

# THE ASCB SYSTEM

APTITUDES, SPECIALTIES, CULTURE, AND BACKGROUND

A DIFFERENT METHOD FOR HANDLING A FUDGE CHARACTER'S ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS

VERSION: 04-18-2002

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## Legal Information

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### About FUDGE

Fudge is a role-playing game written by Steffan O'Sullivan, with extensive input from the Usenet community of rec.games.design. The basic rules of Fudge are available on the Internet at <http://www.fudgerpg.com> and in book form from Grey Ghost Games, P.O. Box 838, Randolph, MA 02368. They may be used with any gaming genre. While an individual work derived from Fudge may specify certain attributes and skills, many more are possible with Fudge. Every Game Master using Fudge is encouraged to add or ignore any character traits. Anyone who wishes to distribute such material for free may do so - merely include this ABOUT FUDGE notice and disclaimer (complete with Fudge copyright notice). If you wish to charge a fee for such material, other than as an article in a magazine or other periodical, you must first obtain a royalty-free license from the author of Fudge, Steffan O'Sullivan, P.O. Box 465, Plymouth, NH 03264.

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## Overview

**Note:** Use of this document requires working knowledge of the Fudge role-playing system.

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*[Overview not complete at this time.]*

## Chapter 1 – Details

### Character Traits

Unlike base-line Fudge rules, a character created under this system does not possess Attributes and Skills. Instead, a character is assigned Aptitudes, Specialties, Culture, and Backgrounds to determine what it can and cannot do, as well as how well it can do it.

Characters using this system may also possess Gifts, Faults, supernormal powers, and referee-defined traits.

### Aptitudes

Aptitudes are general areas of expertise possessed by a character.

Aptitudes possess trait levels. They are measured by the standard Terrible-Fair-Superb scale. The default trait level for an Aptitude is Poor. (During character creation or development, you may change this default level.)

In the most basic sense, Aptitudes are very broad skill groups. They represent a combination of natural ability, trained ability, talent, and fortune. All the aspects of a character – physical, mental, and spiritual – that relate to that area of expertise are measured by the single Aptitude.

For example, a character with Great Martial Aptitude possesses a keen mind for the arts of war, as well as excellent coordination and reflexes associated with it. A character with Superb Mercantile Aptitude possesses a superior mind for business and a personality well suited to business dealings – even though his Poor Intellectual and Social Aptitudes reflect a lack of mental and personal acumen in other areas.

Each character has eighteen aptitudes. They are...

1. Agricultural
2. Animal
3. Artistic
4. Covert
5. Intellectual
6. Kinesthetic
7. Martial
8. Medical
9. Mercantile
10. Perceptual
11. Physical
12. Quotidian
13. Scientific
14. Social
15. Spiritual
16. Technical
17. Urban
18. Wilderness

### Aptitude Descriptions

**Agricultural:** This aptitude represents your ability to deal with plants, cultivate soil, and produce crops. Tasks like the hybridization of orchids, landscaping, logging, choosing ripe fruit, and mowing the lawn use this aptitude.

**Animal:** This measures your aptitude for dealing with animals. Riding a horse, training a dog, scaring away an angry bear, and befriending an injured lion depends on this ability.

**Artistic:** The Artistic aptitude measures your ability to produce art-objects, play musical instruments, and perform in the theater. It covers all fine arts, musical arts, theatrical arts, and crafts. When you attempt to paint, draw, sing, write, play the guitar, crochet, cartoon, whistle, orate, and perform a tea ceremony, you use this aptitude.

**Covert:** The Covert aptitude governs your less-than-legal abilities, like breaking-and-entering, defusing a security system, infiltrating a compound, sneaking past a guard, and picking pockets and locks.

**Intellectual:** This covers pure knowledge and ability to utilize it. The knowledge represented can be as simple as sitcom trivia or as involved as classical Greek philosophy. When you try to recall facts, think through a problem, or form theories, you use the Intellectual aptitude.

**Kinesthetic:** The Kinesthetic aptitude represents the movement of the body. It rates your agility, coordination, reflexes, and movement-related athletic ability. Gymnastics, roller-blading, pole-vaulting, pogo-stick riding, tight-rope walking, basketball, skiing, sports Karate, car driving, and juggling use this aptitude.

**Martial:** Under this aptitude falls all of your actual combat abilities, your acumen in the art and science of war. Shooting a gun, dodging a blow, reacting first in combat, throwing a punch, and planning a battle rely upon the Martial aptitude.

**Medical:** This aptitude ranks your ability in the medical arena. It is a holistic aptitude that covers both physical and psychological medicine. Treating diseases, setting broken bones, selecting and using potent herbs, counseling, diagnosing an illness, and prescribing drugs are but some of the tasks that use this aptitude.

**Mercantile:** This rates your skill and knowledge in business and business-related affairs, your talent for handling money, appraising goods, and finding a good deal. With this aptitude, you may perform tasks like haggling in a marketplace, appraising and fencing stolen goods, auditing an account, marketing a new product, and figuring rates on a loan.

**Perceptual:** The Perceptual aptitude grades the depth and breadth of your sensitivity to your environment. You use it to detect hidden things and notice details or the

Don't like these Aptitude names?  
Have no idea what Quotidian and Kinesthetic means?  
Check out Chapter 6 for tips on customizing the system.

“big picture.” The accuracy of your senses and the application of them in specific circumstances, like tasting wine or sensing an ambush, are controlled by this aptitude.

**Physical:** Your toughness, physical strength, resistance to disease and poison, and endurance fall into this aptitude’s sphere of influence. It determines your Damage Resistance attribute and affects the damage you inflict with a melee weapon or while unarmed.

**Quotidian:** This aptitude covers mundane, day-to-day tasks, like cooking, cleaning, personal hygiene, mending clothing, filing, typing, phone etiquette, and the like.

