Role-Playing Game

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In the ever-continuing effort to catalogue the multiverse, it has fallen to me to devise a system by which theoretical universal streams may be simulated and possible eventualities allowed to play out in a controlled environment. For this purpose, I have borrowed a peculiar Lowtech custom hailing from the organics of the Quadwal universal cluster (specifically, the third planet of the cluster's analogue of the Sol system) through which…

Sorry, my boss Rhinox was standing over my shoulder. Writing in that silly science talk they insist on having us use (something about "setting an example for the Lowtechs") gets tiring. Anyway, what follows is a little project I've been working on –

…we may explore eventualities that rely more on the decisions of the stream's residents, rather than the physics of the stream itself. This method, referred to by the organics as a "tabletop role-playing game" (abbrev. "RPG"), will allow a sort of "theoretical reconnaissance" to take place before a stream is even detected…

- sorry again. If you ask me, I'm not sure Rhinox gets any higher dimensional sciences done beyond walking by to harass me. Anyway, what I've been working on is called a tabletop role-playing game, or RPG, something I picked up scanning the data files of the "humans" (an organic species, if you haven't heard of them, that involves itself significantly in Cybertronian history in a statistically anomalous number of universal streams).

It's basically a storytelling device, and from what I understand it's a hobby to which some humans devote an alarming portion of their short lifespan (only a single Vorn, give-or-take a few stellar cycles). Of course, the humans write all of their RPGs to simulate humans (and sometimes human-like aliens or various varieties of short or pointy-eared human), and I think those of us that know anything about humans know that we probably wouldn't want to spend much time pretending to be a human (I suppose the cavalier disregard for one's own life one must have if one has only a Vorn to look forward to could be an interesting experience to try, but I digress). So I've taken it upon myself to alter one of their existing games, the "FATE System" created by the human organization known as "Evil Hat Productions," to be more appropriate for simulating Cybertronians of any universal cluster or time period.

Of course, Rhinox thinks the game is Serious Business, so I'm going to have to pass it off as a worthy scientific pursuit as well. Just bear with me for those parts: if it's in *italics*, you don't have to read it.

'Til all are one,

Rewind, 3rd Assistant Sub-Secretary to the Minister of Higher Dimensional
Sciences.## Chapter 1: The Basics

C. F. FATE, Chapter 1

In some RPGs, it is customary to give the Game Master some special name like the "Marshall" or the "Keeper." This is confusing. And stupid. It's just the "Game Master." Anyway, it's your game, so if you want to give the GM a stupid special name, go ahead. I recommend "the Furman."

This game assumes that your group will use the d6-d6 dice variant (or the 2d6-7 variant, which has an identical probability distribution), as I find its greater probability swing better represents the Transformers multiverse.

Chapter 2: Game Creation

Unlike some other RPGs that you may have played, FATE and its derivatives expects facts of the game (setting, power level, story, and the like) to be determined cooperatively by the whole group, not single-handedly by the GM. The GM *can* do all this work singlehandedly, but I find that it's more fun to have the whole group involved.

Step 1: Setting

The multiverse is vast, and before beginning a Transformers game it is necessary to establish some facts about the setting. To the uninitiated, a peculiarity of the Transformers property is that it has an enormous number of continuities, so starting a game with the intent to run it in the "Transformers setting" is not as cut-and-dry as starting a game in the *Star Wars* or *Lord of the Rings* setting; the players and the GM must decide which of the dozens of Transformers settings to play in, or just create their own. This guide will walk your group through determining what the setting will look like.

Select Universal Cluster

Individual realities consisting of a single timeline are called "universal streams." Axiom Nexus has catalogued and documented 15,962,782 of these realities, and estimates the existence of at least 59,927,225 streams that have yet to be catalogued. Most universal streams can be classified into one of a number of "universal clusters," groups of similar realities. In what cluster your game takes place (if you choose to use a documented cluster) will affect both the nature of the setting and its history. What follows is a list of universal clusters and a brief description of their commonalities.

For whatever reason, the humans of the Quadwal cluster mentioned in the introduction have some awareness of these realities, as they appeared in various human media between their year 1984 and the destruction of the planet about half a Vorn later. In appreciation of this anomaly, I have listed the name the humans have for the cluster (what they call a "continuity family") in parenthesis, along with the cluster's scientific name.

- **Primax (Generation 1)**: The Primax cluster is the largest collection of realities, and often the one by which other continuities are evaluated. Common events in streams of this cluster include:
  - A (usually) 4.3 million year war on Cybertron between the Autobots and the Decepticons. The cause of the war varies across streams.
  - Combiner technology figures significantly into the war, with the first combiners created by the Decepticons, although the technology eventually finds its way into Autobot hands as well.
  - Near the end of the war, circumstance brings the two factions' leaders, Optimus Prime and Megatron, as well as many of their most elite troops, to the planet Earth, where the war escalates and the planet's indigenous human civilizations get involved.

