

High Octane

High Octane is a slightly more serious, possibly more complicated, and hopefully still fun expansion for...

RISUS by S. John Ross.

High Octane is copyright (whatever that means) 2000 by Vin Diakuw. It contains revisions and restatements designed to clarify certain elements of gaming with RISUS. You will need RISUS to use this material, so the first thing you have to do is go and get RISUS from the link below. If you don't feel like committing it to memory, you could print it out. The same goes for High Octane.

RISUS is handy if you plan to have a good time gaming. If fun is not your priority, choose another system.

As of October 17, 2000 Risus can be found at <http://www.io.com/~sjohn/risus.htm>.

TERMS

- GM** This is the Game master. It could be you, or it could be a friend. GMs do all the work.
- Player** This is most likely you. Players play "make believe" with the GM.
- Character** This is an imaginary person that you guide through the adventures created by the GM.

CHARACTER CREATION!

To create a character you

1. imagine what sort of person you want to pretend to be
2. give them a name
3. write a brief description of how they look
4. possibly explain how they act
5. list their Clichés
6. continue work on the multi-hour generation process of your Big System™ character while the other players fail to break bad habits and spend too much time in a vain attempt to min-max their Risus characters

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CLICHÉS

Clichés are a shorthand which describe that describes what a character knows how to do.

CLICHÉS CAN BE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO, ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

1. careers (for example Psychiatrist or Short Order Cook)
2. areas of knowledge (Coin Collector, Trivia Buff, Fascinated by Ancient Cultures)
3. lifestyle choices (Hermit, Club Kid, Millionaire Playboy, University Student)
4. strong personality traits (Macho, Seductive, Hot Tempered, Cruel)
5. supernatural or paranormal powers (Telepath, Fortune Teller)
6. complete packages of two or more of the above (Macho Psychiatrist, Telepathic Coin Collector, Cruel Millionaire Playboy, Club Kid Fascinated by Ancient Cultures)

The class and level based characters of some RPGs are really just type 6 Clichés. You can borrow Clichés like Rogue, Warrior, Investigator, or Diabolist from such games. I suggest you invent your own. Why should the gaming world be deprived of your Hover Cycle Racer, Drop Dead Gorgeous Newscaster, Psychic Vampire, Filthy Rich Aristocrat, Dark Knight, or Disembodied Head (could be the crawling type, flying type, or in-a-jar type).

EVERY CLICHÉ HAS THREE COMPONENTS:

1. A name (for example Psycho Killer).
2. A number of dice (4).
3. Scope (Butchering people with household objects, inspiring terror, never trip in the woods, supernatural ability to find hidden people).

The **name** should be as precise as you need it to be to capture the essence of the Cliché. Consider the difference between Cop, Beat Cop, and Corrupt Beat Cop.

Scope describes the sorts of things that the cliché lets you do. Even if you never write this down you should discuss it with the GM, just in case the two of you have radically different ideas about what the cliché means. Check out these Scopes written for the same Cliché by two different people.

Biker (Ride motorcycle, brawling, partying, picking up women)

Biker (Ride motorcycle, shooting, connections to organized crime, intimidation)

SAMPLE CHARACTERS

Penny Plowdersson the AutoDuel Jockey

(Aka "Purgatory")

Description: *Tall, brunette, and scowling Likes to race and drink and chase pit crew guys and fight and shoot enemy cars and hit the casino.*

Clichés: *Twisted Metal™ Driver (4), Club Girl (2), Gunfighter (3), Gambler (1)*

Purple Horizon the Cat Burglar

Description: *Nervous and stealthy. Likes to sneak into places where she shouldn't be and steal things and hang out at the mall and look innocent.*

Clichés: *Cat Burglar (4), Fashion Model (3), Mall Rat (2), World Traveller (1)*

Su Ling the Ninja Chick

Description: *Small, poised, and deadly. Likes to travel the world participating in martial arts tournaments. Writes stories for cheezy kungfu magazines.*

Clichés: *Martial Artist (4), Journalist (3), Bimbo (2), Helicopter Pilot (1)*

Iron Chef French Hiruyuki Sakai

Description: *Short and moustachioed. Usually wears a pained expression and a chef's hat. Enjoys cooking creative cuisine never before seen. Likes the ladies.*

Clichés: *Iron Chef™ [5], Ladies Man (2), Outdoorsman (2)*

The square brackets [] in Sakai's Clichés represent a **double pump** Cliché. See RISUS Advanced Options.