**Scientific:** The Scientific aptitude measures your theoretical and practical abilities in the sciences, like physics, chemistry, and biology. Whether apprehending facts, forming theories, performing experiments, and applying your knowledge for “real world” solutions, you use this aptitude.

**Social:** This rates your ability for dealing with other people. Persuasion, fast-talk, seduction, intimidation, and other forms of personal interaction depend upon this aptitude. It is the aptitude of winning friends and influencing people.

**Spiritual:** The Spiritual aptitude ranks your “intangible” attributes that deal with the non-physical side of existence. Patience, religious fervor, willpower, meditation, Zen, yoga, and “sixth sense” are functions of this aptitude.

**Technical:** Your capacity for using, repairing, designing, and building technology is your Technical aptitude. The aptitude covers the most primitive expressions of technology to the most advanced. On one end of the spectrum, you use it to break a flint rock into a sharp knife. On the other end, you use it to manipulate superstrings via quantum computer. Tasks that involve this skill include programming a computer, customizing an automobile, throwing pottery, diagnosing exhaust problems for a jet airplane, forging a sword, and kit-bashing the latest gadget of the week.

**Urban:** All of your urban “survival skills” rely on this aptitude. Canvassing a neighborhood for information, shadowing a person, scrounging for materials, and carousing are but a few tasks associated with the aptitude. Street wisdom and etiquette rely on it.

**Wilderness:** All of your outdoor survival skills rely on the Wilderness aptitude. You use it to track, forage, hunt, navigate, camp, and fish.

## Specialties

A Specialty is a *specific* area of expertise a character possesses *within* an Aptitude.

A Specialty is always derived from a specific Aptitude. It is related to and dependent upon that Aptitude.

Like Aptitudes, Specialties have trait levels, measured on the Terrible-Fair-Superb scale. The default level of a Specialty depends on the Aptitude from which it derives, and the complexity and rarity of the specialized ability it represents. (More on this in the character creation chapter.)

Where an Aptitude is a very broad skill, a Specialty is a specific one. It rates a particular skill-set that is subordinate to and dependent upon the Aptitude.

For instance, Pottery is a specialty of the Technical aptitude. If you had this specialty, it means you have training and talent associated specifically with pottery.

Neurosurgery is a specialty of Medical Aptitude, unarmed combat of Martial, acrobatics of Kinesthetic, strength of Physical, and hunting of Wilderness. Again, if you have any of these specialties, it means you have training and talent associated with that particular task or skill-set.

No pre-set list of Specialties exists (though a few will be selected later). Logic and personal preference, as well as referee fiat, should guide the creation process.

As a rule of thumb, the scope of a Specialty should be considerably more limited than that of the Aptitude on which it depends. It is a sub-set of the Aptitude.

A particular Specialty need not be associated with a single Aptitude. For example, you could develop Cooking as a Specialty of either the Artistic or Quotidian Aptitudes. If dependent on the Artistic Aptitude, you could explain that the character is a gourmet cook, trained to treat each meal as a work of art. If dependent on the Quotidian, the character is an excellent chef who creates tasty, nourishing, and functional meals.

In another example, the Specialty, Physiology and Anatomy, could derive from the Intellectual (as purely theoretical knowledge), Medical (as part of medical training), or Scientific (as purely scientific knowledge) Aptitudes. Pottery could be a Specialty of the Artistic or Technical Aptitudes; in a primitive culture, where it is common for one to make one’s own dishes, it could be Quotidian.

Once the Aptitude upon which a Specialty is dependent has been set, it may not change.

Aptitudes paint your abilities with a broad brush, while Specialties take a fine pen and delineate details upon the brush strokes. Together, they create a fine picture of your character’s capabilities.

Aptitudes are “molecules” of character ability. Specialties are “atoms” within the molecules.

### Just a reminder...

Aptitudes are “fuzzy,” open-ended, and often overlap. You can often use two (or more) different Aptitudes to accomplish the same task.

That’s okay.

### Method of Notation

Specialties are written as follows: the name of the Aptitude on which the Specialty depends, followed by a colon, followed by the name of the Specialty, hyphen, and the trait level of the specialty, or ...

Aptitude: Specialty – Trait Level

### Example

Jack is a mountain man.

In the “big picture,” we know that Jack knows a great deal about living in the wild, he is strong and tough, he can handle himself well in a fight, he is decent with his hands, and he hates city-livin’. To fit these “broad strokes” of the character, we rate most of his Aptitudes as Poor, but give him Great Wilderness, Good Martial, Good Physical, Fair Kinesthetic, and Terrible Urban Aptitude.

On to the details...

Living in the wild toughened Jack. He can handle weather that would kill a lesser man and push his endurance to great extremes.

He is a crack shot with a rifle.

He is a master hunter and trapper.

He can play the fiddle.

To represent these details, we give Jack the following Specialties:

Physical: Resist Elements – Great

Physical: Endurance – Great

Martial: Marksmanship – Superb

Wilderness: Hunting – Superb

Wilderness: Trapping – Superb

Artistic: Fiddle Playing – Fair

### The Advantages of Specialties

As mentioned before, a character with a Specialty has knowledge, talent, and training related to a particular skill-set or task. This specific ability makes the character’s performance of the task superior to a person with more generalized ability.

Whenever you use a Specialty to perform a task, you suffer no or fewer penalties (if any) than a character using the broader Aptitude. Also, if you perform an opposed roll using your Specialty against a character with only an Aptitude, you always win tied rolls.

Specialties develop much more easily and quickly than Aptitudes. (This is covered in the character creation chapter.)

### Culture

Culture describes – in broad strokes – the civilization from which a character originated or to which a character has been exposed.