- o Optimus Prime dies (something alarmingly common in other clusters as well) and passes leadership onto an Autobot named either Hot Rod or Rodimus (names of certain historical figures are perhaps the most common deviation between individual streams of this cluster).
- o Megatron is replaced as Decepticon leader by an individual named Galvatron.
- o Eventual Autobot victory in the Great War.
- o Individuals of note whose role in history varies greatly depending on stream include: Star Saber, Deathsaurus, Overlord, Thunderclash, Thunderwing, Alpha Trion, and Fortress Maximus.

> **Negative Polarity Universes**
> There exist realities in every cluster where "polarities" are reversed. On a microscopic level, protons have a negative charge and electrons have a positive charge, but on a more tangible level, there is an odd tendency for personalities to be "reversed." In Primax -408.24 Epsilon, for example, ~~Starscream is highly loyal and~~

This is the most diverse cluster, with perhaps the greatest number of unique sub-factions or "subgroups." These subgroups are often defined by possession of some sort of rare technology, as exemplified by the Pretenders, Headmasters, and Micromasters, among countless others.

Another common sequence of events (once again involving Earth!) takes place several million years in the future of the Autobot-Decepticon war. Called the **Beast Wars**, common occurrences include:

- o The change of the inhabitants of Cybertron into smaller, more fuel-efficient forms, with the descendants (don't ask how that works) of the Autobots becoming known as the Maximals, and the descendants of the Decepticons becoming known as Predacons (sharing a name with a Decepticon subgroup that existed during the Great War).
- o The Pax Cybertronia, a peace treaty that places the Predacons at severe disadvantage to the Maximals, resulting in the formation of the Tripredacus Council, which seeks to build Predacon resources and assert Predacon control of Cybertron.
- o A conflict on Earth (in its pre-human past due to a time-travel phenomenon) between the crew of the Maximal exploration ship *Axalon*, led by Optimus Primal, and that of the *Darksyde*, a ship stolen by the Predacon criminal Megatron (same name, different individual). The Maximals win and capture Megatron.
- o Upon return to Cybertron, Megatron (somehow) escapes captivity and (somehow) takes over Cybertron and (for some reason) adopts a new agenda of ridding Cybertron of organic influences. The few remaining Maximals eventually defeat Megatron and turn Cybertron into a Technoorganic paradise (for some reason).
- o Individuals of note whose role in history varies include: Galvatron, Magmatron, Lio Convoy, and Big Convoy.
- **Aurex (Unicron Trilogy):** Transformers of this cluster seem to be a good deal more resilient than those of other clusters; indeed their sparks have been observed to be able to survive indefinitely outside of their bodies, even in the vacuum of space. Common occurrences in this cluster include:
    - o Primus, the creator of the Transformers, comes into being alongside Unicron, creates the Transformers, and becomes Cybertron.

- o Six million years after the beginning of the Autobot-Decepticon war, the Mini-Cons, a diminutive third faction of Cybertronians, are created by Unicron and soon leave Cybertron, crash-landing on Earth and its moon. Four million years later, they are rediscovered by the Cybertronians, and the conflict on Earth escalates with the arrival of Megatron and Optimus Prime. Unicron awakens and is defeated, and the war ends.

- o Energon is discovered in the Sol system, and the war reignites. The events that follow are not pretty, and it is inconceivable that anyone would want to play a game taking place in this period.

- o A black hole opens near Cybertron, leading to a search for the Cyber Planet Keys and the Omega Lock. These are found, and Cybertron transforms into the god Primus. The Autobots achieve a final victory, ending the ten-million year conflict.

> **The Unicron Phenomenon**
> A worrying presence in the multiverse, the Unicron Phenomenon is an inter-dimensional singularity that acts as a virus of sorts, consuming realities where it can survive and retreating when it faces resistance. Most commonly, the Phenomenon takes the form of an enormous Transformer which drifts through space, devouring

- **Gargent (*Challenge of the GoBots*):** A curious cluster far removed from our own. Cybertron is called Gobotron, and its inhabitants are cyborgs with organic brains and robotic bodies, not true mechanical lifeforms. Common occurrences in this cluster include:
    - o A civil war erupts among the organic inhabitants of Gobotron, the GoBings, between the terrorist group known as the Renegades and the peace-keeping force called the Guardians.
    - o After an asteroid impact on Gobotron and subsequent ecological disasters, an individual called "The Last Engineer" transferred the brains of the GoBings into robotic bodies, calling the new cyborg species "GoBots."
    - o Thousands of years later, the Renegade leader Cy-Kill attempts to begin a campaign to conquer the universe by taking Earth, but is disrupted by the Guardians, lead by Leader-1.
    - o The inhabitants of the planet Cordax, the Rock Lords, make contact with the Guardians to seek assistance in combating the imperial ambitions of the Rock Lord despot Magmar. The Renegades catch wind of this, and Gobotron's civil war briefly spreads to Cordax. Magmar's and Cy-Kill's forces come into conflict, and both are defeated by the allied forces of the Guardians and the Rock Lords led by Boulder.

