breaks weapons down into three categories: Melee Weapons; Bows, Crossbows and Guns; and Thrown Weapons. While all of the basic weapons stats are the same, each category has its own particular mechanics.

 Melee weapons are rated according to four attributes: Weapon Power, Add, Weapon Speed and Versus Armor. Add and Versus Armor come into play after you have landed a hit, Weapon Speed determines how often you may try to hit, and Power determines the severity of the hit. Bows, Crossbows, and Guns, have a set IMS and use Versus Armor, but don't use Weapon Speed or Add at all. Rather they use a damage mechanic called the Die of Fate. Thrown weapons use Weapon Power and Versus Armor like Melee weapons, but they also use the Die of Fate rather than Add. These weapon types and terms are discussed in detail below.

## Damage=IMS

One element ties weapons together, they all rate damage on the same scale and use the IMS. Each weapon, melee or missile, has three possible levels of damage it can inflict: Incidental, Mark and Superb. Each result reflects the degree of effectiveness to which the weapon was used in the current attack.

 Essentially, anything that can hurt a character has an IMS, whether it is a fist, sword, bow, spell or a thrown rock. Before we move on it is important to take a look at exactly what IMS is.

### Incidental

Glancing hits, nicks, scrapes, duffs and cuffs. Incidental damage is equal to the Mark Hit result (see below) divided by two and *rounded up*. A character with a Pow B4 wielding a sword (Weapon Power +3) has an Incidental result of B4 ( $4+3=7$ .  $7\div 2=3.5$  rounded up to 4). For bare-fisted attacks a character with a B4 Power has an Incidental result of B2.


### Mark

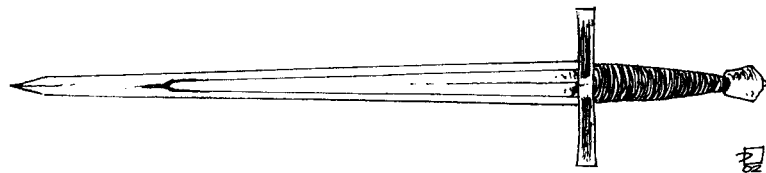
Mark Hit. This represents a shot that has hit its target with good force and fair accuracy. Mark hit damage is the total of the character's Power plus the weapon's Power. A character with a Pow B4 wielding a sword (Weapon Power +3) has a Mark result of B7. A character with a B4 Power has a Mark result of B4 for bare-fisted attacks.

## Superb

Superb shots are so well placed that they have unintended effectiveness: a major artery is hit, a hand gets cut off, and so forth. Superb damage is one-and-a-half times the Mark result. *Round down, fractions are discarded.* A character with a Pow B4 wielding a sword (Weapon Power +3) has a Superb result of B10. A character with a B4 Power has a Superb result of B6 for bare-fisted attacks.

## Ok, I've Got This Funny Number Stuff Down, Now What?

 The IMS numbers represent coordinates on the *Physical Tolerances Grayscale*. Basically, they tell you how much hurty you put on your enemy. When a character scores a Mark result of B7, his opponent notes a B7 on his Grayscale. See Anatomy of Injury for more fun on the effects of damage on characters.



# Melee Weapons

## Sample Melee Weapon

Weapon Type: Sword

Power: +3      Add: 2      WS: Slow      VA: 1

See the Weapons Appendix for a complete listing of weapons stats.

## Striking Your Opponent

To hit another character, test Brawling, Boxing, martial arts, or the appropriate weapons skill. The base obstacle to land a blow on an opponent is Ob 1—a character always needs one success to hit. If the character *meets* his obstacle he has landed an Incidental Hit; if he *exceeds* his obstacle he can score a Mark or Superb result. If he fails to meet the obstacle, then the swing goes wide and misses.

See the Combat Obstacle Modifiers section for more on this. Also the Skill List in the Character Burner has example obstacles for Sword and Boxing skills.

If a character does not have a weapon skill or martial arts-type skill, then use Beginner's Luck and tests against his Agility at a double obstacle penalty.


## Weapon Power

Melee weapons are listed with a "Power" rating. This number is added to the character's Power to determine how much damage is done with a Strike and so forth. Damage is discussed under the Damage=IMS heading of this section.

### Power Shade

Like stats and skills, *Weapon Power* is divided into two components, the shade and the exponent. Unless explicitly stated otherwise all weapons are of mundane caliber and do damage in the black shade.

## Add, or How Do I Get from Mark to Superb?

 Add is the number of additional successes over the obstacle a character needs to achieve in order to step up the damage result from Incidental to Mark and from Mark to Superb.

Melee weapons have an Add of 1, 2 or, rarely, 3. The Add represents the accuracy, deadliness and ease of use of the weapon. Weapons with an Add of 1 are instinctive to use and most inherently deadly. An intuitive weapon like a knife is an Add 1 weapon. Swords and Spears are Add 2 weapons; to best use these weapons the character will need some training and experience. Add 3 is reserved for unlikely weapons like cloaks and heavy rope.

### Successes Needed for IMS Result by Add of Weapon

	Add 1	Add 2	Add 3
Incidental	Base Ob	Base Ob	Base Ob
Mark	+1 Suc	+2 Suc	+3 Suc
Superb	+2 Suc	+4 Suc	+6 Suc

Add is not "obstacle." The Add sets a scale for the character to climb. If a character with an Add 2 weapon gets three successes, she scores a Mark result. If she only gets two successes, she scores an Incidental; five successes is a Superb.

## Weapon Speed

Melee weapons are divided into three categories of speed and "handiness;" *fast* weapons, *slow* weapons and *unwieldy* weapons. *These categories limit how often these weapons may Strike in the script.*

- Fast weapons may Strike every action as desired.

- Slow weapons may not *Strike* twice in a row. Any other action may be placed between two strikes (including Hilt Strike).
- Unwieldy weapons require a “set” action preceding a Strike or Great Strike. No actions other than movement and speech may be taken in the “set” action.

See the list below for the class of individual weapons. If you don't see something listed, just use a close equivalent.

### Melee Weapon Speed

<i>Fast Weapons</i>	<i>Slow Weapons</i>	<i>Unwieldy Weapons</i>
Fists, bottles,	Lead pipes	Primitive axes
Brass knuckles	Maces	Cloaks
Razors, knives	Rifle-butts	Chairs
Daggers	Sword hilts	Garden shears
Katana	Axes, glaives, bills	Heavy chains
Spears	Machetes	Run-of-the-mill
Billy clubs	Broadswords, etc.	warhammers
	Stools	
	Oars	
	Brooms	

### Versus Armor (VA)

VA stands for Versus Armor. It is a measure of how well the weapon penetrates armor. VA is discussed in detail in the Armor and Shields section.

### Beat on the Brat...

**Weapon Type:** Billy club

**Power:** +2 **Add:** 2 **WS:** Fast **VA:** -

*A billy club is a suitable weapon for all occasions. Though it probably won't kill someone in one shot, it has the potential to knock someone's socks off. Billy clubs have a Power of 2 and an Add of 2. Thus a fella with a Pow B4 does an Incidental hit of B3, a Mark hit of B6, and a Superb of B9. (B4+2=6, 6÷2=B3, M: B4+2= B6, S: B4+2 = 6 x 1.5 = B9.) And, as you will later see, a B9 hit is usually enough to put someone in a coma.*

*The Add is 2: For every two successes over the obstacle the damage is bumped up one level, from Incidental to Mark and Mark to Superb.*

*A billy club's main strength lies in its speed. It is a fast weapon capable of delivering rapid, powerful blows.*

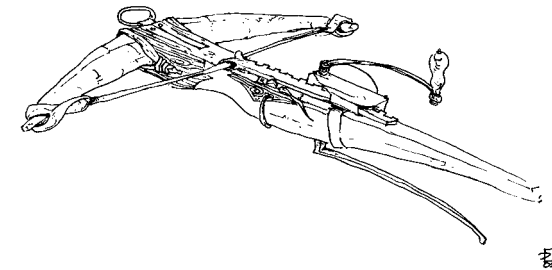
### Bedknobs, Broomsticks and Other Found Weapons



Almost anything can be used as a weapon. A table lamp can make a fine club and a pencil can poke an eye out.

Characters without a martial arts skill may test against their Agility at a double obstacle penalty to use found weapons. Characters with Brawling, Boxing, or martial arts *may test their skill at no penalty when using a found weapon.*

Figuring IMS for found weapons is the same as for any other melee weapon. The Add for found weapons is 2. See the Weapons Appendix for a complete list.



### Bows, Crossbows and Guns

#### Hitting the Target

When a character wishes to shoot a bow, crossbow or firearm at a target he tests his appropriate skill against a base Ob 1 plus any modifiers for range, movement, conditions, etc. If a character doesn't have the appropriate skill he may test Agility at a double obstacle penalty. Once the character has hit the target, roll the Die of Fate for the applicable weapon type and apply the resulting IMS damage to the target.

#### Sample Ranged Weapon

**Weapon Type:** Hunting Bow

**Long Range:** 100 paces

**I:** B4 **M:** B7 **S:** B10 **VA:** -

**DOF:** 1-2: Incidental, 3-4: Mark, 5-6: Superb

#### The Die of Fate: Going from Mark to Superb



Bows, crossbows, and so forth are a little unpredictable in their effects. When firing one of these weapons it is unlikely that the result can be precisely predicted or exactly duplicated every time; there are just too many odd



factors involved—from the angle of the attack, the steadiness of the hand, the attitude of the target, the weather and wind of the day. The list is nearly endless.

In shooting, the Die of Fate (DOF) determines whether the weapon delivered an Incidental, Mark or Superb hit. Each class of weapons has its own Die of Fate Damage Chart. There is no Add result; ranged weapons do damage on a small random scale—the roll of the die determines the severity of the hit, rather than the number of successes achieved. Consult the weapon’s DOF chart for the results of the shot.

Once the type of hit is determined consult the individual weapon and type of ammunition used to determine the exact IMS damage done.

<b>Bow/Crossbow Die of Fate</b> 1-2 Incidental 3-4 Mark 5-6 Superb	<b>Pistol DOF</b> 1-4 Incidental 5 Mark 6 Superb	<b>Arquebus DOF</b> 1-3 Incidental 4-5 Mark 6 Superb
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**Modifiers for the DOF**

- If the shooter rolls double his Ob, add one (+1) to the DOF roll.
- If the shooter rolls successes equal to four times his Ob, add two (+2) to the DOF roll.
- If firing at long range for the weapon, subtract one (-1) from the DOF roll.

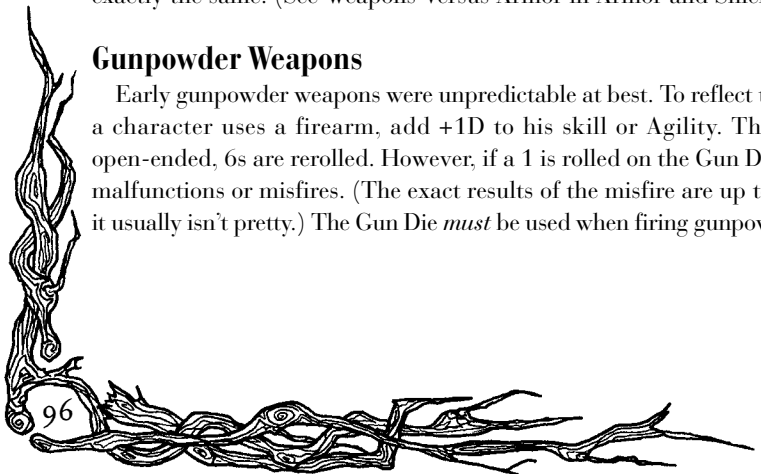
See the Weapons Appendix for a complete listing of Missile Weapon types and ranges.

**Versus Armor (VA)**

Like melee weapons bows and such also have a VA rating. The mechanics are exactly the same. (See Weapons Versus Armor in Armor and Shields)

**Gunpowder Weapons**

Early gunpowder weapons were unpredictable at best. To reflect this, whenever a character uses a firearm, add +1D to his skill or Agility. This Gun Die is open-ended, 6s are rerolled. However, if a 1 is rolled on the Gun Die the weapon malfunctions or misfires. (The exact results of the misfire are up to the GM, but it usually isn’t pretty.) The Gun Die *must* be used when firing gunpowder weapons.



**Thrown Weapons**

Thrown Weapons are the bastard children of melee and missile weapons. They use weapon Power like melee weapons and Die of Fate IMS like missile weapons, but their ranges are determined by the type of weapon thrown and the wielder’s Power.

Thrown weapons with a Power of “zero” use the wielder’s IMS as if it were for a bare-fisted strike. Otherwise add the Weapon Power to the character’s Power as normal. Most thrown weapons have no VA rating, making them tough to use against armored opponents.

**Sample Thrown Weapon**

Small Throwing Knife: Pow: 0; VA: –.

*A character with a Pow of B4 tossing a Throwing Knife has an IMS: I: B2; M: B4; S: B6; and has these ranges: Lob: 4 paces; Throw: 12 paces; Hurl: 16 paces.*

See the Weapons Appendix for a complete listing of Thrown Weapon types.

**Lob, Throw, Hurl**

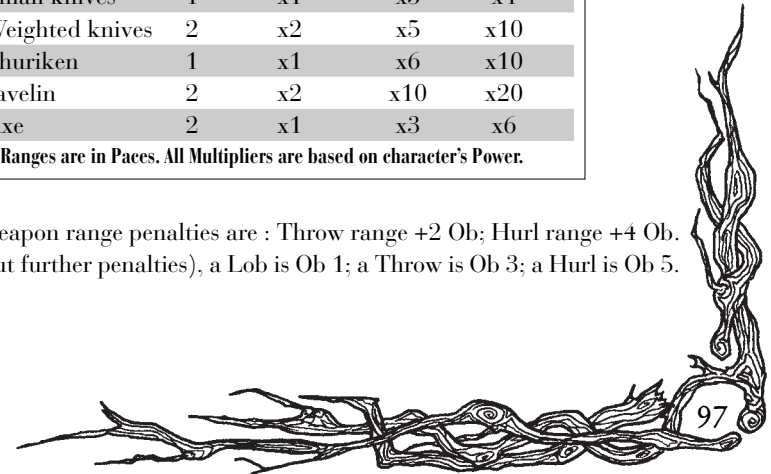
There are three ways a character may loose a thrown weapon: Lob, Throw and Hurl. Each throw goes farther and costs more actions to perform in the script. See Action Reaction for more on the Lob/Throw/Hurl action.


**Thrown Weapon Ranges**

Weapon	Pointblank	Lob	Throw	Hurl
Baseball	1	x2	x6	x30
Bricks	2	x1	x3	x6
Rocks	2	x2	x5	x15
Small knives	1	x1	x3	x4
Weighted knives	2	x2	x5	x10
Shuriken	1	x1	x6	x10
Javelin	2	x2	x10	x20
Axe	2	x1	x3	x6

All Ranges are in Paces. All Multipliers are based on character’s Power.

Thrown weapon range penalties are : Throw range +2 Ob; Hurl range +4 Ob. Thus (without further penalties), a Lob is Ob 1; a Throw is Ob 3; a Hurl is Ob 5.



 Distance of the throw is based on the weapon being thrown, Power of character and type of throw. Power exponent times the multiplier for the individual weapon's type of throw is the distance of the throw in paces.


*Von Goten is desperate, he scoops a big rock (Pow +2, VA -; Range: x1, x3, x6) off the ground and hurls at an approaching zombie. The squire's Power is B6, so his Lob range is 6 paces, his Throw range is 18 paces and his Hurl range is 36 paces.*

*Von Goten rolls his Agility (he doesn't have a Throwing skill) at a double obstacle penalty. The zombie is 10' (3.5 paces) away—within the squire's Lob range. Thus it is Ob 2 to hit the creature (base obstacle 1 plus the double obstacle penalty). He rolls three successes and hits. Now he rolls the DOF on the Bricks chart below to see what wound he's done. He rolls a 4 on the DOF and does his Mark result damage. Von Goten's IMS with a brick is: 1 B4, M B7, S B10. A B7 is enough to snap a zombie arm! "Icky zombies, take that!"*

**Thrown Weapon Die of Fate**

Bricks, Rocks, Axe DOF	Knives, Shuriken DOF	Javelins DOF
1-3 Incidental	1-2 Incidental	1-2 Incidental
4-5 Mark	3-5 Mark	3-4 Mark
6 Superb	6 Superb	5-6 Superb

**Drawing Thrown Weapons**

 No, not sketching them. When a character spends actions drawing a thrown weapon (see Action/Reaction), he may draw multiple items from his sleeve, scabbards, pouches or what have you. The list below details how many items the character may draw and hold in his hands at the ready.

Thrown Weapons in Hand	
Small knives:	2 per hand
Weighted knives:	1 per hand
Rocks, Bricks:	1 per hand
Javelin, Axe:	1 per hand
Shuriken:	5 per hand
Spikes:	4 per hand

See the Weapons Appendix for a complete listing of thrown weapons.


**Acquire Target and Snapshot**

**Snapshot**

Firing quickly or throwing without aiming is called a *Snapshot* in Burning Wheel. A Snapshot is +3 Ob to hit. Unless a character specifically Aims or Acquires Target he is always considered to be doing a Snapshot.

*Using the Acquire Target action negates the Snapshot penalty.*

**Acquire Target**

 Firing a bow or throwing a rock is very different from whacking someone with a sword—these weapons are less intuitive and require more thought on the part of the user. In other words, you have to focus if you are going to hit anything. In Burning Wheel the “focusing” is called *Acquiring the Target*. It is an action that shooters take before letting fly. If a character throwing a rock spends an action to *Acquire* a target, he negates the +3 Ob Snapshot penalty.

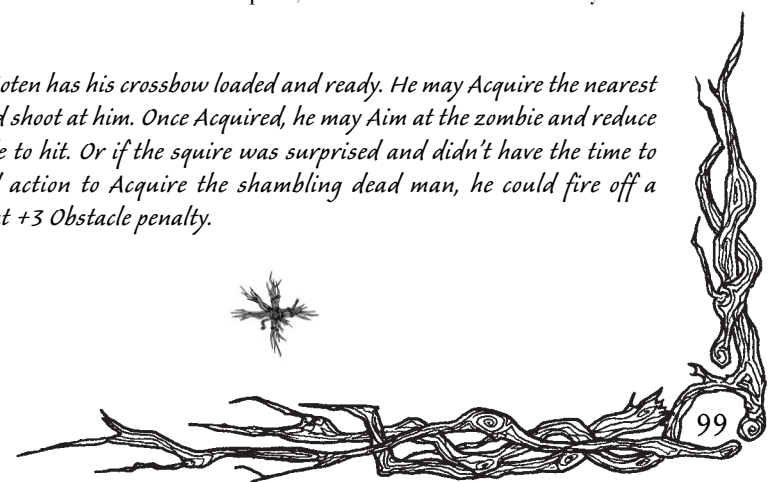
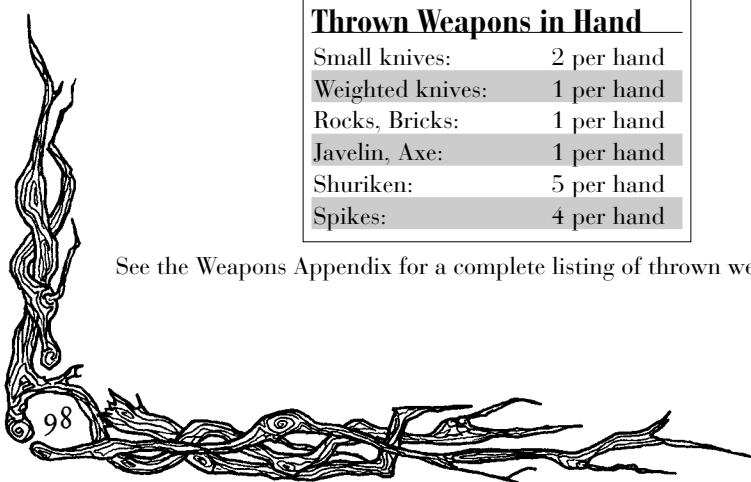
Acquiring with crossbows, guns and thrown weapons must be done separately from loading, unslinging or drawing the weapon. But, these weapons may be armed and readied *without* choosing a target.

Acquiring with a bow is different. The *Acquire* action is already included in the number of actions required to *Draw* the bow—picking a target and aiming at it are just natural parts of this process. A character with a hunting bow could nock an arrow, draw the bow and fire a *Snapshot* in five actions or fire an *Acquired* shot in six actions. Bows must have a target when they are drawn.

**Aiming**

A character using missile weapons of any type may spend actions *Aiming* to reduce her obstacle. If a character wishes to Aim and has not yet Acquired Target, the first Aim action counts as an Acquire, after that the character may Aim as normal.

*Now Von Goten has his crossbow loaded and ready. He may Acquire the nearest zombie and shoot at him. Once Acquired, he may Aim at the zombie and reduce his obstacle to hit. Or if the squire was surprised and didn't have the time to spend an action to Acquire the shambling dead man, he could fire off a Snapshot at +3 Obstacle penalty.*



# Armor and Shields

The armor rules in Burning Wheel take into account both the sturdiness of the protection worn and how much of the body is covered.

## What Should I Wear to the Battle? *An Explanation of Armor Types*

The armor types provided here are general archetypes and genres of armor designed to represent a variety of instances, both historical and fantastic.

Armor Types	DN
Skins, Hides, Leather and Quilted Armor	6
Plated, Reinforced Leather	5
Chainmail	4
Plated Mail	3

**Leathers and Quilting**— Gambesons, cloth and padded armor, and thin, boiled leather. This armor is cheap, easy to make and effective when enough is worn.

**Plated and Reinforced Leather**— Pieces of light chainmail or lamellar are built into or onto hardened leather coverings that are worn over a cloth gambeson. This is probably the most popular armor for foot soldiers world-wide. It is fairly cheap and very effective; it can stop all but the most powerful blows.

**Chainmail**— Interlocking rings form a shirt, hood, sleeves, skirt and leggings all worn over leather or cloth padding—which provides protection from impact and from the armor itself! More often than not, the chain is covered by a decorative outer layer of cloth as well. Chainmail is versatile, effective, heavy and expensive.

**Plated Mail**— Using the same basic kit as chainmail certain areas are reinforced with hard metal plates. Usually a breast and back plate are added, as well as arm and leg greaves. This armor is extraordinarily expensive and very effective.

## Armor Bits

There are six locations on a person that can be armored: head, face, torso, arms, legs and feet. Each of these armor pieces contributes to the overall Protection of the wearer.


Armor Pieces	Coverage
Helmet (Head)	1D
Mask (Face and Neck)	1D*
Vest (Torso)	2D
Jacket, Hauberk (Torso and Arms)	3D
Gloves (Hands)	1D*
Leggings (Legs and Hips)	2D
Boots (Feet and Ankles)	1D*

\*Boots, Gloves and a Mask when worn together, as part of a suit of armor, add +1D total. If worn individually they only count as defending against called shots, not toward the overall armor dice.

Note: A character can *never* have more than 7 dice of armor.

Add up the dice from the individual armor pieces to get the total Protection dice. Players roll those dice every time their characters are struck by an incoming attack.

## Rolling Armor Protection Dice

 When a character who is wearing armor is struck by an opponent's weapon, the armored one may roll Protection dice to ward off the blow. Roll the total number of dice for the armor worn. The obstacle for the test is 1, the DN is according to the armor type (see Armor Types above). *It does not matter how effective the attacker's Strike is; as long as the armor gets one success the attack is deflected and no damage is done. If no successes are generated on the Protection dice, then the attack gets through and does damage as normal.*

*Von Goten is shot by an Orc bow. The squire is wearing a Helmet (1D), Chainmail Leggings (2D), and a Chainmail Hauberk (3D) for a total of 6 dice at DN 4. Von Goten's player rolls six Protection dice and needs one 4 to ward off the hunting arrow.*

## Mixed Armors

A character is free to wear whatever types of armor she wishes on whatever parts of her body she desires. The exact types and locations should be noted on the armor dummy on page three of the character sheet.

There are two ways to play mixed armors. Total the dice for all the protection worn and take the average DN for all the armor types worn; this is the Protection that this suit of armor affords. Or when the player is testing the Protection dice roll different colored dice—each color to represent a different DN of armor.

## Weapons Versus Armor



Certain forms of armor offer better protection against different types of attack. A leather hauberk might stop a club but will provide little protection from a plunging spear.

To reflect this, weapons are listed with a “Versus Armor” (VA) value. VA is rated from 0-4 and tells the attacker how effective his shot will be against the defending armor. For each point of VA raise the DN of the defender’s Protection dice test by one. *If the DN is raised above 6, the defender cannot use armor to deflect the shot.*

*Von Goten is struck by a crossbow bolt. He is wearing 6D of chainmail armor. The bolt has a VA of 1, which raises his DN from 4 to 5. Von Goten rolls six dice, at DN 5, and comes up with one success, enough to deflect the bolt and save his life.*

*Later the squire is caught wooing a lady. He is not wearing his chainmail harness, rather he is wearing simple gambeson (DN 6). The lady’s other suitor takes issue and strikes Von Goten with a sword (VA 1). The VA raises Von Goten’s Protection DN from 6 to 7. The cloth gambeson cannot protect him from this blow.*

## Power and VA

When an exceptionally strong character uses a weapon, he can add to its armor penetration value. Power with an Exp 7 or higher adds +1 VA.

*A long time ago, Von Goten made the mistake of angering a sleeping troll. Before he realized what he had done, the troll whacked Von Goten with a big stick. Sticks (aka clubs) have no VA. However, the troll’s Power B7 gives him a VA 1, raising Von Goten’s armor DN by one (from 4 to 5).*

*Some time after the troll incident Von Goten and his liege, Sir Tristam, were sent to apprehend a rogue knight. This knight was infamous for being tremendously strong. Von Goten didn’t believe the rumors...until this infamous knight crashed his sword into the squire’s chest. The rogue knight had a Power B7 and a sword (VA 1), for a total of VA 2. This raised Von Goten’s armor DN from 4 to 6—he needed a 6 on one die to ward off the attack. Von Goten has since vowed only to pick on weaklings.*

## Armor Failure

When testing Protection, any die that comes up a 1 indicates that the armor has become damaged. It does not matter if the blow got through or if the armor deflected it—if a 1 is rolled subtract one die (-1D) from the overall Protection dice of the character’s armor. *Only one die can be lost per attack (unless the GM says otherwise).* The GM determines what piece of armor was damaged by the incoming attack.



Armor failure is *not* some strange phenomenon where your armor is stripped from your body so that eventually you are fighting naked and helpless. In the fray many things can go wrong, and they usually do when someone is whacking at you with a five-pound, sharpened-steel club! Armor failure rules represent a variety of events that occur when the armor is hit and “fails.”

Helmets are a favorite target in the press of battle. And that is why one wears them, otherwise the target would be your head! Heavy blows to the noggin can burst the helmet’s chin strap and cause it to fly right off. Also, the interior webbing of the helmet can tear, leaving the metal sitting against the pate, and making the next blow to the head very painful. Helmets get dented and bashed in, leaving sharp or rough edges pressing against the tender bits of your soft skull. And when your visor is pressing into your cheek, that next blow is going to really hurt; thus, *even though the piece is still there it no longer provides the protection it should.*

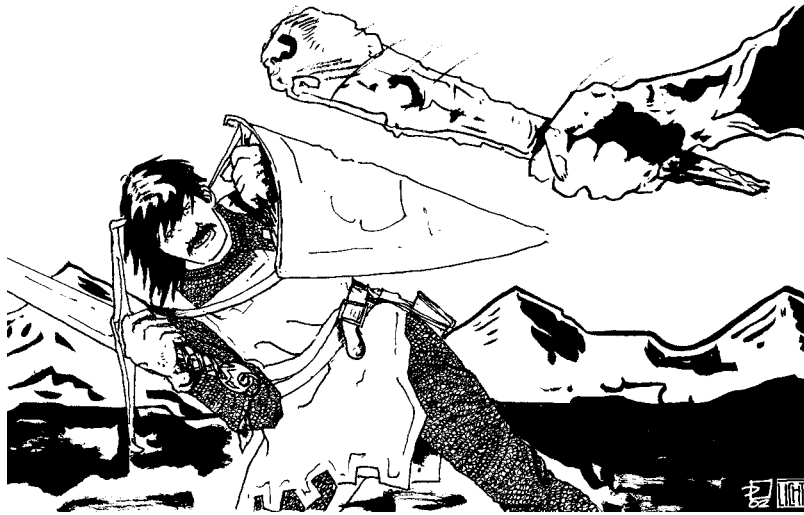
Failure for leather and padded armor usually involves the piece becoming torn and useless or having straps burst, leaving it flapping in the wind and your bottom exposed.

For metal armor, failure is much the same as for helmets: The piece gets knocked in so it no longer functions as it should, the piece gets ripped up, or the piece gets ripped off.




Whatever the GM decides, it still results in -1D to an area of armor coverage. If there was no specific target or called shot, the GM determines the location. I usually like to start on the places most likely to be hit, like the head and arms and then work my way inward....

The attacker can hammer away on exposed areas, calling shots and bypassing the armor completely. However, the defender can also turn this to his advantage by “calling” his defense. See the Called Shot and Telegraphing rules in the Combat Mechanics section of Expanded Gameplay.



Von Goten gets struck by the troll's club. He rolls his 6D Protection and gets 5, 4, 4, 3, 1, 1. The 5 is a success; the blow has been deflected. However, the 1s indicated that the armor has "failed"—a piece has broken, ripped or fallen off. One die is subtracted from Von Goten's Protection dice—in this case the GM determines that the squire's helmet was knocked clean off. Next time he gets hit Von Goten will only roll 5D for Protection. Notice that, despite rolling two 1s, only one die is removed per hit.

## Clumsy Weight

 Armor is bulky and restrictive, it incurs certain penalties when worn. When writing out a character's gear be sure to note Clumsy Weight penalties next to the stats that are modified. Also if the character is wearing armored leggings, make a new average for the character's Reflexes when he is in armor as opposed to his standard Reflexes.

Though there are no Clumsy Weight penalties noted for skills, armor affects skills in other ways. Let's just say that it is very hard to write nice calligraphy while wearing spiky gauntlets; it is very hard to convince the librarian that you are calm, quiet and thoughtful while you are wearing a bloodstained, horned helmet; it is very hard to be inconspicuous during a court ball while wearing plated mail leggings. Obviously, armor affects skills in other ways than the Clumsy Weight penalties.

### Clumsy Weight Penalties

Chapeau de Guerre, War Hat	+1 Ob Perception (DN 5)
Helmets (Bascinet)	+2 Ob Perception (DN 4)
Great Helm	+4 Ob Perception (DN 3)
Face Mask (for Helmets and Hats)	+1 Ob Perception <sup>‡</sup>
Armored Gloves	+2 Ob Agility* <sup>‡</sup>
Armored Leggings	-1D Speed <sup>‡</sup>
Plated, Studded Leather, etc.	+1 Ob Stealthy
Chainmail	+2 Ob Stealthy
Plated Mail	+3 Ob Stealthy
Chain Leggings	Additional +1 Ob Stealthy
Plated Mail Leggings	Additional +2 Ob Stealthy

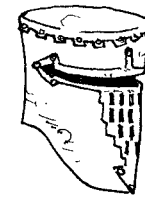
\*Armored Gloves also give a +2 Ob to all fine hand dexterity manipulation skills like Sleight of Hand, Bow or Potter.

<sup>‡</sup>These above penalties count regardless of the type of armor worn.

Von Goten wears chainmail leggings as part of his armor kit. Thus he takes Speed tests at a -1D penalty. The penalty also affects his Reflexes, normally a B4 (B4 Per, Spd, Agi). The penalty reduces the average to B3 (B4 Per, B3 Spd, B4 Agi). The penalty does not affect skills in any way except as noted.

### Specialized Armor Bits

In Burning Wheel, there are alternate bits of armor that don't provide the same protection as the big pieces, but also don't restrict movement as much either. Standard armor pieces count toward overall protection, count against "called shots," and cause a stat penalty due to their protective bulk. *Special bits do not count towards the overall armor rating. They only count if the area they cover is struck by a called shot.* Also, specialized armor bits have reduced Clumsy Weight penalties. See Combat Mechanics in Expanded Gameplay for more on called shots.





Special Armor Bits	Coverage
Skullcap (Head)	1D, (DN 4,5,6)
Mask (Face and Neck)	1D <sup>†§</sup>
Assassin's Gloves (Hands)	1D, DN 6
Boots (Feet and Ankles)	1D <sup>†§</sup>
Half Sleeves (Upper Arm)	1D* <sup>‡†</sup>
Half Leggings, Skirt (Legs and Hips)	1D* <sup>‡†</sup>

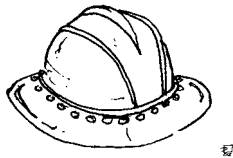
\* Half Sleeves and Leggings give half the dice of normal sleeves or leggings. They *do* count towards the overall Protection, but they do not cause a penalty to stats. Half sleeves and half leggings are worn in place of standard sleeves and leggings.

§ These pieces can be of any armor type. If purchasing special armor bits in Character Burning the player may choose what type of armor (what DN) they are, but the price of the whole suit of armor is equal to a whole suit of the heaviest piece or lowest DN.

‡ Also, any items made of Chainmail or Plated Mail still cause an obstacle penalty to Stealth.

Note: A character can never have more than 7 dice of Protection.

*If Von Goten wore half leggings and a metal skullcap he could reduce his Clumsy Weight penalties. However, his Protection dice would be diminished accordingly. He would roll three dice for his Hauberk, plus one die for the half leggings. The skullcap would only come into play if another character attacked him directly on the noggin. In other words, if they "called" a shot to his head.*



## Shields, Bucklers, Parrying Blades and Warfans

The training skills *Shield Training*, *Two-Fisted Fighting* and *Blazing Wings Technique* cover the use of an off-handed "defensive" weapon—from parrying blades to great shields. These devices are used to deflect an incoming attack and allow the wielder to strike from safety and in a deadly manner. In this section "shield" is the blanket term used to describe all of these "defensive weapons."

What shields and parrying blades aren't, however, is just another piece of armor. They are more of a bridge between armor and weapons.

### Shield Dice and DN

Shields	Dice	DN
Buckler	1D	4
Parrying Blade	1D	4
Warfan	1D	4
Target	2D	4
Heater	3D	4
Great Shield	3D	4

### Shield Block

Shields give characters additional dice to Block (just like the melee maneuver). The dice are rolled and treated in (almost) the exact same way as skill dice. Note that *shields* may Block Great Strikes (warfans and parrying blades may not).

*Von Goten Blocks a brigand's cudgel with his Target Shield. He rolls his weapon skill, in this case his Sword skill of B5, plus two dice from the shield. His successes knock off the attacker's Strike successes just like a normal Block.*

### Strike and Block

When a character with one of the above mentioned Training skills Strikes, *he may divide his weapon skill dice between attack and defense in the same way as a Counterstrike*. Basically, he is reserving momentum to be used in a Shield Block. These dice are combined with the "shield dice" and rolled against any incoming Strikes on that action like a normal Block. This is not considered an actual Counterstrike, nor is it a defensive maneuver.

### Shield Defense by the Numbers

When declaring a Strike in melee, a character with Shield Training divides his skill dice between his Strike and his shield defense. Thus if a character has a Sword skill of B4 and a target shield (2D shield) he may: Strike with 3D from his Sword skill, and defend himself with 1D from his skill plus 2D from the shield. Or he may Strike with 2D of skill and defend with 2D of skill plus the 2D of the shield. Alternately, he may strike with all 4D of his skill and leave the shield's 2D to work on its own. Any tests made using shield dice count as a Block and knock successes off incoming Strikes.

## Shields and Versus Armor

All shields have a DN 4 (unless specially noted otherwise). Shields are affected by VA.

*A parrying blade (1D/DN4) needs to roll a 6 against an incoming axe (VA 2) or a 5 against a sword (VA 1).*



*Skill dice put into blocking with a shield are not affected by VA. Roll different colored dice to represent the shield as opposed to the skill.*

## Shield Failure



Again, shields are the bridge between weapons and armor, so they get the best and worst of both worlds. *Shields fail like armor.* They can get wrapped back around your arm, knocked from your grasp or just splintered. When using a shield, if a *shield die* comes up 1 then the shield loses a die. It is dropped, broken or damaged. Skill dice 1s don't count toward shield failure.

## Shields and Melee Mechanics

### Feints and Shields

Feint is a martial move that “counters” the Block and Counterstrike maneuvers. However, if a shielder throws a Strike with a few dice allocated to Shield Block and her opponent throws a Feint, *the Feint does not bypass the shielder's “Shield Block.”* In fact, the feinter's move is foiled as the shielder lashes out and *Strikes*, Feint only works against Block and Counterstrike, not Strike!

### Counterstrikes and Shields

If a shielder throws a Strike and her opponent throws a Counterstrike, the counterstriker defends against the shielder's Strike and gets to riposte (following the normal rules for Counterstrike). The shielder may use her Shield Block against the “strike half” of the counterstrike.

### Shields and Stance

Shield dice are never affected by Stance modifiers.

#### Neutral Stance

In Neutral stance the shielder may divide her dice between Shield Block and Strike as she sees fit. Also, shields add their dice to any Blocks or to the defensive half of Counterstrikes. *Shields are not used while Avoiding.*

Skill dice may be divided between “attack” and “shield” on Strikes and Feints—that's it.

#### Defensive Stance

Defensive Stance moves are conducted as normal with a shield. The defender adds the shield dice to any Blocks or Counterstrikes. Shields are *not* used for Avoids. *Also, shield dice are not increased by the stance bonus.*

If a cheeky defender tries to “Strike and Shield Block” from Defensive Stance, her shield counts as its normal dice. But she must Strike and Shield Block with half of her normal skill as per the standard Defensive stance rules. So if a character with a B4 Sword skill (and Shield Training) and a target shield is in Defensive stance and she Strikes she would have two dice to divide between her Strike and her Shield Block. After she divides her dice, then add in the 2D of shield dice from her target shield to her Shield Block.

#### Aggressive Stance

Characters in Aggressive Stance have a cap on how many dice they can put into a Shield Block. They may put a maximum of half their base skill dice into a Shield Block. Thus if a character with a B4 Sword skill is in Aggressive Stance, he gets 6D to Strike, but he may only use 2D of that total for a Shield Block (half his base skill).