In a word or three, Culture defines a character’s social, technological, and intellectual background. It shows the time and place from which the character has come.

Culture has no trait levels. It is a short, descriptive phrase that roots a character to a particular way of life – a manner of *thinking* and *doing*.

For example, if you were raised in the jungle in a tribal arrangement, with stone-age technology, you would have a Culture of “Primitive Jungle Tribe.” If you came from the highly advanced, post-nanoclysm, time-traveling society of Altair-4, your culture might be “Super-scientific Time-traveler.” Were you from modern-day England, you would have “21<sup>st</sup> Century English” as your culture.

Culture helps to determine what you can and cannot do with your Aptitudes and Specialties. It is a subjective guide or “rule of thumb” that can be applied whenever you attempt a task.

For example, a character from a Primitive Jungle Tribe would perform much different tasks with the Quotidian Aptitude than a Super-scientific Time-traveler. The jungle tribesman would build fires, dress game, and build homes from palms, wood, and vine. The time-traveler would know next to nothing about these things. In his society, heat comes from a personal nano-skin, food is instantly synthesized at the push of a button, and homes are multi-dimensional, space-bending fields of force. To a time-traveler, these are household conveniences, taken for granted, but to the tribesman, these would be nothing short of magic.

The referee can use a character’s Culture to determine if a task would be especially difficult or impossible to perform. Culture also determines if a character can acquire certain Specialties.

For a 19<sup>th</sup> Century American, use of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century home computer may be difficult. For a 10<sup>th</sup> Century European, it would be all but impossible.

The Use and Character Generation chapters deal with Culture in more detail.

## **Background**

Background is a character's training or education within a particular Culture. It is a short, descriptive phrase for a character's profession or personal way of living. It can be a cliché or archetype. It has no trait levels. Like Culture, it helps determine what can and cannot be done with Aptitudes and Specialties.

No pre-set Backgrounds exist. Like Culture, it is a “fuzzy” character trait. Simply decide what job or place a character possesses in its society. That is the character's Background.

For example, if you are a general in the ancient Roman legions, then your background is “General of the Roman Legions.” If you are a lawyer in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Europe, your background is “Lawyer.”

The Use and Character Generation chapters deal with Background in more detail.



## Chapter 2 - Use

### Action Resolution

This section describes the application of the ASCB System when you want to determine the result of an action performed by a character.

The system uses the following steps:

1. Identify the task.
2. Assign a Specialty to the task.
3. Use Culture and Background to determine the possibility of the task.
4. Determine if the character will use an Aptitude or Specialty for the roll.
5. If the character uses an Aptitude, apply modifiers for Complexity and Rarity, based on the character's Culture and Background.
6. Use the standard Fudge rules, roll the dice, and apply results.

The steps are detailed below.

#### Step 1: Identify the Task

First, you determine what action you wish to perform. For instance, you could desire to climb a wall, calculate the value of pi, or fly a plane.

#### Step 2: Assign a Specialty

Next, figure out which Specialty (not Aptitude) best represents the skill-set necessary to perform the task. In some cases, multiple Specialties may work.

For climbing a wall, you would use the Specialty, Kinesthetic: Climbing. To calculate the value of pi, you use Intellectual: Mathematics or Scientific: Mathematics. To fly a plane, you could use Kinesthetic: Pilot or Technical: Pilot.

#### Step 3: Determine the Possibility of the Task

Ask yourself, can a character with my Culture and Background perform the task I wish to attempt? If the answer is No, then the task is impossible.

For instance, if you come from a culture with no conception of pi, then it is impossible for you to calculate pi's value. You shall first have to invent the concept of pi (which may take a lifetime) or be exposed to a more advanced culture's concept.

#### Step 4: Use an Aptitude or Specialty

If you have a Specialty that applies to the task, then you will roll using that Specialty. You have the *specific* knowledge necessary to pull off the task.

If you do not have a Specialty that applies to the task, then you must roll using the Aptitude that best fits the task. Unfortunately, you are using a general skill-set and may suffer penalties for lack of specific ability. These penalties are part of the task's Complexity and Rarity.

In some cases, you may have Specialty that does not quite fit the task, but *could* work (such as using a Medical: Emergency Medical Technician Specialty to perform impromptu surgery). In this case, you can use your related Specialty and apply modifiers for Complexity and Rarity.

#### Step 5: Apply Complexity and Rarity

Complexity and Rarity are the penalties you suffer for using general knowledge to pull off a task. You apply these modifiers when you use an Aptitude to perform a task or whenever you use a related, but not exactly appropriate Specialty.

Together, the two penalties can reduce your Aptitude's or Specialty's trail level by +0 to -4. The modifiers depend on your Culture and Background. The judgment is subjective.

**Complexity:** This answers the question, "How hard is this task for a person from my Culture and Background?" One of three answers is possible. Depending on the answer, you apply a modifier to your trait level.

Answer	Penalty
Not Hard	+0
Hard	-1
Very Hard	-2

**Rarity:** This answers the question, "How common is it for someone from someone from my Culture and Background to possess knowledge or skill directly related to the performance this task?" Like Complexity, there are three answers:

Answer	Penalty
Not Rare	+0
Rare	-1
Very Rare	-2

The modifiers for Complexity and Rarity are cumulative. If they reduce your trait level below Terrible, you cannot attempt the task with any reasonable chance of success.

For example, your Culture is 21<sup>st</sup> Century Canadian. Your background is College Student. You have a Medical Aptitude of Good. You wish to perform brain surgery on your cat and create a super-intelligent, sociopathic feline. You have no brain surgery Specialty.

Your referee asks the question, "How hard is brain surgery for a Canadian college student with little or no specialized training?"

He answers, "Very hard." (It's very hard for people *with* specialized training.)