- **Malgus (*Transformers: Animated*):** Cybertronians of this cluster tend to have prominent chins. Common occurrences in this cluster include:
    - o Before any reliable record can be found, a powerful artifact called the AllSpark comes into being and creates the Transformers on Cybertron.
    - o Megatron becomes leader of the Decepticons, and the Great War begins against Autobot forces led by Ultra Magnus. To keep the AllSpark from falling into Decepticon hands, the Autobots send it through a space bridge and the AllSpark is lost.
    - o After eight million years of conflict, The Great War ends in Autobot victory. The Decepticons are exiled from Cybertron.

- Two million years later, a space bridge repair crew led by Optimus Prime stumbles upon the lost AllSpark. Megatron and his exiled Decepticons soon track them down, and in the ensuing conflict Megatron and the Autobots crash-land on Earth. A human named Isaac Sumdac finds scattered pieces of Megatron's body and reverse-engineers Cybertronian technology, building a robotics company.
- Fifty years later, Optimus Prime's crew reawakens near the Earth city Detroit, and becomes a super-hero team of sorts, fighting human criminals and dealing with problems arising from the presence of the AllSpark on the planet. Megatron soon returns, and his Decepticons begin a series of schemes to reignite the Great War. These efforts are thwarted, and the Decepticons are captured.

- **Nexus (*TransTech*):** Our own cluster. The Transcendent Technomorphs are a more advanced Cybertronian society, having avoided the barbaric conflicts which define other clusters and instead focused efforts on scientific advancement. Axiom Nexus, by far Cybertron's most prominent city, houses a large population of Lowtech interdimensional travelers. Occurrences of interest in our reality include:
    - The rise to prominence of Optimus, a political leader, and his associate Megatron, a military leader, in the wake of a political scandal wherein they uncovered ties between Sentinel Prime and Liege Maximo. Under Prime's and Megatron's leadership, Cybertron has entered a Golden Age.
    - The institution of *Dux Non Intruitus*, the rule banning all Optimus Primes and Megatrons of other realities from setting foot in Axiom Nexus. A notable exception is The Convoy, an up-until-recently secret counsel of thirteen Optimus Primes from various realities convened to deal with multiverse-scale threats by Axiom Nexus' own Optimus Prime.

- **Tyran (Live-Action Movies):** A controversial reality in which both the AllSpark and The Fallen hold a pivotal role in Cybertronian history. Transformers of this cluster are more "organic" than those of other realities, with some having been observed to contain copious internal fluids, and, in at least one case, the ability to urinate. Common occurrences include:
    - A mysterious, likely organic species creates the transformers by "seeding" several planets with Transformium, mining the substance, and using the AllSpark to give it life. Tyran Cybertronians are unaware of this history, instead worshipping the AllSpark as a sole creator.
    - The creation of the first Transformers, a race of trans-dimensional beings called the Dynasty of Primes. The Dynasty creates the rest of the Cybertronians, and the Matrix of Leadership comes into being. The Primes employ a Star Harvester to power the AllSpark.
    - One of the Primes breaks the Dynasty's rule against harvesting stars orbited by inhabited planets. He further rebels by picking several Cybertronians to follow him as the Decepticons. He is cast out from the Dynasty and dubbed "The Fallen."
    - Thousands of years later, Optimus Prime and Megatron rise to power as co-leaders of Cybertron. Megatron betrays Prime, re-founding the Decepticons. The AllSpark is launched into space, eventually finding its way to Earth. Following its trail, Megatron is stranded and frozen in Earth's arctic.
    - Tracking Megatron and the AllSpark, the Autobots and Decepticons land on Earth. Megatron is revived, and a brief conflict takes place where the AllSpark

is destroyed and Megatron killed. Two years later, an AllSpark fragment's contact with a human reveals the location of the Matrix of Leadership, drawing the attention of the Fallen and the Decepticons. Megatron is brought back to life. Optimus Prime is killed. Optimus Prime is brought back to life. The Fallen is killed. Two years later, another conflict erupts, destroying the Earth city Chicago as well as Cybertron. Megatron is killed, and the Autobots have won the Great War.