## Shields vs Rocks, Arrows, Bolts and Bullets



Shielders are not allowed to “block” incoming missile weapons. Instead, *shields count as cover and raise the obstacle for all incoming missile fire.* Characters can try to maximize the protection of their shield against missiles. There are two “modes” of shielding against missile fire—Normal and Hiding. *Normal mode* counts when the shield is being used to defend. *Hiding* means characters are scrunching down to get maximum cover. When hiding, shielders are considered to be heads down and not really moving, but there are some circumstances when a character can hide behind his shield and move.


The amount of cover offered depends on the size of the shield. Also, note that shields only offer cover from the shield side and the front; the “sword arm” and back are considered exposed. “Completely concealed” means that a character may hide his whole body behind the shield, an enemy character would have to fire through the shield to hit the hiding character. (See Materials in Expanded Gameplay for more on shooting through stuff.)

Shields vs Missiles	NORMAL MODE	HIDING MODE
Buckler	—	+1 Ob
Parrying Blade	—	—
Warfan	—	—
Target	+2 Ob	+3 Ob
Heater	+2 Ob	+3 Ob
Great Shield	+3 Ob	completely concealed

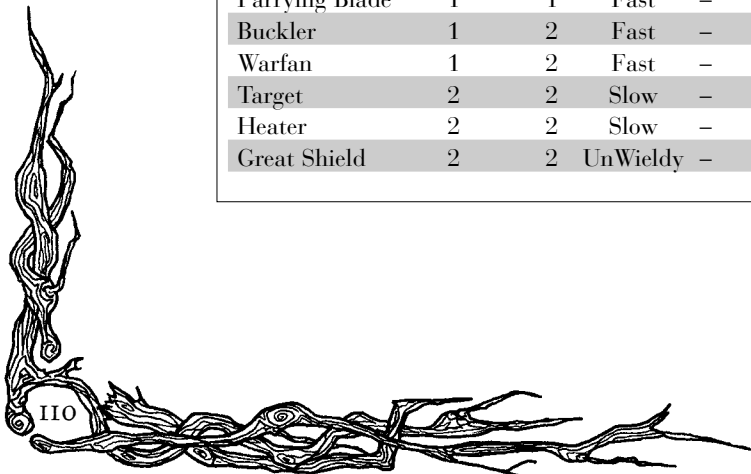


## Defensive Weapons


A shield is a not wall between the attacker and defender; it is both defense and a secondary weapon. Characters can sword Strike, shield Bash, sword Strike, shield Bash. Perfectly legit, very deadly. Not really defenyd.

 *A shield may not be used for defense on an action it is being used to Strike an opponent.*

Shield Type	Power	Add	WS	VA
Parrying Blade	1	1	Fast	—
Buckler	1	2	Fast	—
Warfan	1	2	Fast	—
Target	2	2	Slow	—
Heater	2	2	Slow	—
Great Shield	2	2	UnWieldy	—



## Anti-Shield

 Shields got you down? Opponents blocking all your strikes? Arrows bouncing off? Well, here are a few solutions for your woes.

### Articulated Weapons

Weapons like flails and three-section staves were designed to neutralize shields! A skilled user knows how to wrap the chain around a shield so the ball or stave smashes the shieldy in the skull! No shield defense against these weapons.

### High-Powered Missiles

Guns and really heavy crossbows love shields. They love to go right through them! Any missile with a VA of 3 discounts shield cover. So guns at close range, longbows with armor-piercing arrows, and your friendly neighborhood siege crossbow all laugh at shields.


### Shields on the Inside

Knights smashing your baddies to bits? Get Inside and stab them through their visors! Shields provide *no* defense on the Inside. However they can still be used to shield bash, so watch out! Check out the Get Inside rules in Melee Mechanics and striking distance in Combat Mechanics for more info.

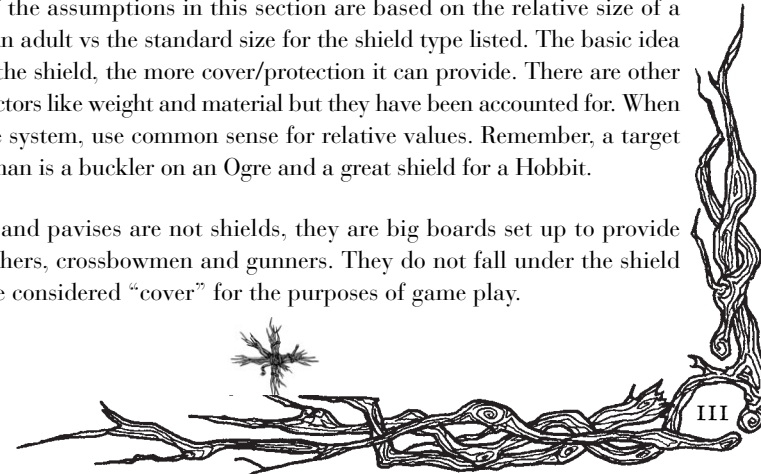
### There's too Many of Them!

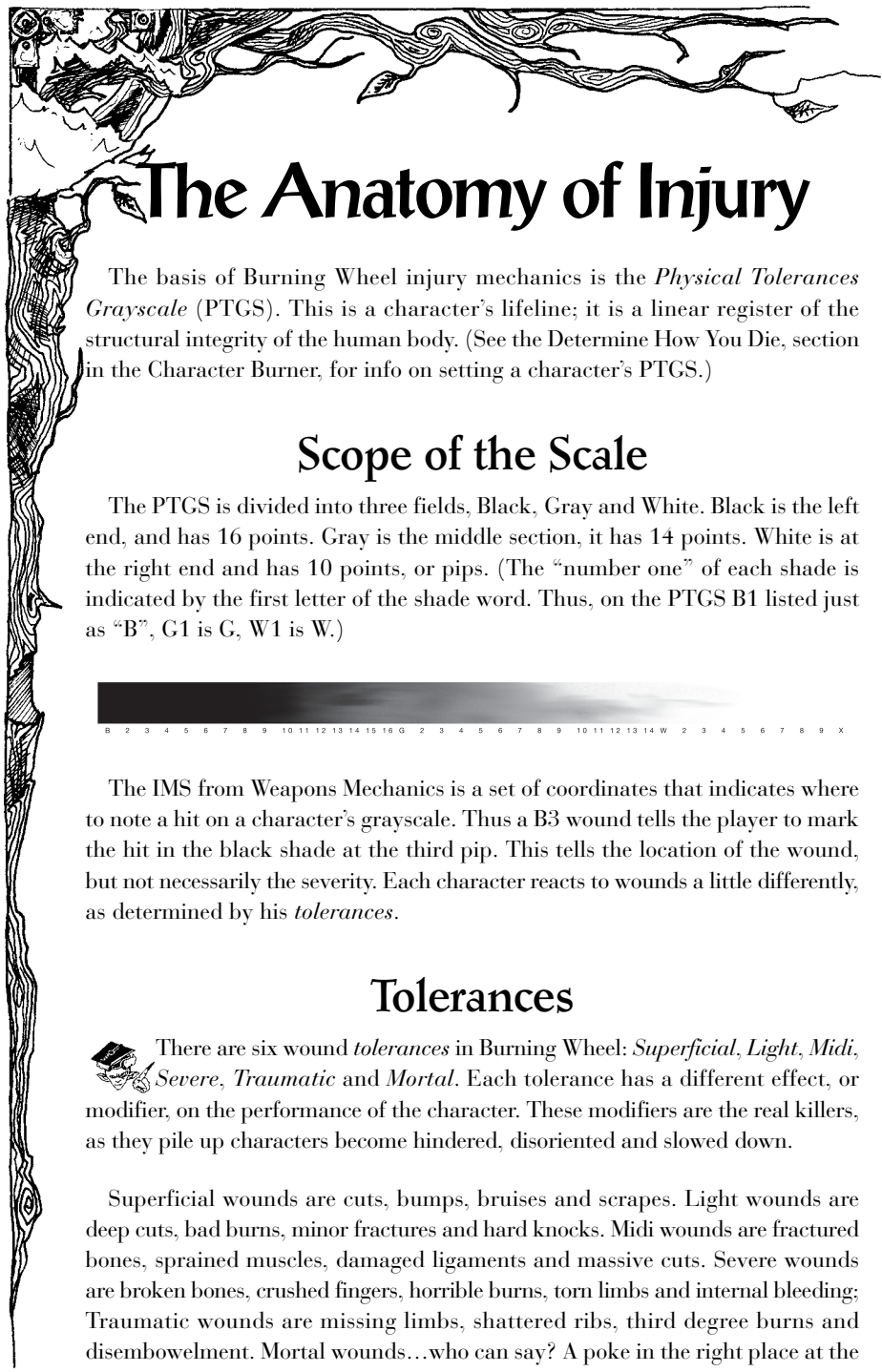
Shield Blocks count for all attackers striking on that action, as long as they are attacking from the front or shield facing of the shielder. Generally, shields cannot defend your "sword arm" side or your ass. So if your players are particularly good with their shields, swamp them from all directions!

## Shield Notes

 All of the assumptions in this section are based on the relative size of a human adult vs the standard size for the shield type listed. The basic idea is the larger the shield, the more cover/protection it can provide. There are other mitigating factors like weight and material but they have been accounted for. When adjusting the system, use common sense for relative values. Remember, a target shield for a man is a buckler on an Ogre and a great shield for a Hobbit.

Mantelets and pavises are not shields, they are big boards set up to provide cover for archers, crossbowmen and gunners. They do not fall under the shield rules, but are considered "cover" for the purposes of game play.





# The Anatomy of Injury

The basis of Burning Wheel injury mechanics is the *Physical Tolerances Grayscale* (PTGS). This is a character's lifeline; it is a linear register of the structural integrity of the human body. (See the Determine How You Die, section in the Character Burner, for info on setting a character's PTGS.)

## Scope of the Scale

The PTGS is divided into three fields, Black, Gray and White. Black is the left end, and has 16 points. Gray is the middle section, it has 14 points. White is at the right end and has 10 points, or pips. (The "number one" of each shade is indicated by the first letter of the shade word. Thus, on the PTGS B1 listed just as "B", G1 is G, W1 is W.)



The IMS from Weapons Mechanics is a set of coordinates that indicates where to note a hit on a character's grayscale. Thus a B3 wound tells the player to mark the hit in the black shade at the third pip. This tells the location of the wound, but not necessarily the severity. Each character reacts to wounds a little differently, as determined by his *tolerances*.

## Tolerances



There are six wound *tolerances* in Burning Wheel: *Superficial*, *Light*, *Midi*, *Severe*, *Traumatic* and *Mortal*. Each tolerance has a different effect, or modifier, on the performance of the character. These modifiers are the real killers, as they pile up characters become hindered, disoriented and slowed down.

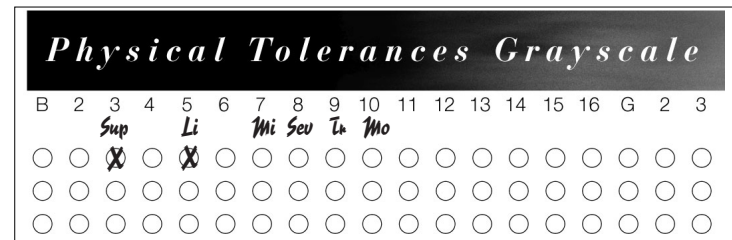
Superficial wounds are cuts, bumps, bruises and scrapes. Light wounds are deep cuts, bad burns, minor fractures and hard knocks. Midi wounds are fractured bones, sprained muscles, damaged ligaments and massive cuts. Severe wounds are broken bones, crushed fingers, horrible burns, torn limbs and internal bleeding; Traumatic wounds are missing limbs, shattered ribs, third degree burns and disembowelment. Mortal wounds...who can say? A poke in the right place at the wrong time and it's all over.

## Taking the Hit

### Registering Wounds on the PTGS

Every time a character takes a hit from a weapon (or other fun stuff) plot the IMS damage on the PTGS and *note what tolerance it falls on*. If the mark falls between two, then the player notes the effect for the left-most or lesser wound.

To mark a B3 wound: "B" tells the player that the wound falls in the Black section of the PTGS and "3" tells the player to mark the circle beneath the number 3, like so:



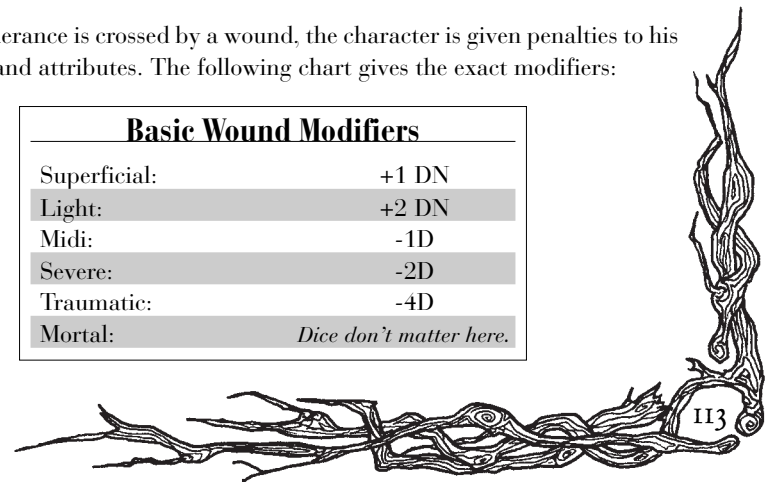
If this unfortunate fellow is mercilessly hit again and receives a B5 wound, it is marked separately, as a new wound, and its effects are added to wound modifiers he has already taken. Wounds are always considered to be separate entities and are not "added together," however, the effects of wounds are compiled as an overall penalty for the character.

Once the wound is noted, consult the Anatomy of Injury chart at the top right of the character sheet and note the effects/penalties. Wounds can add to the DN for all tests or subtract dice from stats, skills and attributes.

## Effects of Wounds

As each tolerance is crossed by a wound, the character is given penalties to his stats, skills, and attributes. The following chart gives the exact modifiers:

Basic Wound Modifiers	
Superficial:	+1 DN
Light:	+2 DN
Midi:	-1D
Severe:	-2D
Traumatic:	-4D
Mortal:	<i>Dice don't matter here.</i>



**+1, +2 DN**

+1 or +2 *DN* is a penalty to the character's stat, skill and attribute tests. So, if a character is Superficially wounded, all Black shade *DNs* are 5 rather than 4. If he is Lightly wounded, all Black shade *DNs* are 6.

**-1, -2, -4D**

-1, -2, -4*D* is the number of dice that these wounds subtract from all tests for stats, skills, and attributes.

See Post Trauma in Expanded Gameplay for recovering from wounds.

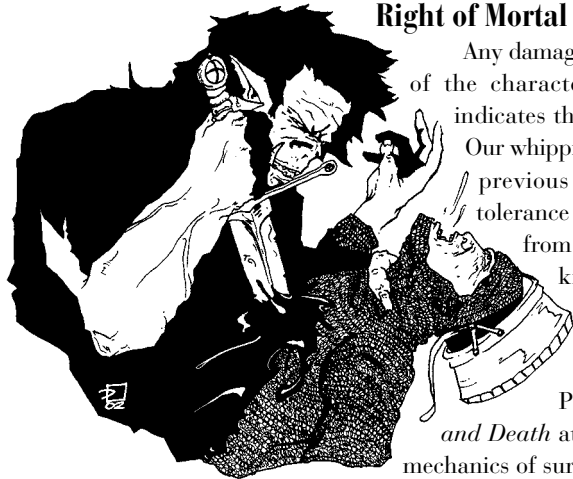
**Left of Superficial**

Wounds that fall to the left of the Superficial marker on the PTGS are considered bruises, scrapes and cuts that do not affect the performance of the character. They will heal on their own without any trouble.

**Right of Mortal**

Any damage that registers on or to the right of the character's Mortal Wound tolerance indicates that he has been killed outright. Our whipping boy from the example on the previous page has a Mortal Wound tolerance of B10. If he takes a Superb hit from a heavy crossbow, a B13, he is killed outright. In fact, even a Superb hit from a hunting bow—B10—would kill him.

Please refer to *Mortal Wounds and Death* at the end of this section for the mechanics of surviving a Mortal Wound.



**Losing Dice and Compiling Difficulty Number Penalties**

All wound modifiers are cumulative. *DN* penalties and wounded dice add up.

**Wounded Dice**

Each die a character loses from wounds and bloodloss counts against the exponent of *all* skills, statistics, the Reflexes, Faith and Steel attributes.

**+3 DN**

Every "+3 *DN*" a character receives from wound modifiers count as one subtracted die. The +3 *DN* is cancelled—the character's current *DN* returns to 4—and one die (-1*D*) is subtracted instead. *Thus three superficial wounds do not give +3 DN*, they actually subtract a die, just as if the character took a Midi wound. A Light and a Superficial Wound—+3 *DN*—subtract a die. The same goes for two Light wounds, +4 *DN*, which become -1*D*, +1 *DN*.

These wounds don't have to be taken all at once for the +3*DN* rule to come into effect. Any time a character finds himself with a +3 (or greater) *DN* modifier, simply trade in +3 and subtract a die.

*In the Taking the Hit section example, the character received a Superficial wound (+1 DN) and then shortly thereafter took a Light wound (+2 DN). The character's player immediately compiles the +3 DN modifier into a -1D penalty. The character's Reflexes, Steel, stats and skills are all considered to be one die lower now.*

**Incapacitation**

When a stat drops to zero or below due to lost dice the character becomes incapacitated. He collapses due to pain and trauma and cannot act.

If it is a physical stat—Power, Forte, Agility or Speed—that has fallen to zero, then the character is rolling around drooling, in pain. He may still observe and even think. Maybe he can watch his enemy put the sword to his throat!


If the character is incapacitated from Perception or Will being reduced to zero, he is considered unconscious.

*A character with a B4 Will (as his lowest stat) takes a Traumatic wound (-4D); he is instantly incapacitated. Or if he takes two Severe wounds (-2D+ -2D), he is incapacitated. Or if he takes four Midi wounds (4x -1D), he is beaten into unconsciousness. Or if he takes six Light wounds (+2 DN x6 = +12 DN, divided by three equals -4D). Or if he takes 24 Superficial wounds, he is ground down and knocked out. Of course these wounds can be taken in combination of any type, if the final die penalty is -4D this character blacks out.*

Incapacitation is not a Mortal Wound or death. (A character is only instantaneously slain when he takes a Mortal wound.) If an incapacitated character is not in danger of bleeding to death or has been treated for his wounds, he will regain consciousness as he recovers from his wounds. However, most wounds will bleed, causing further damage through blood loss. A character incapacitated by a Severe wound or higher must be tended to or bleed to death.



Wounded dice and DN modifiers are not permanent. Characters can heal from wounds. Of course, if the character heals improperly, he can get stuck with permanent modifiers! Yippee, I've got scars and a limp! See Post Trauma.


 There is no limit to how many wounds a character can *take*, just to how many he can *withstand*. The human body is a strange machine, unthinkably durable yet tremendously fragile. Be careful.

## Steel and Wounds

When a character loses a die (-1D) due to wounds, he must pass a Steel test (Steel vs Hesitation obstacle). If a character loses multiple dice from a single wound each lost die after the first adds a +1 Hesitation obstacle to the Steel test.

*If a character takes a Midi wound the player notes the effects (-1D) and makes a Steel test (with the wounded die penalty). If he fails to get successes, then he Hesitates immediately due to shock and pain.*

## Bleeding

 If not tended to, Light wounds and higher will bleed and cause further damage to the character.

### The Continuing Effects of Wounds

**Superficial**– Treatment required within one day or risk infection.

**Light**– Treatment required within one day or risk infection and scars. Certain Light wounds can progress to Midi through bleeding in 12 hours. They *do not* bleed to Severe as a normal Midi would, though.

**Midi**– Attention is required within 12 hours or condition progresses to Severe. The wound ceases to bleed at Severe.

**Severe**– If a Severe wound is not tended to within six hours the wound progresses to Traumatic.


**Traumatic**– Traumatic wounds not treated within two hours progress to a Mortal Wound. Remember, a Traumatic wound means guts everywhere. *Can you say, “breathing tubes”?*

**Mortal**– See the *Will to Live* section below.

## Blood Clock

A wound begins to bleed as soon as it is received. The clock starts tickin'. The times listed above indicate how long the wounded character has before the wound bleeds to the next stage. After six hours of bleeding from a Severe Wound (-2D), a character suffers the *effects* of a Traumatic Wound (-4D). The wound is still considered Severe for treatment purposes.

If a wound bleeds through to Mortal the character bleeds to death.


 As wound modifiers are cumulative, so are the effects of bleeding. A character with two Severe wounds is bleeding twice as fast as one with a single Severe wound. The injury will progress to the next wound stage in three hours rather than six hours.

*Let's say that our whipping boy from the previous examples is having a very bad day, most likely his last. He has taken two Midi wounds and a Traumatic wound. Ouch.*

*Normally, a Midi bleeds to Severe in twelve hours. But our boy was hit with two Midis, so he will bleed to Severe in six hours. But that's nothing compared to the Traumatic wound. In two hours, this wound will bleed through to a Mortal, our whipping boy will gasp his last and slide slowly into death.*


*If someone happens upon his wretched, wrecked frame and deigns to tend his wounds the Blood Clock stops ticking (for the wound being tended). See Post Trauma in Expanded Gameplay for more on that.*

## The Danger of Damage Stages

 This is an imperfect system of numbers and letters that represents vivid, inimitable experience. It is all too easy to fall into the trap of reciting numbers. That trap is a deadly one, because its poison is boredom and boredom kills games, not just characters. To ward off that deadly fate, wounds and their results must be colored and given real weight within the game and story so that players do not become inured. This system is “very deadly” compared to what most players are accustomed to; it makes an attempt to accurately reflect the effect of sharpened steel impacting the human frame—the pain, the disorientation and the debilitation. Real danger swirls around the characters, and unless color and life are evoked, the players will be shocked and disappointed when some unlucky numbers turn up and a character is dead.

That said, I firmly believe that a heroic struggle is no struggle at all if life and death don't hang in the balance. Let the blood flow, but let it flow red and vivid, not black and white. Let them feel the price they are paying for their struggle and let that bitter price sweeten the taste of victory.


## Mortal Wounds and Death

 A character who receives a wound that meets or exceeds his Mortal Wound tolerance is not necessarily instantly killed. He is knocked flat, incapacitated, no longer able to act or speak or even think—truly he is dying, but the *Will to Live* and the help of a doctor or a priest can pull him back from the edge of the pit.

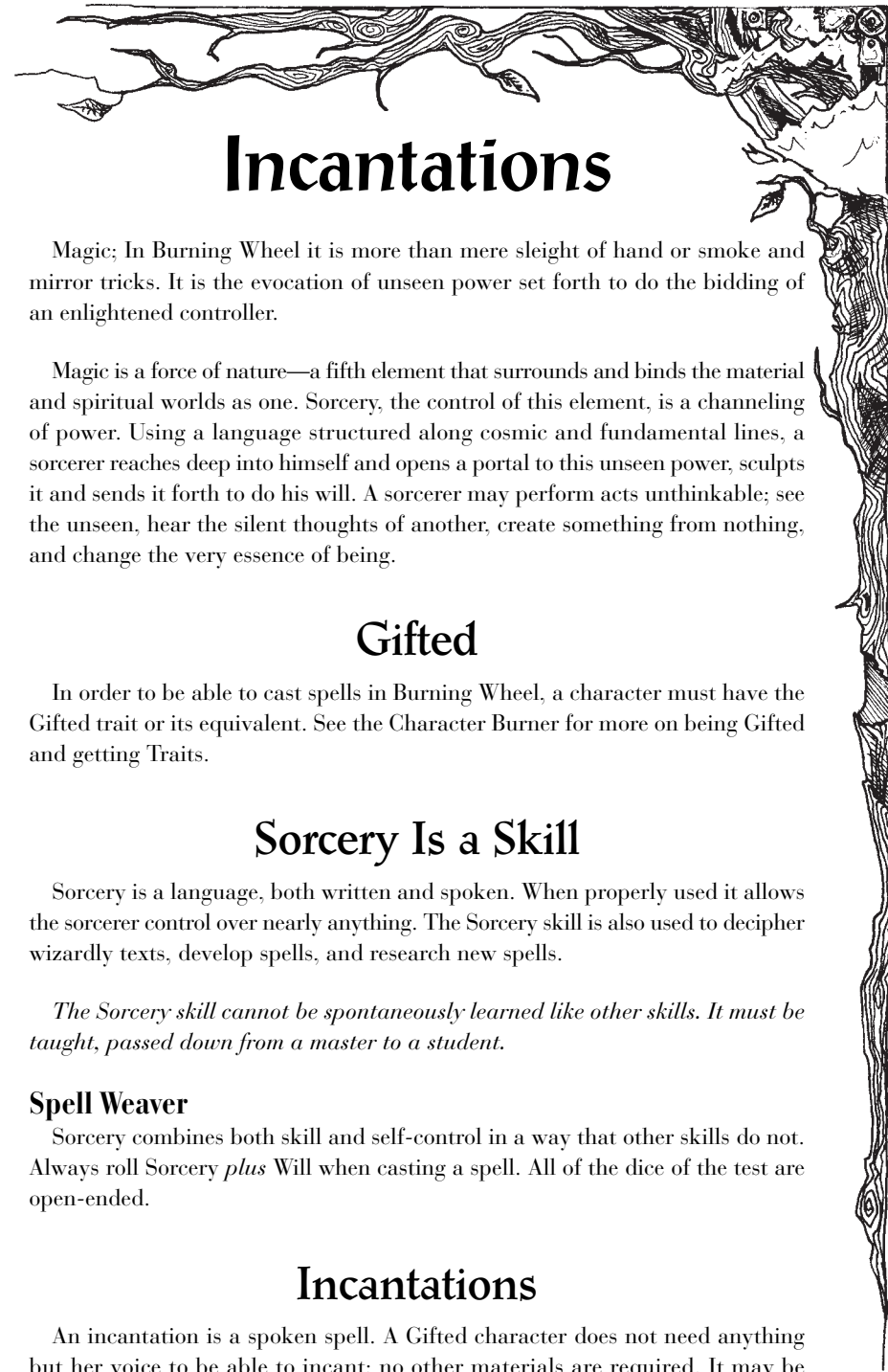
### The Will to Live

It is important that the player have a part in the decision as to whether the character lives or dies at this point. Character death is a chance for the player to move on in the game, but death by bad luck or poor dice is no fun at all. If the player decides (and the GM agrees) to struggle on with the mortally wounded character, then the player must spend two points of Artha for the Will to Live. *If the character doesn't have two points, he cannot recover from a Mortal Wound.*

After the player buys the *Will to Live*, the character is granted one golden hour during which he hovers at death's door. This hour is the only chance for a physician or priest to aid the dying soul. If no help can be found, then the character passes on. But if a doctor can make a successful test, she has either bought more time or even saved the wounded completely. See Post Trauma in Expanded Gameplay for more on treating wounds.

 It is important that the GM have final say over Will to Live. A GM should not force a player to continue with a character he dislikes, but at the same time a GM should not let bad luck destroy a well-built character. Getting knocked in the head is bad, but living through it and recovering can be so much more fun! In most circumstances, it is much more enjoyable to let character live out the consequences of his actions than to give him the easy escape of early death.

That said, GMs be merciless and let the bodies fall. And the players? Be careful, be thoughtful and with a little luck you will live through it all.



## Incantations

Magic; In Burning Wheel it is more than mere sleight of hand or smoke and mirror tricks. It is the evocation of unseen power set forth to do the bidding of an enlightened controller.

Magic is a force of nature—a fifth element that surrounds and binds the material and spiritual worlds as one. Sorcery, the control of this element, is a channeling of power. Using a language structured along cosmic and fundamental lines, a sorcerer reaches deep into himself and opens a portal to this unseen power, sculpts it and sends it forth to do his will. A sorcerer may perform acts unthinkable; see the unseen, hear the silent thoughts of another, create something from nothing, and change the very essence of being.

## Gifted

In order to be able to cast spells in Burning Wheel, a character must have the Gifted trait or its equivalent. See the Character Burner for more on being Gifted and getting Traits.

## Sorcery Is a Skill

Sorcery is a language, both written and spoken. When properly used it allows the sorcerer control over nearly anything. The Sorcery skill is also used to decipher wizardly texts, develop spells, and research new spells.

*The Sorcery skill cannot be spontaneously learned like other skills. It must be taught, passed down from a master to a student.*


### Spell Weaver

Sorcery combines both skill and self-control in a way that other skills do not. Always roll Sorcery *plus* Will when casting a spell. All of the dice of the test are open-ended.

## Incantations

An incantation is a spoken spell. A Gifted character does not need anything but her voice to be able to incant; no other materials are required. It may be shouted, sung or whispered, so long as it is clear.

## Gesture

 Certain magical cults use rigid gestures in addition to the spoken word to invoke their spells. These are mnemonics to aid the caster in properly summoning forth the spell. They are not required by the system, but may be required by the school of magic to which sorcerers belong or by Burning Wheel the campaign in which the players are participating.

## The Elements of a Spell

The seven elements of a spell are Obstacle, Syllables, Range, Effect, Area of Effect, Impetus, Element and Duration.

### Sample Spell

**Arcane Kindness** \_\_\_\_\_ **Ob** Target's Will \_\_\_\_\_ **16 Syllables** \_\_\_\_\_

**Effect:** Soothing rhythms sent forth across the humming wires of sorcery make palatable the desires of the wizard. This incantation reduces obstacles for Social Skill tests: Seduction, Hagging, Oratory and Persuasion. Reduce obstacle by one for each success over target's Will.

**Range:** Personal


**Area:** All in the Presence of the caster. For Tax, use obstacle of highest Will overcome by the spell.

**Impetus:** Influencing      **Element:** Anima      **Duration:** Sustained spell

### Spell Obstacle

There are three kinds of spell obstacles: Spell obstacles that are set into the spell (either as a range or as a fixed obstacle), obstacles equal to one of the *caster's* stats, and obstacles equal to one of the *target's* stats. Though the obstacle may vary in all cases the spell obstacle is governed by the same general rules—for example, all three types may be used with the Advanced Spell Casting techniques.

#### What's This “^” Mean?

 Some spells are listed with a “carrot” next to the obstacle. The carrot indicates that extra successes on the casting roll increase the effectiveness of the spell. Be certain to count up extra successes and add them to the effect.

Spells without a carrot are “flat obstacle” spells. Extra successes do not increase the effectiveness of the spell. Once the obstacle has been achieved the spell has been successfully cast and that's it.


## Syllables and Time

Each Incantation has a number of syllables that must be spoken for the spell to be properly cast. Speaking these syllables takes time—only two syllables may be spoken for every action. (See Action Reaction for more on Reflexes and actions.)

*Han has Reflexes of B4 and he casts an 8-syllable spell. This spell takes him four actions (two syllables per action). If he casts a 5-syllable spell, it takes three actions. (two syllables per action, plus the remainder syllable which takes up another action.)*

### x Syllables

When a spell is listed with “x syllables,” multiply the syllables times the obstacle to get the basic casting time.

 Syllables and casting time may be modified by how the spell is cast. See Advanced Spell Casting for different ways to cast a spell.

## Range

Range indicates where the spell can *start*. It's the point of origin—how far away from the caster the spell can be thrown and still have its intended effect. There are three types of ranges: Personal, Presence, Sight.

### Personal Range

Spells with Personal Range can only be cast on the caster.

### Presence

If the caster could speak to the recipient in a normal speaking voice and be understood (regardless of other ambient noise), then the recipient is in Presence of the Caster. Thus the caster's Presence does not go through walls. A caster's exact Presence is equal to his Will exponent in paces.

Presence is extended by one pace by each of the following skills or traits that the caster possesses: Meditation, Conspicuous, Command, Aura of Fear, Aura of Determination, Aura of Malevolence, Aura of Holiness, Commanding Aura, Perfect Pitch, Sonorous Voice, Unctuous, Bodhisattva, Gift of Babel.

Presence is reduced by one pace for each of the following: Inconspicuous, Stealthy, Misplaced Aura, Obscure Aura, Cipher, or Entropic.

*Han has a Will of B6, he has the Meditation skill which increases Presence by one. However, he also has the Inconspicuous and Stealthy skills which reduce his Presence by two for a final Presence of five paces.*

## Sight Range

If the caster can see it, he can affect it. This “sight range” includes extrasensory sight extended by The Sight, Eagle Eyes and such.

## Effect

The Effect describes what the final outcome of the combination of all of the elements of the spell is. Each spell has a nearly unique effect.



Effect is most directly a mixture of Impetus and Element. Think of them as the muscle and bone of the incantation. However there are other subtler elements built into the spell—the way it was developed, the intent of the caster, the phase of the moon when it was created, and so forth. All of these tiny elements play upon the final outcome and determine the effect. Regardless of Impetus and Element, always follow the Effect listed with each incantation.

## Element

A spell's Element indicates what sphere of the world the spell affects.

**Air**— This is the element of the wind.

**Anima**— The element of the body and mind of creatures.

**Arcane**— The sphere of arcane power—magic.

**Earth**— Stone, wood and dirt.

**Fire**— The sphere of the tool most useful—of heat and flame.

**Heaven**— Sphere of light.

**Water**— Rivers, seas, ponds and streams.

**White**— The dangerous sphere of heavenly fire, lightning and all its sisters.

## Impetus

A spell's Impetus indicates how it will affect its Element.

### Controlling

Controlling Impetus dominates and commandeers the Element, often forcing it into unlikely or impossible positions and situations.

### Creative

The Creative Impetus involves fabrication of materials or substance.

### Damaging/Destroyer Effect

The Destroyer, or as it is sometimes called, the Damager, is one of the dark arts of sorcery. This Impetus combines with an Element to destroy others.

Factoring damage for spells that have Damaging/Destroyer Effect (DE) is similar to factoring damage for weapons. The wizard's Will stat is the base Power of the attack, the spell is the weapon. *IMS is factored just like melee damage*. Thus a wizard with a B5 Will has a I: B3, M: B5, and S: B7 for DE spells. Additional successes create the Weapon Power. For example, if a wizard gets three more successes than needed he adds three to the base Power, or Mark result, of the spell—in this case three successes is a Mark of B8, an Incidental of B4 and Superb of B12.

Exact Damaging Effects are described in the individual spell entries in the Character Burner Spell List. Some spells modify base Power, subtracting dice or use a fraction of the Power; some spells add to Power in various ways; some are +1 Power per extra success, and some are +1 Power per two extra successes.

Like bows and crossbows, spells use the Die of Fate to determine IMS. All spells have a DOF of: I: 1-2, M: 3-4, S: 5-6.

### Enhancing

The Enhancing Impetus grants a boon to its Element. It fortifies and strengthens to an otherworldly degree.

### Influencing

Think of a magnet and a compass. Such is the effect of the Influencing Impetus.

### Taxing

The Taxing Impetus is another black art designed to drain or weaken the strength of its target Element.

## Area of Effect

Some spells affect a single target—either the caster or someone or something designated by the caster—some affect multiple targets or characters designated by the caster. Other spells affect a range of area, either predetermined or a variable area, such as the caster's Presence. Still other areas of effect are governed by the forces unleashed by the caster, these are called the Natural Effect. Unless otherwise stated everything within the Area of the spell is affected equally.

Areas of Effect are fairly self-explanatory and listed with each spell.

### Presence

Certain spells have an Area of Effect that describes the Presence of the caster. The scope of the Presence area is determined exactly the same as it is for Range.

## Duration

There are three durations for spells in Burning Wheel. Spells that have an immediate, instantaneous effect; spells that have a continuing effect that rely on the caster to *sustain* them; and spells that have a permanent effect, completely separate from the caster.

Duration is listed with each spell. See the Sustaining spells heading in this section for more on maintaining spells over time.

## The Basic Spell Cast

Determine what spell is being cast and the intention/target of the spell. Declare this to the GM or write it into the Script.

### Basic Casting

Roll Sorcery skill plus Will dice vs the obstacle listed with the spell. Successes over and above the obstacle may be used toward the spell's Effect and/or Area. The sorcerer must meet the spell obstacle in order to avoid a *Failed Casting*.

After the spell is cast, go right to *Tax*. If the spell was successfully cast, then go to *Allocate Successes*.

### Basic Time

The syllables of a spell determine the length of time required to speak the spell. A character's Reflexes determines how quickly the spell is spoken. Characters speak two syllables per action, so divide the syllables by two to determine the number of actions required for the character to cast the spell.

*If a sorcerer has Reflexes of B4 and is casting a spell with 8 syllables, it requires 4 actions (1 exchange) for him to cast the spell—his Reflexes give him four actions per exchange, he can Incant two syllables per action. 2 into 8 is 4 actions.*

## Tax

The caster must resist a *Tax* put upon his body by the power he has invoked. After an incantation is cast, test the caster's Forte. The obstacle is spell's *actual* obstacle.

If he passes the test, then he suffers no ill effect. If he fails the Tax test, then each success below the obstacle is temporarily subtracted from his Forte.

*Han casts Mage Light—he wants to summon Lantern light. That's an Obstacle 3, 9-syllable spell. Han rolls his Sorcery (B5) and Will (B5), and gets six successes—more than enough for his Ob 3 spell. The light appears, glowing at the end of his staff. He then tests his Forte (B6) and gets two successes—one less than the obstacle of the spell. Han temporarily subtracts 1D from his Forte; he will recover it when he has had a chance to rest for a few hours.*

If the sorcerer's Forte is reduced to zero, he is rendered unconscious. If a sorcerer's Forte is reduced below zero, he has overtaxed himself—his body is overloaded with the power of the spell. For each point his Forte drops *below* zero he takes physical damage equal to the obstacle of the spell in "pips" on the Grayscale. If multiple dice are lost, the "pips" are cumulative.

*A witch casts an Obstacle 3 spell and loses two dice due to Tax. Her Forte drops from B5 Forte to B3 Forte. If she then casts a spell and loses 4 Forte dice, her Forte drops to -1 and she takes a B3 wound (pips equal to the Obstacle 3 spell). If it dropped two below zero, then the damage would be B6 on the PTGS.*

## The Sickness



Every mage suffers from The Sickness at one time or another. It is the feeling of weakness and frailty that overcomes them after being taxed by spell casting. This draining weakness is only temporary however. Forte dice lost to failed Tax tests are recovered over a course of hours determined by the wizard's Health.

### Standard Recovery Time

10 minus Health exponent=Number of hours per Forte die

Thus a Wizard with a Health of B5 recovers 1 point of taxed Forte every five hours (10 - B5=5).