The referee asks, "How common is it for a Canadian college student to possess the training or talent directly related to the performance of brain surgery on a cat?"



The answer, “Very rare.”

For this very hard, very rare task, you suffer a –4 penalty to your Medical Aptitude’s trait level, reducing it to Terrible for this task.

### Step 6: Resolve the Roll

You have figured out what skill-set is necessary to perform the task, whether or not you have that skill-set, and how much aptitude you possess. Time to resolve the task using the standard Fudge rules. Apply your Action Modifiers, set your Difficulty Level, and roll.

**Opposed Rolls:** If one of the character’s performing an opposed roll uses a Specialty, while the other character uses an Aptitude, the character with the Specialty *always* wins any ties.

Same thing if one character has a Specialty that directly applies to the task, while the other has a Specialty that almost, but not quite applies.

For instance, Ted is a burly fellow with Great Physical Aptitude. You are a smaller person with Mediocre Physical Aptitude and a Fair Arm-wrestling Specialty. Even though Ted is stronger than you are, you know a lot of arm-wrestling tricks. In the case of a tied roll, you use some of those tricks to give yourself an edge – and you win.

## Combat

The ASCB System has a few idiosyncrasies when used for Fudge combat.

Strength-based modifiers that alter a muscle-powered weapon’s damage come from the Physical Aptitude or a Specialty based on the Physical Aptitude.

A character’s Damage Capacity is based on the Physical Aptitude or a Specialty dependent on the Physical Aptitude.

In the case of tied opposed rolls, the person with the Specialty always wins against the person using an Aptitude or unsuitable Specialty. (The character with the Specialty grazes on a relative degree of +0, when rolling against the non-specialized.)

The Martial or Kinesthetic Aptitude (or Specialties based on these Aptitudes) may be used to determine who goes first in alternating combat turns.

The Martial Aptitude and its Specialties are *the* combat abilities. Use of any other Aptitudes or Specialties runs a distant second place, imposing a –1 penalty to trait level for attack and defense rolls. Because of this a character with the Specialty, Kinesthetic: Sport Karate – Great, reduces his trait level to Good if he uses sport karate in a real fight.

If a character uses an Aptitude to perform combat actions with a weapon you feel does not fit its Culture or Background or a weapon that is difficult to use without training, apply penalties for Complexity and Rarity. (In most cases, you will use only Rarity penalties.)

## Examples of Use

### Unopposed Action with Specialty

Fred is a 19<sup>th</sup> Century English mathematician. He wishes to calculate pi to one hundred places.

The referee determines the task requires the Specialty, Intellectual: Mathematics (or something very similar to it). Fred has that Specialty at Superb level.

The referee sets the task’s difficulty at Great.

Fred’s player rolls Fudge dice and gets a Superb result. After a bit of calculating, Fred writes out pi to the hundredth place.

### Unopposed Action with Aptitude

Fred wishes to compose a sonnet to his true love.

The referee states that poetry composition requires the Specialty, Artistic: Poetry. Fred lacks this Specialty and shall use his Artistic Aptitude, which is Mediocre.

The referee considers Complexity and Rarity.

How hard is writing a sonnet for an educated, Victorian Englishman, like Fred? Probably not very hard.

For educated, Victorian Englishmen, how rare is the training and talent to write a sonnet? Considering a classical education with exposure to many ideas, it is not rare. He has probably read and enjoyed Shakespeare.

A not hard, not rare task imposes a modifier of +0 to Fred’s Artistic Aptitude. Fred shall use his full Mediocre ability.

The referee assigns a Difficulty Level of Fair.

The player rolls the dice, with a result of Poor.

Fred produces a bumbling, stumbling sonnet. Luckily, his true love is more impressed with the effort than the actual product.

### Unopposed Action with Inappropriate Specialty

Fred has traveled to the United States and shot a buffalo. Proud of his kill, he wishes to stuff the head of the buff and keep it as a trophy.

The referee decides this task shall require a Taxidermy Specialty, which can be based on the Animal, Medical, Scientific, or Technical Aptitudes.

Fred is no taxidermist, but he is an amateur biologist, with the Specialty, Scientific: Biology – Good.

The referee decides that all the hours Fred spent dissecting toads and pigs may help in the task. Now, he applies Complexity and Rarity to the Specialty. A –1 penalty is applied to Fred’s trait level, reducing it to Fair. The task is not necessarily complex, but it is unlikely that Fred received any training in it.

Stuffing the buffalo requires a Fair result on the roll. Fred rolls Great and mounts his trophy.

**Opposed Action with Specialty**

Fred and his rival, Jack, have engaged in a contest of wits, strength, and coordination.

First, they play chess.

The referee decides that chess requires the Intellectual: Chess Specialty. Both have this specialty at Great ability.

The rivals sit at the chessboard and start an hours long battle of wits. They make an opposed roll with their Specialty to simulate the game. Fred gets a Great result, while Jack gets Superb.

Fred loses the game.

**Opposed Action with Aptitude**

For their second contest, Fred and Jack arm-wrestle.

The referee states that arm-wrestling requires the Specialty, Physical: Arm-wrestling.

Jack has this Specialty at Good ability. Fred has no Specialty and must use his Physical Aptitude, which has a trait level of Good.

The referee decides that Fred suffers no penalties for Complexity and Rarity. Arm-wrestling is a common skill-set.

The rivals roll Fudge dice. Both get a Good result.

Normally, this results in a tie. Because Jack uses an appropriate Specialty and Fred does not, Jack wins the tie...and the arm-wrestling match.

**Opposed Action with Inappropriate Specialty**

Fred and Jack play mumblety-peg for their third contest.

Stepping outside the saloon, they clear an area on the grass and toss knives at one another's feet.

The referee determines that mumblety-peg requires the Specialty, Kinesthetic: Mumblety-peg.