SAMPLE CLICHÉS (AND THEIR SCOPE)

Agent (Sneaking, spying, resisting torture, Agency contacts)

Club Grrl (Dancing, non-verbal communication, recreational drugs, knows all the 'hot spots')

Combat Driver (Hotwiring a car in record time, driving on two wheels, speed stunts, jumping over things)

Cop (Shooting, police procedures, intimidation, planting evidence)

Fashion Model (Being gorgeous, shameless self-promotion, causing a scene, looking bored)

Gunfighter (Quickdraw, shooting locks off doors, sliding/jumping/falling/spinning while shooting)

Hapless Techno Weenie (Hacking, programming, electronics)

Journalist (Writing, smelling a rat, eavesdropping)

Ladies Man or Seductress (Seducing, loving, being gone in the morning, obtaining favors or gifts)

Outdoorsman (Tracking, building shelters, finding food)

Private Detective (Shooting, fistfighting, tailing people, intimidation, searching rooms)

Psychic (Telepathy, Precognition, Telekinesis)

Professional Athlete (Sports, negotiating, carousing)

Street Fighter (Dirty fighting, improvised weapons, gangland politics)

Thief (Lying, disposing of evidence, police procedure)

- Cat Burglar (Climbing, safecracking, picking locks, security systems)
- Mobster (Intimidation, searching people, mob connections, shooting)
- Embezzler (Forgery, accounting, office politics)
- Con Artist (Manipulating people, evading cops, upper class etiquette)

Top Gun (Pilot jet, military training, bragging, cheesy pick-up lines)

World Traveller (Cosmopolitan air, good at manipulating cabbies, clerks and customs officials)

There are numerous other Clichés at <http://www.io.com/~sjohn/risus.htm>.

These Clichés are only meant as examples. If you feel inspired you should have no trouble listing a bunch of your own. If you aren't inspired, I recommend you make up your own anyway. It really is worth it. The next section is an example of Clichés that have been written or rewritten with a particular genre in mind. Any similarity to any version of D&D™ is purely coincidental.

SWORDS & SORCERY CLICHES & TWO NEW RULES

Assassin (Poisoning people, stabbing people, shooting people in the back)

Bard (Charming, entertaining, appraisal)

Cleric (Warding against evil, blunt weapon fighting, religious etiquette)

Dwarf (Seeing underground, stoneworking, smithing, holding your liquor, underground lore)

Elf (Immortal, keen senses, archery, being artistic, wilderness lore)

Gladiator (Fighting, playing to the mob, animal handling)

Gnome (Being a Dwarf only funnier, playing pranks, creating minor illusions, can smell gold)

Halfling (Looking harmless, fellowship, moving quietly, carousing)

Lizard man (Resisting cold, tail-fighting, breathing water)

Half-Orc (Being surly, resisting poisons, intimidation)

Paladin (Turning undead, smiting evil, riding, being holy)

Ranger (Wilderness lore, befriending animals, tracking, hunting, fancy archery stunts)

Sorcerer (Spellcasting, research, making potions)

- Black (Death, Corruption, Darkness, Evil, Void)
- Water (Water, Dragons, Spirits, Truth/Illusion)
- Brown (Earth, Plants, Animals)
- Green (Wind, Guidance, Protection, Healing)
- Ice (Ice, Storms, Negation, Banishment, Destruction)
- Blood (Life, Romance, Persuasion, Sexuality)
- Red (Fire, Chaos, Passion, Courage, Will)
- Silver (Moon, Purity, Protection, Healing, Truth)
- Sand (Desert, Persuasion, Energy, Heat)

Thief (Pick pockets or locks, sneaking, climbing, finding and removing traps, hearing noise, reading languages)

BONUS RULES FOR THIS GENRE

Traps are rated as a Cliché all their own. If you fail to avoid a trap you may be Paralyzed (4), fall into a Pit (1 per 10 foot depth), be hit by Flying Blades (6), brained by a Tumbling Block (2), Electrocuted (5), set on Fire (3), knocked Unconscious (8!), Poisoned (4, then 3, then 2, then 1 – good luck), burned by Acid, Frozen, magically Confused, changed into the Opposite Sex, Stuck in place, or whatever.