### Recovering from The Sickness

When a wizard fails a Tax test, immediately test his Health to see how long it will take to recover from The Sickness. Each success knocks off one hour of time from the standard recovery time.


*Roll separately for each die lost. Minimum recovery time is one hour per Forte die.*

*Han wants to recover the Forte die he lost when he cast Mage Light. The young wizard's Health is B6, thus his recovery time is 4 hours per die. He rolls his Health and gets 2 successes, which knocks two hours off his recovery time.*





## Allocate Successes

 To fully benefit from most spells, the wizard must generate more successes than the obstacle of the spell. Extra successes are divided between Effect and Area as the caster sees fit.

### Area of Effect

A spellcaster can allocate extra successes into the spell's Area of Effect to increase the area covered by the spell.

*The Sense has an Area of 10p plus 10p per extra success. This means that as long as the spell is successfully cast the sorcerer may "sense" for 10 paces around himself. For each additional success the sorcerer allocates to Area he may sense for an additional 10 paces. 1 extra successes? The Area of Effect is 20 paces. 5 extra successes? The Area of Effect is 60 paces.*

### Effect

The more successes a caster puts into Effect, the more potent the spell is.

*Turn Aside the Blade's effect is to add an obstacle penalty to attacks directed against the caster. Each success over the actual obstacle of the spell is +1 Ob to all incoming attacks. 4 successes over? +4 Ob.*

### Damaging Effect Example

*Han casts Shards at the feet of a charging Hound Assassin. Shards is an Ob 1 spell with a Damaging Effect. Han rolls an amazing 9 successes—8 successes over his obstacle. The Damaging Effect base Power is 1/3 of Han's Will of B5, plus 1 pip for every 2 successes over obstacle. So that's B1 (1/3 Will) plus 4 (8 successes divided by 2)= B5 Mark result; Incidental B3, Superb of B7. Han rolls the DOF and gets a 5! A B7—Superb shot—to the drugged murderer! Yay for the good guys!*

If the player plans to sustain the spell, he should note how many successes were put into spell Effect and how many were put into Area.

## Failed Casting

A sorcerer who botches a casting (does not meet the obstacle) is subject to three possible outcomes: harmless dissipation, garbled transmission or unwanted summoning.

The casting sorcerer should roll the Die of Fate for the failed spell:

- 1 Unwanted Summoning
- 2 Garbled Transmission
- 3-6 Harmless Dissipation

### Harmless Dissipation

Harmless dissipation indicates that the sorcerer has gotten lucky this time. Their spell has no further effects, harmful or otherwise.


### Garbled Transmission, aka: "Wheel of Magic, turn, turn, turn. Tell me the lesson that I have learned!"

Garbled Transmission means that the spell has misfired and has an unexpected effect. Consult the Wheel of Magic!

To use the Wheel of Magic, roll two different colored dice. The first die indicates direction on the wheel: Odd is counterclockwise, even is clockwise. The second die indicates how many steps the wheel shifts in that direction. Thus if I roll a 2/3, I move clockwise three steps.

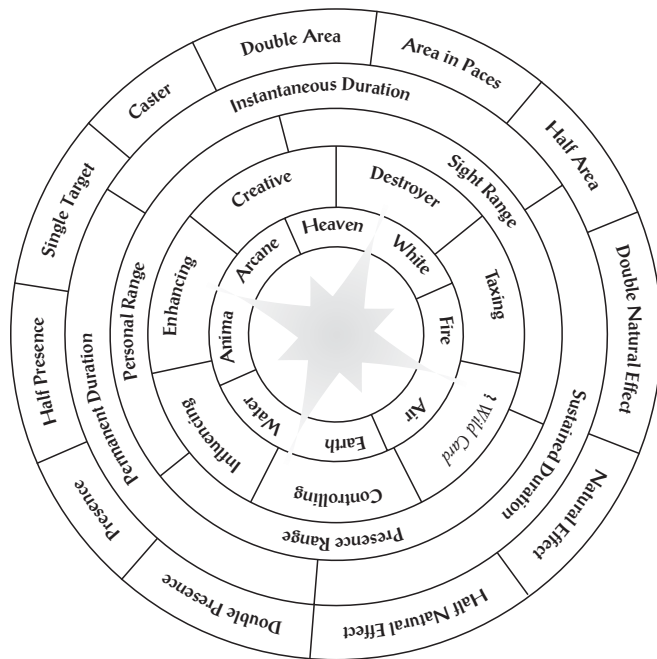
Starting in the middle, find the Element, Impetus, Range, Duration and Area of the attempted spell. These are the starting points when using the Wheel of Magic. Use the cast spell's locations on the Wheel as the starting point.

*If Han gets a Garbled Transmission result when attempting to cast Eldritch Shield (Arcane, Control, Personal Range, Sustained, for "a shield-sized" Area), he consults the Wheel of Magic. Two d6s are rolled. With a 2/3 result, the new spell would be: Fire, Creative, Presence Range, Instantaneous, with an Natural Effect Area.*

 *But what does that all mean? The final interpretation is up to the GM but I think this one is fairly obvious—The botched attempt at summoning the Eldritch Shield instead causes an eruption of flame in the place of the shield. Since the Range is Presence, it can be made manifest several paces from the caster, so as the GM I would not have damaged him with it—but it might hurt one of his friends, and it certainly is a rather noticeable effect!*

If a Destroyer/Damaging Effect result is rolled on the Wheel, use the same mechanics described for Damaging Effects. When determining the Power of the failure, add to the base Power for each success *below* the spell obstacle!

*The Wheel of Magic*



Be creative, have fun, and don't screw your players too hard.

**Unwanted Summoning**

Unwanted summoning indicates that the sorcerer has ripped open an unwarded gate with his senseless prattle. Spellcasting is a dangerous game, and this is about as bad as it gets.


There are two ways to play this. The first is the more brutal—the gate is opened and the caster disappears. Bye-bye. Sucked into the nether-realms by an accident of his negligence and bad luck.

The second way is the opposite: Something gets pulled through from the other side. A shade, a spirit, an imp, a demon. Something nasty, something that is going make the caster sad in the long run. I don't advocate killing a spell-caster outright because they failed a spell. I do, however, advocate making them pay a heavy price.

**Spell Interrupt**

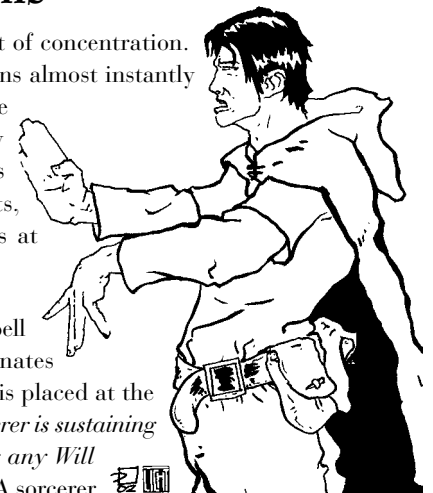
Spells must be completed uninterrupted. If a sorcerer is “distracted” while speaking the syllables of an incantation, the spell is ruined and a Tax test is required. The obstacle of the test is based on the portion of the spell that was completed. If it was half done, the test is at half the spell obstacle. *Also, the sorcerer is subject to Failed Casting.* See above.


**Interruptions Include, but Are Not Limited to:**

 Being hit in the mouth, being physically (or magically) restrained, being hurt, being blinded, a sudden violent squall, falling asleep, being *persuaded* to stop, failing a Steel test, having a sustained Eldritch Shield reduced to zero dice.

**Sustained Spells**

A sorcerer is rigorously trained in the art of concentration. He is able to slip into trance-like meditations almost instantly and then, while maintaining the trance, come forward in his mind and interact normally with his surroundings. By dividing his concentration into separate compartments, a sorcerer can *sustain* one or more spells at a time.



To maintain a spell the sorcerer casts the spell as normal and then, once successful, nominates one Will die to represent the spell. This die is placed at the top of the character sheet. *So long as the sorcerer is sustaining that spell, the Will die may not be used for any Will tests (including sorcery or sustaining tests).* A sorcerer  may maintain as many spells as his Will minus one.

Only spells with lasting effects may be maintained in this way. Spells with instantaneous effect may not be. The spell list in the Burner indicates if a spell can be sustained or not.

It requires one action in the script to drop (stop sustaining) a spell.

**While Sustaining a Spell, a Sorcerer May:**

Fight, jog, jump, play, talk, argue, read, study, think and cast spells.

**While Sustaining a Spell, a Sorcerer *May Not*:**

Sprint, panic (i.e., fail a Steel test, even by one die), be hurt, fall down hard, fail a Tax test (even by one die), completely lose an Eldritch Shield, go to sleep or otherwise lose consciousness.

***Maintaining Concentration After a May Not***


If any of the above “may nots” happen to the sorcerer while she is sustaining a spell (or spells), *then she must test her Will against the base obstacle of each spell currently being sustained.* If she fails the Will test, the spell being sustained is dropped. If the Will test is successful, the caster maintains her concentration and sustains the spell. *Dropping a sustained spell due to distractions is not a Spell Interrupt or a Failed Casting.* But it can be bad news if the spell you were sustaining was Levitation...

**The Power Still Flows through Him.**

*When sustaining a spell a sorcerer must retest for Tax.* The time between tests is equal to his Forte minus the spell obstacle in hours. *If this results in zero or a negative number, the spell may not be maintained at all.* The “Power Still Flows” Tax test is at the *base spell obstacle*—casting a spell *patiently* does not help sustain it later. This test counts as a standard Tax test for the “May Nots” of sustaining spells.

*If Han (Forte B6) is sustaining Turn Aside the Blade (Ob 4), then he must retest for Tax every two hours. (6-4=2). The obstacle for the test is 4 (the base spell obstacle). If he fails the test, then dice are subtracted from his Forte just as with a normal Tax test.*

**The Color of Will Dice**

 We here at Burning Wheel headquarters strongly recommend that wizard players keep a set of specially colored or styled dice to represent their Will. Only keep as many as the Will exponent. That way it is very easy to keep track of how many spells you have sustained. Each die represents a potential spell! It is much easier than taking notes or some such—if the special Will dice are not in your hand, then one can safely assume they are being used to sustain an important spell, and are thus unavailable for casting other, less important, spells.

**Advanced Spell Casting**

Each spell can be cast in five different ways: Normally, Carefully, Patiently, Patiently and Carefully, and Hastily.

**Normally**

This method uses the standard obstacle and syllables for each spell. No special consideration is taken. This is *Basic Spell Casting* as described above.

**Carefully**

The sorcerer meticulously speaks the words of the spell, enunciating slowly and deliberately. This decreases the Obstacle of the spell while increasing the time taken to cast the spell. For every -1 Ob, the sorcerer increases the syllables in multiples of two.

- 1 Ob = x2 Syllables
- 2 Ob = x4 Syllables
- 3 Ob = x6 Syllables
- etc....*

*The casting obstacle cannot be reduced below half its original obstacle (round down) or below one. Whichever is higher.*

**Patiently**

By adding specially designed phrases and pauses to the body of the spell, and by taking the utmost care, the sorcerer reduces the strain of Tax on her body. Casting patiently reduces the Tax test obstacle.

Increase syllables by x5 for each Tax obstacle reduced.

- 1 Ob = x5 syllables
- 2 Ob = x10 syllables
- 3 Ob = x15 syllables

*-3 Ob is the most a sorcerer may reduce Tax.*

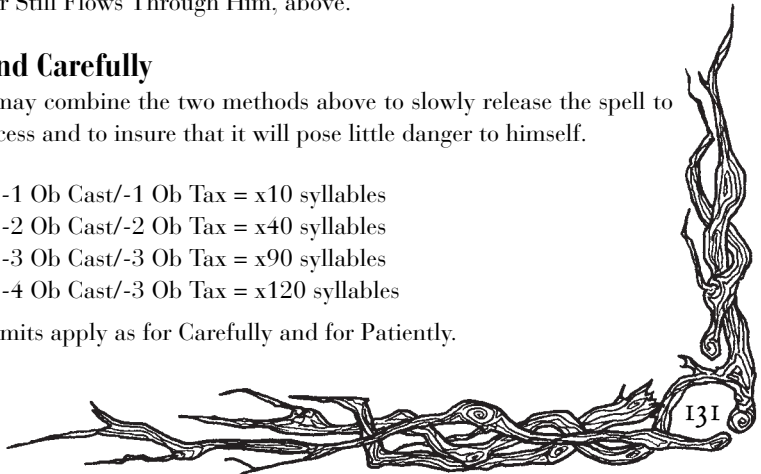
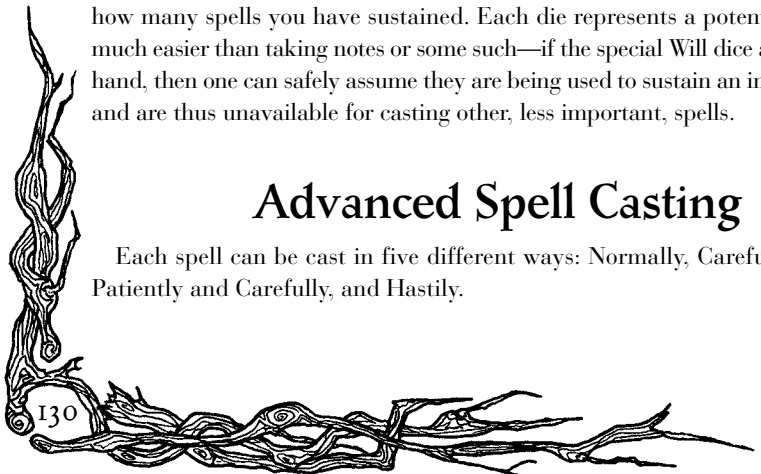
Casting a spell patiently does not lower the obstacle for *sustaining* the spell. See The Power Still Flows Through Him, above.

**Patiently and Carefully**

A sorcerer may combine the two methods above to slowly release the spell to insure his success and to insure that it will pose little danger to himself.

- 1 Ob Cast/-1 Ob Tax = x10 syllables
- 2 Ob Cast/-2 Ob Tax = x40 syllables
- 3 Ob Cast/-3 Ob Tax = x90 syllables
- 4 Ob Cast/-3 Ob Tax = x120 syllables

The same limits apply as for Carefully and for Patiently.



Han wants to cast Mage Light for a Lantern effect (Ob 3, 9 syllables). He has plenty of time so he decides to minimize his risks and cast the spell Patiently and Carefully. The young wizard wants to reduce the Casting and Tax obstacles by -2 to 1—a x40 syllable multiplier.  $9 \times 40 = 360$  syllables (180 Actions/45 Volleys (seconds)/15 Exchanges).

His obstacle to cast the spell at this level is 1, as is his Tax obstacle. Both are easily achieved for a wizard of his caliber.

## Hastily

Hurrying a spell can reduce time but it increases the difficulty of the casting and the chance of making an error. Add +1 Obstacle to the casting for each two syllables extracted from the incantation.

*A spell can never be reduced below half its original syllables.*

- +1 Ob Cast/+0 Ob Tax = -2 syllables
- +2 Ob Cast/+1 Ob Tax = -4 syllables
- +3 Ob Cast/+2 Ob Tax = -6 syllables
- +4 Ob Cast/+3 Ob Tax = -8 syllables

Each level of Casting Hastily reduces the casting time by one action in the script. (2 syllables equals one action.)

*If Han was in a bind and needed his Lantern Light fast he could cast the spell Hastily. The normal time for the spell is 9 syllables or 5 Actions. The young wizard wants that light up pronto, so he casts at Hastily/-4 syllables. That reduces the time to 3 actions/5 syllables and raises the casting to Ob 5 and the Tax obstacle to 4.*

## Coup de Magie

(Pronounced: Coo d' Mahji) A sorcerer may withhold the final syllables of an incantation until he deems them fit to be released. This requires the utmost concentration—the sorcerer must focus all his Will to maintain the pregnant spell. He may hold the Coup de Magie for as many actions equal to his Will exponent. If he still wants to continue to hold the spell after this time, he must make an Ob 1 Will test. Each set of actions that he holds the Coup de Magie raises the obstacle of the concentration test by one.

*With his B5 Will Han can hold Coup de Magie for 5 Actions. After that he has to make an Obstacle 1 concentration test. If he passes he may continue to hold the Coup de Magie for another five actions, after which he must make another*

*Will test at Obstacle 2. This can continue until the wizard finally casts the spell or fails a Will test.*

If the wizard fails the Will test for Coup de Magie, then the spell is lost, but no Tax or Failed Casting test is taken. But if he is “distracted” from Coup de Magie, he suffers full Tax as under Spell Interrupt. See Spell Interrupt for distractions.

## The Clash of Magic

*Nargil felt a tugging at the corner of his eye. He looked up from his reading and saw his Light slowly dimming. Something was coming, something Dark.*

Sorcery is as much science as it is art. Like the science of alchemy, Sorcery has catalysts, reagents, sharp acids and cold bases—a chemistry of reactants that can be set against one another to return the source to a neutral state.

Spells of certain Elements and Impetus can be cast to cancel or diffuse spells of opposing Elements and Impetus.

## Counter-spells

Spells can be cast to attempt to neutralize or overcome an opposing spell. The contest is much like the martial Strike and Block—the sorcerer with the most successes overcomes, but spell's effect is lessened by the defense (or attack) of his opponent.

Roll for the counter-spell as a normal casting. The spell's successes are reduced by the successes of the counter-spell. If this reduces the spell successes below the obstacle, then it is completely negated (but not a Failed Casting). If the counter-spell generates more successes, then its effects overwhelm the opposing spell and are played out as normal—the extra successes over the defeated spell go toward spell Effect and Area.

More than Impetus and Element, what is ultimately being countered is the actual “effect” of the spell. Let common sense reign in these matters.

### Element Opposites

Fire vs Water, White vs Earth, Air vs Fire, Heaven vs Heaven, Arcane vs Arcane, and Anima vs Anima: These are just some of the possibilities. The effects of these combinations are not cut and dried or easily predicted.

### Impetus Opposites

Destroyer vs Creative, Enhancing vs Taxing, Controlling vs Influencing, Influencing vs Influencing, and Controlling vs Controlling.



## Gameplay

Some spells have obvious counters, some do not, and some do not have counters at all. Rainstorm is a counter-spell for Rain of Fire, or even Breath of Fire. Mage Light is always at war with Dark of Night. Persuasion has no real “counter;” it can’t be blocked or cancelled. However, the effects of Persuasion can be “countered” with Persuasion:

*Bad Wizard to warrior: “Drop your sword.”*

*Good Witch to warrior: “Ignore him.”*

*The sword is dropped, but the swordsman should ignore Bad Wizard’s further commands.*



In fact, most spells cannot be countered directly. They must be attacked obliquely, usually by distracting the wizard as he casts or sustains the spell. Levitation, for example, has no counter-spell, but a hunting bow and a leaf head arrow make a fine substitute for one!

### **Timing is tricky**

*As long as the counter-wizard is casting a viable counter-spell, and finishes it in the same volley as the opposing spell, he may attempt to counter.*

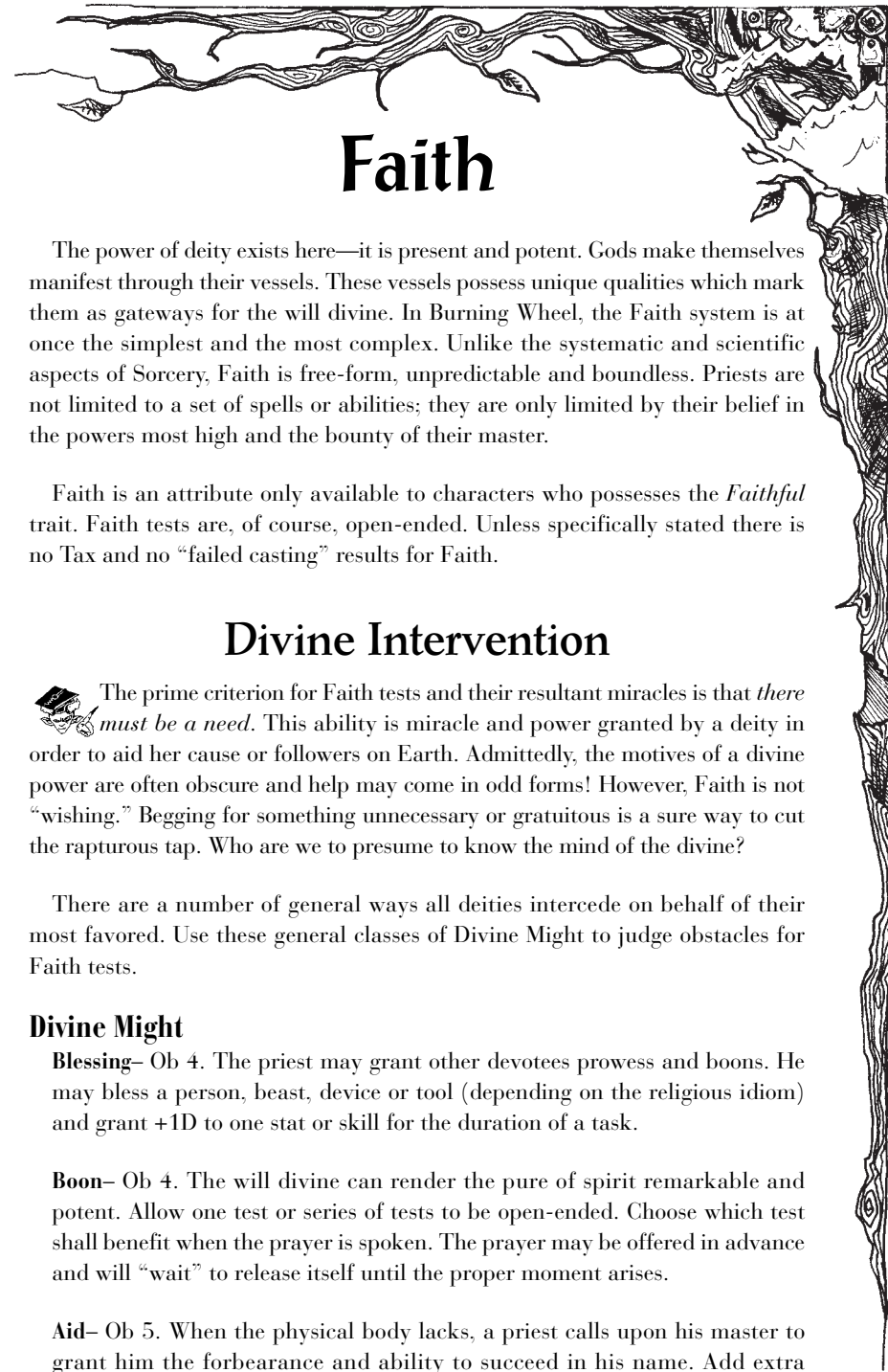
Spells like Rain of Fire, Breath of Wind and White Fire all have sudden and violent instantaneous effects. It is best to think ahead and defend yourself with an Eldritch Shield before engaging an enemy who can summon heaven’s wrath and turn you to pile of ash.

## The Eldritch Shield Spell

This spell grants the wizard the power to erect a magical barrier to block incoming “Damaging/Taxing Effects” magic. This shield deflects spells like White Fire, Breath of Fire, Rain of Fire, Shards, Choking Hand, Lights of Simplex, Emperor’s Hand, Fire Fan and Storm of Lightning. *Each die of the shield negates one die from the incoming spell attack. The shield is reduced by one for each die it deflects.*

### **The Shield Was Blasted Away**

If the Eldritch Shield is knocked down completely (reduced to zero dice) by opposing spells, the witch must make an Ob 2 Tax test. Also, completely losing a Shield while sustaining other spells means the witch must test Will to maintain those spells. If the witch drops the Shield voluntarily there is no additional negative effect.



# Faith

The power of deity exists here—it is present and potent. Gods make themselves manifest through their vessels. These vessels possess unique qualities which mark them as gateways for the will divine. In Burning Wheel, the Faith system is at once the simplest and the most complex. Unlike the systematic and scientific aspects of Sorcery, Faith is free-form, unpredictable and boundless. Priests are not limited to a set of spells or abilities; they are only limited by their belief in the powers most high and the bounty of their master.

Faith is an attribute only available to characters who possess the *Faithful* trait. Faith tests are, of course, open-ended. Unless specifically stated there is no Tax and no “failed casting” results for Faith.

## Divine Intervention



The prime criterion for Faith tests and their resultant miracles is that *there must be a need*. This ability is miracle and power granted by a deity in order to aid her cause or followers on Earth. Admittedly, the motives of a divine power are often obscure and help may come in odd forms! However, Faith is not “wishing.” Begging for something unnecessary or gratuitous is a sure way to cut the rapturous tap. Who are we to presume to know the mind of the divine?

There are a number of general ways all deities intercede on behalf of their most favored. Use these general classes of Divine Might to judge obstacles for Faith tests.

### **Divine Might**

**Blessing**— Ob 4. The priest may grant other devotees prowess and boons. He may bless a person, beast, device or tool (depending on the religious idiom) and grant +1D to one stat or skill for the duration of a task.

**Boon**— Ob 4. The will divine can render the pure of spirit remarkable and potent. Allow one test or series of tests to be open-ended. Choose which test shall benefit when the prayer is spoken. The prayer may be offered in advance and will “wait” to release itself until the proper moment arises.

**Aid**— Ob 5. When the physical body lacks, a priest calls upon his master to grant him the forbearance and ability to succeed in his name. Add extra successes from the Faith test as dice to any *stat* or *Steel* or *Health* test. Choose



what is aided at the time the prayer is spoken. The prayer can be cast in advance and will “wait” to release itself until the proper ability is tested.

**Hindrance**— Ob 4-6. (Obstacle varies depending on the number of foes. Ob 4 for one or two, Ob 5 for three or five, Ob 6 for six to ten.) When the enemies of the Faith rush forward in great mass to overwhelm the faithful, god may raise his hand against them and cause them to stumble, fall or cower.

**Guidance**— Ob 5. When the way is lost, the priest may ask to know the right path.

**Minor Miracle**— Ob 5. When it is dark we pray for light, when it is wet we pray for dry, when something is broken we pray that it be made whole, when something is lost we pray that it be found.

**Purification**— Ob 5. With the touch of his hand, the priest may drive out rot and evil spirits.

**Consecration**— Ob 6. A lengthy prayer to mark a place as holy and sacrosanct—protected from the ill will of spirits and demons. The consecration will bar spirits and demons whose Will is lower than the Faith attribute of the consecrating priest.

**Inspiration**— Ob 7. A priest may call upon her deity for a revelation or knowledge. This is a dangerous prayer, because a divinity knows much and often will reveal that which the priest did not intend to learn.

**Intercession**— Ob 8. This mighty miracle brings the hand of god down to pluck the devotee from danger (or pluck the danger from the devotee).

*A priest is about to be run down by a galloping knight. There is no hope of escape—but miraculously the knight falls from his saddle as he charges! Alternately, a priest is about to be shot down by an assassin—but the murderer’s bow string snaps! Huzzah!*

**Miracle**— Ob 10. When all hope is lost, when the cataclysm has come, we pray for the power divine to manifest and save us. This is the big one—the column of scourging fire, the parting of the seas, the raging storm that destroys the fleet.

### Prayer vs Sorcery

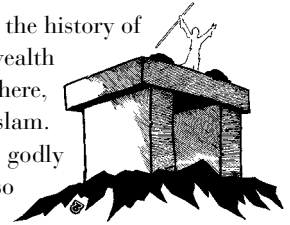
In many instances Faith and the Gift of Sorcery are at odds. In my campaign I allow the Minor Miracle to be used as a “spell-breaker” type prayer. If successfully prayed, the Minor Miracle can strip a wizard of a sustained spell or interrupt/neutralize the casting of a spell in progress.

### A Note on the Idiom of Divine Might



Prayers must be within the idiom of the deity. Don’t pray to the God of the Night for light! And don’t think that the Blood God is going to pity you and tend your wounds on the field. However, most deities are kind to their devotees and will aid them with health, strength and succor when they can—and most are wrathful towards the enemies of their adherents.

When deciding how the powers divine manifest, look to the history of religion and myth for examples. Christianity provides a wealth of outlandish examples for priestly powers. But don’t stop there, Judaism has fantastic legends of divine might, as does Islam. Hinduism has a vivid tapestry of legends concerning the godly intervention in the lives of mortals. Classical mythology also holds many keys to man’s relation to the power divine. The list goes on....



### Prayers and Time

Prayers and supplications take as long as is required to utter the very syllables invoked. *The priest-player must invent and speak the prayer!* After the prayer has been spoken the exact result (and timing) is out of their hands—a higher power takes over.

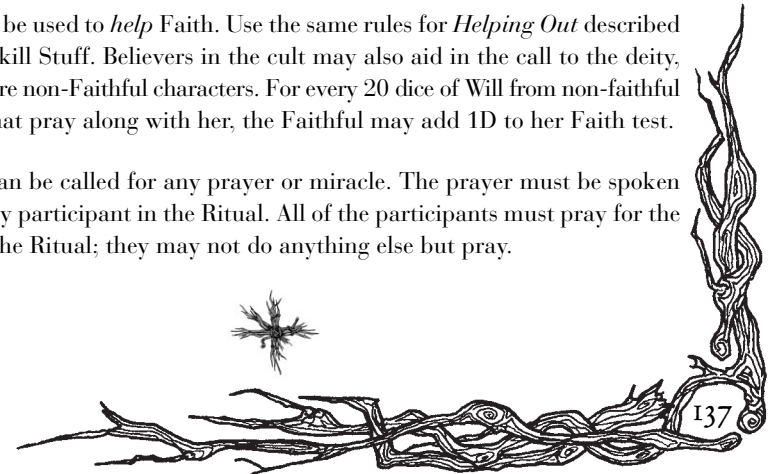
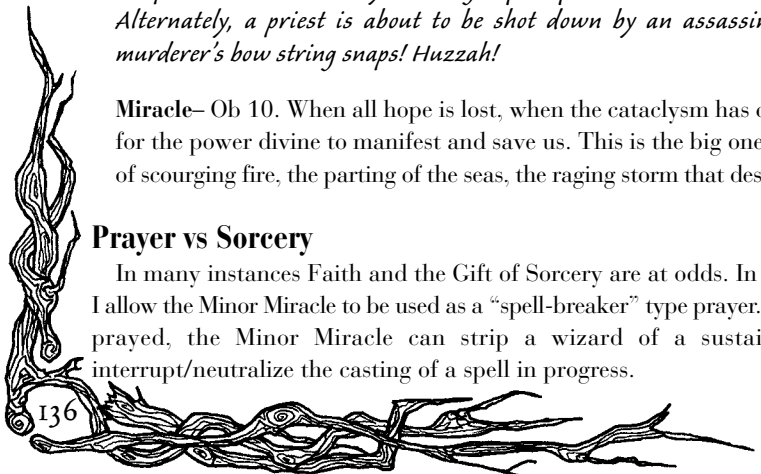
*For example, “Drive this darkness from mine eyes; grant me sight! Let me look upon thine enemies!” The priest’s staff lights with fire as bright as day. The prayer comes in at 19 syllables/10 actions.*

*Prayers are not spells.* They do not cause tax and may *not* be “cast Patiently, Carefully or Hastily.”

## Ritual Prayer

Faith may be used to *help* Faith. Use the same rules for *Helping Out* described under Fun Skill Stuff. Believers in the cult may also aid in the call to the deity, even if they are non-Faithful characters. For every 20 dice of Will from non-faithful characters that pray along with her, the Faithful may add 1D to her Faith test.

A Ritual can be called for any prayer or miracle. The prayer must be spoken once for every participant in the Ritual. All of the participants must pray for the duration of the Ritual; they may not do anything else but pray.





# Expanded Gameplay




Ducunt fata volentem, nolentem trahunt  
*The fates guide him who will, him who won't, they drag.*  
—Seneca

# Obstacle Modifiers for Skills

## Base Obstacle and Up

The base obstacle for any test is 1. Obstacles can never fall below 1. (There is always an exception: In the case of Striking an incapacitated character. Or in the case of acts done without effort, like picking your nose. See Combat Obstacles and I Can Do That without Trying for more on that.) All obstacle penalties/bonuses here are cumulative.


## Certain Assumptions

 Basic skill and stat test obstacles assume a normal or neutral set of conditions. For example, if a character wants to pen a letter with his Calligraphy skill, he needs a scroll or piece of vellum and a brush and a quiet, clean place to write. Without these basics, the test obviously gets a little harder. The Ob 1 for the test assumes that the character meets the necessary conditions to make the test without penalty.

The more outlandish and convoluted the situation becomes, the harder the test—the obstacle goes up. If the character is writing his letter on a leaky ship, during a storm, at night, or with thinned ink because there isn't enough to finish the whole scroll, then the Obstacle for producing a respectable product goes up. (Probably to about 4 or 5).


*Remember, the range of difficulty of tests in Burning Wheel is fixed—an Obstacle 1 test is easy; an Obstacle 8 test is an impossible one. It is more possible for skilled characters to accomplish harder tasks. Do not raise the obstacle of a task because a character has a high skill. The skill of a character never matters when determining the obstacle for a test.*

## A Note on the Inconspicuous Skill and Other Stat-Based Obstacles

 In the case of Inconspicuous, the standard obstacle—the Perception of onlookers—is used whenever the character has a reasonable chance of blending in—the character is dressed in relatively similar clothes to the other people around her, she is not extremely physically different, and is not acting in a non-inconspicuous way (bleeding, limping, flailing, cackling, etc). If any of these

conditions vary from the “norm,” then a modifier is placed on the obstacle for the test, making it harder (or easier) to accomplish the task.

## Why Raise Obstacles?

 Obviously some situations are more complex than others, it follows that skill tests would grow more difficult. For example, it is much easier to make simple shelves with the Carpentry skill than it is to make an armoire.


However, there is another reason. Without higher obstacles, the character's skills, stats and attributes will never improve.

## Tests Without Proper Tools

There is a double obstacle penalty for attempting to complete a task without the proper tools. For example, you can't create boards without a saw. It can be an improvised stone-toothed affair or a nice steel blade, but there has to be something.

Tools can be bought as a kit during character creation. It is assumed the tool kit provides for the needs of the skill and mitigates the double obstacle penalty. In the list that follows the penalty is noted as “x2 Ob.”

## Skill Obstacle Modifiers

 Only a sampling of skills are listed here with modifiers. These modifiers are the standard for the game and the system. Once CMs are familiar with the scale and range of obstacles, they should have no problem judging them on their own.

### Academic Skills

This category includes Research, Symbology, Reading and similar skills.

**Poor Lighting** +1 Ob  
**Decayed Texts** +1-4 Ob

More often than not characters will come upon a text that is in poor condition. Either due to age, wear and tear, fire or water damage, the text is somewhat less legible than it was originally. The obstacle penalty is based on the extent of the damage.

### Anatomy

**Mutilated Viscera** +2 Ob  
Mutilated viscera are harder to identify than intact pieces.

**Artist Skills**

Includes Painter, Sculptor, Illuminations and similar skills.

**Tests without Tools** *x2 Ob*

You can draw pictures in the sand with a stick, but unless you have a brush, some paint and a flat, durable surface you are not going create an eternal masterpiece.

**Calligraphy****Test without Tools** *x2 Ob*

Improper pens, inks and paper incur a double obstacle penalty.

**Craftsman and Artisan Skills**

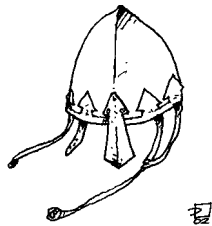
This category includes Blacksmith, Whitesmith, Coppersmith, Mason, Carpentry, Carving, Etching, Jeweler, Lapidary and Engraving.

**Tests without Tools** *x2 Ob*

There is not too much one can do with craftsman skills without the proper tools. By their nature, these arts use tools to manipulate materials: Carpenters uses axes and saws, potters use wheels and kilns, blacksmiths use hammers, tongs and forges. Without these tools, the craftsman is stuck making simple or inferior products.

**Poor Materials** *+1-3 Ob*

Working with poor materials can hinder the craft: Boards snap, pieces shatter and things fall apart. The obstacle penalty for Poor Materials depends on just how bad the materials are.

**Climbing**

<i>Rainy</i>	<i>+1 Ob</i>
<i>Icy</i>	<i>+3 Ob</i>
<i>Twilight</i>	<i>+1 Ob</i>
<i>Torchlight</i>	<i>+2 Ob</i>
<i>Dark</i>	<i>+3 Ob</i>

I think these conditions are fairly self-explanatory. It is a bad idea to climb around in rough weather.

**Firebuilding**

<i>Windy Conditions</i>	<i>+2 Ob</i>
<i>Rainy Conditions/Wet Wood</i>	<i>+2 Ob</i>

*Be all you can be—an adventurer; It's not just an adventure it's a job; It is very cold and very wet and I wish this damn fire would start!*

**Inconspicuous**

Inconspicuous works best when the character looks just like everyone else.

<i>Different Race</i>	<i>+2 Ob</i>
<i>Same Race, Different Region</i>	<i>+1 Ob</i>
<i>Garish or Inappropriate Clothing</i>	<i>+1 Ob</i>
<i>Obvious Identifying Mark or Feature</i>	<i>+2 Ob</i>

There are so many things that can go wrong when being inconspicuous. But when it goes right no one notices just how slick you are.

**Knots**

<i>Wet Ropes</i>	<i>+1 Ob</i>
<i>Frayed Ropes</i>	<i>+1 Ob</i>
<i>Icy Ropes</i>	<i>+2 Ob</i>

**Martial Skills**

Boxing, Brawling, martial arts and weapon skills have their own section of obstacle modifiers. See the following section, Combat Obstacle Modifiers.

**Medicinal Skills**

This category includes the Herbalism, Surgery and Field Dressing skills.

**Tests without Tools** *x2 Ob*

Wounds can be tended with rags and a bottle of whisky, but the process is immeasurably easier with a sharp knife, clean cloth, needles, thread, boiling water and a leather strap for the victim to bite down on.

**Horrible Conditions** *+2 Ob*

Cleaning someone's wounds in the rain, in the mud, in the snow, on a sinking ship, in the middle of a fire, or during a raging battle.

**Musical and Performance Skills****Distracting Conditions** *+1 Ob*

Performance requires concentration. Playing in a town square full of bustling business and screaming vendors is not as easy as it sounds.

**Inferior Instruments** *+1 Ob*

It's hard to make your fugue sound masterful when your organ's pipes are bad.