Jack possesses this Specialty with a trait level of Good. Fred does not have this Specialty, but he spent some time in Burma, learning knife-throwing techniques. He decides to use his Specialty, Martial: Knife-throwing. It has a trait level of Good.

Complexity and Rarity impose no penalties on Fred's knife-throwing Specialty. While Fred lacks familiarity with the subtleties of mumblety-peg, his knife-throwing ability is sufficient for the task.

The opponents make their rolls.

Both Jack and Fred achieve a Good result.

Because Jack uses an appropriate Specialty while Fred uses an inappropriate one, Jack wins the tie.

Again, Jack wins the contest.

Jack proclaims that a high-falutin', math-makin', sonnet-writin', buffalo-stuffin' limey has no place on the American frontier.

**Combat Roll with Specialty**

Fred, who despises a sore winner, decides to throw his knife into Jack's leg.

According to the referee, the Specialty, Martial: Knife-throwing is necessary for the attack, and the Specialty, Martial: Dodge, is required to avoid being hit.

As mentioned before, Fred has the Martial: Knife-throwing Specialty with a Good trait level.

Jack has Martial: Dodge – Fair.

Neither character applies penalties for Complexity and Rarity, as they possess appropriate Specialties.

Fred gets a Great result on this throw. Jack rolls Mediocre for his dodge.

The knife hits and sticks in Jack's leg.

**Combat Roll with Aptitude**

Jack draws his revolver and fires at Fred.

Shooting the pistol requires the Specialty, Martial: Pistol. Dodging the attack requires Martial: Dodge.

Jack possesses Martial: Pistol at Fair ability. Fred lacks the Martial: Dodge Specialty. He must use his Martial Aptitude, which is Fair.

The referee imposes no penalties for Complexity and Rarity. Dodging is not uncommon.

Both combatants roll a Fair result.

Normally, the relative degree of +0 would result in a miss. Because Jack uses a Specialty and Fred does not, Jack wins any tied results. His attack grazes Fred.

Jack prepares to shoot a second time, but his hammer fouls, jamming his pistol.

**Combat Roll with Inappropriate Specialty**

Fred rushes Jack and tries to knock his opponent senseless with a well-placed punch.

The referee states that punching an opponent requires the Specialty, Martial: Unarmed Combat. Dodging the blow needs the Martial: Dodge Specialty.

Fred does not have Martial: Unarmed Combat, but he did spend several years boxing (as a sport). This gave him the Specialty, Kinesthetic: Pugilist at Superb ability.

Jack has Martial: Dodge – Fair.

Because Fred uses a non-Martial Specialty for a combat roll, the referee imposes a –1 trait level penalty for using that Specialty in a real fight, reducing Fred's trait level to Great. The referee imposes no penalties for Complexity or Rarity.

Even with the penalty, Fred achieves a Superb result on his punch's roll. Jack rolls Good on the dodge.

The punch hits. Jack falls, senseless.

## Chapter 3 – Character Creation

*This section assumes that you are familiar with the basic Fudge character creation rules.*

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### Relative Value

Here is a “rule of thumb” for determining the value of a character’s Aptitudes, Specialties, Culture, Background, Gifts, and Faults.

**1 Aptitude level = 3 Specialty levels.**

**1 Culture = 2 Aptitude levels.**

**1 Background = 2 Aptitude levels.**

**1 Gift = 2 Aptitude levels.**

**1 Gift = 6 Specialty levels.**

**1 Gift = 1 Culture.**

**1 Gift = 1 Background.**

**1 Fault = 1 Gift.**

**1 Fault = 2 Aptitude levels.**

**1 Fault = 6 Specialty levels.**

**1 Fault = 1 Culture.**

**1 Fault = 1 Background.**

### Starting Level

In the basic ASCB system, only two leveled attributes exist: Aptitudes and Specialties. This section answers the question, “In the ASCB system, at what trait level do those attributes begin?”

#### Aptitudes

All of a character’s Aptitudes start at the Poor level.

#### Specialties

The starting level of a Specialty equals the level of its parent Aptitude, modified by the Complexity and Rarity of the Specialty. Use the following steps:

**1. Determine the Specialty you desire.**

- If the Specialty does not fit your Culture and Background, you cannot acquire it. (For example, if you were a Neanderthal hunter-gatherer, a Specialty in quantum physics does not fit.)

**2. Determine the Aptitude upon which the Specialty shall depend.**

- The Aptitude you select must logically and reasonably relate to your Specialty. You could not use Kinesthetic as the parent Aptitude for a quantum physics Specialty, but you may use the Scientific or Intellectual Aptitudes.

**3. That Aptitude’s trait level is the *base* trait level of your Specialty.**

- For instance, if your Aptitude has a Fair trait level, your Specialty’s base trait level is Fair.

**4. Apply a Complexity modifier to the base trait level.**

- Ask the question, “In my character’s Culture and Background, how difficult is this Specialty?”
- If you answer Hard, then reduce your base trait level by –1.
- If you answer Very Hard, reduce the base trait level by –2.

**5. Apply a Rarity modifier to the base trait level.**

- Ask the question, “In my character’s Culture and Background, how rare is this Specialty?”
- If you answer Rare, then reduce your base trait level by –1.
- If you answer Very Rare, reduce the base trait level by –2.

**6. The final result is your trait level.**

**Example:** Fred's Culture is 19<sup>th</sup> Century Englishman. His background is Mathematician. He wishes to acquire the Specialty, Mathematics.

Fred's player decides to base the Specialty on Fred's Intellectual Aptitude, which has a Great trait level.

Because the parent Aptitude has a trait level of Great, Fred's Specialty has a base trait level of Great.

Now the player asks, "For a 19<sup>th</sup> Century English Mathematician, how difficult is mathematics?"