Spells must be written out in advance by the player. The GM has final say on what spells are acceptable. Spells always work the way they are supposed to. If they affect another creature, that creature may be able to resist the effects by beating the Sorcerer's roll. The sorcerer starts with one spell per dice in her Cliché. When she rolls to advance, she can create one new spell for each even number she rolled.

WE'VE GOT THE TOOLS; WE'VE GOT THE TALENT... OKAY, SO WE'VE ONLY GOT THE TOOLS

People generally take the time to assemble whatever equipment is required to do a job before they start. These tools vary a great deal across genres (Samurai need katanas, Seers need crystal balls, and Supermodels need make-up), but there is always something you necessary to get the job done. Generally Characters are assumed to have whatever gear they normally use, although some GMs will sadistically demand that you list every piece of this stuff on your "sheet". This is virtually mandatory in the Swords and Sorcery genre. Sorry pal.

There are **two approaches** to use if the Character is deprived of her normal gear. The first is to **raise the difficulty** of the task. Alternately, if your Character is ever deprived of its normal gear, the associated cliché will be rolled with **reduced dice**. The choice your GM makes will depend on personal taste, but I favor the first option, if only because it offers a finer gradation of difficulty. It also lets the player roll her entire pile of dice. This is something players like to do.

Conversely some special items or state-of-the-art equipment might give you a bonus. If the Pilot was using experimental military equipment in a secret base, she might get a bonus die. If her 'Mech had artificial intelligence and could assist in repairing *itself* she might get two bonus dice. If the AI was damaged though, she would be on her own. **In the case of special equipment I always use more dice rather than reduce difficulty** because, as I said, players love to roll dice.

Science Fiction Clichés

These Clichés were written or rewritten with science fiction in mind. Any similarity to Traveller™ is purely coincidental. Any resemblance to Space Opera™ is more suspect, but still coincidental.

Alien (Being a human in a funny suit)

- Avian (Flying, keen eyes, fragile bones)
- Canine (Running, keen nose, works well in groups)
- Feline (Agile, works best alone, see in the dark)
- Metahuman (About 10% better than a human in every way)
- Reptilian (Strong, thermal vision, ugly)
- Ursoid (REALLY strong, stupid)

Android (Strong, don't eat or breathe, trouble understanding humans)

Armsman (Shooting, demolitions, patrolling, intimidation)

Asteroid miner (Prospecting, flying spaceships, jury-rigging ship's systems)

Colonial marine (Shooting bugs, squad tactics, knife fighting)

Colonist (Driving rover, surveying, brawling, being parasitized)

Cyborg (Have mechanical parts, fighting, being alienated)

Hot Shot Pilot (Flying startfighters, shooting, inspiring the cynical)

Medic (First aid, doing research)

Merchant (Bargaining, marketing, alien customs)

Smuggler (Finding cargo, shooting, hiding, forgery, being cynical)

Tech (Repairing anything except starships)

Weapon List & Optional Rules for Modern Genre

Here is a selection of weapons for a Modern genre. Use of the bonus rules that exploit the Damage column is purely optional. The assumption is that in a Modern genre a lot of firefights occur. In the “real world” the average gunfight lasts about 5 seconds. When a Risus gunfight occurs, these new damage rules enable bodies to fall with a more plausible rapidity. These rules are far from Cinematic and will definitely discourage players from seeking direct confrontation. If you want the characters to take risks then ignore this rule. Should you dare, here are the steps.

1. Assuming you hit your opponent, an extra **damage** roll is made
 - a. If the damage is **kill** it means that any “hit” is a “kill” regardless of how many dice you have in your Cliché. Ditto **blind**.
2. An extra Cliché roll is made by the target. The target can roll the same Cliché as he did in the contest she just lost, or can roll a Cliché that speaks to her ability to avoid damage (like Unstoppable, Bulletproof, or Preternatural Speed).
 - a. If you are wearing armor, you get to add the **AR** dice to your roll to resist damage
3. Array the dice from the two rolls against each other in descending order
4. You lose at one die plus one for each Cliché die that is less than a damage die(!)
 - a. You always lose dice from your Cliché, never your **AR**

EXAMPLE

Penny Plowdersson with Gunfighter (3) and Su Ling with Martial Artist (4) are in a fight. Penny has a 12 gauge shotgun (5). Penny wins the round and rolls 5 dice. Su Ling rolls her Martial Artist (4).