**Navigation**

<i>Stormy weather</i>	<i>+2 Ob</i>
<i>Cloudy weather</i>	<i>+1 Ob</i>
<i>Tests without Tools</i>	<i>x2 Ob</i>
<i>Uncharted Waters</i>	<i>+1 Ob</i>
<i>Out of Sight of Shore</i>	<i>+1 Ob</i>

Navigating is a tricky business. It is always a fine balance of knowledge, experience and luck. It is all too easy for the balance to be thrown off and the ship to be lost.

**Observation vs Stealth**

<i>Rainy</i>	+1 Ob
<i>Windy</i>	+1 Ob
<i>Foggy</i>	+2 Ob
<i>Dark</i>	+2 Ob
<i>Twilight/Dawn</i>	+1 Ob
<i>Torchlight (Dim Flickering Light)</i>	+1 Ob
<i>Noisy</i>	+1 Ob

These are the penalties for Observers attempting to spot Stealthy Characters.

*Ranger Max rolls his Stealth skill vs Nine Finger's Observation/Perception. Max rolls one success. It is a Foggy afternoon thus Nine Finger needs to get four successes to spot the Max: 1 for Max's Stealth, 2 because it is Foggy, and one more because Nine Finger must get more successes than Max to win the Versus test.*

**Orienteering**

<i>Unfamiliar Territory</i>	+2 Ob
<i>Bad Weather</i>	+1 Ob
<i>Night or Darkness</i>	+2 Ob

The Unfamiliar Territory modifier is not for going someplace that a character has never been before, but for being in a type of land he is unaccustomed to. For example a character who grew up in the desert suddenly finds himself wandering a large, dark forest; he knows the principles of finding his way around, but is disoriented by the big slabs of wood blocking the horizon line.

**Perception**

<i>Spotting "Stealthy" Characters</i>	+2 Ob
<i>Spotting "Inconspicuous" Characters</i>	+2 Ob

Characters without Observation Training suffer a double obstacle penalty when trying to spot other characters who are using Stealthy or Inconspicuous. Use the Observation penalties for additional modifiers.

**Riding**

See Riding the Beast in Expanded Gameplay.

**Rigging**

<i>Stormy Weather</i>	+2 Ob
<i>Icy Weather</i>	+3 Ob
<i>Tangled, Frayed Rigging</i>	+1 Ob
<i>Clean/Supple Rigging</i>	-1 Ob

The "Clean/Supple Rigging" bonus is for sailing ships that are maintained particularly well with top-quality materials.

**Social Skills**

These modifiers cover the Hagglng, Oratory, Persuasion and Seduction skills.

<i>Openly Hostile</i>	+2 Ob
<i>Openly Friendly</i>	-2 Ob
<i>Suspicious</i>	+1 Ob
<i>Trusting or Gullible</i>	-1 Ob
<i>Stubborn or Ornerly</i>	+1 Ob
<i>Language Barrier</i>	+2 Ob
<i>Semi-fluent Language</i>	+2 Ob

Social skills obstacles are based on the target's Will. The "Stubborn/Ornerly" modifier should be used for most traits that would make it harder for the target to be convinced. Alternately, the Trusting/Gullible modifier should be used for Traits that would make it easier for the target to be convinced.

**Stealthy**

<i>Twilight/Dawn light</i>	See Observation Obstacle Penalties
<i>Torchlight</i>	See Observation Obstacle Penalties
<i>Dark</i>	See Observation Obstacle Penalties
<i>Windy</i>	See Observation Obstacle Penalties
<i>Noisy</i>	See Observation Obstacle Penalties
<i>Rainy</i>	See Observation Obstacle Penalties
<i>Foggy</i>	See Observation Obstacle Penalties

The above conditions have no effect on the Stealthy skill per se, rather they are *penalties* for Observation or Perception. See Observation vs Stealthy.

Listed below are Stealthy penalties.

<i>Open Ground</i>	+1 Ob
<i>Bright Light</i>	+1 Ob
<i>Quiet Area</i>	+1 Ob
<i>Dry Leaves on the Ground:</i>	+2 Ob

*Ranger Max wishes to quietly crosses a courtyard (Open Ground). His Obstacle is 2—base Ob 1, +1 for the Open Ground.*

**Swimming**

<i>Swimming after Eating</i>	+1 Ob
<i>Rough Seas/Swift River</i>	+2 Ob
<i>Stormy Seas</i>	+4 Ob

Don't swim during the dawn or twilight hours. Never swim alone. Swimming the Channel is tough but doable, and it is as much Forte as anything else.



# Combat Obstacle Modifiers

## Ranged Weapons Combat Modifiers

### Called Shots in Shooting

It is possible to designate a specific area of the body as the main target of a shot. In general, when firing at a human target, it is assumed that all shots are directed at the chest or head, all other hits are essentially near misses. When you want to specify a location on the body use these obstacle modifiers:

<b>Heads</b>	<b>+3 Ob</b>
<b>Hands, Feet and Knees</b>	<b>+4 Ob</b>
<b>Arms or Legs</b>	<b>+1 Ob</b>

If a character misses due to the called shot penalty, then the shot completely misses. If the attacker hits with a called shot, the damage affects the immediate area. Armor dice, if any, are only rolled for the specific location "called."

### Cover from Shooting

<b>Minimal cover</b>	<b>+1 Ob</b>
<b>Partial cover</b>	<b>+2 Ob</b>
<b>Full Cover</b>	<b>+3 Ob</b>

#### **Firing from Full Cover** **+1 Ob**

In most circumstances firing from a full cover position is awkward and incurs a +1 Ob penalty to hit.

#### **Firing through Cover** **+3 Ob**

Firing at the covered parts of a partially exposed target is a +3 Ob penalty to hit the target. See the Materials Mechanics section for more information about shooting *through*.

#### **Chameleon** **see description**

When shooting a target that is "Chameleon" concealed add the number of Chameleon successes to the shooter's obstacle. Use this penalty for attackers who have detected a target even if they cannot completely see it. To see cloaked targets, characters must make a successful Perception test.

#### **Blindfire** **see description**

When firing at targets whose location is unknown...you miss. If the GM determines that there is a remote possibility that you might hit, then cast a Die of Fate. If the DOF comes up a 1, then you have waved your bow in the

right direction and managed to hit the target as normal. There is a -1 penalty to the DOF damage roll.

Firing at target without looking—one that you know is there—incurs a +6 Ob penalty. (Sticking your crossbow out from cover and firing at oncoming baddies.)

### Firing Stance

**Standing** —  
Standard attack position. No modifier.

**Crouched, Kneeling** **see description**  
Shooting at a target who is crouching or kneeling is a +1 penalty to the attacker if the target is beyond five paces. Moving in a crouch: Walk at .75 x Speed. Jog at 1.5 x Speed. No sprint possible while crouching.

**Prone** **see description**  
Falling prone requires one action. Lying prone offers +1 Ob of cover at 10 paces and +2 cover beyond 20 paces, even if the character is in the open. Characters can crawl on elbows and knees at half walk Speed. The Prone modifier is not combined with other cover. It is assumed that a character normally does what ever necessary to best use cover, this includes laying prone (even if the player doesn't explicitly state it.)

### Movement Penalties

Movement penalties apply to the character who is moving. If both characters are moving, then the penalty is applied twice.

#### **Walking** **+1 Ob**

There is a +1 Ob penalty for shooting while walking. Attacker may stop and fire and then proceed after shooting in order to reduce penalties. This process is dictated through the script.

#### **Jogging** **see description**

It is +3 Ob to shoot while you are jogging. The penalty to hit a jogger is equal to 1/2 their Speed stat rounded up. Thus it is +2 Ob to hit a jogger with B4 speed, and it is a +4 Ob to hit a jogger with a B7 speed.

#### **Sprinting** **see description**

Sprinting demands the character's full attention. The obstacle penalty for firing on the sprinting character is equal to the character's Speed exponent. Thus it is +3 Ob to shoot at a target sprinting with B3 speed, but it is +6 Ob to shoot at a sprinter with B6 speed.

Shooting *while* sprinting incurs a +4 Obstacle modifier.

#### **"He's coming right for us!" Notes on Movement Modifiers**

The obstacle modifiers for firing on a jogger or sprinter only count if the target is moving across the line of fire. If the target is moving directly toward or away from the attacker the modifier is only +1 Ob.

## Range Modifiers

**Pointblank** -2 Ob

Missile weapons are listed with Pointblank range. When firing at a target at that range the shooter gets a -2 Ob bonus.

If the target is under that pointblank range, then they are too close to hit easily. The shooter incurs a +4 Ob penalty.

**Short, Medium and Long range** 0, +2, +4 Ob

Each weapon has designated ranges. The farther away a target is the harder it is to hit.

## Targeting Modifiers

**Aim** -1 Ob per action aimed

After acquiring a target an attacker may choose to Aim in order reduce the Ob. For each action the character spends Aiming they receive a -1 Ob bonus. A character may only aim as many actions as half his Perception exponent. A character cannot aim at a place where a target *will* be and receive any bonus.

**Snapshot** +3 Ob

If a character fires at an unacquired target, he has a +3 Ob penalty for the shooting skill test. If the character persists firing at the unacquired target, the penalty drops by one for each shot after the first. If the attacker acquires the target, then the penalty is removed entirely.

**Superior Position** see description

Shooters firing from elevated positions receive a special range modifier to their obstacle. -1 Ob to the range mods for 5-10 paces of elevation above target, -2 Ob for 11+ paces above target. This only applies to Ob penalties for range.

**Wee Folk** +1-6 Ob

Attacking a small target like a faerie is difficult. The smaller the little munchkin the higher the penalty. The smallest pixies incur a +6 penalty while the bigger leprechauns can be targeted at a +1 penalty.

## Visibility Conditions

**Visibility dim** +1 Ob

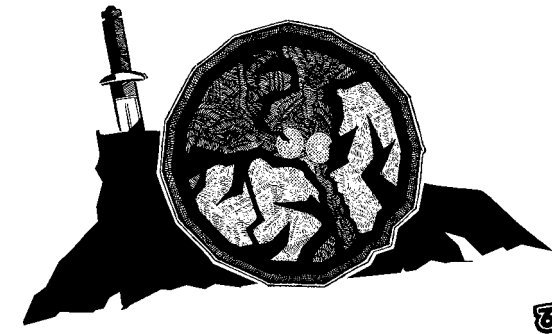
Twilight, street lamp light, poorly lit interiors and rain incur a +1 Ob modifier for all shooting tests.

**Visibility hazy** +2 Ob

Smoke, mist, fog, heavy rain or moonlit darkness causes a +2 Ob penalty to shooting.

**Visibility obscured** +4 Ob

Darkness, thick fog, torrential rain, smoke: +4 Ob penalty to shooting.



## Melee Modifiers and Notes

## Getting Knocked Down

It requires two actions to get back on your feet. During the second of those two actions you may “scramble move” equal to your walk rating.

**Attacking from the ground** +4 Ob

Unless otherwise noted you may not keep a stance while on the ground. This penalty is for a character Striking at a standing foe. If both characters are down, the situation is slightly different: The character on his back is +2 Ob, the character on top is +1 Ob. Of course, if a character is on his stomach (or face) then the +4 Ob still applies.

## Striking Distance

**Lunging** +1 Ob

Striking at just “outside” your striking distance is +1 Ob.

**Attacking from Inside (Striking Distance)**

Pole Weapons, Two-Handed Axes	+4 Ob
Swords, Axes, Clubs	+3 Ob
Small Swords	+2 Ob
Hilt/Butt Smash	+1 Ob
Knives, Daggers	No Penalty
Fists	No Penalty

## Movement Modifiers

**Walk/Skip** —

Taking a quick sidestep in the press can sometimes save your life. A character can move his walk speed in a volley without penalty to him or his attacker.

**Jog/Dash****special**

Moving in the melee is essential to staying alive. Characters vie for position while staying out of their opponent’s range. The penalty to hit a dasher in

## Expanded Gameplay

melee is equal to 1/4 his Speed. A character who is dashing incurs a +1 Ob penalty to his own tests in the volleys he is dash-moving.

### *Sprint*

### *special*

Sprinting demands the character's full attention. The penalty to hit a sprinter in melee is equal to 1/2 their speed. A character who is sprinting is a +4 Ob penalty for all melee maneuvers except Charge/Tackle. Charging is not penalized for sprinting.

## Called Shots

### *Called Shots in Bare-fisted Combat*

There are no penalties for making "called shots" in barefisted combat. If your opponent is wearing a metal breastplate and you don't try to punch him in the face, then you are an idiot.

As long as the areas being attacked are reasonably exposed there are no called shot modifiers. However, if your opponent is covered to a near complete degree and you are trying to punch him in the hand or eye there is +3 Ob called shot penalty. Or if your opponent is wearing a helmet and you are trying to punch him in the face there is a +1 Ob penalty. Yes, this rule is specifically designed to screw players.

### *Called Shots in Armed Melee Combat*

Head	+2 Ob
Arms, Legs	+1 Ob
Eyeballs, Earballs	+3 Ob

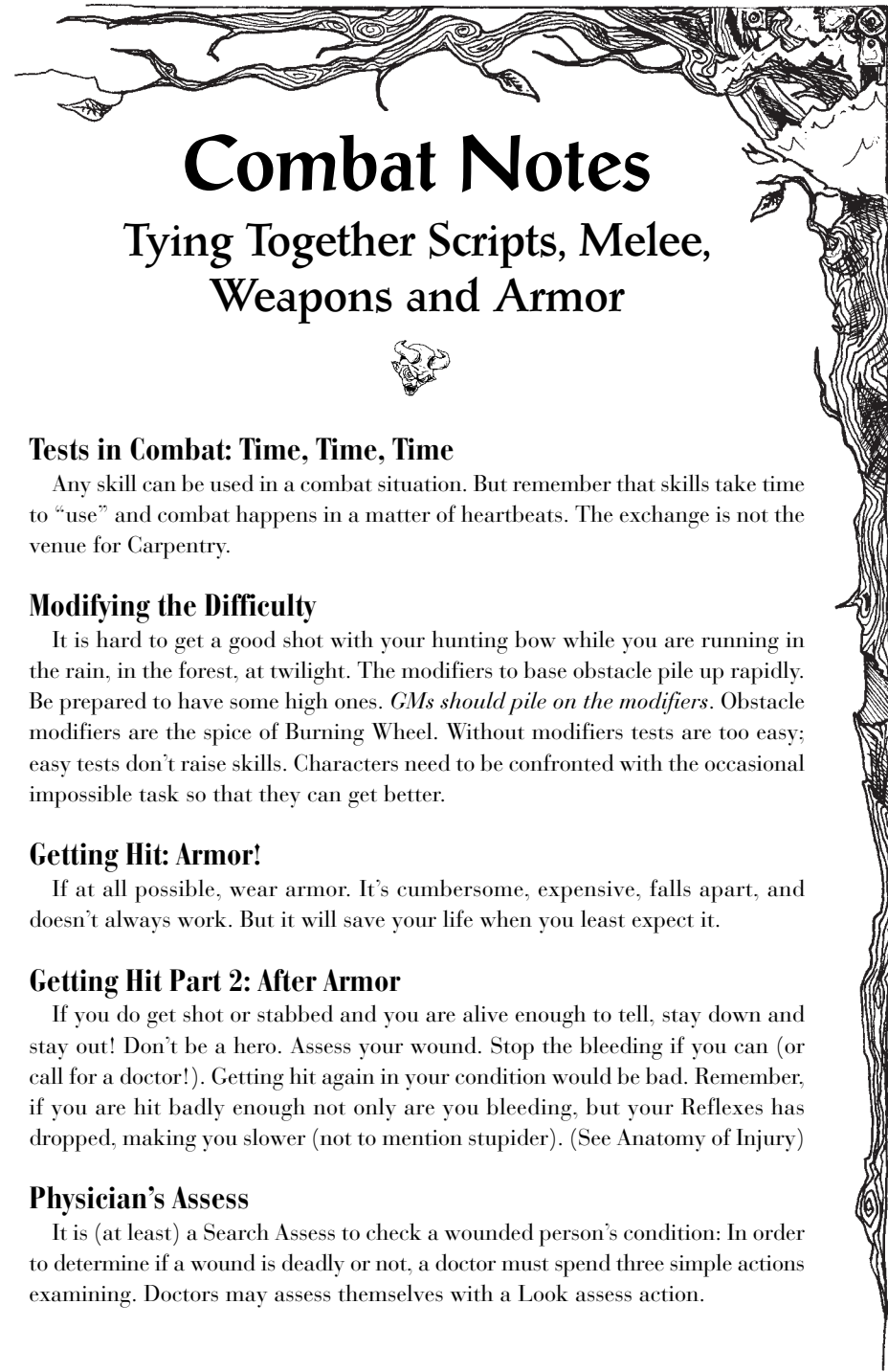
It is harder to wick someone's head off with a sword than it is to punch them in the jaw. For that reason melee weapons and the like have a small called shot modifier.

### *Telegraphing*

Since the armored goon can usually tell that the bare-knuckled bruiser is going to try to punch him in the eye rather than in his spiky codpiece, the defender gets a -1 Ob bonus to Block, Counter, and Avoid called shots.

## 0 Obstacle

There is no obstacle for Striking a target or opponent that is unable to defend himself. Unconscious, restrained or otherwise unaware is considered "unable to defend themselves." What this means is: No successes still misses, one success is an Incidental hit, successes equal to the weapon's Add is a Mark result, successes equal to twice the weapon's add is a Superb result. Surprised opponents are not considered to be 0 Obstacle.



# Combat Notes

## Tying Together Scripts, Melee, Weapons and Armor



### Tests in Combat: Time, Time, Time

Any skill can be used in a combat situation. But remember that skills take time to "use" and combat happens in a matter of heartbeats. The exchange is not the venue for Carpentry.

### Modifying the Difficulty

It is hard to get a good shot with your hunting bow while you are running in the rain, in the forest, at twilight. The modifiers to base obstacle pile up rapidly. Be prepared to have some high ones. *GMs should pile on the modifiers.* Obstacle modifiers are the spice of Burning Wheel. Without modifiers tests are too easy; easy tests don't raise skills. Characters need to be confronted with the occasional impossible task so that they can get better.

### Getting Hit: Armor!

If at all possible, wear armor. It's cumbersome, expensive, falls apart, and doesn't always work. But it will save your life when you least expect it.

### Getting Hit Part 2: After Armor

If you do get shot or stabbed and you are alive enough to tell, stay down and stay out! Don't be a hero. Assess your wound. Stop the bleeding if you can (or call for a doctor!). Getting hit again in your condition would be bad. Remember, if you are hit badly enough not only are you bleeding, but your Reflexes has dropped, making you slower (not to mention stupider). (See Anatomy of Injury)

### Physician's Assess

It is (at least) a Search Assess to check a wounded person's condition: In order to determine if a wound is deadly or not, a doctor must spend three simple actions examining. Doctors may assess themselves with a Look assess action.

## Expanded Gameplay

### Not Getting Hit: A New Era

If swords must be brought into play, then don't get hit. Getting stabbed sucks. You'll be out for months. Duck and Weave! Moving during the exchange raises your opponent's obstacles.

### Momentum vs Inertia

Horses, coaches, and other beasts move great distances in short amounts of time. A knightly charge into combat can be devastating. They can be on top of you before you can say, "Lance."

## Take Cover!



Act like a normal person when the arrows start to fly. Don't stand in the middle of the field screaming at the archers. Get yourself some cover. Cover works. Cover will protect you. Cover is what normal people look for when arrows threaten to eat their heart. *You will die standing out there.*

## Armor vs Called Shots

*Getting hit by a "called shot" in a specific location bypasses the general Protection dice.* The defender is only allowed to roll for the armor in the specific location being struck:

Called Shot	Armor Dice Rolled by Defender
Head Shot	1D for Helmet, +1D for Mask
Face/Neck Shot	1D for Mask
Arm Shot	1D for Arm, +1D for Gloves/Gauntlets
Hand Shot	1D for Glove/Gauntlet
Leg Shot	1D for Leggings, +1D for Armored Boot
Foot Shot	1D for Armored Boot.

## Combat Space



When scripting an exchange, it is important to determine the general distance between the combatants. Are the opponents nose to nose? Are they circling just out of reach? Or are they across the street from each other. This simple detail will dictate the initial actions of each combatant: Do I charge him now? Do I draw my sword and advance? Do I Get Inside? Do I run? All very important questions.

## Combat: tying together Scripts, Melee, Weapons and Armor

In Burning Wheel there are three combat distances, at which characters can attack one another in a melee; *striking distance*, *Outside striking distance* and *Inside striking distance*.

### Striking Distance

Combatants are in striking distance when they cross swords and attempt to cut each other down with Strike and Counterstrike. There is no inherent modifier for attacking someone in striking distance.

*A character's striking is distance extends from his hand to the tip of his weapon, usually about one or two paces.* Pole weapons have a longer reach than swords, axes and clubs; they increase striking distance by one pace. Also, certain traits can increase a character's striking distance, such as Long of Limb and Massive Stature.

### Outside (Striking Distance)

When a character must extend his body to reach a target, that target is considered to be Outside striking distance. This is usually *more than two paces from the character*.

Pole weapons increase a character's Outside range by a pace.

*Attacking at the Outside range is modified by the +1 Ob Lunge penalty.*

### Inside (Striking Distance)

The "Get Inside" action takes a character into this range. This is when two opponents are in contact in some manner, by hands, arms, legs or even body to body—too close to use swords, axes, spears, etc in their traditional manner. *Short stabbing or smashing weapons are more effective Inside*, as opposed to pole weapons which are more effective attacking at long distance and useless Inside.

Being Inside striking distance, while limiting some actions, opens up a wide variety of other options (See Martial Actions in Melee Mechanics).

*Once Inside, there are no called shot penalties for weapons.* However certain weapons are penalized due to their unwieldiness at close quarters:

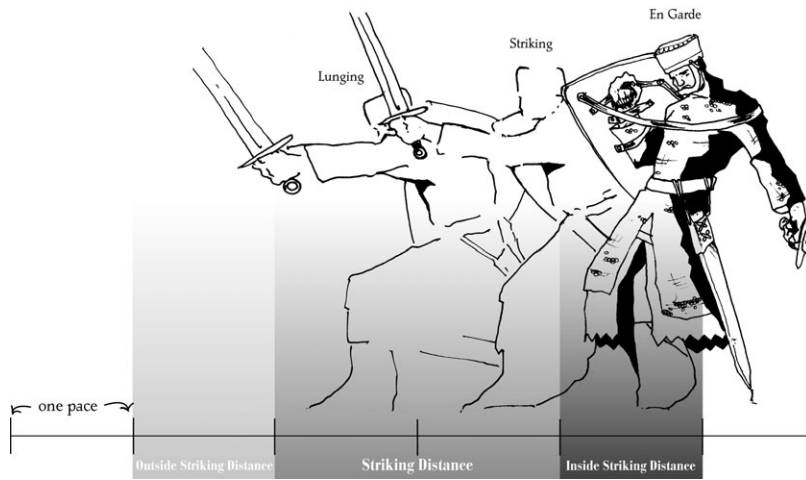
#### On the Inside:

Pole Weapons, Two Handed Axes	+4 Ob
Swords, Axes, Clubs	+3 Ob
Small Swords	+2 Ob
Hilt/Butt Strike	+1 Ob
Knives, Daggers	No Penalty
Fists	No Penalty



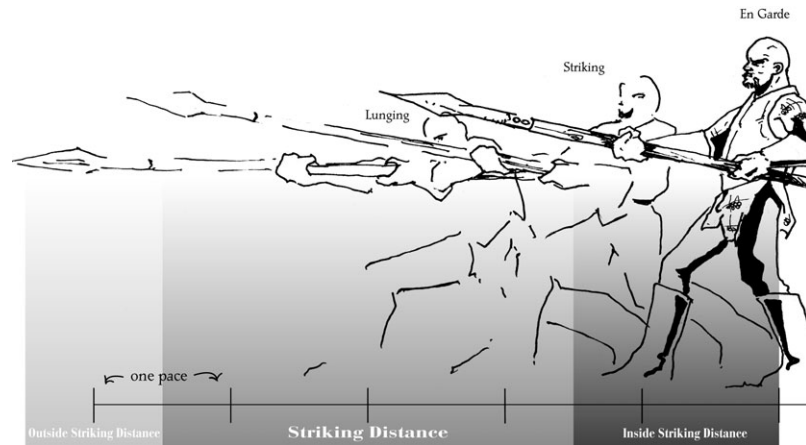
## Expanded Gameplay

### Illustration of Sword Fighting Distances



The swordsman depicted here has a Striking distance of 1-2 paces. His Outside striking distance is 3 paces from him. Opponents inside one pace of his reach are considered Inside Striking Distance.

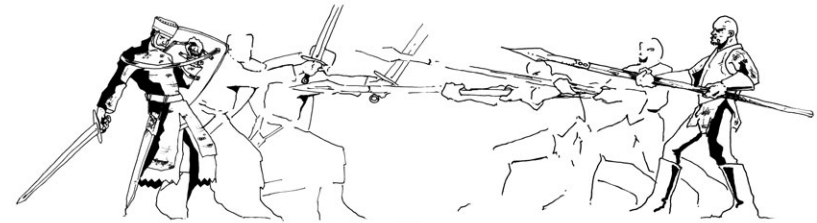
### Illustration of Spear/Pole Weapon Fighting Distances



The spearman depicted here has a striking distance of 1.5 to 3 paces. A long reach. His Outside striking distance is 4 paces from him. Opponents inside one and a half paces of his reach are considered Inside striking distance (and are trouble!).

## Combat: tying together Scripts, Melee, Weapons and Armor

### Illustration of why I would rather have a spear than a sword



The contest above illustrates the danger of meeting a trained spearman when unprepared. Essentially, the swordsman can only attack if the spearman lets him. This situation is very difficult for an aggressor swordsman. Using his actions wisely, the spearman can retreat, keeping his opponent at the spear's Outside striking distance, slashing at him with the bladed tip.

#### Spearman

- 1- Strike Swordsman
- 2- Strike Swordsman

"Hah!"

Actions/Speech

dash/retreat  
movement

#### Swordsman

- 1- Shield block
- 2- Strike Spearman

"Bastard!"

Actions/Speech

dash forward  
movement

The swordsman hopes to advance into his own striking distance by use of his Speed and hack down the spearman, but it is unlikely he will get a clean shot.


The swordsman dashes (+1 Ob penalty) forward (2 paces) and Blocks then Strikes. The spearman dashes (+1 Ob) back (2 paces) and Strikes and Strikes (with a +1 Ob Lunge penalty). Looking at both movement actions for the characters, it is easy to see that the spearman keeps the swordsman out of striking distance while giving him two good whacks. Even though the spearman's Obstacle is 4 (Base 1 plus both characters are dash moving (+1,+1) and he is attacking at Outside striking distance (+1)) it is likely that he will inflict Incidental hits on the swordsman.



## Expanded Gameplay

Sometimes the best answer is a crossbow.


### A Final Note on Combat Space

 The combat space details are not at all necessary to running a successful combat. They can be ignored completely and the game will run just fine. They are provided here to lend another level of detail to the drama of combat.

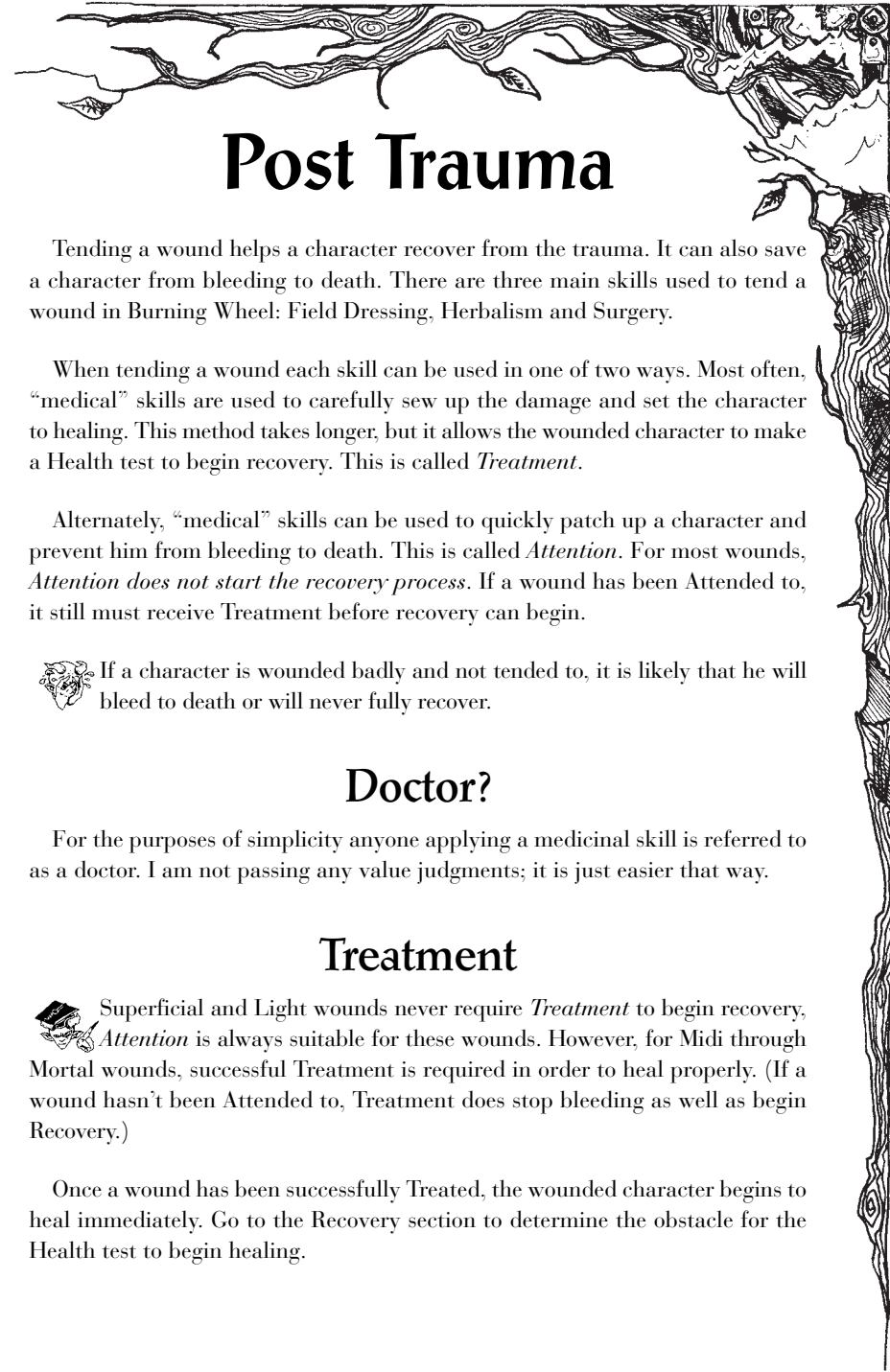
Despite what it may look like it is not vital to keep track of every pace of every movement and the exact attack distances of every opponent. In most situations folks are going to move into striking distance and go at it. To use these rules effectively just keep a mental picture of the combat in your head, a general location of where everyone is. A player will inevitably tell the GM when he is trying to disengage from combat and when he is trying to get in close. That is the time to consult the striking distances rules.

## Movement in Combat

Movement happens over the course of a volley, and thus a “single move” usually extends over multiple actions. The actions take place in the span of time it takes a character to get from “here” to “there.” Usually, the first action falls as they start to move and their second comes at the end of their movement. Allow characters some leeway in plotting their move/action combos.

 What is “in striking distance” for a character is determined by his location, not his movement. Striking distance is constant from a fixed point, the body. A character can move to put himself in better position to strike, but he cannot move and extend his striking distance.

When a character is striking he is considered to be extending and recoiling his body as needed for the blow. And when he is lunging he is deemed to be reaching out to full extension to land the blow. These are not considered “movement” within the rules.




## Post Trauma

Tending a wound helps a character recover from the trauma. It can also save a character from bleeding to death. There are three main skills used to tend a wound in Burning Wheel: Field Dressing, Herbalism and Surgery.

When tending a wound each skill can be used in one of two ways. Most often, “medical” skills are used to carefully sew up the damage and set the character to healing. This method takes longer, but it allows the wounded character to make a Health test to begin recovery. This is called *Treatment*.


Alternately, “medical” skills can be used to quickly patch up a character and prevent him from bleeding to death. This is called *Attention*. For most wounds, *Attention does not start the recovery process*. If a wound has been Attended to, it still must receive *Treatment* before recovery can begin.

 If a character is wounded badly and not tended to, it is likely that he will bleed to death or will never fully recover.

## Doctor?

For the purposes of simplicity anyone applying a medicinal skill is referred to as a doctor. I am not passing any value judgments; it is just easier that way.

## Treatment

 Superficial and Light wounds never require *Treatment* to begin recovery, *Attention* is always suitable for these wounds. However, for Midi through Mortal wounds, successful *Treatment* is required in order to heal properly. (If a wound hasn't been Attended to, *Treatment* does stop bleeding as well as begin Recovery.)

Once a wound has been successfully Treated, the wounded character begins to heal immediately. Go to the Recovery section to determine the obstacle for the Health test to begin healing.

## Attention

### Superficial Wounds

Since Superficial wounds are really nothing more than scrapes and bruises, successful *Attention* to a Superficial wound removes the +1 DN modifier.

### Light Wounds

The cuts, tears and hard knocks of Light wounds can also be taken care of with simple *Attention*. Successful *Attention* to a Light wound reduces the +2 DN modifier to +1 DN as soon as the doctor finishes administering aid. However, the remaining +1 DN must be healed following the normal Recovery rules. (See below.)

### Midi through Mortal

Successfully tending to a Midi through Mortal wound using *Attention* stops the wound from bleeding to the next level on the blood clock. *It does not heal the wound nor does it allow the recovery process to begin.*

## Band-aids for Boobos:

### Obstacles for Treatment and Attention

#### Skill Tested

Type of Wound	Unskilled		Field Dressing		Herbalism		Surgery	
	Treat	Attend	Treat	Attend	Treat	Attend	Treat	Attend
	Obstacle		Obstacle		Obstacle		Obstacle	
Superficial	N/A	2	N/A	1	N/A	1	N/A	1
Light	N/A	3	N/A	2	N/A	2	N/A	1
Midi	5	4	4	3	4	3	3	-
Severe	-	6	-	4	5	4	4	-
Traumatic	-	8	-	6	6	5	5	-
Mortal	-	10	-	10	10	6	8	-

Field Dressing is a rough soldier's skill that focuses more on stopping the bleeding and splinting shattered limbs than it does on long-term goals like recovery and Health tests. Hence, Field Dressing cannot even *Treat* Severe, Traumatic or Mortal wounds.

Herbalism is a broad and useful skill that encompasses not only herbal remedies and concoctions, but a good deal of common sense "first aid." Herbalism is also suited to *Treating* the harsher wounds and preparing a character to recover.

Surgery is a professional and academic medical skill. Surgeons only bother with *Attention* for the most minor wounds, all others are *Treated* with care and precision.

Folks with no skill can attempt to use some common sense and good luck to patch up their friends. Rather than apply a double obstacle penalty to characters with no skill, use the Unskilled column of the preceding chart to determine obstacles.

## Treatment and Attention Time

The time listed below is the amount of time a doctor needs to tend the wound.

- *Unskilled or Field Dressing* Treatment requires 10 minutes per obstacle number. Thus a Midi wound requires 40 minutes for Field Dressing to Treat.
- *Unskilled or Field Dressing* Attention requires 5 minutes per obstacle number. Thus it takes 15 minutes for a character with no skill to Attend to a Light wound.
- *Herbalism* requires 15 minutes for Treatment and 10 minutes for Attention per obstacle point.
- *Surgery* requires 20 minutes for Treatment and 10 minutes for Attention per obstacle point.


*A surgeon treating a Severe wound (Ob 4); needs 120 minutes (20 minutes x Ob 4) to sew the guts back in.*

### Minimum Treatment and Attention Time

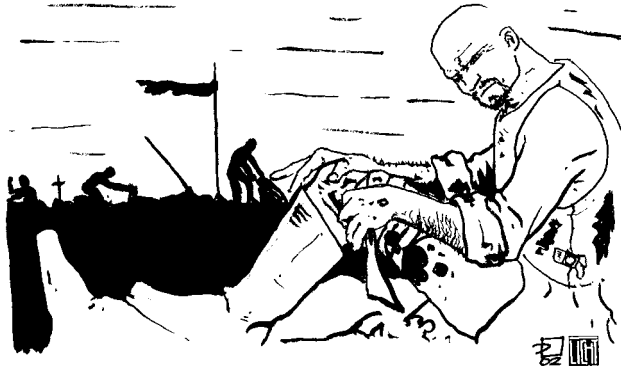
The minimum time required to Treat or Attend a wound is 10% of the maximum time for the wound. Thus the minimum time for a surgeon to Treat a Severe wound is 12 minutes (120 minutes is the max time, 10% of that is 12 minutes).

### Tending the Bleeding as the Blood Clock Runs Down

Wounds are tended on a one-to-one basis. If a character has twelve Superficial wounds, she must be "treated" twelve times. If a character is being treated for a bleeding wound, the Blood Clock stops as soon as a successful test is made.

 This does not mean that *all* wounds the character has suffered stop bleeding. Only the wound being tended stops bleeding. Thus, if a character has taken a Severe and a Traumatic wound and the doctor treats the Traumatic first, the Severe wound could progress to Traumatic and onward before the doctor can properly treat the victim. As you can see, it gets messy.

(Alternately, you can use the more “realistic” meanie rule where the wound does not stop bleeding until the doctor has finished attending to the wound.)



## Working Carefully, Diligently, Quickly with Medicinal Skills

When testing the Herbalism, Surgery or Field Dressing skill to tend to wounded character, the doctor can use the standard options for skill tests: Working Carefully, Diligently or Quickly. Carefully and Quickly modify time following the standard rules, but Working Diligently is slightly different:

- Working Diligently reduces the wounded character’s Health test obstacle for recovery by one for every two Diligently applied successes.