The answer, "Not hard at all. He is – after all – a trained mathematician."

No Complexity modifiers are applied to the Specialty.

The player asks, "For a 19<sup>th</sup> Century English Mathematician, how rare is a specialty in mathematics?"

The answer, "Not rare. Mathematicians know mathematics."

No Rarity modifiers are applied to the Specialty.

Fred's Intellectual: Mathematics Specialty starts at the Great trait level.

**Example:** Fred's travels take him to Orient. He is exposed to transcendental meditation and desires it as a Specialty.

Because transcendental meditation deals with the inner self, the player uses Fred's Spiritual Aptitude as the parent. This Aptitude has a Fair trait level.

The player asks, "For a 19<sup>th</sup> Century English Mathematician, how difficult is transcendental meditation?"

The answer, "It is probably difficult, because the process is alien to a Western mindset."

A Hard Complexity modifier of -1 is applied to the Specialty's base trait level. The trait level is now Mediocre.

The player asks, "For a 19<sup>th</sup> Century English Mathematician, how rare is transcendental meditation?"

The answer, "Almost no one from this Culture and Background knows about transcendental meditation, so it is Very Rare."

The Specialty's Mediocre trait level suffers a -2 modifier due to its Rarity, reducing it to Terrible.

Fred's Spiritual: Transcendental Meditation Specialty starts at Terrible.

## Objective Character Creation

For objective character creation, use the following steps:

### 1. Choose your character's Culture.

- You get one Culture for free.
- You may purchase additional Cultures (to represent a well-traveled character) by trading in Gifts, Faults, and the like. (Use the Relative Value section, above.)

### 2. Choose your character's Background.

- You get one Background for free.
- You may purchase additional Background (to represent a broadly trained character) by trading in Gifts, Faults, and the like. (Use the Relative Value section, above.)

### 3. Purchase Aptitudes with free levels.

- The suggested starting amount of free Aptitude levels: 18.
- All Aptitudes start at Poor.
- Unless you have a compelling reason, Aptitudes should rise no higher than Great during character generation. (Because they represent such generalized ability, only a genius or highly experienced individual would have an Aptitude of Superb or better.)

### 4. Purchase Specialties with free levels.

- The suggested starting amount of free Specialty levels: 6.
- When you spend your first level on a Specialty, you acquire the Specialty at a starting level based on its Aptitude, modified by Complexity and Rarity.
- Any additional levels spent on the Specialty increases its starting level.
- For example, Jill wishes to purchase the Specialty, arm-wrestling, for her character, Theodora. Arm-wrestling is based on the Physical Aptitude. Theodora has Great Physical Aptitude. Jill spends her first free level to get the arm-wrestling Specialty. Because it is a common, easy Specialty, it starts at the Great trait level. Spending a second, free Specialty level on arm-wrestling, Jill raises Theodora's trait level to Superb.

### 5. Purchase other character Attributes (e.g., Gifts, Faults, supernatural abilities).

- A single Fault will let you get one Culture, one Background, two Aptitude levels, or six Specialty levels.

## Subjective Character Creation

Here are a few things to remember for subjective character creation:

1. **A character can have multiple Cultures and Backgrounds.**
  - For example, Fred was raised as a 19<sup>th</sup> Century European Mathematician, but was later spirited to Mars and became a Martian Warlord. Fred has two Cultures, 19<sup>th</sup> Century European and Martian, and two Backgrounds, Mathematician and Warlord.
  - The classic “origins” of kidnapped by gypsies, escaped from gladiator pits, acquiring mystical secrets from the Orient, and the like are great reasons to give your character an extra Culture or Background.
  - Generally speaking, whenever you character experiences a major life-change or enters a new profession, you can represent it with a new Background. If your character travels a lot or adopts another people’s way of life (or learns the ins-and-outs of it), give it a new Culture.
2. **Unless your character is a genius in a broad field, possesses a lot of experience or specialized training, or has some other exceptional reason, keep the Aptitudes to Great or less.**
3. **High trait levels in Specialties are more common than trait levels in Aptitudes.**
  - Folks tend to specialize when they learn skill-sets.
4. **Well-rounded characters tend to have many Specialties rather than lots of high level Aptitudes.**

## Random Character Creation

If you wish to randomly generate the trait levels for your Aptitudes and Specialties, use the following rules.

### Random Aptitudes

For each Aptitude, roll 2d6 and consult the following chart for your trait level.

2d6 Roll	Trait Level
2	Terrible
3-5	Poor
6-7	Mediocre
8-9	Fair
10	Good
11	Great
12	Superb

### Random Specialties

For each Specialty, roll 2d6 *after* you have determined the Specialty’s starting level, based on the parent Aptitude, Complexity, and Rarity. Modify your starting trait level by the result.

2d6 Roll	Trait Level Modifier
2-7	+0
8-11	+1
12	+2

## Chapter 4 – Character Development

*This section assumes that you are familiar with the basic Fudge character development rules.*

### Objective Character Development

The instructions provided here assume that you use an experience point-based character development system.

#### Culture and Background

Acquiring a new Culture or Background costs 6 EP and requires the referee's permission.

#### Aptitudes

Raising an Aptitude from one trait level to the next costs the following:

From...	To...	Cost
Terrible	Poor	3 EP
Poor	Mediocre	3 EP
Mediocre	Fair	3 EP
Fair	Good	6 EP
Good	Great	12 EP
Great	Superb	24 EP
Superb	Legendary	48 EP*
Legendary	Legendary +1	90 EP*
Every level beyond Legendary +1		150 EP*

*\*The referee's permission is necessary to acquire this trait level.*

You may increase your Aptitudes only one level at a time.

When an Aptitude's trait level changes (either up or down), all Specialties related to that Aptitude change by the same amount.

