

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

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An age old problem for most GM's is that, whether or not the PCs are working for the side of good, they always end up breaking the law. They expect the cops to take down every creep in town but when they are pulled over for speeding they just can't see why the cops are picking on them. "After all, we're the good guys!"

No way! When a cop sees half a dozen armed guys shooting up a place they arrest them. They don't give a hoot whether it just happens to be the home of a gang boss.

So the answer is to arrest them for every crime, right? Wrong! The game wouldn't go anywhere if the players had to go by the rules all the time. A bit of a catch-22 really!

These rules are designed to balance this little problem. They are just heavy enough to make the players sweat but they keep the P.C.s out of jail, so players don't have to wait fourteen years for their favourite character to come out of jail on that manslaughter charge!

The system draws from Peter Christian's article on gun laws, "And bear arms", from Issue 4 vol. 1 of Interface. It uses his classification for guns which works very well indeed. It places every weapon in a category relating to it's lethality. This is how he classifies them:

- AA - Deadly force authorized, terminate with extreme prejudice. High powered military weapons. These weapons can cause widespread damage to buildings and cyberpsychos. These are mostly military weapons and, quite frankly, P.C.s shouldn't be carrying this stuff anyway. It covers rocket launchers, heavy machine guns and (shock horror!) grenades.
- A - Deadly force authorized, use restraint. These are battlefield weapons and the kind of thing. The swat teams use this kind of equipment. It includes machine guns, heavy submachine guns and concussion grenades. Lethal cyberware also falls into this category.
- B - Personal defense. These are close quarter weapons such as handguns and light submachine guns.
- C - Sport weapons. This is the fuzzy area that covers weapons for hunting and sports. Pistols, rifles and shotguns come under this category but all must meet certain criteria such as long barrel length. These can be used with a license.
- D - Non-lethal ranged weapons. This covers tasers, paintballs with drugs and the like.
- E - Non-ranged lethal weapons. Swords, knives and staves. Anything you've seen Bruce Lee wield in his films.
- F - Martial arts. Once again, this is Bruce Lee country. As Peter Christian mentions in his article, in some cases martial arts have been outlawed.
- G - No offensive or defensive weapons. This is Joe average whose most lethal weapon is a coffee cup.

These are the categories. If you want to be strict you can include armour in these categories.

Peter Christian suggests anything above 14 in B and anything above 20 in A. In my campaign I have opted to allow the players some weapons but the other larger weapons they have to hide.

This is the system I've used. It uses the offense categories which I will mention in a minute.

AA, A and B categories are illegal. Class B are available to certain professionals if their jobs requires them to have one, such as policemen. C-G classes are available to the public although class C weapons need a license (25eb) and carry special restrictions.

When carrying a pistol, class C, on the street a person must carry them in a holster otherwise it is a concealed weapon and is illegal (class 5 offense and confiscation of the weapon). Rifles, shotguns and the like must be carried in a case and must not be loaded otherwise this is also a class 5 offense with confiscation of the weapon.

Swords must be carried in sheaths or this is a class 6 offense with confiscation.

If you are using the Great Britain sourcebook then the rules are slightly different. Swords can be carried freely but all class C weapons and above are illegal.

When a gun is licensed the authorities mark it with a laser etched serial number. When it is used in a crime the owner is held responsible (class 4 offense and confiscation) unless the weapon was reported lost or stolen to the police.

Carrying an illegal weapon incurs the following charges:

AA - Class 3 A - Class 4 B - Class 5 C - Class 6

In Great Britain add one to the offense rating for each category.

Punishment

Whenever a person is charged with an offense of class 5 or 6 there is usually no trial although the accused can demand one and face the consequences. The crime is too small to be of much bother to the courts and is settled on a local level. In these circumstances the accused simply rolls a D10 on the appropriate punishment table. A roll of 1 or 2 means the person got lucky and was let off with a warning.

When a case goes to trial, class 4 or more, then the defense lawyer and prosecution lawyer both roll a D10 and add their INT and LAW skill (see end of article for details on the law skill). Take away the prosecutions roll from the defenses roll and subtract or add the difference from the punishment roll. If the accused is genuinely innocent then subtract 3 from the roll. After all, all the evidence points towards his/her innocence.

Class 6 - Littering, speeding, drunk and disorderly

1-2 Let off with a warning 3-6 Fine 1D6×10eb

7-8 Fine 1D6×100eb 9-10 Fine 1D6×100eb and 1D4×10 hours community service

Class 5 - Trespassing, concealed weapon, rioting

1-2 Let off with a warning

3-6 Fine 1D10×100eb

7-8 Fine 1D10×200eb

9-10 Fine 1D10×300eb

Class 4 - Assault and battery, resisting arrest, actual bodily harm.

Those found guilty who already have undergone reconditioning have their rating boosted by 1D10

1-2 Not guilty

3-6 Fine 1D6/2×1000

7-8 Fine 1D4×1000

9-10 Fine 1D6×1000 and must undergo reconditioning at an initial rating of 1D10

Class 3 - Burglary, grievous bodily harm

Those found guilty who already have undergone reconditioning have their rating boosted by 1D10+5.

1-2 Not guilty

3-6 Fine 1D6×1000eb

7-8 Fine 1D10×1000 and 1 year in jail.

9-10 1D4+1 years in jail. Conditioning level is increased to 1D10+10

Class 2 - Rape, 2nd degree murder.

1-2 Not guilty

3-6 1D10+5 years in jail.

7-8 1D10+10 years in jail.

9-10 Death sentence. Possible retrial.

Class 1 - 1st degree murder.

Conditioning is boosted by 2D10+15. Those who have not had reconditioning must undergo it with an initial rating of 1D10+15.

1-2 Not guilty

3-6 1D10+15 years in jail.

7-8 Death. Possible retrial.

9-10 Death. No retrial.

These are just tables to speed up the process. As per usual, the GM's word is final and feel free to assign any punishment that you see fit. This system brings some of the punishments that the P.C.s could face into reality and may make unruly groups slow down a little. If your game world is more or less strict then assign different sentences for different crimes. They make the whole punishment system very black and white. Either you get sent to jail for a very long time, or short time depending if you got the death sentence, or you pay a fine and go away.

Anyone who cannot pay their fine may get sent to jail instead. Assign about one year for every thousand short.

Plea bargaining

Forget it! Doesn't happen!

Reconditioning

When characters are found guilty of more violent or damaging crimes they are sent to undergo personality adjustment. This involves brainwashing and negative reinforcement with that makes the character less likely to commit crimes. The justice department has had a lot of bad press from this technique and have been forced to reduce the amount of conditioning they do on any individual.

The amount of adjustment is represented by a rating. Whenever they attempt to commit a crime they must roll over this rating divided by ten. If they fail to do this they become confused and disorientated and find they are no longer inclined to commit the crime. If they pass then they can continue as normal.

There are some underground medical doctors who have made a lot of money undoing all the good work of the justice department. Mind doctors, or Siggies. They use psychological techniques to reduce the amount of personality alteration. They are VERY expensive though. For 5000eb you can book a session with one of these guys who will reduce your conditioning rating by 1D10 per alteration. So if someone has got a rating of 36 from two sessions with the justice department they can only benefit from two sessions with the mind doctors. It's not so much a cure as damage control.

Exile implants

For particularly twisted crimes the GM may want to use one of these. See page 180 of the rulebook for more details.