*Palgi and Vega are on the run, hunted by the Prince’s guard. Vega was wounded badly in their last skirmish, and his condition is slowing them down. So Palgi ducks into the stalks of a sorghum field and tries to tend his friend’s wounds. Vega has a Superficial (+1DN), a Light (+2DN) and a Midi wound (-1D) for a -2D total. Palgi has a B4 Field Dressing skill. He starts the treatment by bandaging the cut above Vega’s eye, the Superficial wound. It is an Ob 1 test, he rolls 2 successes. The extra success goes into reducing time (10% per success) to 9 minutes. Then Palgi removes the splinters and metal shards from Vega’s shoulder, the Light wound. It is an Obstacle 2 test, and he rolls 4 successes! The two extra successes go into time, reducing the Treatment Time for that wound from 15 to 12 minutes. Thus far 21 minutes have passed, Palgi can hear the Prince’s men searching the far side of the field—they’ll be upon them soon. He quickly assesses his friend’s cracked and bruised ribs and realizes that there isn’t time to deal with such a wound—his old friend will have to suffer.*

*However, Palgi’s ministrations have reduced Vega’s wounded die penalties from -2 dice to -1D for the Midi and +1 DN for the “attended” to Light wound. Much better than -2 dice!*

*If Palgi had more time he could have put his extra successes toward helping Vega heal faster. When he tended to Vega’s Light wound he could have put his two extra successes into Working Diligently. This would have reduced Vega’s Health test obstacle for recovery by one.*

## Helping the Doctor

Medical skills use the same rules for helping as standard skills (see Fun Skill Stuff, Helping Out). However, there is a limit to how many people can actually help. A doctor can tend to one wound at a time. Up to three doctors may work on a single victim at a time. (That’s three surgeons bandaging up three separate wounds.) Each doctor can have two additional helpers.

## Untended Wounds

If the character is unable to find someone with the proper skills to help them (or if the wound receives *Attention* but is never properly *Treated*), then the wound will close, but does so improperly. If Midi, Severe or Traumatic wounds are not properly treated, then their modifier becomes permanent. This happens over time. Use the normal Recovery times listed for the wound, *but if the first interval of healing time passes without Treatment, the wound has closed and has begun to heal improperly.*

## Tending Mortal Wounds

### Attending to a Mortal Wound

If by some miracle someone makes a successful *Attention* test on a Mortal wound, this will hold the wounded at death’s door for a number of hours equal to their Health exponent. If after this time has expired the character has not received proper *Treatment* or some form of miraculous aid, then the doctor must make another *Attention* test against the Mortal wound. If the doctor fails the test, the patient has moments to live as her life slowly ebbs away. If he succeeds, the wounded character is held at death’s door once again.



This represents that band-aids and whiskey can hold death at bay for a little while, but such makeshift treatment won’t bring the patient back.


Actual *Treatment* from a skilled surgeon or a miracle are the most reliable ways of pulling someone back from death's door.

### Treating a Mortal Wound

Mortal wounds are tricky things—a killing blow, ultimately destructive, difficult to judge and hard to mitigate. Their effect on the body and spirit is almost impossible to total. Despite this, it is possible to save someone from the verge of death and restore her to the land of the living.

*Treatment* obstacles for mortal wounds are listed with the Herbalism skill and the Surgery skill. *These are the only two skills that can Treat a Mortal wound.*

After the wounded has paid for her *Will to Live* (see Anatomy of Injury and Artha), the doctor may administer aid. If the test is successful, the patient is no longer in danger of dying, she will recover in time. If the test fails, the wounded passes on and becomes meat and fertilizer. *Dig in.*

 No time is listed for Mortal Wound treatment. It is up to the GM, circumstance and drama. Some Mortal Wounds will require days of tireless care to overcome. Others can be beaten by quickly administering the right herbs at the right time. Again, it is up to the GM and the drama of the situation.

## Recovery: Regaining Consciousness and Recovering Dice

The body's ability to recover from trauma is based on the character's Health attribute. Each type of trauma has an obstacle attached to it, the obstacle for the Recovery/Health test.

Wounds close and the body recovers its strength over time. Each wound is listed with a general recovery period. The actual time may vary according to the actual damage done to the character's body and the whim of the GM.

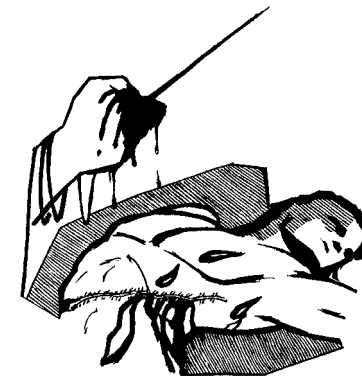
### Health Tests for Recovery


In order to see how quickly a wound closes up and the pain fades, the GM first determines the length of time needed to heal, aka the recovery time. The player then tests his Health vs the obstacle listed for the wound type—modified by any extra successes applied by a doctor Working Diligently on the wound. Extra successes from the Health test reduce recovery time.

Wound	Health Ob	Recovery Time
Superficial	1	2-6 days
Light	2	5-10 days
Midi	3	2-12 weeks
Severe	4	1-3 months
Traumatic	5	2-6 months
Mortal	6	see below

- If the test meets the obstacle, then the wound requires maximum healing time.
- If the test exceeds the obstacle, then each extra success decreases the overall recovery time by 10%.
- If the health test fails, the wound will heal wrong. See Botched Recovery tests.

The final necessary time required to heal is then divided into the stages described below. (See Regaining Consciousness.)



 **Note:** You may have noticed that there is no mention of the doctor making the pain go away. Yep. The modifiers stay until the body naturally heals. Pain relief can be had by using the Apothecary or Herbalism skill. See the Skill List in the Character Burner.

**The Pain Period: How Long it Takes for the Fever to Break**

As the wound heals, the modifiers it imposes on stats and skills drop. Usually, the modifiers, and the aches and pains, subside long before the wound has “fully healed.”

Listed with each type of wound is a range of *possible* times for recovery. The *actual* time depends on the specifics of the wound. Minor bone fractures may not cause too much pain, perhaps a Light wound, but they may take two weeks to heal. Whereas burns hurt a lot initially, but the pain usually fades quickly—perhaps a Light wound that heals in one week. It varies from situation to situation and it is up to the GM to decide the actual length of time required for the Recovery of a wound.



Characters cannot properly recover from Midi through Mortal wounds without *Treatment*.

**Superficial Wound: +1 DN; 2-6 days to Recover; Health 0b 1**

Attention to Superficial wounds suppresses the +1 DN modifier. The wound is still present until it has properly healed, but care, time and bandages provide the character with a buffer from the discomfort.

If a character receives no care for their superficial injuries, they may still test their Health to recover. In this case, the wound heals (and the modifier fades) in two to six days (determined by the GM) minus extra successes from the Health test, rather than immediately upon receiving Attention.

If a character has sustained more Superficial wounds than her Forte exponent, these modifiers can not be suppressed; her body has reached its limit. These “additional” cuts and scrapes close up over the normal healing time.

**Light Wound: +2 DN, 5-10 days to Recover; Health 0b 2**

The modifier can be partially suppressed by Treatment or Attention. +1 DN is suppressed as soon as the wound is Attended to. The second +1 DN fades in *one quarter* of the necessary time required to recover .

Untreated Light wounds will heal on their own. The first +1 DN drops in *one quarter* of the necessary healing time. The second +1 DN fades after half the time required to recover.

**Midi Wound: -1D, 2-12 weeks to Recover; Health 0b 3**

The -1D fades after one half of the necessary healing time.

**Severe Wound: -2D, 1-3 months to Recover; Health 0b 4**

The first die is recovered after one quarter of the necessary healing time. Second die is recovered after one half of the necessary time.

*Von Goten is badly injured, he received a Severe wound in a battle against the Samagosians. Von Goten's player rolls his Health for Recovery against Ob 4. He just makes it with four successes. The GM sets the time for recovery from the spear puncture at two months. This means that the wounded squire is at -2D for the next two weeks (one quarter of two months). After that his body recovers a little of its strength; he is at -1D for the following two weeks (the second quarter of two months). So, a month after he was wounded he has his dice back, but he still has another month to completely heal. If he is wounded again in that month his Severe wound reopens. Perhaps he'll stay at home and practice his poetry.*

**Traumatic Wound -4D, 2-6 months to Recover; Health 0b 5**

Traumatic wounds usually require massive restorative processes: A needle, thread, whiskey, a saw and some tar. After Treatment, a die is recovered for each quarter of the necessary healing time. The first die is recovered after 1/4 of the required time, the second recovers after 1/2, the third die after 3/4, and the fourth, and last, die modifier fades after the total necessary recovery time.

**Mortal Wound: Incapacitation, Special Recovery; Health 0b 6**

A Mortal Wound heals differently than the other wounds. Essentially the character must heal from each type of wound in succession from Mortal down to Superficial.

The necessary healing time for a Mortal Wound is divided into *six* unequal parts: Mortal, Traumatic, Severe, Midi, Light and Superficial stages. The Mortal stage is the longest. For the duration of this period the character is incapacitated and unconscious. This stage usually lasts 4-24 months. Test Health vs Obstacle 6. Subtract the 10% of the time for each extra success, if any. After the character has passed through the Mortal stage he makes another Health test for the Traumatic stage, and heals following the rules for Traumatic wounds. After he has recovered from the Traumatic wound then roll for recovery of the Severe wound. Roll for each wound, all the way down to Superficial, until the character has completely healed and recovered all his dice. On average the entire process takes about 18-20 months. Not bad for a near-death experience!



### The Dreaded Random-Length Recovery Roll

If the GM is stuck for an idea or is pressed for time, Recovery time can be generated randomly for each wound. Superficial: 2d3; Light d6 +4; Midi: 2d6; Severe: d3; Traumatic: 2d3.

### Botched Recovery Tests

If a player fails her Health test for Recovery, her wound will heal, but it will not heal properly. For minor injuries the character might develop a limp, a nervous tick, slurred speech, a mangled digit or a heinous scar. For the more drastic wounds the failure can mean the loss of feeling in a limb, crushing headaches, body-wracking pain, or even the loss of a hand, foot or arm. The effects of the lingering injuries should be placed with the character's traits, the more severe wounds possibly even becoming stat penalties.

The unlucky character who fails her recovery test heals over the maximum time required.

## Scabs and Scars

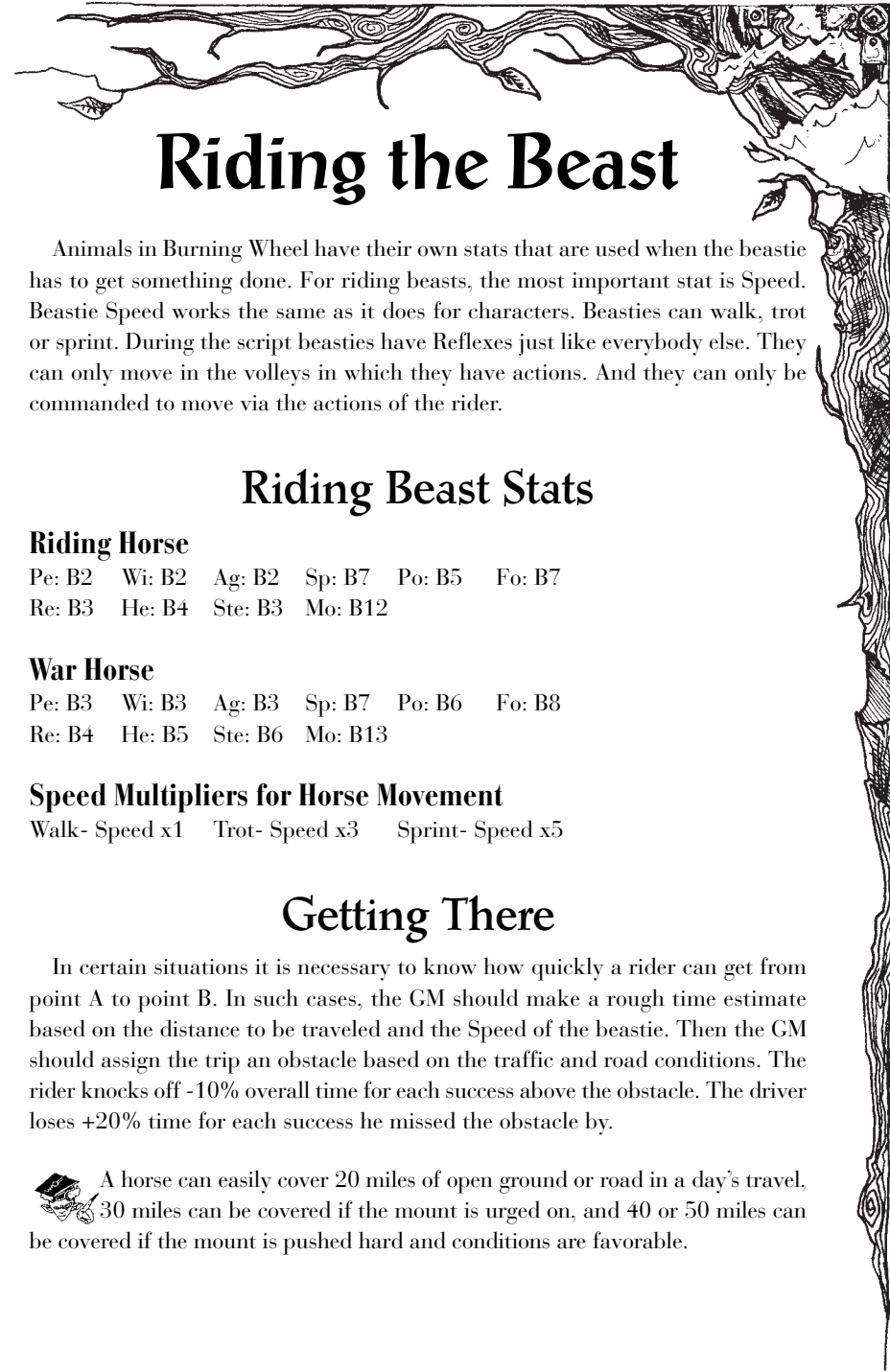


As a wound heals, it does not become "less" of a wound. A Traumatic wound does not become a Severe wound even though its modifiers drop; a Midi is a Midi until the body heals completely. The modifiers decrease, but the body doesn't forget the actual trauma of damage sustained.

### Lingering Pain



It is vital to keep track of what wounds the character is healing from, even if they no longer present a modifier to the character because...wounds can be reopened. *If a character sustains any damage to an area that is healing from a previous wound, then the previous wound is reopened. The character suffers the die modifiers for both the new wound and the full effects of the old wound.* The old wound now counts as if it were just received by the character. It bleeds, must be Attended/Treated accordingly, and a new Health test is made for Recovery.



# Riding the Beast

Animals in Burning Wheel have their own stats that are used when the beastie has to get something done. For riding beasts, the most important stat is Speed. Beastie Speed works the same as it does for characters. Beasties can walk, trot or sprint. During the script beasties have Reflexes just like everybody else. They can only move in the volleys in which they have actions. And they can only be commanded to move via the actions of the rider.

## Riding Beast Stats

### Riding Horse

Pe: B2 Wi: B2 Ag: B2 Sp: B7 Po: B5 Fo: B7  
Re: B3 He: B4 Ste: B3 Mo: B12

### War Horse

Pe: B3 Wi: B3 Ag: B3 Sp: B7 Po: B6 Fo: B8  
Re: B4 He: B5 Ste: B6 Mo: B13

### Speed Multipliers for Horse Movement

Walk- Speed x1 Trot- Speed x3 Sprint- Speed x5

## Getting There

In certain situations it is necessary to know how quickly a rider can get from point A to point B. In such cases, the GM should make a rough time estimate based on the distance to be traveled and the Speed of the beastie. Then the GM should assign the trip an obstacle based on the traffic and road conditions. The rider knocks off -10% overall time for each success above the obstacle. The driver loses +20% time for each success he missed the obstacle by.



A horse can easily cover 20 miles of open ground or road in a day's travel, 30 miles can be covered if the mount is urged on, and 40 or 50 miles can be covered if the mount is pushed hard and conditions are favorable.

## Pursuit

When tailing, chasing or pursuing another ridden beast make a versus test between the pursuer's and prey's Riding skills. Modify the skills as listed below:

### Modifiers to Pursuit Test

- +1D if the rider has Affinity for Animals or Low Speech
- +1D to the rider with higher Reflexes
- +1D if the rider has Stealth or Inconspicuous skills

#### *In urban and sub-urban situations:*

- +1D for beastie with higher Speed.
- +1D for the beastie with smaller body size

#### *In rural and highway situations:*

- +1D for every point of Speed faster than opponent

## Fighting From Horseback

Fighting while mounted is difficult, awkward and requires special training to master. Characters without Mounted Combat are +1 Ob to all melee maneuvers while mounted.



Avoiding while mounted is +2 Obstacle. If a character does not want to further suffer this penalty, she is free to dismount as she Avoids.

### While the Beast Moves:

- The rider is at an additional +1 Ob if the beast is walking
- The rider suffers an additional +2 Ob if the beast is trotting.
- The rider suffers an additional +4 Ob if beast is sprinting

### Shooting from the Back of a Beastie:

- Shooting while the beastie is standing or walking: +1 Ob
- Shooting while the beastie is trotting: +2 Ob
- Shooting while the beastie is sprinting: +3 Ob.

## Shooting at Moving Beasties

- +1 Ob for a walking beastie
- Shooting at a trotting beastie is obstacle equal to half its Speed exponent rounded down.
- Shooting at a sprinting beastie is obstacle equal to its Speed exponent.
- These trotting and sprinting obstacles only count for targets sprinting *across* line of sight. Shooting a beastie sprinting or trotting straight at the shooter is +2 Obstacle. See Combat for more on movement

## Mounted Combat

A character fighting from a mount who possesses the training skill Mounted Combat receives bonuses that untrained characters do not. When opening a Mounted Combat training skill choose one of the below options for the character, *Mounted Lancer* or *Mounted Bowman*. In general, Mounted Bowman is such a rare skill, it is assumed that nearly all Mounted Combat is as Mounted Lancer.

### Mounted Lancer

- Ignore the +1 Ob penalty for fighting from horseback. But still penalized for Avoiding (+2 Ob).
- Ignore the obstacle penalty for the mount walking or trotting.
- Trained riders only have a +1 Ob penalty when their mount is sprinting.
- Mounted Combat gives a bonus +2D when using a sword from horseback. The sword was made for use from the back of a horse. These dice count as equipment dice for the purposes of failure. If the swordsman rolls double 1s on the horsey dice, the sword is dropped.
- The mounted combatant also knows the mechanics of the lanced charge. When bearing down with a lance or spear on a foe on foot, the mounted combatant gains +2 Power to the spear attack and a +1 bonus to the VA rating of the spear. Essentially the weapon becomes a "lance" (Power +4, VA 2). In order to effect this maneuver, the rider must be seated in saddle, harness and stirrups.
- When charging another mounted fighter while using a lance, successes to hit count as a Push attack in addition to the Strike damage. In this case, the Push attack is defended against with the Riding skill or Power, not Speed. If a character is pushed one pace in the saddle, then he is partially dislodged and must spend an action to reseat himself. If he does not, he suffers +1 Ob to all tests. If a character is pushed by two or more paces while in the saddle, he is unhorsed and hits the ground. The ground hit also counts as a Throw

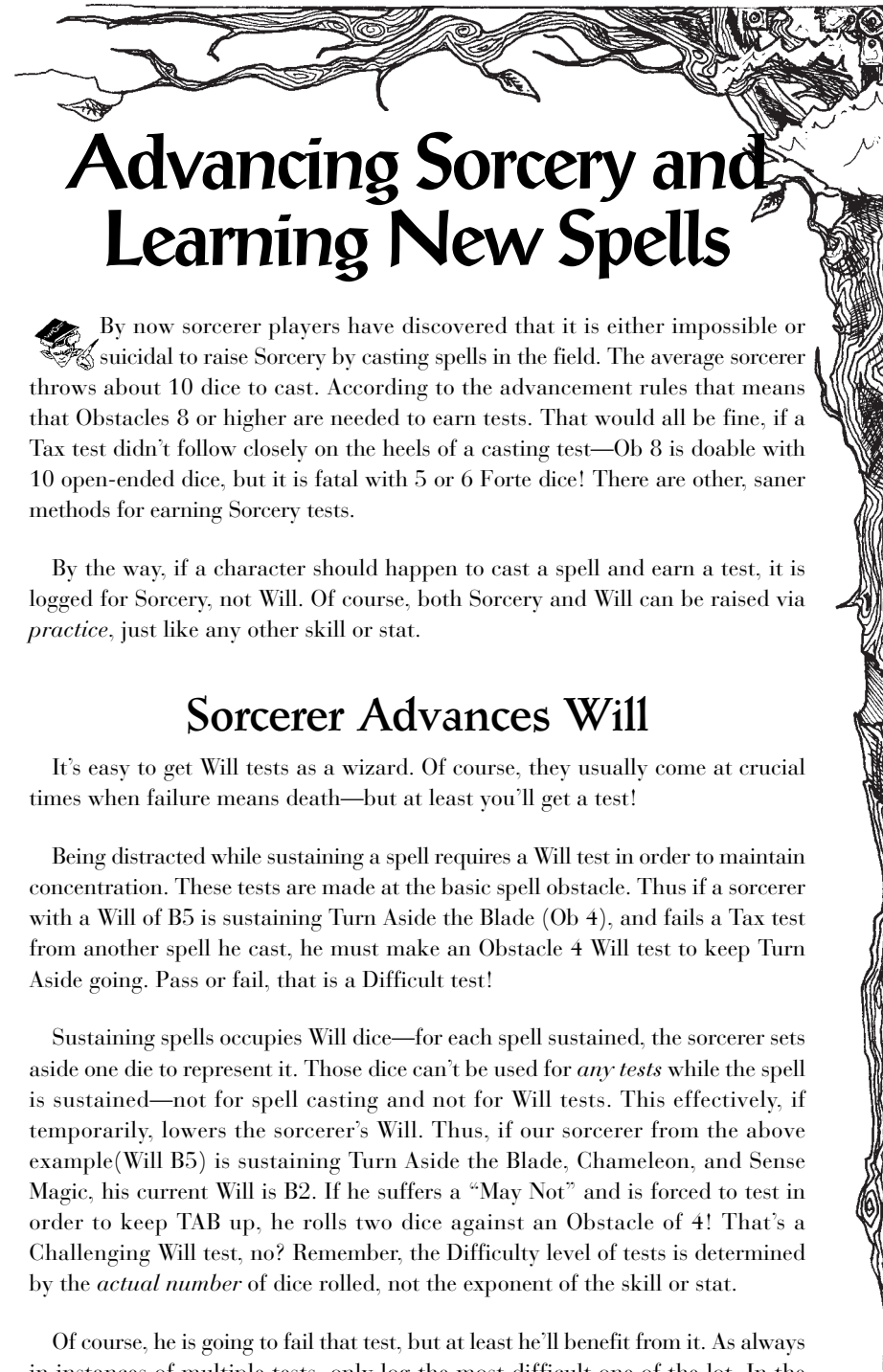
## Expanded Gameplay

for purposes of damage. Use the lance successes (subtract the Riding/Power Natural Defenses) as the successes of the Throw, and the Speed of the lancer's horse is the Power of the attack. See *Thrown Against the Wall* for more about damage from Throws.


### Mounted Bowman

Being trained in mounted archery reduces the penalties for firing from horseback by one step:

- Shooting while the beastie is standing or walking: —
- Shooting while the beastie is trotting: +1 Ob
- Shooting while the beastie is sprinting: +2 Ob
  
- Mounted bowman ignore the +1 Ob penalty for fighting from horseback.
- Mounted Bowman still gives the +2D bonus when using a sword from horseback. As Mounted Lancer.
- Mounted bowman benefit from the first level of the Superior Position obstacle modifier when shooting at targets on foot.



# Advancing Sorcery and Learning New Spells

 By now sorcerer players have discovered that it is either impossible or suicidal to raise Sorcery by casting spells in the field. The average sorcerer throws about 10 dice to cast. According to the advancement rules that means that Obstacles 8 or higher are needed to earn tests. That would all be fine, if a Tax test didn't follow closely on the heels of a casting test—Ob 8 is doable with 10 open-ended dice, but it is fatal with 5 or 6 Forte dice! There are other, saner methods for earning Sorcery tests.

By the way, if a character should happen to cast a spell and earn a test, it is logged for Sorcery, not Will. Of course, both Sorcery and Will can be raised via *practice*, just like any other skill or stat.

## Sorcerer Advances Will

It's easy to get Will tests as a wizard. Of course, they usually come at crucial times when failure means death—but at least you'll get a test!


Being distracted while sustaining a spell requires a Will test in order to maintain concentration. These tests are made at the basic spell obstacle. Thus if a sorcerer with a Will of B5 is sustaining *Turn Aside the Blade* (Ob 4), and fails a Tax test from another spell he cast, he must make an Obstacle 4 Will test to keep *Turn Aside* going. Pass or fail, that is a Difficult test!

Sustaining spells occupies Will dice—for each spell sustained, the sorcerer sets aside one die to represent it. Those dice can't be used for *any tests* while the spell is sustained—not for spell casting and not for Will tests. This effectively, if temporarily, lowers the sorcerer's Will. Thus, if our sorcerer from the above example (Will B5) is sustaining *Turn Aside the Blade*, *Chameleon*, and *Sense Magic*, his current Will is B2. If he suffers a "May Not" and is forced to test in order to keep TAB up, he rolls two dice against an Obstacle of 4! That's a Challenging Will test, no? Remember, the Difficulty level of tests is determined by the *actual number* of dice rolled, not the exponent of the skill or stat.

Of course, he is going to fail that test, but at least he'll benefit from it. As always in instances of multiple tests, only log the most difficult one of the lot. In the

example above our sorcerer is going to make three Will tests. In this case, note only the Challenging test.

## Learning New Spells

 The only thing I can liken Sorcery to is an evil cross-breed of English and Canton Chinese—an infinite collection of ambiguously defined words that either sound similar or that have different sounds but the same meaning, all garnished with a pronunciation of a thousand closely related tones.

Learning a new spell is a long, difficult, dangerous and complicated process. In order to begin, a sorcerer must have a written copy/translation of the incantation he wishes to master. Once the copy is acquired, the sorcerer may set about trying to understand the material and master its pronunciation.

There are three steps to learning a new spell:

### First Reading

Make a Sorcery test vs the spell's basic obstacle. This test is a skill test and may be modified using *Working Carefully*, *Diligently* or *Quickly*.

Time for the test is obstacle in months. Extra successes (Working Quickly) subtracts 10% of time per success.

If the test is successful, the character now has a basic understanding of the spell and may move on to Practicals.

If the test is failed, the character may not attempt to cast the spell, but may attempt the First Reading again. Use the Academic skills time for failure rules.

*This Sorcery test is not open-ended.*

### Practicals

Here is the dangerous part. The sorcerer's mastery is far from complete, he only has a basic grasp of the spell—he must cast it to fully understand it.

When casting the new spell the sorcerer is at a *double obstacle penalty*. So if a sorcerer is learning Turn Aside the Blade, an Ob 4 spell, his Practicals are at Ob 8. The sorcerer may cast his Practicals *patiently*, *carefully* or *hastily*. Minimum obstacle for the spell is 2 no matter what.

The sorcerer must cast the spell (pass or fail) as many times as his Perception Aptitude. No sitting around your hotel room setting the couch on fire. Like skill

tests, these tests must be game-legitimate. After he has fulfilled his Aptitude requirement, he then moves on to Second Reading.

### Second Reading

Second Reading is similar to First Reading except that now the sorcerer is trying to unlearn all the garbage and mistakes he made and get at the root of the spell—he is trying to get rid of that pesky double obstacle casting penalty!

Make a Sorcery test vs the spell's basic obstacle. This test is a skill test and may be modified by *working carefully*, *diligently*, or *quickly*.


Time for the test is obstacle in weeks. Extra successes (Working Quickly) subtracts 10% of time per success.

If the test is successful, the character now has mastered the spell and may cast it as normal.

If the test is failed, the character *must* go through another set of *Practicals* before he may make another Second Reading test.


This Sorcery test is not open-ended.

### Sorcery Tests for Advancement

 Inside the juicy center of learning new spells is a fat Sorcery test: First and Second Reading. If a sorcerer with a B5 Sorcery is reading a spell with an Obstacle of 4, then he earns a Difficult sorcery test for advancement—in addition to potentially learning a new spell!

If a sorcerer wants to learn a spell whose obstacle is higher than his Sorcery exponent, he must either work Carefully or spend Artha to do so. (Either a point for Luck or three points for Inspiration. See Campaigning for more on Artha.)

## Learning Sorcery as a New Skill

 Sorcery must be taught to a character. He cannot pick it up on his own. It can be learned through written instructions (designed expressly for that purpose) or taught by another sorcerer.



# Materials and Structures


Materials have statistics of their own stats which indicate how tough they are and how much punishment they can take just like characters. Material stats are: *Surface*, *Breach*, *Integrity* and *Strength*.

Surface and Breach act like wound tolerances on the PTGS. Surface damage are scratches, nicks and bites. Breaches are cracks, holes and chunks torn away. When attempting to damage a material, a character must meet or exceed the Surface or Breach rating.

Integrity is the “Forte” of materials. It indicates how many breaches a “sheet” of the material can sustain before it is destroyed—just the way a character can lose X amount of stat dice before falling unconscious.

The Strength of a material indicates how stiff, tough and resistant the stuff is. Strength is used when trying to penetrate a material.

## Scratches and Breaches

 When attempting to damage a material, always use the Mark result of the attack/weapon. There is no need to roll the dice. Just use the Mark result. If the Mark is equal to or greater than the Breach rating, then the character has punched a hole in the material. If the attack is less than the Breach but equal to or greater than the Surface damage rating, then the character has scratched, chipped or marred the material. Three Surface “scratches” equal one Breach, just like +3DN equals -1D for wounds on characters.

### Breaking Down

If the material suffers Breaches (loses dice) equal to its Integrity, that “sheet” or section is broken, shattered or destroyed.

Material Statistics				
Type	Surface	Breach	Integrity	Strength
Cloth	B4	B5	3	0
Ceramic	B3	B4	1	0
Thin Wood	B4	B6	4	1
Glass	B3	B5	1	1
Wood	B5	B8	2	2
Brick	B6	B8	1	3
Slate	B6	B9	1	3
Granite	B8	B14	3	5
Iron	B7	B12	4	2
Copper	B3	B4	5	1
Earthworks	B3	B10	8	4


## Attacking through Materials with Hand Weapons

To hack through a wall, first a character must be able to Breach the material. If the Power of the attack is enough to cause a Breach, then the attack goes through and may hit whatever is on the other side. The material Strength is tacked on to the weapon’s Add when factoring how much damage was done to the target on the other side. It is hard to punch through walls and kill someone.

*Roy has a Power of B8 (whoa!) and is trying to punch through a plaster and wood wall to surprise his dogged pursuer, Deckard. The Breach rating for this wall (Wooden wall: Surface: B5; Breach: B8; Integrity: 2; Strength: 2) is B8—equal to Roy’s Power, so he is able to punch through! Roy Strikes at Deckard with an Ob 3 (Base 1 plus 2 for the Attacking Through Penalty). Roy gets 5 successes—normally enough to push the strike from an Incidental to a Mark (2 successes over the Obstacle for an Add 2 strike). However, since he is punching through a wall, he combines the Strength of the material with his own Add of 2—the total Add for his punch becomes 4. Since he only got 2 successes over his obstacle it is not enough to push it from Incidental to Mark. However, he still smashes through the wooden slats and hits Deckard with an Incidental, a B4 for super-Roy! Definitely enough for the GM to call for Deckard to make a Steel test.*



## Shooting through Materials

 Compare the Mark result of the missile weapon with the Breach rating of the material. If the Breach is higher, then the weapon cannot shoot through at all. If the weapon's Mark is equal or greater than the Breach, then the attacking character may attempt to hurt whoever is hiding on the other side.

Roll to hit. Factor obstacle penalties as normal.

When shooting through materials, the Strength rating is used as a modifier for the Die of Fate. Subtract the Strength of the material from the DOF roll. If the total is zero or less the weapon still hits, but no damage is done. If the weapon has a VA, subtract that from the Strength of the material. The result is the penalty to the DOF.

*A hunting bow has a Mark result of B7. It may not shoot through wooden walls, which have a Breach of B8. A crossbow has a Mark of B8, so it may shoot through wooden walls. If the crossbow hits, the player has a -1 penalty to the DOF. The material Strength is 2, minus 1 for the VA of the crossbow.*


## Thrown against the Wall

Being smacked against a brick wall really hurts, and characters who are thrown can possibly take damage on the PTGS. The damage is based on the effectiveness of the Throw, the Power of the thrower, and the stiffness of the material the character is thrown into.

Factor damage like a Strike with a weapon. *Use the Strength of the material as the Weapon Power, add this to character's Power to factor IMS.* This the Mark result of the throw. (Divide by half for the Incidental result, add half for the Superb result.) The Add for the attack is always 2. The extra successes from the Throw count for Strike successes—one success is an Incidental, three for a Mark, five for a Superb.


*Zhu Kwan throws Kyosho-Gin into the wall of the temple where they are dueling. Zhu rolls four successes on his Throw, Kyosho-Gin rolls two successes on his Natural defenses—he is thrown two paces. Zhu's Power is 6 and the wall of this temple to Lord Earth is granite, Strength 5. (Power 6 plus Strength 5 = Mark Throw result of B11, and an Incidental of B6.) Zhu got two successes, an Incidental Hit—a B6 wound to Kyosho-Gin. Had Zhu got one more success he would have killed his opponent with a B11 wound!*

## Heroic and Supernatural

 As mentioned way back in the beginning of the book, in Elements of Character, *shade* is an indicator of a particular ability's potential. There are three shades, left to right along a gray scale: Black/*mundane* shade, Gray/*heroic* shade and White/*supernatural* shade. When a character has a “lighter” shade it does not mean they *are* better, rather it shows they have the potential to *do* better.

Stats, attributes, skills and even equipment can be Heroic or Supernatural shade.

### Why “Black, Gray, White?”


 Because I work in black and white; because it is an intuitive scale that almost everyone can easily grasp. I like to think of it as the shades of a flame or fire, the deeper hued flames are the cooler ones, but the hotter the flame the clearer its hue. Hence, “white hot.”


### But What Does It All Mean?

- Gray shade stuff has a DN of 3.
- Supernatural shade stuff has a DN of 2.


Obstacles for Heroic and Supernatural are the same as for Mundane; the other shades just have a better chance of meeting those Obstacles. Thus if a heroic knight has a G5 Sword skill, the player rolls five dice and needs 3s rather than 4s to get successes.

### How Do I Get These Neato Abilities?

 Lighter shades can be bought for characters when you burn them—it is expensive, but sometimes it is worth it. Generally, Men and Orcs won't have the points to start off with Gray shades; they must earn them. However, it's practically expected of powerful Elves and Dwarves to be Heroic in some aspect. Also, a player can save up Artha and give his character an Epiphany which permanently lightens the shade or one stat or skill.

 I have never seen, nor do I hope to ever see a character with a Supernatural skill or stat. It is an extraordinarily powerful ability, and one that must be taken into careful consideration.

## If They Aren't for Me, Who Are They for?

 The far right end of the grayscale is meant for the unthinkable: for deities, demons and dragons.

## Heroic and Supernatural Shade Stats


### Gray and White Shade Speed

Characters blessed with a heroic or supernatural Speed have a celerity of movement rarely seen in mortal men. They can run with horses and are capable of short bursts of incredible speed. Gray and White Speeds have special Speed multipliers for walking, jogging and sprinting.

#### Heroic and Supernatural Speed Multipliers

Heroic:	Walk- x2	Jog- x3.5	Sprint- x5
Supernatural:	Walk- x3	Jog- x5	Sprint- x10

### Gray and White Shade Power

 A character imbued with a heroic or supernatural Power is truly a fearsome mortal. Power is the most raw of the various abilities and most capable of directly influencing the world around the character, albeit this influence is most easily wrought in destruction.

A heroic or supernatural Power indicates that the character is made of sterner stuff than the fleshy sinews of men. They are not confined by the same limitations as their peers; they can lift more, throw farther, and punch harder. Materials that resist the blows of men will crumble from the efforts of one of heroic or supernatural Power.

When it is granted to a character, this potent ability must be recognized for all of its destructiveness.

- Heroic Power throws twice as far as mundane Power
- Heroic Power lifts twice as much as mundane Power
- Supernatural Power throws thrice as far as mundane Power
- Supernatural Power lifts thrice as much as mundane Power

A characters with Gray shade Power who attacks with his bare hands adds +2 to his Mark result. Add this bonus and then factor Incidental and Superb results.



Characters with White shade Power who attack with their bare hands add 3 to their Mark result before factoring their IMS.

Characters who have heroic and supernatural Power and wish to do damage in the Gray or White scale must have the Hands of Stone trait.

## Heroic and Supernatural Attributes


### Gray and White Shade Stats for Aptitude

Characters who have Gray and White shade stats have a greater ability for learning skills. Subtract two from the standard Aptitude for Gray Shade, subtract three from the standard Aptitude for White Shade. Thus, a G6 Agility has an Aptitude of 2 for Agility-rooted skills. A W6 Perception has an Aptitude of 1 for Perception-rooted skills.

### Heroic and Supernatural Mortal Wounds

Characters whose Power and Forte are both Gray or White mark their Mortal Wound in the Gray or White where appropriate. The wound tolerances must be stretched from the Superficial in the Black to the Mortal Wound in the Gray or White.

### Gray Reflexes—Drool

 A G6 Reflexes is the same as a B6 Reflexes in every way except one. Gray Reflexes act twice for each "action." Consider each "action" an interval. A B6 Reflexes acts on six intervals in an Exchange; 1 action per interval, two intervals per volley. G6 Reflexes acts on six intervals during the Exchange as well, 2 actions per interval, two intervals per volley.

*Legolas and an ancient Black Orc Chief are fighting. Legolas has a G6 Ref, the Black Orc has a B6. The Black Orc acts twice per volley, his first action goes at the same time as Legolas' does. However, before the Orc gets his next action Legolas has an action in between— his second action of that "interval."*


*For the Second Action of the volley the characters would act simultaneously again, but after that Legolas would get another action—his second action for the second interval of the first volley. Phew!*

The same goes for Supernatural Reflexes, except they get three actions per interval.

### Heroic and Supernatural Health Steel and Faith

No special mechanics for these attributes—aside from their lowered DN's!

## Heroic and Supernatural Power and Weapons IMS

 Beings with heroic and supernatural Power may attempt to use their full strength through a weapon. There are two aspects to this: A demigod with a Power of G4 who is wielding a regular ol' baseball bat can choose to do mundane damage or attempt to do heroic damage. If the character chooses to do mundane damage, then his IMS is the same as if he were wielding a mundane weapon; he adds the bat's Power to his bare fist Mark result. The damage is in the black.