#### Specialties

Initially acquiring a Specialty at its starting level costs 1 EP. Figure the starting level based on the parent Aptitude, Complexity, and Rarity.

Raising a Specialty from one trait level to the next costs the following:

From...	To...	Cost
Terrible	Poor	1 EP
Poor	Mediocre	1 EP
Mediocre	Fair	1 EP
Fair	Good	2 EP
Good	Great	4 EP
Great	Superb	8 EP
Superb	Legendary	16 EP*
Legendary	Legendary +1	20 EP*
Every level beyond Legendary +1		50 EP*

*\*The referee's permission is necessary to acquire this trait level.*

You may increase your Specialties only one level at a time.

### Subjective Character Development

Keep the following in mind:

- Developing Specialties is easier and more common than developing Aptitudes.**
  - For example, if your character spends a great deal of training in the sword and fighting with the sword, your character will develop the Martial: Sword Specialty. The character's Martial Aptitude will most likely remain the same.
- If your character receives intensive training in a broad area of related skills, then an Aptitude may increase in trait levels.**
  - If your character underwent intensive gladiator training (involuntary, of course), then it is likely that your character's Kinesthetic, Physical, and Martial Aptitudes will grow in trait levels.
- If your character spends a lot of time in another culture, then it will probably acquire a new Culture.**
- If your character changes professions or undergoes a similar life-change, then it will probably acquire a new Background.**

## Chapter 5 – Four Freds

Sample characters.

### Fred Pennington-Smythe

This Fred is “Example Fred.”

**Culture:** 19<sup>th</sup> Century English

**Background:** Mathematician

#### Aptitudes and Specialties...

Name	Trait Level
Agricultural	Poor
Animal	Fair
– Horsemanship	Good
Artistic	Mediocre
Covert	Mediocre
Intellectual	Great
– Chess	Great
– Mathematics	Superb
– Philosophy	Superb
Kinesthetic	Good
– Pugilist (Boxing)	Superb
Martial	Good
– Burmese Knife-throwing	Good
Medical	Fair
Mercantile	Fair
Perceptual	Good
Physical	Good
Quotidian	Fair
– Tea Preparation	Great
Scientific	Good
– Biology	Good
– Botany	Great
Social	Good
– Etiquette	Superb
Spiritual	Fair
– Transcendental Meditation	Terrible
Technical	Good
Urban	Fair
Wilderness	Fair
– Hunting	Good

#### Gifts...

*Aplomb* – Nothing shakes Fred’s cool.

*Well-read* – Fred’s voracious reading habits expose him to a variety of ideas.

*Well-traveled* – Fred has traveled to many different places and interacted with a variety of cultures.

#### Faults...

*Jingoist* – Fred believes English society is the *best* society.

*Violent* – Despite cultured upbringing, Fred is apt to solve problems with violence, not words.

### Fred the Barbarian

In his childhood, Fred’s village of Egalliv was overrun by the Gamboling Horde of Migthroth. His parents were murdered. He was raised as a slave.

His great strength and iron resolve drew the interest of his captors. They made him into a gladiator.

In time, Fred won his freedom. He became a great warrior of the Horde and slew Migthroth.

The Gamboling Horde under his command, Fred has turned his heart towards crushing the jeweled thrones of the world underneath his sandal-shod feet.

**Culture:** Egalliv Barbarian; Migthroth Hordesman

**Background:** Apprentice Smith; Gladiator; Warlord

#### Aptitudes and Specialties...

Name	Trait Level
Agricultural	Poor
Animal	Great
– Horsemanship	Superb
Artistic	Poor
Covert	Fair
Intellectual	Fair
– Art of War	Superb
Kinesthetic	Great
– Balance	Superb
Martial	Superb
– Combat Reflexes	Superb
– Dodge	Superb
– Horde Weaponry	Superb
– Swordsmanship	Legendary
Medical	Mediocre
Mercantile	Poor
Perceptual	Great
– Spot Danger	Superb
Physical	Superb
– Damage Resistance	Legendary
– Endurance	Legendary
– Strength	Legendary
Quotidian	Poor
Scientific	Poor
Social	Fair
– Leadership	Superb
Spiritual	Good
– Judge Character	Great
– Willpower	Legendary
Technical	Mediocre
Urban	Poor
Wilderness	Good
– Survival	Superb



**Gifts...**

*High Social Status* – Master of the Horde.  
*Martial Arts* – Unarmed ODF is +0, not -1.  
*Rage* – While fighting, ignores the effects of all wounds, until incapacitated.

**Faults...**

*Ruthless* – Cold-hearted and views other people as expendable.  
*Superstitious* – Fears the Ancient Gods and sees them present in all events.

**Frederica the Were-beast Maimer**

On her 14<sup>th</sup> birthday, Frederica discovered that she was the Elected One, chosen by the Forces of Goodness and Light to do battle with were-creatures everywhere.

A devout vegetarian, California Democrat, and animal-rights advocate, Frederica does not kill were-creatures. Instead, she maims and cages them, hoping someday to release them back into their natural habitat with harmless, yet colorful radio-transceivers attached to their bodies, so that she can track their movements.

**Culture:** 21<sup>st</sup> Century United States Citizen  
**Background:** Politically-active High School Student

**Aptitudes and Specialties...**

Name	Trait Level
Agricultural	Poor
Animal	Poor
Artistic	Poor
Covert	Fair
Intellectual	Poor
– Leftist Activism	Good
– Teenager Trivia	Good
– Were-creature Lore	Mediocre
Kinesthetic	Great
– Cheerleading	Great
– Gymnastics	Superb
Martial	Great
– Evasion	Superb
– Supernatural Creature Combat	Superb
– Were-creature Combat	Legendary
Medical	Poor
Mercantile	Poor
Perceptual	Poor
Physical	Great
– Toughness	Superb
– Strength	Legendary
Quotidian	Poor
Scientific	Poor
Social	Poor
– Flirting	Great

**Aptitudes and Specialties (continued)...**

Spiritual	Poor
Technical	Terrible
Urban	Poor
– Mall-hopping	Great
Wilderness	Terrible

**Gifts...**

*Extremely Attractive* – Frederica turns heads and stops hearts.  
*Maimer’s Boon* – Frederica gets a +1 bonus to her ODF against were-creatures.