Penny gets	6	4	3	2	1
Su Ling gets	5	4	2	2	

Su Ling loses 1 + **2** dice and is reduced to Martial Artist(1).

Had Su Ling won the round, Penny would have simply lost the usual single die.

NOTE: Had Su Ling been using a shotgun as well, she could deal extra damage when she won a round but would be at a great disadvantage since her Martial Artist Cliché doesn't have shooting in its scope. She would roll 2 dice against Penny's 5 dice. It is much smarter for her to try and beat Penny down with her fancy fighting techniques.

Weapon	Damage	Clip	Weapon	Damage	Clip
Combat Knife			Hand Taser (touch stun)	5	--
9mm Silenced Handgun	3	15	Air Taser (ranged kill)	kill	--
.45 Handgun	4	10	Incendiary Grenade	6	--
M-16 Assault Rifle	3	30	M-79 Grenade Rifle	6	--
HK-5 Machine Pistol	4	32	C-4 Explosive Pack	kill	--
12 Gauge Shotgun	5	--	Tear Gas Rifle	blind	--
UAS-12 Rapid Fire Shotgun	5	--	Flak Jacket	AR=2	
PK-102 Assault Rifle	3	30	Armored Trenchcoat	AR=1	
Sniper Rifle	3	10	Military Shell	AR=3	
Nightvision Rifle	3	10	Hand Taser (touch stun)	5	--
Crossbow	5	--			

GM Controlled Characters

For GM controlled characters you may need information to be formatted a little differently. With Player characters you develop an intimate knowledge of how each one performs. With creatures and generic GMCs you want to be able to be consistent between encounters without having to remember just what an Orc(4) is capable of compared to an Ogre(4). So I'm advising the use of the Fight, Move, Think, Search, Charm (FMTSC) system.

In a nutshell, make the creature as much like a character as you want, but then give it separate dice for each of Fight, Move, Think, Search, and Charm. These five columns will cover the majority of interactions with players. For anything else, use the Cliché dice.

Here are a few examples:

Russian Bodyguard(4) =F(4) M(3) T(2) S(3) C(1)

Ogre(4) =F(6) M(4) T(1) S(3) C(1)

Dragon(4) =F(10) M(8) T(4) S(5) C(4)

The Blob™(4) =F(6) M(3) T(0) S(6) C(0)

It's as easy as pie, and it lets you create reasonably complete creatures without having to think of a bunch of Cliché names.

Places are People Too! Well No, Not Really...

But that doesn't mean that you can't use the Cliché system to describe cities, dungeons, rivers, or anything else you little gamer's heart desires.

Central City, USA

Description: *A bustling metropolis, a city the Never Sleeps, the Big Fruit. Central City has the hottest restaurants, biggest stores, impressive cultural attractions, and five star hotels*

Clichés: *Capital of the Free World (4), Crime Ridden (2), Shopping Mecca (3), Dirty (3)*

Industrial City, Japan

Description: *From the dazzling neon that illuminates the night to the beauty of a perfectly arranged sand garden, Industrial City stirs the senses. When you're overcome by the press of the rush-hour crowd, you can retreat to quiet cobbled lanes and sculpted gardens for the harmony, scale and sense of stillness that the Japanese have prized for centuries.*

Clichés: *Factory City (4), World Port (3), Technopolis (2), Crowded (4)*

Dungeon with Tunnels full of Trolls and Dragons

Description: *This forsaken complex is a preposterous mix of crypts, abandoned fortifications and dismal underground lairs.*

Clichés: *Heavily patrolled (4), Trapped (3), Undead (2), Lots of Hiding Places (1)*

How Do I use these Clichés?

There are two uses for the Cliché ratings of places. They can be **active** or **reactive**. Any Cliché can be used either way.

Active use is when the GM wants something to happen to the players. With the Dungeon you have Heavily patrolled (4). So when the characters are sneaking around, the GM might roll 4 dice vs whatever Cliché they are using to be stealthy. If the GM wins, then the characters encounter a group of wandering baddies. With a city the GM might use the dice for Crime Ridden if the PCs try to pull off a heist. Does the local criminal community object to the PCs poaching on their turf? Roll Crime Ridden (2) against a difficulty of 5.

Reactive use is to help guide GMs when the players try to do something in a location. Let's say they want to fence some stolen goods from their heist above. Can they find anyone? Let them **add** the Crime Ridden (2) to whatever Cliché they are using to make an unsavory connection.