If the character chooses to attempt heroic damage with a mundane blade, roll the DOF after applying the IMS damage for each Strike, Counterstrike, etc. On a 1-3 the weapon has disintegrated. If the character has supernatural Power and is attempting to use a mundane weapon, the material disintegrates on a 1-5 on the DOF.

### Heroic and Supernatural Weapons and the IMS

Characters using weapons listed with a Gray or White shade damage use the shade of the weapon being used rather than the shade of their Power.

## Heroic and Supernatural Forte and Bleeding

Beings with a heroic Forte bleed six times slower than their mundane brethren.


Beings with a supernatural Forte bleed nine times slower.

*A Dragon with a W10 Mortal Wound who receives a W9 blow, a Traumatic Wound, would bleed to Mortal in 18 hours.*

## Heroic and Supernatural Equipment

Equipment that is heroic or supernatural in nature uses its own DN for its own equipment tests unless specified otherwise.

## Heroic and Supernatural Armor vs Weapons


 Armor can only serve its wearer against attacks of the same or lesser shades. If a mundane weapon attacks mundane armor, a normal armor save is made. However, if a heroic weapon attacks mundane armor, no roll is allowed.


### Versus Armor and Shade

The Versus Armor of a weapon is ignored if the striking weapon is a darker shade than the armor being struck.

*So a regular sword (run of the mill or superior quality, it doesn't matter) has no VA against Gray Armor*

### Armor Failure and Shade


 Also, failed armor dice don't count at all if the weapon that caused them is a darker shade than the armor being struck.

 This does not mean that a person wearing heroic or supernatural armor is invulnerable to attacks from lesser shade weapons. The bearers of such awesome gear are still subject to their own mortality—if an attack sneaks through or the armor is bypassed they can still be killed. Heroic and supernatural armors must still test their Protection dice against mundane blades; If the armor works the attack is deflected, if it fails then the wearer is wounded as normal.

Heroic and supernatural armors will, however, protect against heroic and supernatural attacks. The normal armor rules apply for Versus Armor and Protection dice when the weapon and armor are of a like shade.

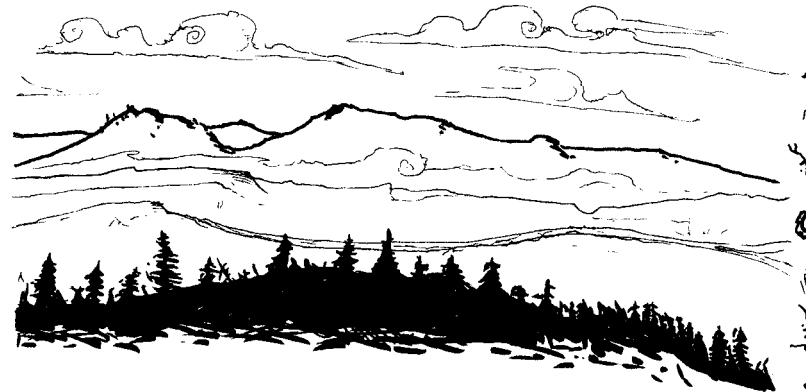
## Spells, Shade and IMS

Sometimes spells and prayers add dice to an ability. *The dice added are the shade of the skill/attribute that cast the spell.*

 Sometimes a *damaging effect spell/prayer* will do enough damage to go past B16, into the Gray. This is perfectly acceptable; that is the way it was meant to be. Just keep counting pips after B16 up on into the Gray. Any mortal touched by such a powerful spell is turned into goo.



# Campaigning




*Some are gaming, some are drinking,  
Some are living without thinking;  
And of those who make the racket,  
Some are stripped of coat and jacket;  
Some get clothes of finer feather,  
Some are cleaned out altogether;  
No one there dreads death's invasion,  
But all drink in emulation.*

—Some Are Gaming,  
song author unknown.

# Artha

## Spiritual Rewards in the Land of Fire

Artha is a meager indicator of the character's power and success in life. Once gained it is meant to be devoted to earning more power and success. Artha will help you maximize your potential on this earthly plane and, with luck aid, you in transcending to the next. If Burning Wheel is a violent and soulless game, then Artha is a scrap of spirituality for us to cling to.

 Artha is accrued and spent in points. It will come as a boon from being yourself and staying true to your idiom, no matter what you believe.

## Artha is Earned through Roleplaying

### Idiom

**1-3pts.** Roleplaying your character, however dastardly or noble, garners reward. The better you roleplay, the more Artha you get. I tend to give out *idiom* artha on a sliding scale. Players who consistently roleplay well but don't push themselves get one or two points a run, no matter how brilliant they are. Players who flash brilliantly and, for a moment, truly embody their character and take get two or three points.

### Goals

**1-4pts.** Accomplishing goals will earn Artha for the group/party/team/company. Goals can be set forth by the GM or by the players. They need not be grand, in fact most often they are simple. "We should recon the bandit's hideout and find out who is paying them." Accomplishing this simple goal will earn the characters clues to completing their other goals, thus a reward is fitting. Simple goals like that above earn a single point of Artha, grand goals like swaying a nation to your cause, winning a war, or closing an infernal gate earn three or four points.

### Teamwork

**1pt.** Working together gets the whole party 1 pt of Artha.

### Rolling with the Punches


**1pt.** Graceful handling of unexpected situations.

### Linchpin

**1pt.** Being voted the MVP of the night.

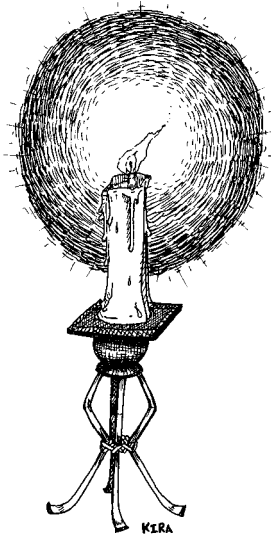
# The Long Run

## Beyond the Numbers of Character

 This game system can be used to play one-offs, one nighters or a short series of adventures, but it really favors the extended campaign. In a campaign characters change and develop—even beyond just watching their skill and stat numbers climb. There are a number of other ways which Burning Wheel fosters character development.

Characters evolve not just *as* they are played, but by *how* they are played. Players focus on certain aspects of the character while letting other aspects slip away. This happens because of the demands of the campaign, the abilities, likes and dislikes of the player. To represent this, after a series of adventures—the completion of a story arc—it is possible to gain new traits, lose unused ones, and change Instincts and Beliefs.

Finally there is a run-of-the-mill RPG points-award system. We call it Artha (pronounced "Ar-tah"). Artha is points that players get for successfully completing adventures and roleplaying a character. The points allow players to substantially modify tests and pull off some seriously heroic acts.







## You Can Spend Artha for...

### Luck

1pt to open-end all 6s for one roll. This may be announced after the dice are cast.

### Iatjutsu

1pt (and up). Artha can be spent during an Initiative bid in order to outbid all those who have bid actions. It costs one point per bid. Artha can be used to counter-bid against bid Artha. (See Bidding for Initiative, in Action Reaction.)

### Shrug It Off

2pts. A character with a Superficial or Light wound can spend one action and 2pts of Artha to temporarily shrug off +1 DN. This effect lasts until the end of the fight; then pain hits.

### Divine Inspiration

3pts to double the dice of a single skill, stat, or attribute test. This must be announced *before* the dice are cast. Reflexes and equipment dice may not be doubled in this way. These dice *do not* count toward the total dice rolled for the purposes of earning stat and skill tests for advancement. Thus if a character with a skill of B4 needs to make an Ob 6 test, he may spend the Artha to double his dice and still get the Challenging test toward advancing his skill.

### Saving Grace

4pts to reroll any failed successes from a test. This may be announced after the dice are cast. May be used on equipment dice like armor or guns.

### Focus

2pts of Artha to reduce obstacle of a task by 1. Focusing on a task must be announced before the dice are cast. Focusing requires 10 actions of closing your eyes, breathing deep and rubbing your temples. Obstacles cannot be reduced below 1.

### Nimble Hands

2-10pts. Artha may be spent to reduce the time needed to complete a task. It costs 2 pts to reduce time by 25%, 5 pts to reduce time by 50% and 10 pts to reduce time by 75%. Obviously, not for martial tasks or spell casting.

### Will to Live

2pts. A character must spend Artha to buy the chance for a Will to Live test to survive a Mortal Wound.

### Epiphany

A stat can be permanently shifted one shade to the right for the cost of 30 pts of Artha. A skill, Faith or Steel can be Epiphanied for 25 pts of Artha.

A skill can be temporarily shifted one shade to the right for 10 pts of Artha. In this case the epiphany lasts for one test or series of tests.

### Aristeia

10 pts. This temporarily nullifies all wound modifiers and other like penalties (but not death). Character must be wounded or impeded before the *Aristeia* is summoned. *Aristeia* lasts until the character has succeeded in a short, immediate, attainable goal or until he is killed trying to accomplish said goal.


### Investiture

Artha may be invested in a material object in order to render it “special.” It doesn’t make the object any more potent than it was and it won’t make it magical. But investiture will lend the object a certain undefinable quality, the object becomes “lucky;” less likely to be lost, less likely to be ruined or damaged in the hurly-burly of life. Indiana Jones’ hat is a great example of Artha Investiture. No matter how bad the situation, the hat stays on, stays near or always manages to work its way back. Of course, Indiana goes out of his way not to lose it! Investiture can’t help you if just abandon your investment to fate!

*The Dread Lord invests 5 pts, which is quite a lot, in his sword, the Sword of Kings. In a duel with his rival, the Prince, the Dread Lord is incapacitated and the sword is captured. The Artha in the sword does not prevent it from being stolen from a foolish owner! However, later on in the story, the Dread Lord once again meets the Prince in single combat. This time the Prince drops the sword in the fray and, as the Dread Lord dives for it, the sword practically leaps into his hand (a moment before the Prince can recover it!). Artha well spent by the Dread Lord, who now turns on his rival with his rightful weapon, prepared to wreak vengeance!*



## Awarding Tests

 Skills and stats go up as players test them in game. However, occasionally a stat or skill gets neglected by the dice—something that was often relied on but never actually rolled. Forte is a great example of this. During my campaigns my players are forced to push their characters to their limits: Forced to endure sleep deprivation, starvation and physical hardship. But only very rarely, under the most adverse conditions, do I make them actually roll a Forte test. I generally assume that, due to gravity of the conditions, the characters are capable of pushing themselves to the limits of human endurance. For me it is enough that the *players* are overwrought and pushed to the limits of their *mental* endurance.

So at the end of the campaign, I usually just have the players note Challenging Forte tests (for pushing their characters to the limits of their endurance, even though we didn't roll the dice). And if the campaign involved lots of running around (as it often does), I give out Challenging Speed tests as well. If it involved climbing mountains or constantly hauling around heavy packs, then a Power test is in order. And so on, until the rigors of the adventure have been properly rewritten into the skin and bones of the character.

There is no set system for this. Basically, overcoming the demands the campaign set before the characters should be rewarded with a Challenging or Difficult test at the *end* of the campaign.

These are bonus tests and rewards given by the GM in recognition of good game play and achievement.

## Awarding Traits

Sometimes, through good luck and good roleplaying, a player can develop a “trait” for his character. It occurs naturally, a consistent pattern emerges—something that “always happens” around that character. If a player always roleplays in a certain way—if he always runs from a fight. Or performs in a consistently spectacular fashion, he is eligible for a new trait.



At the end of the campaign the GM and the players nominate characters to receive new traits. All players and the GM vote on whether or not a character should receive a new trait. Unanimous decision gets the character a new trait. Characters can be awarded Die, Call-On or Character traits. It depends on the circumstance.

*We had a player who always spent Artha on his Health tests for Recovery and always rolled so well that his character healed very quickly. At the end of the campaign he nominated himself for the Wolverine trait and cited his examples: The character had taken three severe wounds in the course of the campaign—one had cost him his hand! All of the players voted affirmative for Wolverine and I gave my nod of approval.*

*In another example, one character was the leader of a vast army, a warlord of untold power. But he had a secret: he couldn't really fight—he would get his ass kicked every time he went into a melee. So the other characters, his inner circle, created a rule: “The Dread Lord never enters hand to hand combat.” Well even so, the player couldn't restrain himself, he would always get heated up, jump into the fray and cause lots of trouble for the other players. At the end of the campaign another player nominated him for the Rash trait. The vote was unanimous, even he voted for it, and it went into his trait list.*

There are certain times in an adventure when the circumstances cause a player to spontaneously generate a trait. If the character loses a hand, then he gets the One-Handed trait. It's obvious, but the new trait is necessary to remind the player of his new handicap. Madness is another example. If a priest goes mad during an adventure in the temple of ancient and forgotten gods, then his new insanities, Fear of the Ocean, Fear of the Dark, Repulsed by Fish are immediately added onto his sheet as character traits. No need to wait until the end of the campaign.

## Losing Traits

Sometimes a character will start with a trait that either doesn't fit or never gets used in the course of the campaign. If this is the case, then at the end of the campaign the trait disappears as the character grows and changes.

*For example, the warlord in the example above actually paid for the Fingerspritzenful trait. It is an awesome trait and should have made him a fantastic general. But he could never make it work. He was so focused on inspiring his army, rather than actually leading it, that he never got the opportunity to outwit his opponents on the field. On the few occasions he did command the strategy of his army, he was such a terrible general that no silly trait could have saved him. So at the end of the campaign, I apologized to him and told him that Fingerspritzenful had to go. He thought about it for a while and agreed with me.*

This house cleaning is imperative. It keeps characters from becoming fat with “pull it out of my ass once” traits.

*A priest had the Iron Will Trait. The player never played it. He was the most pliable and wishy-washy priest the other players and I had ever met. He never stood up for anything. Yet whenever he had to test his Will he would shout, “But I have Iron Will!” Uh-huh: He had the trait, but he couldn't play it! At the end of the campaign that trait was gone. In fact, it was replaced with the House of Cards trait—whenever his hand was forced, he collapsed!*



## Changing Instincts



Players love to change their characters' Instincts as soon as anything bad or unexpected happens. *This is not allowed.* Players caught doing this should be flogged. Instincts can change, but there must be time and reason for the change.

*A farmer's Instincts would be along the lines of: “Always throw a rock at the crows,” “Never stand behind the horse or mule” and “When the wife starts hollerin', get down on one knee and pray.”*

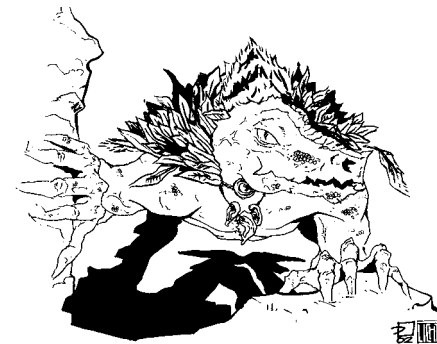
*One day, his landlord's men come and demand service to his Lord and take him off to stand in front of charging cavalry. After a summer of fighting, our incredibly lucky and somewhat traumatized farmer returns home with some different instincts: “If I happen to have a pike and I am charged by horsemen, I set the butt end in the ground and hold on for dear life,” “If unarmed and charged by a knight, I sprint away and fling myself to the ground” and, of course, “Never stand behind the horse or mule.”*

Circumstance changed our farmer; it will take him some time to become reacquainted to farm life.


Changing instincts is allowed, but it takes place after adventures, sometimes in the middle of a campaign—it's likely that if our lucky farmer hadn't learned those new instincts as quickly as he did, he wouldn't be alive to help us out with this example.



The GM is final arbiter of whether or not an Instinct is appropriate. A player should discuss the matter with GM before he changes anything.



# Changing Beliefs

 A player usually wants to change his Beliefs right after the GM “screws” him or leans on him to do something that he didn’t want to do. This usually indicates that he didn’t really believe in his Belief anyway.

**GM:** The whole place is in flames at this point. You’ve got the money, but Angus is still in there.


**Player:** Ah, that’s too bad.

**GM:** Isn’t one of your Beliefs, “My dog is my best friend?” You can hear him barking.

*Player glances at his sheet nonchalantly:*

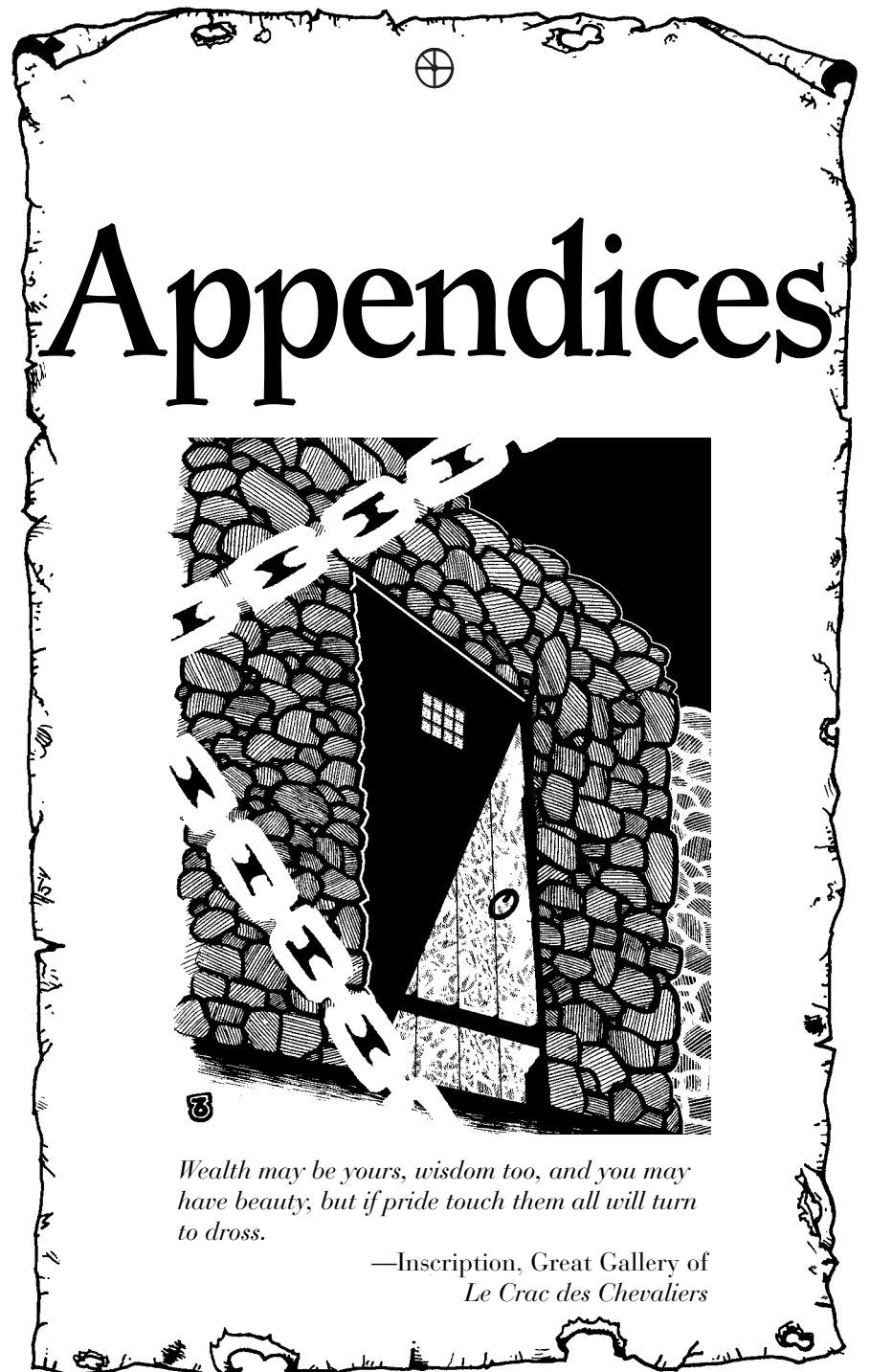
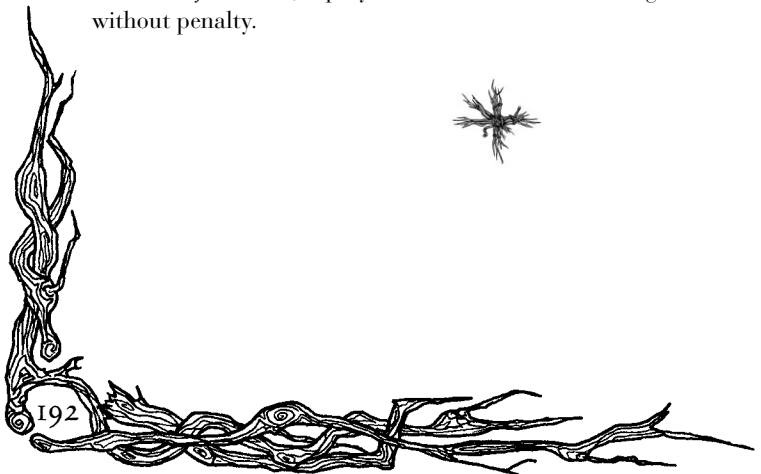
**Player:** Yeah, but I’m not going back in there.

**GM:** Ok. *Raises eyebrows to indicate “I’m going to remember this.”*

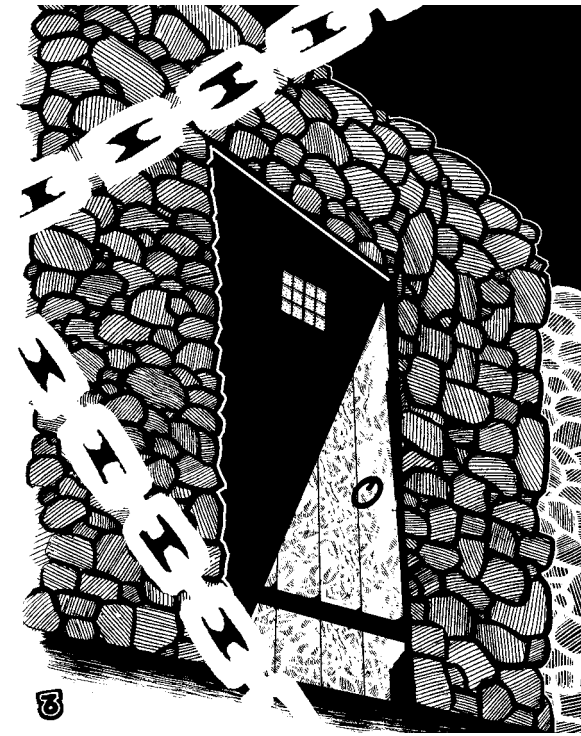
 Obviously, the player never really cared about Angus in the first place. The Belief should immediately be erased. And the player will receive a point or two less Artha at the end of the adventure for not roleplaying his character and sticking to his guns.

When a player doesn’t follow a Belief because it is inconvenient for him, then the Belief should be erased from his character’s sheet and the character should be considered for the Callow trait. Not to mention that he won’t get Artha for Idiom.

However, Beliefs can and do change over time. Characters change religion, change jobs, have life-affirming experiences, whatever. During these proper narrative junctures, a player should feel free to change his character’s Beliefs without penalty.



# Appendices



*Wealth may be yours, wisdom too, and you may have beauty; but if pride touch them all will turn to dross.*

—Inscription, Great Gallery of  
*Le Crac des Chevaliers*



# Appendix: Weapons

## Melee Weapons

Weapon Type	Power	Add	WSpd	VA
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### Primitive Gear

Bare Fist	-	2	Fast	-
Wooden Club <sup>2</sup>	2	2	Fast	-
Stone	1	2	Slow	-
Spear <sup>1,2</sup>	2	2	Fast	-
Sword	3	2	Slow	-
Axe <sup>1,2</sup>	4	2	Unwieldy	1
Knife, Shiv	0	1	Fast	-

### Run-of-the-Mill Gear

Spear <sup>1,2,3</sup>	2	2	Fast	1
Sword	3	2	Slow	1
Axe <sup>1,2</sup>	4	2	Slow	1
Hammer <sup>1,2</sup>	4	2	Unwieldy	2
Dirk	1	1	Fast	-
Mace	2	2	Fast	2

### Superior Quality Gear

Pike <sup>1,3</sup>	2	2	Slow	2
Sword <sup>2</sup>	3	2	Slow	2
Axe <sup>1,2</sup>	4	2	Slow	2
Hammer <sup>1,2</sup>	4	2	Slow	2
Dagger	1	1	Fast	1
Great Mace <sup>2</sup>	2	2	Slow	3

#### Notes:

1: Two handed

2: May Great Strike

3: Extended, 3 pace, striking distance.

## Found Weapons

Weapon	Power	WSpd
Hilt/Butt	1	F
Bedknob	1	F
Spike/Nail	1	F
Bottle	1	F
Mallet	2	S
Broomhandle	1	F
Lantern	2	S
Chair	2	U
Pick	4	U
Branch	2	S

Note: All Found Weapons have an Add of 2.

## Missile Weapons

### Hunting Bow

I: B4 M: B7 S: B10 VA -

### Long Bow

I: B6 M: B9 S: B12 VA 2

### Crossbow

I: B5 M: B8 S: B11 VA 1

### Heavy Crossbow

I: B6 M: B9 S: B13 VA 2

### Pistol

I: B4 M: B8 S: B11 VA \*

### Arquebus

I: B5 M: B8 S: B12 VA \*

\*VA by Range: Pointblank: VA 4; Short: VA 3; Medium: VA 2; Long: VA 0.

### Bow/Crossbow DOF

1-2 Incidental

3-4 Mark

5-6 Superb

### Pistol DOF

1-4 Incidental

5 Mark

6 Superb

### Arquebus DOF

1-3 Incidental

4-5 Mark

6 Superb

### Modifiers for the DOF

—If the shooter rolls double his Ob, add one (+1) to the DOF roll.

—If the shooter rolls successes equal to four times his Ob, add two (+2) to the DOF roll.

—If firing at long range for the weapon, subtract one (-1) from the DOF roll.



## Missile Weapon Ranges

Weapon	Pointblank	Short	Medium	Long
Hunting bow	2	3-49	50-79	80-100
Long bow	2	3-59	60-119	120-300
Crossbow	1	2-39	40-79	80-125
Heavy Crossbow	2	3-59	60-119	120-300
Pistol	0	2-5	6-9	10
Arquebus	2	3-15	16-30	31-50

All Ranges are in Paces.  
**Pointblank:** Targets at PB range are -2 Ob to hit. If the target is closer than PB, it is +4 Ob to hit.

## Specialty Arrow and Bolt heads

### Arrow heads

Hunting arrow	Standard IMS, VA, and DOF
Armor Piercer	-1 IMS, +1 VA
Leaf Head	+1 pip damage to IMS, -1 VA
Frog Crotch	+1 IMS, +1 DOF, +1 Ob to hit, -1 VA
Blunt Head	-1 IMS, -1 VA, -1 DOF
Barb Tip	As hunting arrow but the character takes an additional Mark result wound if the barbed arrow is removed. Ob 4 Field Dressing test or Ob 3 Surgery test to remove arrow properly.

### Bolt Heads

Helmeted	standard IMS, VA, and DOF.
Mallet Head	+1 DOF, reduce ranges by 10 paces per category
Fisted Bolt	+1 IMS, +1 DOF, +1 Ob to hit
Spear Tip	+1 VA, -1 IMS
Horsehead	-1 VA*, +1 Ob to hit, reduced range as Mallet head

\*These powerful arrows are designed to knock riders off their horses. Each stage on the DOF also causes a Push, where the successes are determined by the DOF. Target rolls Speed to resist push. Missed successes count as paces staggered. If the rider misses the obstacle by two successes he is knocked off his mount.

**Crossbow Horsehead:** I: Ob 2 Push; M: Ob 3 Push; S: Ob 4 Push.

**Heavy Crossbow Horsehead:** I: Ob 2 Push; M: Ob 4 Push; S: Ob 5 Push.

## Thrown Weapons

Weapon	Power	VA
Baseballs	0	-
Bricks	2	-
Small rocks	0	-
Small knives	0	-
Weighted knives	1	-
Shuriken	2	-
Javelin	2	-
Axe	2	1

<b>Bricks, Rocks, Axe DOF</b>	<b>Knives, Shuriken DOF</b>	<b>Javelins DOF</b>
1-3 Incidental	1-2 Incidental	1-2 Incidental
4-5 Mark	3-5 Mark	3-4 Mark
6 Superb	6 Superb	5-6 Superb


## Thrown Weapon Ranges

Weapon	Pointblank	Lob	Throw	Hurl
Baseball	1	x5	x10	x30
Bricks	2	x1	x3	x6
Rocks	2	x2	x5	x15
Small knives	1	x1	x3	x4
Weighted knives	2	x2	x5	x10
Shuriken	1	x1	x6	x10
Javelin	3	x2	x10	x20
Axe	2	x1	x3	x6

All Ranges are in Paces.  
 All Multipliers are based on character's Power  
**Lob:** 1 Action; **Throw:** 2 Actions; **Hurl:** 3 Actions  
**Pointblank:** Targets at PB range are -2 Ob to hit. If the target is closer than PB range, it is +4 Ob to hit.

# Appendix: Martial Arts

## Expanded Counterstrikes

 A counterstrike has many variations. To inspire you to greater martial arts prowess, I'll list a few. These variations should be limited to characters with applicable martial skills or styles:

### Locking-Block<sup>def</sup>

Dice are divided between “block” and counterattack as normal, but rather than “striking” back, the defender uses his remaining dice to attempt to Lock his opponent. When using a Locking Block or Counter-Lock, a defender does not have to use the Get Inside action in order to apply a Lock to his opponent. See Lock in Melee Mechanics.


### Throwing- or Pushing-Block<sup>def</sup>

Dice are divided between “block” and counterattack. But rather than “strike” back the defender uses her dice to Throw or Push her opponent. When using a Throwing Block or Push Block, a defender does not have to use the Get Inside action in order to use a Throw on her opponent. See Throw in Melee Mechanics.

### Counter-Disarm<sup>def</sup>

Dice are divided as with a normal Counterstrike, but the defender may attempt to disarm the attacker with his “counter attack” dice as per the Disarming Strike action. The obstacle for a Counter-Disarm is only *half* of the attacker's weapon skill.

## Specialist Martial Arts

 In the Burning Wheel skill system, Boxing, martial arts, and weapons skills are assumed to cover wide varieties of styles and experiences. Generally, the fighters use what is best available to them at the time; there is no preference for one style over another.

However, in the campaign that I run, my players were very eager to develop the martial arts abilities of their characters. The campaign has an Eastern flavor to it and, using that context, we have built martial arts specialist rules for developing stylized arts.

The “specialist” arts have individualized maneuvers separate from the basics listed in Melee Mechanics; they also have certain penalties they suffer.

These arts are separate skills from the general Brawling, Boxing, martial arts and weapons skills.

### Learning “Special Moves”

Each “special move” is listed with an obstacle. This is used only to learn the move. *It is not the obstacle to use the move.*

In order to master the maneuver and add it to his repertoire, a character must successfully test his skill vs the obstacle three times. Each test takes three days, pass or fail. The successes do not have to be consecutive—a character may fail many times before he succeeds even once! No Artha except for Luck may be used for these tests. Tests to learn special moves cannot be made “in stance,” either.

*Chima is mastering Tae Poong Do. His current skill is B5 and he wants to learn the Flying Kick. The young master returns to his temple to study and practice. He tests his skill vs Obstacle 5. It takes six tries before five successes come up. 18 days have passed and Chima has one successful test. He continues to practice and tests his skill another five times before another five success roll comes up—another 15 days, for a running total of 33. Chima presses on and gets lucky; his next test comes up all five successes. He has passed three tests against the Ob 5 of the Flying Kick in 12 attempts, for a total of 36 days of training.*

Learning special moves never counts as standard practice. The character benefits from this time in other ways!

## Tae Poong Do

Tae Poong Do (TPD) is a variation on traditional tae kwan do. The art focuses on the attack, primarily with the legs, and training the body into a hardened, weapon-like state. Movement is crucial to this art. Constant dashing and side-stepping mimic the winds upon which this art is based. Opponents will find it very hard to pin down a practitioner of TPD.

- Tae Poong Do has all basic moves available.
- Tae Poong Do suffers from all basic combat modifiers.

**Additional Basics (come with skill):**

**Rising Attack-** Practitioners may kick out of a fall and leap to their feet. They stand in one action and may attack as they stand.

Tae Kwan- Punch  
 Nam Poong- Front kick  
 Dong Poong- Right roundhouse kick  
 Sauh Poong- Left roundhouse kick  
 Book Poong- Axe kick

**Special Moves/Abilities:****Ob 1 No-Face Kick**

TPDer's have no rear flank and are always considered to be facing their opponent no matter how their back is turned.

**Ob 2 Tae Kwan**

Push kick. Damage as normal kick plus effects of Push.

*Palgi scores four successes with a Push Kick against his foe. That's a Mark result for damage, which is applied before the Push. His foe now tests his Speed as if he had been pushed and gets 2 successes. Subtract those from Palgi's four successes—the foe gets staggered back two paces (as per standard Push rules).*

**Ob 3 Tae Poong<sup>agg</sup>**

Circle kick, Hook kick or Wheel kick. Adds +1 to the IMS of unarmed damage when this kick is thrown. If the attacker misses, he must spend an action recovering. The next action is lost and is considered a hesitation as the attacker re-orient's himself.

**Ob 3 Yong Poong<sup>neu</sup>**

Sweep kick. Skill vs Ob equal to target's Speed. If successful, the target is knocked off of his feet.

**Ob 4 Iron Fist Level 1**

Toughening of the hands and feet. Adds +1 Power to unarmed melee attacks.

**Ob 5 Une Cheong Baram "The Divine Wind"<sup>agg</sup>**

This leaping or flying kick gives +2 to IMS for unarmed attacks. If the attacker misses or is foiled, then he must spend two actions recovering. This Strike may not be Blocked. TPDer may sprint into this kick with a +1 Ob modifier (down from +4 Ob).

**Ob 5 Iron Fist Level 2**

Toughening of the hands and feet. Additional Iron Fist training increases the Power of unarmed melee attacks by a further +1. At this point the practitioner also gets a Versus Armor rating of 1 for barefisted attacks.

**Ob 6 Tae Den Ji Da<sup>neu</sup>**

As Throw except target is tossed two paces per extra success. See Throwing rules for more detail.

**Ob 6 Iron Fist Level 3**

Toughening of the hands and feet. Additional Iron Fist training increases the Power of unarmed melee attacks by a further +1.


**Ob 7 Koin Poong<sup>neu</sup>**

Great Leap. Test skill. Horizontal, running leap: 3 paces per success; Standing leap: 2 paces per success. Vertical: Standing leap: .5 pace per success; Running: 1 paces per success.

**Ob 7 Kal Kwon<sup>def</sup>**

Weapon Breaker. The only defensive special move in the art. TPDer's skill vs. foe's Strike. Successes go to Block, extra successes after successful Block go into breaking the weapon. Obstacle to break: Ob 2 for wooden weapons, Ob 3 for metal. +1 Obstacle if the weapons are "superior quality."

**Ob 9 Whirlwind**

 By focussing all of his qi into a single fearsome blast of energy the master can temporarily shade-shift his Reflexes one step to the right. The shift lasts one Exchange. The master must meditate for four hours before he may unleash the whirlwind again.

## Kimdo

Kimdo is a softer art than Tae Poong Do. This art centers on teaching balance and awareness rather than attack and hardening.

The use of Kimdo in self defense is founded on four basic ideas: Avoid, Warn, Lure and Kill. If confronted with an aggressor, the martial artist first attempts to avoid him and disengage. If the attacker persists, the Kimdoer warns him that he is treading on dangerous ground and should desist. This warning can be given in a number of ways: a Great Push, a Disarm or even a Throw. If the warning is ignored, the Kimdo practitioner is taught to then lure the attacker into lashing out at her. This usually results in the Kimdoer Locking her opponent up. At this

point, the Kimdo practitioner is taught that it is fully in her right to kill her attacker. Usually, this is done quite swiftly by applying a Killing Lock.

Kimdo practitioners may not use the Strike, Feint or Counterstrike maneuvers, they also may not take the Aggressive stance. All other maneuvers and penalties stand as normal for Kimdo.

### Basic Practitioners of the Art Benefit from:

#### *Landing Roll*

Kim Do allows martial artists to test their skill against the effects of a Throw or Push. The martial artist rolls out of the fall; Successes knock off thrower's successes as a Block to a Strike in regards to *damage*. The Kim Doer is still thrown, but is unhurt.

#### *Counter-Feint*

Kimdoers may throw a "Counter-Feint" move. This maneuver counteracts Feints. If played against the Feint maneuver, the Kimdoer "out-Feints" the feinter. Instead of being faked out of position, the Kimdoer may Push, Great Push, Throw or Lock the attacker. It must be scripted whether the move is a Counter-Feint-Push or a Counter-Feint-Lock.

#### *Balance and Awareness*

For Locks, Throws, Pushes, Charges and Avoids Kimdoers use their skill when performing these maneuvers. They also use their skill as their Natural Defenses when defending against them.

### Special Moves/Abilities:

#### **Ob 1 Counter-Push<sup>def</sup>**

Kimdo meets most attacks by redirecting the energy of the incoming blow and sending it elsewhere. Mechanically, the maneuver is akin to a Block. Roll skill vs attack. If the Ob is met, then the attack is deflected. Extra successes over the attacker's count as a Push. The Push must move in the direction of the attacker's momentum.

#### **Ob 2 Counter-Lock<sup>def</sup>**

Kimdo can easily deal with flailing arms and slashing swords. The mechanics of Counter-Lock are the same as Counterstrike; divide dice between Blocking and Locking. This Lock does not require that the user be Inside to apply it.

#### **Ob 3 Counter Throw<sup>def</sup>**

Similar to Counter-Push except that the attacker is taken off his feet and moved in the direction of the defender's choosing. Initial successes go to deflecting the attack. Extra successes count as a Throw. Use the basic Throw mechanics.

#### **Ob 4 Counter-Disarm<sup>def</sup>**

Dice are divided as per Counterstrike, but the Kimdoer may attempt to Disarm the attacker with the "Strike" dice. The obstacle for the Disarm is half the attacker's skill, rounded up.

#### **Ob 5 Great Push<sup>neu</sup>**

Like Push, except that the target is staggered two paces for each additional success over the target's Natural Defenses roll.