**Faults...**

*Cannot Kill Animals* – Frederica has an irrational, almost hysterical, inability to kill animals, including were-creatures. (She has no problem maiming them.)  
*Elected One* – Frederica must serve the world as the Were-creature Maimer, whether she likes it or not.  
*Idealistic* – Frederica has an unrealistic view of the world.  
*Secret Identity* – Frederica must never let normal people know that she is the Maimer.  
*Superficial* – Frederica lacks emotional and intellectual depth.  
*Vain* – Frederica is vain about her appearance.

**Fred Dodgers in the 25<sup>th</sup> Century**

Fred Dodgers was a man – was a Big Man.  
 In World War II, Fred served in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne, from Normandy to Hitler’s Eagle’s Nest. Upon returning to the States at the end of the War, he acquired a divinity degree and became an Episcopal minister. In the 50’s, he became the host of a children’s show with anthropomorphic animal puppets. His message of peace, love, and kindness to mailmen reached the nation, changing many a child’s life for the better.

Alas, Fred’s time in the 20<sup>th</sup> century ended when he fell into a mine-shaft. Knocked unconscious by radioactive fumes, he slept for centuries, never aging.  
 Fred finally awoke in the 25<sup>th</sup> Century, to the blighted landscape of a world at war. Martians had invaded the earth and all but wiped out the human race. The last survivors, the Yanks were enslaved and toiled in the hellish plutonium mines (where – as destiny would have it – Fred slept).

Appalled by human slavery, enraged by Martian evil, Fred donned the knit sweater and sneakers of righteousness. Taking an Atomic Death Ray in hand, applying 20<sup>th</sup> Century can-do know-how, he leads the Yanks in rebellion against their Martian overlords and seeks to re-establish a human civilization based on niceness to your fellow man!

**Fred Dodgers in the 25<sup>th</sup> Century (continued)...**

**Culture:** 20th Century United States Citizen; 25<sup>th</sup> Century Yanks Rebel

**Background:** Ranger (101<sup>st</sup> Airborne); Pastor; Children Show's Host; Great Military Leader

**Aptitudes and Specialties...**

Name	Trait Level
Agricultural	Poor
Animal	Poor
Artistic	Good
– Puppeteer	Great
Covert	Fair
Intellectual	Great
– Child Psychology	Superb
– Tactics	Superb
– Theology	Superb
Kinesthetic	Good
– Parachute	Good
Martial	Great
– Marksman	Legendary
– Unarmed Combat	Superb
Medical	Good
– First Aid (Combat Medicine)	Great
Mercantile	Fair
Perceptual	Great
– Sense Danger	Superb
Physical	Good
– Toughness	Great
Quotidian	Great
– Cleaning	Superb
– Filing	Superb
– Sweater Knitting	Superb
Scientific	Mediocre
Social	Great
– Counseling	Legendary
– Diplomacy	Superb
– Pastor	Superb
– Leadership	Legendary
Spiritual	Superb
– Eerie Calm	Legendary
– Soothing Presence	Legendary
Technical	Fair
Urban	Fair
Wilderness	Good
– Survival	Great

**Gifts...**

*20<sup>th</sup> Century Can-do* – Something about his 20<sup>th</sup> Century ways makes Fred superior to the 25<sup>th</sup> Century man (and Martian). He gains a +1 bonus on all rolls.

*Hero of Humankind* – Fred is a living legend. All humans know of him, love him, and willingly follow him to the gates of Hell, if need be.

*Hypnotic Voice* – Fred's soothing, level voice can lull even the most murderous individuals into a trance-like

state replete with feelings of good will and happy thoughts.

*Immortality* – Exposure to the radioactive gas of the Martian plutonium mines has mutated Fred into an age-less being.

*Martial Arts* – Fred is trained in unarmed combat and has a base ODF of +0 while unarmed. He can perform nerve strikes and exotic (painful!) grapples.

*Pleasant Demeanor* – Even the Martians think Fred is a pleasant and like-able fellow, making it that much easier to slaughter them wholesale with his Atomic Death Ray.

**Faults...**

*Concern for Children* – Fred puts the welfare of children above all other considerations. Their cleanliness, good behavior, and possession of basic alphanumeric knowledge are his foremost concern.

*Hyper-morality* – Fred is an incredibly moral being. Fred is so moral, that power cannot possibly corrupt him. He's just that good.

*Notorious* – The Martians know Fred and hate Fred. Their immense evil and technology are bent towards his destruction.

*Sense of Duty* – Fred has an immense sense of duty to all humanity. He would willingly sacrifice himself to save the human race.

## Chapter 6 – Customizing the System

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### Aptitudes by Any Other Name...

Standard Name	Cowboy Name
Agricultural	Farmin'
Animal	Ranchin'
Artistic	Drawin', Singin', and Such
Covert	Thievin'
Intellectual	Learnin' and Knowin'
Kinesthetic	Snap
Martial	Fightin'
Medical	Doctorin'
Mercantile	Tradin'
Perceptual	Wits and Sense
Physical	Vim and Vigor
Quotidian	Chores and the Boring Stuff
Scientific	High Fallutin' Book Learnin'
Social	People Smarts
Spiritual	Soul
Technical	Machine Smarts
Urban	City Smarts
Wilderness	Outdoor Smarts