#### **Ob 5 Don't Feint on Me**

Expanding on some of the basic forms of his art the Kimdoer learns to sense his opponent's movements and predict her attacks. Whenever an attacker uses a Feint (against a Kimdo counter move) she Strikes as normal, but the Kimdoer is allowed to defend himself with an Avoid. The Kimdoer *must* retreat from the attack.


#### **Ob 6 Killing Lock<sup>neu</sup>**

Practitioners learn how to apply pressure when Locking an opponent. A Kimdoer may apply a damaging Lock without having to reduce his opponent to zero dice. Also, when applying a "damaging lock," use the skill exponent in place of Power to factor the IMS. See the Lock rules for more on damaging Locks.

#### **Ob 7 Centered Way**

The master can never be moved off his feet against his will. *Pushes, Throws and Charges have no effect on the character.*

#### **Ob 8 Touch of a Feather, Weight of a Mountain**

 When in close proximity with another character, the master of Kimdo can sense his opponent's movements and counteract them. When the master is "on the Inside," his opponent must reveal his next action to him. The first action of each subsequent volley must also be revealed (so long as the master remains Inside). If the Kimdo master Gets Inside in the middle of an exchange or volley, he may alter his action to suit his need without a forfeit penalty.

## Takashido

This is a very demanding sword art that rigorously trains the qi of the student and focuses on speed and precision.

Takashido requires that the swordsman always be in motion. If the swordsman cannot move his full dash move in a particular volley, he suffers +2 Ob to all Takashido tests until he is free to move.

**Ob 2 Gliding Feet**

Takashido ignores the Dash movement penalty in melee combat.

**Ob 3 Blazing Wings**

Takashido swordsmen learn to fight with a long sword and small sword. Both swords may be used to attack in one action; divide skill dice between the swords and Strike. If not being used to attack, the off-sword counts as a 2D shield.

**Ob 3 Water Sheath**

Once properly trained, the swordsman may draw his sword in one action rather than two.

**Ob 4 Sweeping Wind Strike<sup>agg</sup>**

Using movement and fast sword work, Takashido can attack multiple targets on one flank in one action. Divide skill dice between targets and roll for individual Strikes.

**Ob 4 Glittering Star-Catcher**

Once this maneuver is mastered the swordsman may Block Great Strikes.

**Ob 5 Weaving Snake**

Takashido trains the body to become one with the sword, and trains the sword never to be still. The Weaving Snake discipline teaches how to coil and uncoil the body, twist, revolve and strike around opponents. Takashido is used to Get Inside and Push. Weaving Snake also replaces the swordsman skill as his Natural Defenses against Get Inside, Lock, Throw and Push.

**Ob 5 Pillar of Heaven**

The swordsman may catch weapons with his own blades. When raising a Block, extra successes go into a Lock maneuver. The attacker may resist with Natural Defenses Agility or Power. The Lock counts against the “weapon skill” of the opponent. Thus the Pillar of Heaven can be used to reduce the opponent’s skill so that he may be more easily disarmed. The Pillar of Heaven locking block only applies to the weapon, not the wielder, however all other Block and Lock rules apply.

**Ob 6 Viper’s Tooth**

Once properly trained the swordsman may strike from the scabbard. Essentially he can Draw and Strike in the same action.


**Ob 7 Coiled Strike**

The swordsman focuses his qi and leaps past his target striking it from behind. This maneuver requires an entire volley to perform. The swordsman tenses and then leaps at the last second. He must start his attack about one pace less than his volley sprint distance from his target. Swordsman travels full sprint distance in the last action of the volley and may Strike without penalty. The target is +3 Ob to strike at the oncoming swordsman. If the swordsman misses his Coiled Strike he spends one action recovering.

**Ob 8 Sword of Lightning, Sheath of Cloud**

Building off the force of the Viper’s Tooth the swordsman is trained to draw his sword as if it were a flash of lightning. When the swordsman draws and Strikes, it counts as a “lightning strike.” It is as if he bid an action to Strike—his strike will precede any other non-bid action in the volley. The sword must start sheathed in order to use this technique.

**Ob 9 Leaves of Autumn Strike**


 This technique focuses the swordsman’s qi to the utmost. It requires one volley of inaction to focus, after which the swordsman may strike *any and all targets* within his volley *sprinting* distance. The Leaves of Autumn Strike happens in one single action. It may not be used to strike the same target twice. All strikes are done at full skill dice. After use, this power requires eight hours of meditation before it can be performed again.





# Detailed Combat Example

Combat is not the focus of Burning Wheel, but it is important to the game and, let's face it, it's fun. In the scenarios that the players will be acting out, combat is a distinct possibility. Knights Templar, Elven Rangers and Great Orcs tend to get into a tangle every so often. You know?

 Special attention has been paid to the details of combat within this game, so that when the time comes to draw swords and attack, the players can feel that they are being accurately represented on the field. The example below combines all of the aspects of the previous mechanics sections.

## “Von Goten’s Story Part II” in Detail

### The Players

#### Von Goten

Pe: B4 Wi: B5 Ag: B4 Sp: B4 Po: B6 Fo: B4

Re: B4 He: B6 Ste: B6 Mo: B11 Hesitation: 3 ACTIONS

#### PTGS

Su: B3 Li: B6 Mi: B8 Se: B9 Tr: B10 Mo: B11

**Skills:** Armor Training, Shield Training, Mounted Combat Training, Riding B3, Sword B5, Brawling B4, Knives B3, Lance B3, Crossbow B3, Intimidation B2, Command B2, Field Dressing B3, Etiquette B2, Inconspicuous B2, Sprinting Training.

**Gear:** Helmet, Mail Hauberk, Arms and Half Leggings; Bastard Sword, Dirk, Sword Belt, Money Pouch, Field Dressing Kit, Boots, Leather Gloves and a Rain Cloak.

**Armor:** 5 Dice/DN 4 (4 Dice w/o Helmet)

**Sword:** Pow 3, Add 2, VA 1

I M S  
B5 B9 B13

**Dirk:** Pow –, Add 1, VA –

I M S  
B3 B6 B9

**Traits:** Loyal, Fearless.

#### Rahtgash (Orc with Crossbows)

Pe: B3 Wi: B2 Ag: B4 Sp: B5 Po: B4 Fo: B4

Re: B4 He: B3 Ste: B6 Mo: B10 Hesitation: 8/6 ACTIONS

#### PTGS

Su: B2 Li: B6 Mi: B7 Se: B8 Tr: B9 Mo: B10

**Skills:** Bow B4, Knives B3, Stealthy B3, Brawling B4, Sword B3

**Gear:** 2 Loaded Crossbows, Knife, Hide leggings, Fur Cloak and Hobnailed boots.

**Armor:** 2 Dice/DN 6

**Rusty Knife:** Pow –, Add 1, VA –

I M S  
B2 B4 B6

**Traits:** Twisted, Loathsome, Fanged Maw, Black-Blooded, Claw-Handed, Lynx-Eyed, Cannibal; Ferocious, Cunning, Hateful.

#### Burza (Orc with Knives)

Pe: B3 Wi: B2 Ag: B4 Sp: B5 Po: B5 Fo: B3

Re: B4 He: B2 Ste: B6 Mo: B10 Hesitation: 8/6 ACTIONS

#### PTGS

Su: B2 Li: B5 Mi: B7 Se: B8 Tr: B9 Mo: B10

**Skills:** Bow B3, Knives B4, Stealthy B3, Brawling B4, Sword B3

**Gear:** 2 Knives, Hide leggings, Fur Cloak and Hobnailed boots.

**Armor:** 2 Dice/DN 6

**Knives:** Pow –, Add 1, VA –

I M S  
B3 B5 B7

**Traits:** Twisted, Loathsome, Fanged Maw, Black-Blooded, Claw-Handed, Lynx-Eyed, Cannibal; Ferocious, Hateful.

### The Story

To start, the GM asks Pete, Von Goten’s player, to make a Perception test. The test is Ob 2—but the GM doesn’t tell Pete that. Pete rolls and gets two successes, enough to see the beacon and realize something is amiss.

*“The signal beacon!” Von Goten started in alarm. Through the dismal curtain of the downpour he could make out the shining white light glimmering atop the gate tower.*

*“Matthias!” He grabbed his Samagosian friend by the collar and pulled him down, so his mouth was level with his ear. “Matthias, the beacon! They are raiding,” Von Goten had to scream to be heard over the din of the torrent. Rain ricocheted off the metal bowl of his helmet, he could barely hear himself shout. “Go fetch Tristam and Tomás. In the chapel, go!”*

*The barbarian knit his black brows together and chewed his lip in response. Hefting his broad-bladed spear, the Samagosian dashed off across the courtyard toward the tower from which they had begun their patrol.*

The GM informs Pete that it is dark and raining heavily—+2 to Perception Obstacles due to the rain and +4 Ob for the darkness. However, Von Goten is carrying a lantern which reduces his Perception penalties to +1 Ob immediately around him. Also, Von Goten has a +2 Ob penalty to Perception tests while wearing his helmet.

*As he watched his friend disappear into the gloom, a splash of cold fear ran down Von Goten's spine; night made the tight of his helmet's confines even darker.*

Pete decides he should at least give his character a remote chance at seeing something, so Von Goten removes his headgear.

*Casting aside fear, he pressed on toward the main bastion. He couldn't see a damned thing. After he had gone a short way, he stopped under the pitiful shelter of the cooper's awning. The man-at-arms set his lantern down and began to unbuckle his headgear.*

Unbeknownst to Pete or Von Goten, two Orcs lurk up ahead, forward scouts who slipped into the fortress to cause mayhem. The Orcs are moving Stealthily—two successes each. They both carry knives, and one also carries a pair of crossbows. Since Orcs have the Lynx-Eyed trait they suffer no penalty from the darkness—even without his egregious, lantern they would easily spot Von Goten.

Rahtgash kneels in the street and takes a shot at Von Goten with his crossbow while Burza slinks ahead to finish off the soon-to-be-doomed squire. Rahtgash Acquires Von Goten and then Aims for two actions. His obstacle is base 1 for an Acquired shot at short range, +2 for Heavy Rain, -1 per action Aimed—a total Ob of 1. However, the Orc does not have a Crossbow skill, so he suffers a double obstacle penalty—making his Obstacle 2 for the shot. He tests his B4 Agility and comes up with no successes, a clear miss.

The GM immediately calls for another Perception test on the part of Von Goten and privately notes the obstacle for noticing the missed crossbow shot—Base 2, +3 for weather and light conditions: Ob 5 Perception test. Pete rolls four dice: 6, 6, 5, 4—a terrific roll! The sixes are open-ended and come up 4, 1—for a total of 5 successes, barely passing the test.

*Something skittered in the dark and caught his eye. He quickly finished removing the bascinet, and unburdened his senses. But still the rain was thick and his lantern's light weak, he could see little.*

Pete is worried now. He states, "I hold still and search the darkness." Another Perception test is in order for the squire. However, the GM decides to let the last test ride. Von Goten is searching the darkness with his 5 successes. The Orcs are both Stealthing with 2 successes, plus the +1 Ob penalty for Rain and +2 Ob penalty for Darkness, Ob 5. And to top it all off Von Goten doesn't have Observation Training, so he has a Double Obstacle penalty to see the Stealthing Orcs. Thus, 5 successes don't amount to much right now!

*"Blasted rain," He swore to himself. It was the perfect night for a raid. At least the garrison wouldn't have to worry about fire. A small consolation.*

Frustrated with the shoddy workmanship of the crossbow, Rahtgash tosses it aside and pulls up his second. He may not have the skill to use the weapon, but *Cunning* Rahtgash knows how awkward crossbows are at close quarters, thus when he raided the armory he stole two weapons and loaded them both, for just such an occasion. Raising the bow he takes aim at the unsuspecting squire. He Acquires Von Goten and Aims for two Actions. Another Ob 1 shot. This time he rolls 2 successes and hits.

*A dull shock shook the squire's sturdy frame. His mail rattled from a sharp blow and his bones vibrated in tune—he knew this feeling well.*

The GM tells Pete to make an Armor test for Von Goten; he has been hit by a VA 1 weapon. (He doesn't tell him any other details since Von Goten has as of yet failed to notice his attackers.) Pete rolls four dice and needs at least one 5 (chainmail has a DN 4, the crossbow has a VA 1, raising the DN of the armor by one). He gets a single 5 and does not roll any 1s on the test.

*But before he could fully register what had happened a wet weight landed on his back.*

Just as Pete is about to ask what he was hit by, the GM tells him to make a Natural Defenses Speed test. Burza crept in the shadows behind him and performed the Get Inside action. Burza rolled his B5 Speed and got three successes. Natural Defenses against Get Inside is Speed. Von Goten's Speed is B4, Pete rolls 3 dice and comes up with one success. Burza wins the test and Gets Inside. On top of it all, the GM asks Pete to make a Steel test for Von Goten (for surprise). Pete rolls the B6 Steel against Obstacle 3 (his Hesitation) and comes up with 3 success, narrowly passing the test (and probably saving his character's life.)

*Von Goten staggered and cursed his luck. At first he thought the awning had buckled under the rain and collapsed onto him, but then he felt a hand grope across his face and grasp his beard. There was someone on him!*

At this point the GM calls for a script to be written. Pete furiously scribbles his actions, the GM notes the Orcs'.

First Exchange: Von Goten		
Volley 1	Volley 2	Volley 3
1st- Lock slimy hand Actions/Speech 2nd- Throw "Foul Orc!"	1st- Assess Actions/Speech "trouble"	1st- Draw... Actions/Speech "Very Bad"
stand ground movement	walk toward lantern movement	walk toward lantern movement

First Exchange: Burza		
Volley 1	Volley 2	Volley 3
1st- <del>Stab head w/ knife</del> Actions/Speech 2nd-Lock	1st- <del>Stab head</del> Forfeit V3 to Change V2 to Get Up.	1st- <del>Stab head</del> This Action was Forfeited.
Stay on squire's back! movement	movement	movement
First Exchange: Rahtgash		
Volley 1	Volley 2	Volley 3
1st-Assess Actions/Speech	1st/2nd- Stealth Actions/Speech	1st- Change squire Actions/Speech
7og toward squire movement	7og toward squire movement	sprint movement

*Instinct took over. He grabbed the searching hand and wrenched it away. Across his other shoulder a black blade darted down and slit his cheek open. A fetid voice crackled in his ear. Von Goten got his legs under him and violently swung his weight around, hurling his attacker into the wall of the cooper's shop. Barrels scattered and tumbled at the impact.*

*"Foul Orc!" Von Goten hissed to himself in alarm. "Trouble. Very bad trouble," he searched the darkness for his attacker and edged closer to his sputtering lantern. A shadow crossed the light, two glowing coals within it fixed his gaze. But before he could judge its attitude the inky form lunged out of the darkness and tackled him about the waist. Water sliced around his feet and his steel spurs slid across the slick cobblestones, yet the squire kept his feet. "Thanks be," he muttered to himself, well aware of his dimming fate and small good fortune.*

### 1st Exchange, Volley 1 Results

Von Goten grabs Burza's grasping hand. He rolls his B6 Power vs B5 Burza's Power. Pete rolls three successes for Von Goten, the GM rolls two for Burza. The Orc is a strong opponent, but the squire has steel sinew. Von Goten now has Burza in a 1 die Lock. At the same time Burza Strikes Von Goten in the head—there is no penalty for "called shots" when fighting on the Inside. The GM rolls Burza's B4 knife skill and gets two successes—a Mark result and B5 wound to Von Goten. Since Von Goten took off his helmet and the strike was a "called shot" to the head, Von Goten does not get to test his armor to deflect the blow. Pete notes the wound on his PTGS, a B5 is a Superficial Wound for the squire—he now has +1 DN to all tests. Uh-oh.

On the Second Action, Burza tries to reverse the Lock and grab Von Goten around the throat. Pete tests the squire's Natural Defenses Power vs the Orc's Power for the Lock. Burza gets three successes this time, but Von Goten matches him with another three

successes. (Remember, Von Goten now needs 5s instead of 4s to get successes. Pete is rolling very well!) At the same time they are struggling, Von Goten attempts to Throw the Orc. Pete tests Von Goten's Power vs the Orc's Natural Defenses Agility—however, remember that Burza is in a 1 die Lock, thus his Natural Defenses are reduced by 1. Normally the Orc's Agility is B4, so he rolls three dice to resist. The squire gets three successes on his Power test for the Throw, the Orc gets one success to resist and is thrown two paces. Burza is thrown into a pile of barrels. The barrels have a Material Strength of 1 plus Von Goten's Power of B6—the throw IMS is 1 B4, M B7, S B10. Von Goten only got two successes more than Burza, not enough to achieve a Mark result with an Add 2 weapon. (He needed one success to pull off the throw. Two additional successes, three total, would done a Mark result.) Burza takes a B4 from the throw—a Superficial Wound for him; he too now has +1 DN to all tests.

### 1st Exchange, Volley 2 Results

Von Goten *glance assesses* the area trying to see if there are more Orcs—trying to see if he should run or stay. Since matters have changed a bit since his last Perception test (being ambushed by an Orc tends to rattle a man) the GM asks Pete to roll Von Goten's Perception, rather than let the previous test ride. Pete gets three successes, not bad at all! But not enough to see Rahtgash coming—2 Stealthy successes, +2 for Rain, +1 Lantern Light, double obstacle penalty = Ob 10!

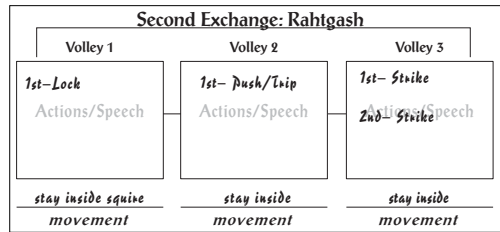
Burza's second and third volleys are foiled because of Von Goten's throw. He forfeits his an action to change his Volley 2 action to the first part of Get Up. After that he has no more actions for the exchange—he hesitates during Volley 3.

Rahtgash moves Stealthily across the lantern light to get a better angle of attack on the squire. The GM deems this a complex physical act, thus it takes two of Rahtgash's actions.

### 1st Exchange, Volley 3 Results

Von Goten starts to draw his sword, which takes two actions. Rahtgash Charges Von Goten. He rolls his B5 Power vs Von Goten's B4 Speed and gets three successes to Von Goten's two. Von Goten staggers one pace but is not knocked down.

Second Exchange: Von Goten		
Volley 1	Volley 2	Volley 3
1st- Lock Actions/Speech "Thanks Be"	1st- Lock Actions/Speech 2nd-Throw	1st- Counter-Strike Actions/Speech
stand ground movement	stand ground movement	stand ground movement
Second Exchange: Burza		
Volley 1	Volley 2	Volley 3
1st-Finish Getting Up Actions/Speech 2nd-Change	1st-Strike Actions/Speech	1st- Strike Actions/Speech
Sprint movement	stay inside movement	stay inside movement



*Then as he grappled with this new shadow, his first assailant careered out of the darkness and ploughed headlong into him as well. The blasted devils weren't hindered in the least by the night. Fortunately, the redoubtable soldier had his feet under him and he held his ground. The loathsome Orcs kicked and bit, trying desperately to drag him off, so that they might overpower him and slit his throat. A knife rebounded from his shoulder guard. Von Goten blindly grabbed one of the Orcs and heaved him down. The squire could barely pry him loose. The beast was wiry and starved, but with a tenacious and feral disposition.*

*One Orc was off, but the other fought on. A clawed hand clamped onto the neckward rim of Von Goten's breastplate and yanked hard. He wrestled with the goblin, warding off its blackened knife, as the other Orc regained his feet.*

## 2nd Exchange, Volley 1 Results

Since Rahtgash's Charge was marginally successful—his intention was to knock the squire down and leap on him—the GM decides that Rahtgash is “on the Inside.” He informs Pete of this before the scripts are written for the second exchange.

Pete decides there is no time to finish drawing the sword, so he doesn't script the second action in that sequence. Rather, he scripts in a Lock as his first action. Von Goten uses his superior Power to his advantage and Locks up Rahtgash. Pete rolls his B6 Power and gets one success. The GM rolls Raht's Natural Defenses Power of B5 and gets two successes—Raht fends off Von Goten.

However, the Orc has the same idea. He wants to get Von Goten Locked up so that he will be easy prey for the Orc knives and teeth. The GM rolls Raht's B5 Power vs the squire's Natural Defenses Power of B6. Pete's luck runs a little dry and he only rolls one 5 on six dice. The GM doesn't do much better, he rolls 2 successes. However, this means that Von Goten is now in a 1D Lock.

As if it couldn't get any worse, Burza comes charging back into the fray. He gets up and scramble-stumble-sprints into the big man-at-arms. Normally, characters *are* allowed to start moving on the second part of the Get Up action, but not usually allowed to sprint. Thus the GM imposes an Obstacle modifier on Burza as he Charges: his base obstacle for the Charge is 2 rather than 1. The GM rolls Burza's B5 Power and gets three successes—very lucky! Remember Burza also is at DN 5 because he was wounded by Von Goten's Throw. Von Goten rolls one success for his Natural Defenses. Burza wins the test by one. (In the case of Versus tests where there is a “base obstacle” higher than 1, the successes needed to meet that obstacle only ever count as one success—thus Burza actually only got

two successes.) Von Goten staggers again, but does not fall. Again the GM decides that this is enough to get the Orc on the Inside. Had Von Goten got more successes on his Natural Defenses than the Orc got on his Charge, he would have staved the Orc off completely.

## 2nd Exchange, Volley 2 Results

Von Goten tries to Lock up Rahtgash—Pete rolls his B6 Power minus one die for the Lock and needs DN 5 due to his wound. Pete gets two successes. Raht tests his Natural Defenses Power and gets two successes, enough to ward off the Lock.

Burza tries to stab the squire, he wants to weaken him for the easy takedown. However, Von Goten and Raht are locked arm in arm struggling for dominance—the GM determines that Burza can't get off a clean called shot to the head. He imposes a +3 Obstacle for the headshot and decides instead to take a general Strike at Ob 1. The GM rolls two successes—a Mark hit! But Pete tests Von Goten's chainmail armor and easily deflects the shot.

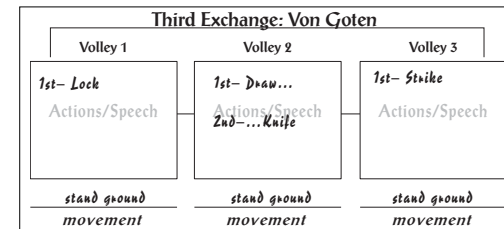
Meanwhile, Raht Pushes Von Goten. The GM rolls Raht's Power vs Von Goten's much hindered Natural Defenses Speed. Raht rolls three successes. Pete rolls 3 dice at DN 5! (4–1 due to Raht's Lock.) Pete gets one success. Raht won the test by two, enough to push Von Goten back two paces, but since it was a Push action he is one success shy of knocking him down.

Von Goten wraps his arms around Raht and heaves him off. Pete rolls a phenomenal 4 successes on 5 dice. The GM rolls Raht's B5 Speed and botches it with only 1 success. Pete's first success goes toward breaking Raht's 1D Lock, the second goes to meeting Raht's 1 die of Natural Defenses, and the remaining two dice count as Throw successes—Raht is hurled two paces onto the cobblestones and is hurt by the hard landing: The street has a Material Strength of 3 plus Von Goten's Power of B6 for an IMS of I B5, M B9, S B13. Raht lands hard on his head and takes a B5, a Light Wound for him. Ouch.

## 2nd Exchange, Volley 3 Results

Raht is out of the way, leaving the path clear for his companion; Burza Strikes wildly at Von Goten, a knife shot to the head. Von Goten Counterstrikes, expecting such a dirty trick from an Orc. Pete divides his Brawling skill: 3 dice for Block and 1 die for Strike. The GM rolls Burza's Knife Skill of B4 and gets one success. Pete rolls Von Goten's Block and gets one success, warding off the blow. He then Strikes back, a called shot to the face, with 1 die (at DN 5) and hits! doing a B3 to Burza: Another Superficial, raising the Orc's DN to +2 now.

Raht is lying on his arse, well out of position. Rather than Forfeit, the GM decides that Raht thrashes around in anger, gnashing his teeth, slashing at the air and cursing the cruel dark.





Third Exchange: Burza		
Volley 1	Volley 2	Volley 3
1st—Dash Actions/Speech 2nd—Strike	1st—Bite Actions/Speech	1st—Strike Head Actions/Speech
— movement	— movement	— movement
Third Exchange: Rahtgash		
Volley 1	Volley 2	Volley 3
1st—Get... Actions/Speech 2nd—Up	1st—Charge Actions/Speech	1st—Lock Actions/Speech
— movement	sprint movement	stay inside movement

*Hands and arms interlocked, Von Goten and the leathery goblin grappled. Using his superior weight to his advantage, the squire managed to pin his adversary—once he had the Orc's knife tied up, he took the opportunity to draw his own.*

*Before he could bring the weapon to bear, his legs were kicked out from under him. Hit from behind, Von Goten slipped, staggered, and fell. Wicked visions flashed before his benighted eyes: The memory of his cousin, a goodly knight, pulled down by Orcs and slain through his visor; the fortress captured and burning; a black flag draped on the altar of Tudomin.*

### 3rd Exchange, Volley 1 Results

Von Goten Locks up Burza. He gets two successes to the Orc's none. Burza attempts to knock the squire off his feet again, getting one success to Von Goten's none—the Orc pushes the squire by one pace but fails to knock him down. On his second action Burza attempts to Strike Von Goten in the head with his knife. He rolls two dice and needs 6s! (Two dice off for Von Goten's lock, and +2 DN for the Orc's wounds.) The GM rolls no successes, the Orc completely misses.

### 3rd Exchange, Volley 2 Results

Raht is on his feet again and hurls himself at the two entangled opponents. Since Von Goten has Burza so tightly locked up, the GM rules that the Charge attack hits and affects both of them. The GM rolls Raht's B4 Power and gets two 6s, two successes. Pete tests his Natural Defenses Speed and gets no successes. The GM rolls for Burza, his Speed minus 2 (needing 6s), and gets no successes. All go down in a heap.

As they are going down Von Goten and Burza act. Burza snaps at the squire, again getting no successes and missing, and Von Goten draws his knife. Since Von Goten did fall from the Charge the GM asks Pete to test his Agility to see if he holds on to his dirk. Pete rolls 4 dice gets one success and keeps his knife.

### 3rd Exchange, Volley 3 Results

Von Goten slashes at Burza with his knife, but considering the tangle of bodies the GM gives him the +4 Ob Striking from the Ground penalty and he misses. Burza suffers equally; pressed between his cohort and his enemy he has little momentum to Strike. He has the same penalty as Von Goten, and he misses.

Raht, on the other hand, tries to pin the burly man-at-arms down with a Lock. The GM tests the Orc's B4 Power and gets one success. Pete rolls Von Goten's Natural Defenses Power and narrowly avoids the Lock with one success himself.

Fourth Exchange: Von Goten		
Volley 1	Volley 2	Volley 3
1st—Block Actions/Speech	1st—Lock Actions/Speech 2nd—Strike	1st—Strike Actions/Speech
Roll Over movement	— movement	— movement
Fourth Exchange: Burza		
Volley 1	Volley 2	Volley 3
1st—Strike Actions/Speech 2nd—Break Lock	1st—Strike Head Actions/Speech	1st—Strike Head Actions/Speech
— movement	— movement	— movement
Fourth Exchange: Rahtgash		
Volley 1	Volley 2	Volley 3
1st—Lock Actions/Speech 2nd—Disarm	1st—Strike Head Actions/Speech	1st—Strike Head Actions/Speech
— movement	— movement	— movement

*The two jackals were on him, scrabbling and clawing their way toward his end. He cursed to himself; if he hadn't removed his helmet.... Now was not the time for regret though! He rolled onto his back and flailed his arms free so he could shield his face from the hungry knives of the ferocious Orcs. Much to his surprise, Von Goten had managed to keep hold of his own dirk when he fell.*

*In the light of his watch-lantern, the dim forms of his assailants resolved; their coal-red eyes, yellowed teeth and oily hair. Desperate, he lashed out with his blade at those very eyes and found purchase. As soon as his knife bit home he reached out with his other hand to brace his target and punched the blade deeper down. Unrelenting, he slammed his dirk to the hilt, once and then again. Something cracked most satisfactorily under his blows.*



*The squire was shocked from his murderous reverie by a bolt of white pain. The other goblin slashed savagely at Von Goten's face as the veteran soldier murdered the Orc's companion. Another blow cut clumsily across his scalp, he was blinded from the metal, rain and blood.*

*If he lived through this, his liege would never let him forget his misjudgment! His helmet would be a fixture on his head, like that of a statue!*

### 4th Exchange, Volley 1 Results

The GM informs Pete that Von Goten lost his hold on Burza when he fell.

Pete tries to position Von Goten better so as not to have such a severe penalty for his strikes. He rolls to his back and Blocks. Burza Strikes Von Goten. He gets one success. Von Goten rolls his B3 Knife skill and also gets one success, the Strike is successfully opposed.

Raht doggedly tries to pin Von Goten again. He pits his B4 Power vs Von Goten's B6 Natural Defenses Power. Once again the GM fails to get more successes than Pete.

For Burza's second, action he anticipated another Lock attempt by Von Goten, However, Von Goten doesn't have an action now nor did he successfully Lock Burza on his first action, so Burza's action is wasted. Raht, on the other hand, attempts to Disarm Von Goten. As he rolls the dice the GM wonders what the hell he was thinking scripting this action, it's too hard for the wounded Orc to pull off—Raht rolls his B4 Brawling against an Obstacle 3, Von Goten's Knife skill. Raht also has a DN 6 due to his Light wound penalty. The GM rolls two successes, very close but no cigar.

### 4th Exchange, Volley 2 Results

Von Goten Locks Burza as both Orcs strike at him. Pete rolls Von Goten's Power and gets two successes. The GM rolls for Burza's Natural Defenses Power and gets no successes. Burza is in a 2D Lock.

Both Orcs Strike, Burza rolls his B4 Knife skill and gets no successes because of his DN 6. Burza Strikes *as* Von Goten is Locking him, thus this Strike is not penalized by the Lock. Raht manages to get two successes, a Mark result for an Add 1 weapon, and cuts Von Goten across the head. A B4 is a Superficial wound to the squire. Von Goten now has two Superficial wounds, +2 to his DN.

Pete scripted two actions in the second Volley. He Strikes at the locked up Burza. He rolls his B3 Knife skill and needs 6s due to his wounds. Pete rolls a single success—an Incidental Hit, a B3 to the Orc. A B3 is a superficial wound to Burza. That now raises Burza's DN penalty to +3. The GM erases the DN penalty and notes a die off all Burza's stats, attributes and skills due to the wounds. Also, since Burza lost a die due to wounds, he must test his Steel. The GM rolls 5 dice (B6 minus 1 die for wounds) and gets 5 successes. Very good, but Burza's base Hesitation is 3 actions, due to his extremely low Will. That means Burza is still hesitating for the next three actions.

### 4th Exchange, Volley 3 Results

Burza is Hesitating and may do nothing further. Von Goten Strikes him in the head with his knife. His Obstacle is 1, he gets three successes! A Superb result with the knife,

a B9. A B9 is a Traumatic wound to Burza— -4D to all stats, attributes and skills. More than enough to incapacitate him.

Raht slashes Von Goten in the head again, 2 successes—another Superficial wound for the squire. Now Von Goten has +3 DN. Pete erases the +3 DN from his injury modifiers box and instead writes -1D. And he too must make a Steel Test due to the pain of his wounds. Pete rolls Von Goten's B6 Steel minus one die. Von Goten's base Hesitation is 5, his Fearless trait reduces that to 3. Pete rolls three successes on his Steel test and Von Goten doesn't even blink from the pain.

At this point the GM determines that Raht must make a Steel test after seeing his cohort's skull smashed open by Von Goten. He rolls Raht's B6 Steel with a DN of 6. Raht's base Hesitation is 8 due to his low Will, but his Cold Black Blood trait reduces that by two. The GM reduces the Hesitation obstacle by an additional point because Raht never really liked Burza anyway—a final Ob of 5. He rolls and gets three successes, which means Raht will Hesitate for the next two actions. The GM decides Raht will *Run Screaming* from Von Goten.

Fifth Exchange: Von Goten		
Volley 1	Volley 2	Volley 3
1st- Strike/Punch Actions/Speech	1st- Change Bid Atha for Initiative Actions/Speech	1st- Strike Actions/Speech
Roll Over movement	Sprint movement	— movement
Fifth Exchange: Burza		
Volley 1	Volley 2	Volley 3
Actions/Speech Bleed	Actions/Speech Bleed More	Actions/Speech Spit Blood
— movement	— movement	— movement
Fifth Exchange: Rahtgash		
Volley 1	Volley 2	Volley 3
1st- Run Screaming (Get...) 2nd- Run Screaming (...Up) Actions/Speech	1st- Change Actions/Speech	1st- Bite 2nd- Strike Actions/Speech
Scramble Away movement	Sprint movement	— movement

*Lashing out wildly, Von Goten landed a lucky blow, a hard cross to the Orc's ribs, and the wiry creature rolled off him. The pain of his own wounds sat like a veil across his vision, but a hot, murderous fire boiled within him now—it burned the shroud away. Von Goten could clearly see the silhouette of the goblin in the brass light, could see him tensing for the lunge.*

*Full of fire and fume, the burly squire put all he could into a bodily charge. Fate was kind and his formidable frame crashed full force into the black goblin, taking him by surprise. Before the twisted creature could recover, Von Goten slammed his dirk down, cracking its misshapen skull.*

### 5th Exchange, Volley 1 Results

Von Goten punches Raht as the Orc rolls off him and scrambles away. Pete rolls the squire's B4 Brawling skill minus one die due to his wounds. His obstacle is 3 (Base 1 plus a +2 penalty because Raht is actually considered sprinting for this volley.) He gets 2 successes, enough to connect but not enough to do any damage.

### 5th Exchange, Volley 2 Results

Raht recovers his wits and turns to face the beleaguered squire. Somewhat at a loss, the Orc decides to leap back into the fray with a tried and true Charge. However, Pete has scripted a Charge as well, and before either side announces their actions, Pete states, "I am bidding a point of Artha for Initiative." The GM blinks, "Ok, you have the Initiative. Go ahead."

Von Goten's Charge happens before Raht's. Pete rolls for the Charge as normal, and Raht gets his Natural Defenses. Von Goten wins by two successes and knocks Raht down. Pete says, "I want to stay on him." And Von Goten is now considered on the Inside.

The GM turns to Pete, "Hey, Von Goten wasn't even on his feet. He couldn't really Charge." Pete swallows hard.

"It's ok," says the GM. "An honest mistake, right? I'll let it slide."

Obviously, Raht's Charge is spoiled by his being on his back with 200 pounds of muscle and metal on top of him.

### 5th Exchange, Volley 3 Results

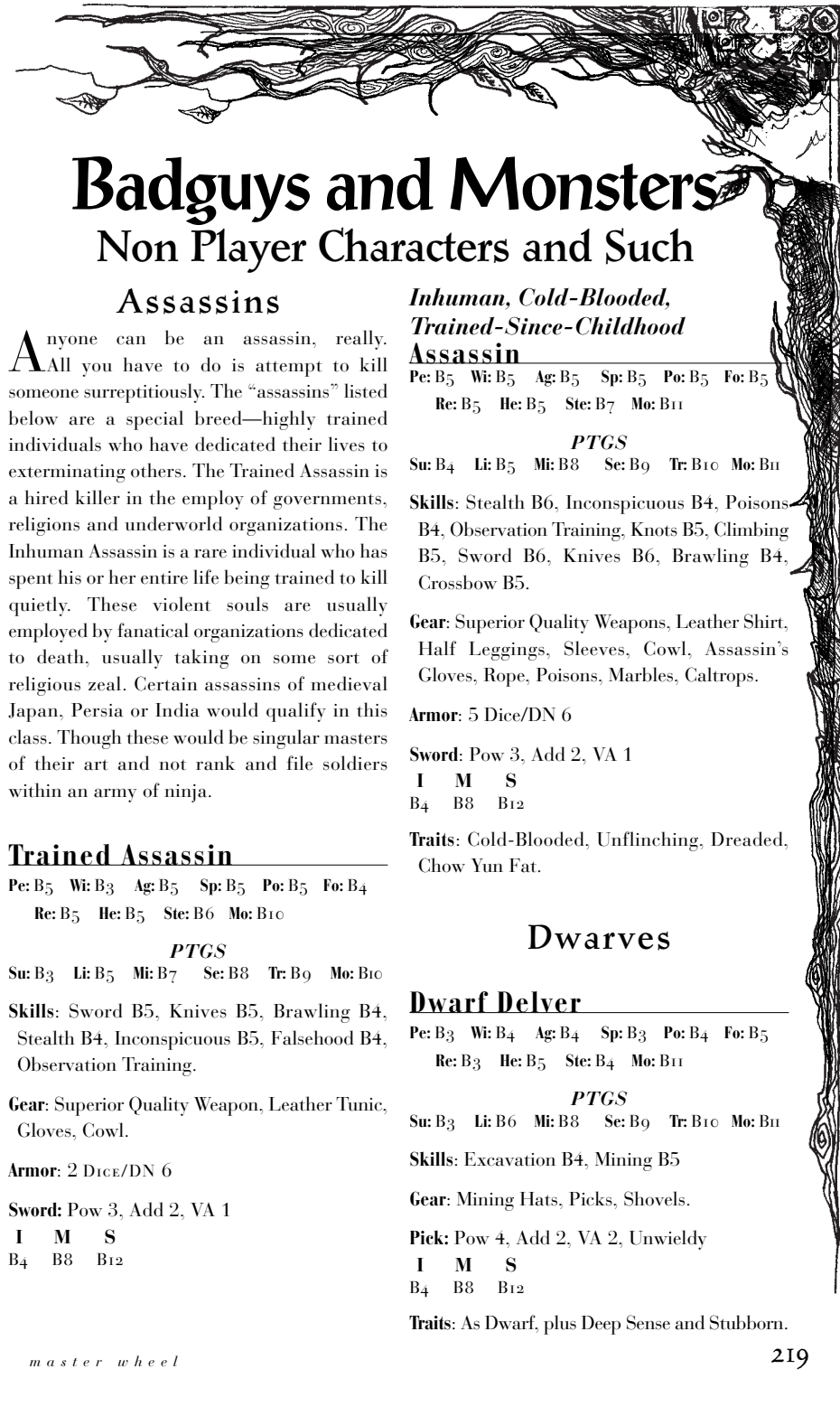
Von Goten Strikes Raht in the head as the Orc bites him. Pete rolls his current Knife skill, B2 and gets two 6s. He spends a point of Artha for Luck and rerolls the 6s. They both come up successes for a total of 4 successes—a Superb shot with an Add 1 weapon. That's a B9 to Raht, a Traumatic wound, -4D.

Raht spitefully bites the squire on the hand as his life spills out, but only gets 1 success, an Incidental hit. A B2 to the squire, and not enough to hurt him.

*His heart beat a riot against his chest. Amazed at his luck, the squire heaved himself to his feet and dashed out of the lantern light in to the relative safety of shadow. Regaining his composure, he drew his bastard sword and returned his bloodied dirk to its home. Rain stung his tattered scalp.*

The encounter is over, no further scripts are written. The GM asks Pete, "What do you do now?" Pete says he wants to investigate what he saw skittering through the darkness before the Orcs came upon him.

*The night loomed around him like wall of somber mourners. Cautiously, he cast about for more black-blooded creatures. As he peered out...*



# Badguys and Monsters

## Non Player Characters and Such

### Assassins

Anyone can be an assassin, really. All you have to do is attempt to kill someone surreptitiously. The "assassins" listed below are a special breed—highly trained individuals who have dedicated their lives to exterminating others. The Trained Assassin is a hired killer in the employ of governments, religions and underworld organizations. The Inhuman Assassin is a rare individual who has spent his or her entire life being trained to kill quietly. These violent souls are usually employed by fanatical organizations dedicated to death, usually taking on some sort of religious zeal. Certain assassins of medieval Japan, Persia or India would qualify in this class. Though these would be singular masters of their art and not rank and file soldiers within an army of ninja.

### Trained Assassin

**Pe:** B5 **Wi:** B3 **Ag:** B5 **Sp:** B5 **Po:** B5 **Fo:** B4  
**Re:** B5 **He:** B5 **Ste:** B6 **Mo:** B10

#### PTGS

**Su:** B3 **Li:** B5 **Mi:** B7 **Se:** B8 **Tr:** B9 **Mo:** B10

**Skills:** Sword B5, Knives B5, Brawling B4, Stealth B4, Inconspicuous B5, Falsehood B4, Observation Training.

**Gear:** Superior Quality Weapon, Leather Tunic, Gloves, Cowl.

**Armor:** 2 DICE/DN 6

**Sword:** Pow 3, Add 2, VA 1

**I M S**  
B4 B8 B12

### Inhuman, Cold-Blooded, Trained-Since-Childhood Assassin

**Pe:** B5 **Wi:** B5 **Ag:** B5 **Sp:** B5 **Po:** B5 **Fo:** B5  
**Re:** B5 **He:** B5 **Ste:** B7 **Mo:** B11

#### PTGS

**Su:** B4 **Li:** B5 **Mi:** B8 **Se:** B9 **Tr:** B10 **Mo:** B11

**Skills:** Stealth B6, Inconspicuous B4, Poisons B4, Observation Training, Knots B5, Climbing B5, Sword B6, Knives B6, Brawling B4, Crossbow B5.

**Gear:** Superior Quality Weapons, Leather Shirt, Half Leggings, Sleeves, Cowl, Assassin's Gloves, Rope, Poisons, Marbles, Caltrops.

**Armor:** 5 Dice/DN 6

**Sword:** Pow 3, Add 2, VA 1

**I M S**  
B4 B8 B12

**Traits:** Cold-Blooded, Unflinching, Dreaded, Chow Yun Fat.

### Dwarves

### Dwarf Delver

**Pe:** B3 **Wi:** B4 **Ag:** B4 **Sp:** B3 **Po:** B4 **Fo:** B5  
**Re:** B3 **He:** B5 **Ste:** B4 **Mo:** B11

#### PTGS

**Su:** B3 **Li:** B6 **Mi:** B8 **Se:** B9 **Tr:** B10 **Mo:** B11

**Skills:** Excavation B4, Mining B5

**Gear:** Mining Hats, Picks, Shovels.

**Pick:** Pow 4, Add 2, VA 2, Unwieldy

**I M S**  
B4 B8 B12

**Traits:** As Dwarf, plus Deep Sense and Stubborn.

**Dwarf Foot Soldier**

Pe: B4 Wi: B5 Ag: B4 Sp: B4 Po: B4 Fo: B6  
Re: B4 He: B6 Ste: B4 Mo: B11

**PTGS**

Su: B3 Li: B6 Mi: B8 Se: B9 Tr: B10 Mo: B11

**Skills:** Hammer B4, Brawling B3, Armor, Shield.

**Gear:** Hammer, Dwarven Shield, Chainmail, and Helmet.

**Armor:** 4 Dice/ DN 4; Shield: 3 Dice/DN 3

**Pick:** Pow 4, Add 2, VA 2, Slow

**I M S**  
B4 B8 B12

**Traits:** As Dwarf plus Stubborn and Orc-hater.

**Dwarf Axe-Bearer**

Pe: B4 Wi: B6 Ag: B5 Sp: B4 Po: B5 Fo: B6  
Re: B4 He: B6 Ste: B6 Mo: B12

**PTGS**

Su: B3 Li: B6 Mi: B9 Se: B10 Tr: B11 Mo: B12

**Skills:** Axe B5, Brawling B4, Armor, Shield.

**Gear:** Dwarven Axe, Dwarven Shield, Superior Quality Chainmail, and Helmet.

**Armor:** 4 Dice/DN 4; Shield: 3 Dice/DN 3

**Pick:** Pow 4, Add 2, VA 2, Slow

**I M S**  
B5 B9 B13

**Traits:** As Dwarf plus Stubborn, Suspicious and Fearless.

**Elves**

**Elf Bowyer**

Pe: B5 Wi: B5 Ag: B6 Sp: B5 Po: B4 Fo: B4  
Re: B5 He: B6 Ste: B6 Mo: B10

**PTGS**

Su: B2 Li: B4 Mi: B6 Se: B8 Tr: B9 Mo: B10

**Skills:** Bow B5, Bow-craft B4, Stealthy B5, Knives B4.

**Gear:** Elven Bow, Assorted Arrows, Plated Leather, Hooded Cloak, Elven Knife.

**Armor:** 3 Dice/DN 5

**Pick:** Pow 4, Add 2, VA 2, Slow

**I M S**  
B5 B9 B13

**Traits:** As Elf plus Lithe.

**Elf Sword Singer**

Pe: B5 Wi: B5 Ag: B6 Sp: B5 Po: B5 Fo: B5  
Re: B5 He: B6 Ste: B6 Mo: B11

**PTGS**

Su: B3 Li: B6 Mi: B8 Se: B9 Tr: B10 Mo: B11

**Skills:** Sword, B5, Sword Song B4, Brawling B5, Shield, Bow B4, Riding B5, Singing.



**H**

**Hobgoblin Kyodai**

Pe: B4 Wi: B4 Ag: B4 Sp: B4 Po: B4 Fo: B5  
Re: B4 He: B4 Ste: B6 Mo: B11

**PTGS**

Su: B3 Li: B6 Mi: B8 Se: B9 Tr: B10 Mo: B11

**Skills:** Sword B4, Bow B4, Spear B4, Knives B3, Stealthy B4, Etiquette B3, Skirmish Tactics

**Gear:** Haramaki, Haidate, Sode, Sune-ate, Hanburo, Sword, Hunting Bow, Barbed Arrows, Hooked Spear.

**Armor:** 5 Dice/DN 5

**Sword:** Pow 3, Add 2, VA 1

**I M S**  
B4 B7 B10

**Traits:** Loyal, Determined and Tough.

**Hoszrem (Lizard Man)**

Pe: B5 Wi: B5 Ag: B5 Sp: B4 Po: B5 Fo: B6  
Re: B4 He: B6 Ste: B7 Mo: B12

**PTGS**

Su: B3 Li: B6 Mi: B9 Se: B10 Tr: B11 Mo: B12

**Skills:** Sword B5, Bow B4, Brawling B5, Climbing B4, Stealth B4.

**Gear:** Run of the mill Sword, Hunting Bow, Leather Cloak

**Savage Bite:** Pow 2, Add 2, VA 1

**I M S**  
B4 B7 B10

**Reptilian Claws:** Pow 1, Add 2, VA -

**I M S**  
B3 B6 B9

**Sword:** Pow 3, Add 2, VA 1

**I M S**  
B4 B8 B12

**Traits:** Scaly skin (-1 pip to incoming damage), Semi-prehensile Tail, Savage Bite, Reptilian Claws, Resilient, Devout.

**Sword Singer Gear:** Elven Sword, Shield, Superior Quality Chainmail, and Helmet.

**Armor:** 4 Dice/DN 4; Shield: 2 Dice/DN 4.

**Pick:** Pow 3, Add 2, VA 2, Slow

**I M S**  
B4 B8 B12

**Traits:** As Elf plus Graceful.

**Wilder Elf**

Pe: B5 Wi: B5 Ag: B4 Sp: B4 Po: B4 Fo: B4  
Re: B4 He: B5 Ste: B4 Mo: B10

**PTGS**

Su: B2 Li: B4 Mi: B6 Se: B8 Tr: B9 Mo: B10

**Skills:** Song of the Harvest B4, Mending B4, Singing B5.

**Gear:** Flute or harp, good wine, good food.

**Bare-fist:** Pow -, Add 2, VA -, Fast

**I M S**  
B2 B4 B6

**Traits:** As Elf plus Reclusive.

**G**

**Gryphon**

Pe: B6 Wi: B5 Ag: B7 Sp: B8 Po: B6 Fo: B7  
Re: B8 He: B13 Ste: C6 Mo: B13

**PTGS**

Su: B5 Li: B9 Mi: B11 Se: B13 Tr: B14 Mo: B13

**Character Shredding:** B6

**Beak:** Power 3, Add 2, VA 3.

**I M S**  
B5 B9 B13

**Claw:** Power 2, Add 2, VA 1.

**I M S**  
B4 B8 B12

**Traits:** Keen Eyesight, Smarter than you think, Flight of the Eagle, Tough.



## Mercenaries

The mercenary soldier is a fixture of nearly every campaign. These are not mythical hardened veterans, rather they are simply armed men who chose to fight for their bread rather than farm for it. Individually, they are a dangerous nuisance, en masse they are a significant threat. There are very few characters in Burning Wheel who could survive a concerted attack from two dozen mercenaries.

### Mercenary

**Pe:** B3 **Wi:** B3 **Ag:** B3 **Sp:** B3 **Po:** B4 **Fo:** B3  
**Re:** B3 **He:** B3 **Ste:** B4 **Mo:** B9

#### PTGS

**Su:** B2 **Li:** B4 **Mi:** B6 **Se:** B7 **Tr:** B8 **Mo:** B9

**Skills:** B3 Weapon skill (Sword, Bow, Crossbow, Spear, or Knives skill where appropriate.), Brawling B3, Haggling B3.

**Gear:** Run of the mill weapon, Leather Tunic, Chapeau de Guerre.

**Armor:** 2 Dice/DN 6; 1 Die/DN 5

**Sword:** Pow 3, Add 2, VA 1

**I M S**  
B4 B7 B10

**Traits:** Belligerent

### Mercenary Sergeant

**Pe:** B4 **Wi:** B4 **Ag:** B3 **Sp:** B3 **Po:** B4 **Fo:** B4  
**Re:** B3 **He:** B4 **Ste:** B5 **Mo:** B10

#### PTGS

**Su:** B2 **Li:** B4 **Mi:** B6 **Se:** B8 **Tr:** B9 **Mo:** B10

**Skills:** B4 Weapon skill (Sword, Bow, Crossbow, Spear, or Knives skill where appropriate), Brawling B4, Haggling B3, Command B2, Intimidation B4.

**Gear:** Run of the mill weapon, Leather Tunic, Chapeau de Guerre.

**Armor:** 2 Dice/DN 6; 1 Die/DN 5

**Sword:** Pow 3, Add 2, VA 1

**I M S**  
B4 B7 B10

**Traits:** Belligerent, Overbearing, Oddly Likable.

### Mercenary Captain

**Pe:** B4 **Wi:** B4 **Ag:** B4 **Sp:** B3 **Po:** B4 **Fo:** B4  
**Re:** B4 **He:** B4 **Ste:** B6 **Mo:** B10

#### PTGS

**Su:** B2 **Li:** B4 **Mi:** B6 **Se:** B8 **Tr:** B9 **Mo:** B10

**Skills:** B4 Weapon skill (Sword, Bow, Crossbow, Spear, or Knives skill where appropriate), Brawling B4, Haggling B3, Command B4, Intimidation B4, Interrogation B4.

**Gear:** As Sgt plus Mail Shirt, Helmet (Bascinet).

**Armor:** 4 Dice/DN 4

**Sword:** Pow 3, Add 2, VA 1

**I M S**  
B4 B7 B10

**Traits:** Belligerent, Prick, Utilitarian.

### Mercenary Commander

**Pe:** B5 **Wi:** B4 **Ag:** B4 **Sp:** B3 **Po:** B5 **Fo:** B5  
**Re:** B4 **He:** B5 **Ste:** B6 **Mo:** B11

#### PTGS

**Su:** B3 **Li:** B6 **Mi:** B8 **Se:** B9 **Tr:** B10 **Mo:** B11

**Skills:** Sword B5, (Bow, Crossbow, Spear, or Knives skill where appropriate), Brawling B4, Haggling B3, Command B5, Intimidation B5, Interrogation B5.

**Gear:** Superior Quality Weapon, Mail Shirt, Helmet (Bascinet).

**Armor:** 4 Dice/DN 4

**Sword:** Pow 3, Add 2, VA 1

**I M S**  
B4 B8 B12

## Ogres

These behemoths are captured young from wild tribes and put to work in the Orc society. They lead a harsh and withering existence, forced to undertake labors that even the powerful Orcs shy from. Ogres are not mental invalids, but being raised as slaves for a brutal people hell-bent on destruction limits their range of opportunities and stunts their mental growth.

Most serve unquestioningly: Pain is life—life is pain. There is nothing else. This is where the Brute trait comes into play. These monsters tend to shrug off pain and harm, moving inevitably toward their single-minded goal. This makes them incredibly dangerous, since their physical stature makes them hard to drive off, and killing one is a herculean effort!

### Ogre War-Slave

**Pe:** B3 **Wi:** B2 **Ag:** B4 **Sp:** B4 **Po:** B8 **Fo:** B8  
**Re:** B3 **He:** B6 **Ste:** B7 **Mo:** B15

#### PTGS

**Su:** B4 **Li:** B8 **Mi:** B10 **Se:** B12 **Tr:** B14 **Mo:** B15

**Skills:** Brawling B5, Back-Breaking Labor, Lifting Heavy Things, Abuse Sponge.

**Gear:** Club, Mace or Sword, Shield, Hides, Fur Cloak and a Sack.

**Armor:** 3 Dice/DN 6; Shield: 2 Dice/DN 5

**Club:** Pow 2, Add 2, VA 1 (for Power)

**I M S**  
B6 B12 G1

**Traits:** Thick-Skinned, Big-Boned, Massive Stature, Brute\*.

\* The Brute trait describes that the Ogre is just too dumb to know when to stop. His mind doesn't matter, he only quits when his body does. There for Ogres can't be incapacitated by reducing their Perception or Will to zero dice. They are only knocked out when a physical stat is reduced to zero.

## Orcs

### Black Goblin

**Pe:** B3 **Wi:** B2 **Ag:** B3 **Sp:** B4 **Po:** B3 **Fo:** B4  
**Re:** B4 **He:** B3 **Ste:** B5 **Mo:** B9

#### PTGS

**Su:** B2 **Li:** B4 **Mi:** B6 **Se:** B7 **Tr:** B8 **Mo:** B9

**Skills:** Bow B3, Brawling B4, Stealthy B4, Foraging B3.

**Gear:** Knife, Hunting Bow, Barb Tipped Arrows, Poor Quality Plated Leather.

**Armor:** 3 Dice/DN 5

**Knife:** Pow 1, Add 1, VA –

**I M S**  
B2 B3 B5

**Traits:** Twisted, Loathsome, Fanged Maw, Black-Blooded, Claw-Handed, Lynx-Eyed, Cannibals; Running Away.

### Black Wolf Rider

**Pe:** B3 **Wi:** B3 **Ag:** B3 **Sp:** B4 **Po:** B5 **Fo:** B5  
**Re:** B4 **He:** B5 **Ste:** B6 **Mo:** B11

#### PTGS

**Su:** B3 **Li:** B6 **Mi:** B8 **Se:** B9 **Tr:** B10 **Mo:** B11

**Skills:** Riding B4, Mounted Combat, Spear B4, Sword B4, Armor Training, Brawling B4, Warg Husbandry, B2.

**Gear:** Chainmail Hauberk, Iron Spear, Black Sword, A Big, Bad, Black, Talking Doggie.

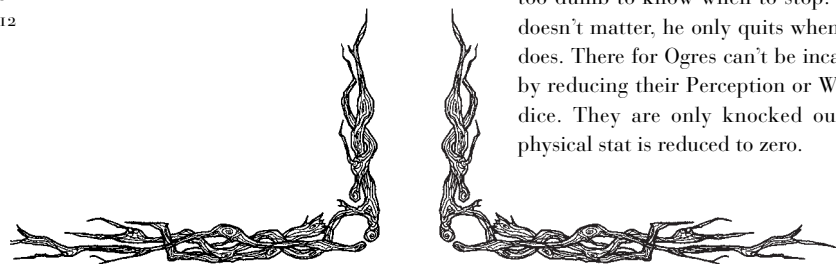
**Armor:** 3 Dice/DN 4

**Spear:** Pow 2, Add 2, VA 1, Fast

**I M S**  
B4 B7 B10

**Traits:** Twisted, Loathsome, Fanged Maw, Black-Blooded, Claw-Handed, Lynx-Eyed, Cannibals; Cry of Doom.

Many Orc tribes use Great Black Wolves as mounts. When fighting in close combat the Warg does the lion's share of the





killing while the rider takes strikes where he can and attempts to defend the Warg from spear and sword.

### Orc Legioner Veteran

**Pe:** B3 **Wi:** B3 **Ag:** B3 **Sp:** B4 **Po:** B5 **Fo:** B5  
**Re:** B4 **He:** B5 **St:** B6 **Mo:** B11

#### PTGS

**Su:** B3 **Li:** B6 **Mi:** B8 **Se:** B9 **Tr:** B10 **Mo:** B11

**Skills:** Bow B4, Sword B4, Stealthy B3, Brawling B4, Armor Training, Shield Training.

**Gear:** Black Scimitar, Shield, Chainmail Hauberk, Chain Hood and Small Helm, Hide leggings, Fur Cloak and Hobnailed boots.

**Armor:** 4 Dice/DN 4; Shield: 2 Dice/DN 4

**Scimitar:** Pow 3, Add 2, VA 1

**I M S**  
B4 B8 B12

**Traits:** Twisted, Loathsome, Fanged Maw, Black-Blooded, Claw-Handed, Lynx-Eyed, Cannibals; Ferocious, Cunning, Hateful.

### Great Orc

**Pe:** B5 **Wi:** B4 **Ag:** B4 **Sp:** B5 **Po:** B5 **Fo:** B6  
**Re:** B5 **He:** B7 **St:** B7 **Mo:** B12

#### PTGS

**Su:** B3 **Li:** B6 **Mi:** B8 **Se:** B9 **Tr:** B10 **Mo:** B11

**Skills:** Sword B5, Stealthy B4, Brawling B5, Command B4, Intimidation B6, Armor Training, Shield Training, Bow B4.

**Gear:** Black Scimitar, Shield, Chainmail Hauberk, Chain Hood and Small Helm, Chain leggings, Fur Cloak and Hobnailed boots.

**Armor:** 6 Dice/DN 4; Shield: 2 Dice/DN 4

**Scimitar:** Pow 3, Add 2, VA 1

**I M S**  
B4 B8 B12

**Traits:** Twisted, Loathsome, Fanged Maw, Black-Blooded, Claw-Handed, Lynx-Eyed, Cannibals; Ferocious, Cunning, Tough as Nails, Wicked, and Savage Consequences.

## Trolls

### Cave Troll

**Pe:** B3 **Wi:** B2 **Ag:** B3 **Sp:** B4 **Po:** B9 **Fo:** B8  
**Re:** B3 **He:** B7 **St:** B10 **Mo:** B15

#### PTGS

**Su:** B4 **Li:** B8 **Mi:** B12 **Se:** B14 **Tr:** B15 **Mo:** B15

**Skills:** Brawling B5, Black Speech B1.

**Gear:** Teeth and Claws.

**Stone-Skinned:** DN 4/ Dice 5

**Claws:** Pow 1, Add 2, VA 2

**I M S**  
B5 B10 B15

**Traits:** Brutal, Wicked, Dim-witted, Stone-skinned, Sight of the Bat, Aura of Fear, Fearless. **Night's Blood:** Cave Trolls are turned to stone if the rays of the sun fall upon them. Rightly so, they fear the sun terribly and only venture forth in the dark.

### Great Troll

Great Trolls are the intelligent, wicked and unabashedly evil cousins of the Cave Trolls. They serve in the armies of the Great Orcs as bodyguards to the commanders and occasionally even as terrible hosts of soldiers.

**Pe:** B4 **Wi:** B4 **Ag:** B3 **Sp:** B4 **Po:** B8 **Fo:** B9  
**Re:** B3 **He:** B8 **St:** B10 **Mo:** B15

#### PTGS

**Su:** B5 **Li:** B10 **Mi:** B12 **Se:** B13 **Tr:** B14 **Mo:** B15

**Skills:** Brawling B5, Hammer B5, Black Speech B3.

**Gear:** Great Hammer, Round Shield of Blackened Steel, Teeth and Claws.

**Stone-Skinned:** DN 4/ Dice 5

**Shield:** 2d/DN 4

**Claws:** Pow 1, Add 2, VA 2

**I M S**  
B5 B9 B13

**Black Hammer:** Pow 4, Add 2, VA 3

**I M S**  
B6 B12 B16

**Traits:** Brutal, Cunning, Wicked, Stone-skinned, Sight of the Bat, Tough as Nails, Aura of Fear, Fearless; **Loathe the Sun:** Great Trolls are not turned to stone by the rays of the sun. However, they remember its terrible punishment and hate it for its splendor. If they can help it, Great Trolls will remain under the cover of night, but if they are forced to they will journey out into the day.

## W

### Wave-Walker, Deep One

**Pe:** C3 **Wi:** B5 **Ag:** B4 **Sp:** B4/6 **Po:** C5 **Fo:** C5  
**Re:** B4 **He:** B7 **St:** C7 **Mo:** C9

#### PTGS

**Su:** B6 **Li:** B12 **Mi:** C2 **Se:** C5 **Tr:** C7 **Mo:** C9

**Skills:** Crushing Puny Mortals B5, Swimming C6

**Toothy Maw:** Pow 2, Add 2, VA 2

**I M S**  
B5 B9 B13

**Claws:** Pow 1, Add 2, VA 1

**I M S**  
B4 B9 B12

**Traits:** Scaly skin (-1 pip to incoming damage), Webbed Hands and Feet (Speed counts as B6 when swimming), Toothy Maw, Poisoned Bite, Aura of Malevolence (+5 Ob to Steel Tests), Taint of Corruption, Sight of the Shark.

**Poison:** Requires a Mark result bite to inject poison. -2d Forte per 30 seconds (10 Exchanges). Maximum -6d. If Forte is reduced to zero, the victim is killed.

**Taint of Corruption:** If a victim is bitten with an *Incidental* result, roll the DOF. On a DOF roll of a 1 he has been corrupted and develops aquatic traits, such as scales, webbed fingers or toes, gills or ocular membranes.

## Wizards

Below are listed two variations on violent and destructive wizards in Burning Wheel. The Red Wizard is a "traditional" sorcerer type, while the Black Wizard takes on characteristics of an Assassin. Wizards are very rare and extraordinarily powerful. Use them carefully.

### Red Wizard

**Pe:** B5 **Wi:** B5 **Ag:** B4 **Sp:** B4 **Po:** B3 **Fo:** B6  
**Re:** B4 **He:** B6 **St:** B7 **Mo:** B10

#### PTGS

**Su:** B3 **Li:** B6 **Mi:** B7 **Se:** B8 **Tr:** B9 **Mo:** B10

**Skills:** Sorcery B7, Astrology B5, Enchantment B5, Conspicuous B4, Intimidation B5.

**Spells:** Rain of Fire, Pyrotechnics, Turn Aside the Blade, Chaos Ward, Eldritch Shield, Persuasion, Fear, The Sense.

**Gear:** Red Robes, a Charmed Pendant (spell multiplier), an Ensorcelled Staff (sustainer).

**Traits:** Gifted, Inscrutable, Aura of Dread.

### Black Wizard

**Pe:** B6 **Wi:** B5 **Ag:** B4 **Sp:** B4 **Po:** B4 **Fo:** B6  
**Re:** B4 **He:** B6 **St:** B8 **Mo:** B11

#### PTGS

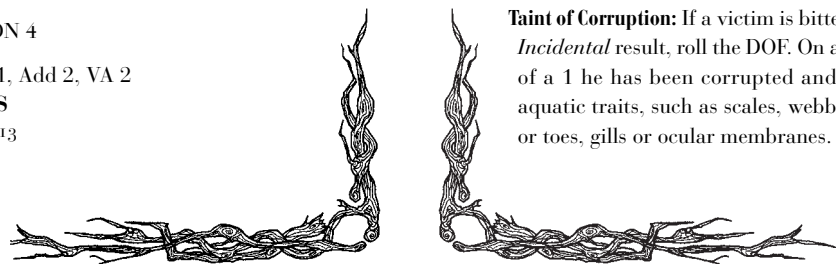
**Su:** B3 **Li:** B6 **Mi:** B8 **Se:** B9 **Tr:** B10 **Mo:** B11

**Skills:** Sorcery B6, Stealthy B4, Brawling B4, Inconspicuous B3.

**Spells:** Mage-light, Dark of Night, Levitation, Witchflight, Fire Breath, Delirium, Turn Aside the Blade, Witch Key, Chameleon.

**Gear:** Black leather sleeves, Black leather tunic, Cowl, Metal Skull Cap, Knives, Ensorcelled Ring (sustainer).

**Armor:** 3 Dice/DN 6; 1 Die /DN 4





**Dagger:** Pow 1, Add 1, VA –

**I M S**  
B3 B5 B7

**Traits:** Gifted, Wicked, Murderous

## Great, Black Wolves

**Pe:** B4/7 **Wi:** B3 **Ag:** B3 **Sp:** B6 **Po:** B5 **Fo:** B6  
**Re:** B5 **He:** B5 **Ste:** B7 **Mo:** B11

### PTGS

**Su:** B3 **Li:** B6 **Mi:** B8 **Se:** B9 **Tr:** B10 **Mo:** B11

**Skills:** Savage Attack B5, Intimidate B5.

**Special Attack:** Ferocious Charge\*

### Speed Multiplier:

Walk x1, Trot x3, Sprint x5

**Crushing Jaws:** Pow 3, Add 2, VA 2

**I M S**  
B4 B8 B12

**Tearing Claws:** Pow 2, Add 2, VA 1

**I M S**  
B4 B7 B10

**Traits:** Feral, Savage, Keen Intelligence, Keen Hearing, Keen Smell, (hence the +3D to the Warg's Perception).

**\*Ferocious Charge:** These huge wolves have a particular (and vicious) method of engaging an enemy. If they are able, a warg will charge his enemy, starting at about six paces away and clearing the gap in a single volley. This is not a typical overbearing attack. Rather it is an elaborate feint used to get their tremendous jaws quickly around the necks of their victims. The Ferocious Charge gives the wolf +2d to his Savage Attack.

In effect, this attack counts simultaneously as a Strike as well as a Lock—*successes count for both the Lock and a Strike*. Lock successes must be shrugged off by the defender's Natural Defenses. If the defender fails to shrug off the warg's successes, then the wolf has succeeded in getting its jaws around the throat or an exposed limb. The warg's next action, once he has his jaws around

something, is to Shake. He convulses his whole body in one muscular whip attempting to snap the victim's spine. No roll is made. If the warg shakes, the victim takes a B12.

## Z



## Ach! Zombies!

**Pe:** B2 **Wi:** B2 **Ag:** B2 **Sp:** B2 **Po:** B5 **Fo:** B5

**Re:** B2 **He:** – **Ste:** – **Mo:** B11

### PTGS

**Su:** – **Li:** – **Mi:** B8 **Se:** B9 **Tr:** B10 **Mo:** B11

**Skills:** Relentless Shambling Death Grip B3.

**Gear:** Ragged remains from the world of the living.

**Dirty Zombie Nails** Pow 0, Add 2, VA –

**I M S**  
B3 B5 B7

**Traits:** Unfeeling\*, Sightless, Unrelenting, The Hunger for Human Flesh, Death Grip.

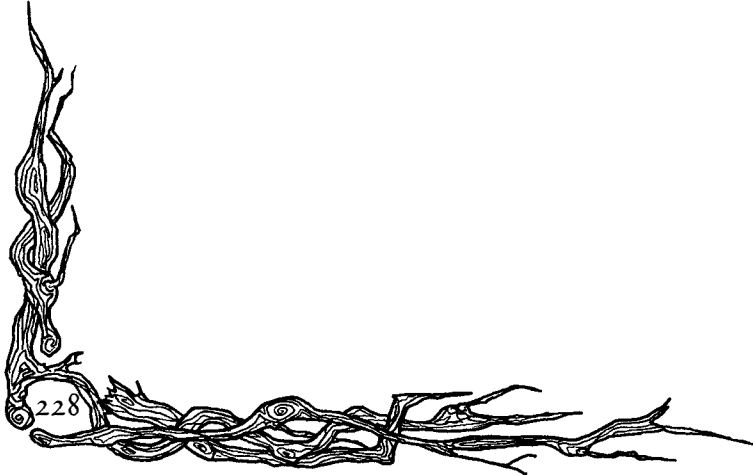
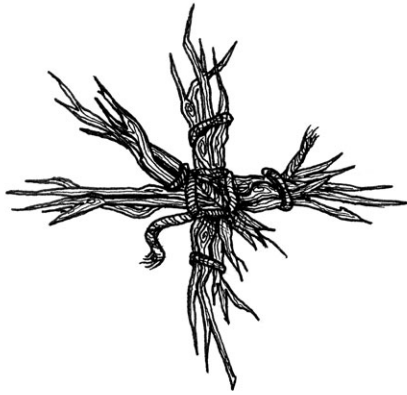
The preferred method of attack for the walking dead is use their *Relentless Shambling Death Grip* skill to *Get Inside*. Your average person can fend off one deadman, but when fighting hordes of the living dead it is only a matter of time before those Speed dice come up all ones and a zombie is on the inside! After they are on the inside, the dead will use his B5 Power to Lock his prey. Once the prey has been incapacitated due to the Lock the zombie will proceed to dine. Roll to Strike using the Death Grip, Ob 0 if the Victim is incapacitated.

Zombies travel in packs; they are almost never encountered alone. Typically, they are encountered in groups of ten to twenty, but they have been seen roaming about in forces numbering in the thousands.

Lastly, some zombies are infectious, some aren't. It depends on the GM's Cold-Blooded Cruelty Factor (CBCF). My CBCF rating is pretty high; all of my zombies are highly infectious with a virulent strain of the zombie disease.

\*Zombies feel *no* pain. *Thus Superficial and Light wounds have no effect on them.* However, subtracted dice do affect them—broken bones and smashed limbs hinder their ability to eat you. *Even so, a zombie is only incapacitated when his Power or Forte is reduced to B0. His other stats do not count for these purposes.*





# Designer's Notes



3

*Therefore he willed that the hearts of Man should seek beyond the world and have no rest therein; but they should have a virtue to shape their life, amid the powers and chances of the world...*

—JRR Tolkien



## Don't Use This System

That's right. You heard what I said. Don't use it. If you are rolling dice in the course of the game you have done something wrong. Or at least that is how I see it. But I admit that I am somewhat of a roleplaying purist. Telling a consensual story with players sitting around the table, all inputting their parts of the narrative is the most perfect game to me. It requires loads of imagination, insight, teamwork, a certain level of verbosity, sense of curiosity, and a hunger for knowledge—all attributes that are well suited to any aspect of life, not just the gaming table.

Ok, now that we all feel good about ourselves, I will say it again: Don't use this system. Dice and numbers just get in the way of good story. And that is what we are all after, deep down, isn't it? A good story. We come to this game inspired by brilliant narratives and we want to participate. We want our chance to act in the story, to change things, to do it our way—we come to the game to get in on the action. The system should be subordinate to that desire, kept in your pocket as a back-up to your own good story. It should support that story and help it move along, not bog it down, and drag it in impossible circles. That is why you shouldn't use this system, or any system for that matter.

Let the story reign. My favorite nights around the table are the nights when we don't roll any dice, the nights where all the hurdles are overcome with a little discussion, a little teamwork and a lot of roleplaying. Trust me, these nights are not just "sit around the campfire and talk about our adventure" nights. I have run whole rebellions without touching the dice. The inspiring words of a commander are far more important to the game and to the players than a roll of the dice.

This system is the antithesis of that free form of storytelling. It is exacting, accurate and sometimes harsh. A well-placed roll of the dice will tell you unequivocally if you have succeeded or failed—if you survive or if you are destined to bleed out your life staring at the twilight sky. This system will inject such a fierce drama into the game that players might come to enjoy it. They might look forward to rolling the dice—to seeing their ideas accurately represented in those little cubes. And we wouldn't want that! We wouldn't want the system to actively support the characters and their development. We wouldn't want all this to make sense, now, would we? So, like I said, don't use this system.

## A Rant about Armor

The sanity of the game as a whole has been preserved by taking a general approach to certain elements. Like armor. The inclusion of endless bits of technical information about which armor is better under what conditions and the massive variety of gear available in a medieval society would bog down the game. Legions of books and games have been written on the subject of historical accuracy and "realism." Play them if you want. The armor rules here are fun and easy (and better than most).

This does not mean that this system shirks its duty to consistently and accurately represent real world counterparts in the body of our fantasy! Hell no, using this armor system will provide very satisfactory representation.


You can call the armor types any name you want, but just let the numbers and general references stand as they are. These basic classifications work well for all types of armor from all over the world from almost any period. My campaign uses variations on East Asian armor styles. For the basic field kit I use plated leather. The wealthier the soldier, the more pieces he can afford. For certain samurai/knight-level nobles, I use a variation of the Portuguese/Japanese *oyoroi* that was introduced to Japan late in the 1600s. It incorporates European metal plating into the Japanese style of armor design. This armor provides 6D of protection at DN 3. It is very powerful!

One set of armor that is not listed here is late period European "knightly" plate armor. The main reason I don't include it is because I have never found a way to impress its value, care and importance on a player—owning a suit is like maintaining a '60 Cadillac in a crash-up derby, and the spare parts are 10 times as expensive. Also, players always shoot right for the biggest guns and toughest gear: "Screw contacts, I want knightly armor!" Snore. A very boring character indeed, who sleeps in his knightly Cadillac and has no friends!

If you read any account of knightly activity in a real war (not tilting or tournaments), you constantly hear about how expensive knights are to maintain and how darn formidable they are on the field. Knights were the tanks of their day; they were terrible and fearsome opponents on and off their horses. Part of this was due to a measure of religious zealotry, part was due to training and practice, and part was due to the armor and weapons technology available to them.

So, if you want to include true late period knights in shining, full platemail in your campaign, go ahead, but be warned: They get 7D at a DN 2.

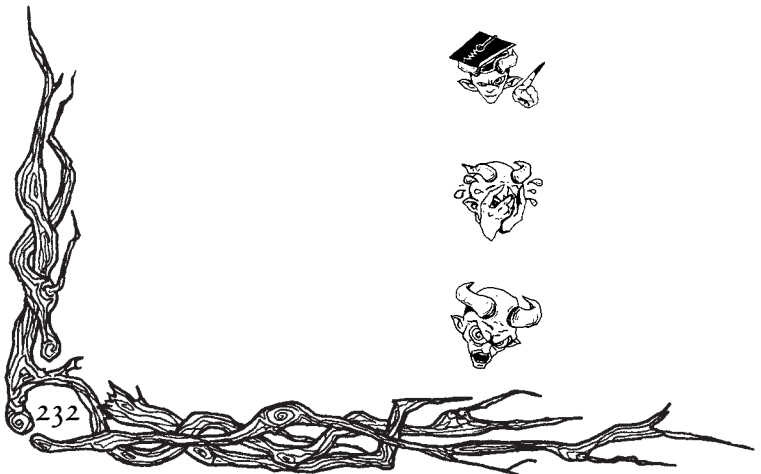
## Weapon Notes, Options and Variations

 The weapons presented in Burning Wheel are general examples designed to cover a broad range. Feel free to come up with your own examples. However, Burning Wheel hates nichey little weapons classifications—endless lists of barongs, bayonets, bolos, daggers, dirks, dudgeons, kards, knives, kuttars, pangas, parazoniums, poniards, skean dhuis, snickersnees, and stilettos only bog the game down. A knife is a knife and a sword is a sword. In rare cases, I will provide variations where the difference between weapons is technological, cultural and useful. The *katana* is a good and obvious example. It's a sword, same as all the rest, but it is a *fast* sword.

When coming up with weapons and stuff of your own, remember this: *Everyone* thinks his weapon is the best, most deadly, most powerful, most penetrating, most advanced...blah, blah, blah. And of course *everyone* has facts and figures to back it up: Historical examples, friends in the SCA, or actual weapons. What does this mean to us? When adding weapons to the game it is important to do a little math. Since everyone says his weapon is the best, we take away the common denominator and see what we have left: *All* minus *Best*= All weapons are the same. (I can already feel the hate waves of historians, militarists and trained martial artists. But it's true.)

Also, consider that I have done a fair amount of research and playtesting to develop numbers that best represent these weapons in the game. So I say to you: Trust me. I know what I am doing.

Lastly, remember this important little fact: *It's not what you have, but how you use it.* A knife may seem useless against an armored opponent with a shield, but when used properly in this game (and life) a knife can be very deadly. If something doesn't "feel right" to you in the game, write to me and I will see if I can better explain how I intended it to be used.



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*I wouldn't if I were you.*

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**End.**

*In every heart there is a fire; in every fire there is a heart.*

—Fragment from original Burning Wheel text.