- o Three years later, humans have studied the bodies of the Decepticons and developed their own Cybertronian-based robots, which are hijacked and manipulated by Megatron who is brought back to life as Galvatron.

- **Uniend (Aligned Continuity):** A more recently-discovered cluster "bridging" Primax and Tyran, with many commonalities with both realities. In most streams of this cluster, Cybertronians noticeably lack noses, but there are noteworthy exceptions. Common occurrences include:
  - o Primus and Unicron come into being, creating the thirteen original Transformers. The Thirteen create a number of powerful artifacts, with which they defeat Unicron. Unicron's body floats off into space, eventually becoming the core of the planet Earth. The Thirteen create the first Cybertronians, including the Predacons.
  - o The Decepticons form in opposition to Cybertron's caste system, and are led by Megatron. The Great War begins between the Decepticons and the newly-created Autobots, led by Optimus Prime. The Decepticons gain control of Dark Energon, which turns the war to their favor but also renders Cybertron uninhabitable. The Autobots flee the planet, pursued by the Decepticons.
  - o The Decepticons begin mining Earth for Energon, and Optimus Prime and his crew track them to the planet and ally themselves with the government of the United States. The Autobots wage a guerilla war against the Decepticons on Earth, involving the tracking down of a number of artifacts created by the Thirteen. Eventually, they discover Unicron, and the Autobots, Decepticons, and Decepticon-revived Predacons unite to fight this new threat. In the process, Cybertron is revived.
  - o Years later, the Autobot Prison ship *Alchenor* crashes on Earth, releasing Decepticon criminals who are hunted down by a small squad of Autobots led by Bumblebee.
- **Viron (Robots in Disguise 2001):** A small family of realities heavily involved in the Universe War. Some debate exists as to the nature of the cluster, with some categorizing the whole thing as a part of the Primax cluster, although I have listed it as its own. Common occurrences in this cluster include:
  - o Megatron, leader of the Predacons, targets Earth for conquest. In anticipation of this, the Autobots, led by Optimus Prime, take Earth disguises and prepare for the Predacons' arrival.
  - o A conflict takes place which leads to the creation of the Decepticons, a small group led by Scourge, a clone of Optimus Prime, and the revival of Fortress Maximus on

> **The Universe War**
> To date the largest multi-cluster event, the Universe War was a conflict that took place primarily in Primax 703.00 Gamma, but involved participants from countless streams in the Primax, Aurex, and Viron clusters. Initiated by an incarnation of Unicron abducting individuals from other realities and forcing them into conflict to feed on their energy, the Universe War was a conflict between the Minions of Unicron and the Children of Primus, ended by the abrupt disappearance of

Earth. Omega Prime, the combined form of Optimus and his brother Ultra Magnus, defeats Galvatron, the vampiric upgraded form of Megatron, by using the Matrix Blade, a powerful weapon created by Fortress Maximus harnessing the power of Earth's children.

- **Other Clusters:** The listed clusters are not the only in the universe, but are the most well-documented and appropriate for play. Some of these realities are simply poorly documented, while others are inappropriate for use with this game (Lukas and Quadwal, for example, lack Cybertronians and can be better simulated by other RPGs). For the sake of completeness, here is a list of the other miscellaneous clusters that have been catalogued:
  - **Fornax (*Kre-O*):** A cluster almost entirely made up of bricks. Its streams include many realities which appear to be brick facsimiles of Primax, Tyran, and Uniend universes.
  - **Iocus (*Hero Mashers, Bot Shots, Construct-Bots, Battle Masters*):** A strange cluster similar to Fornax in its somewhat confusing and at-times surreal physics, although this cluster is even more variable to the point that it is difficult to pinpoint any distinct commonalities between its streams.
  - **Lukas (*Star Wars*):** A cluster which shares very little with other documented universes. Underlying it is a mysterious force (referred to by Lukas natives rather unimaginatively as "the Force"). There is no documented counterpart in this reality to either Earth or Cybertron, and most of its streams lack Transformers entirely. One notable exception is a series of piloted robots from Lukas 106.0 Beta which can only described as "vanity mechs," but nevertheless seem to be Lukas' counterpart to Cybertronians.
  - **Quadwal:** A cluster which, like Lukas, lacks any known counterpart of Cybertron, but unlike Lukas does have a counterpart of Earth. In spite of the lack of Cybertronians, human culture seems coincidentally rife with references to Cybertron and its inhabitants, with some representation of every heretofore documented cluster, a fact which perplexes the Ministry of Higher Dimensional Sciences to no end. It is also happens to be the cluster from which the documents on which this very game is based originate.
  - **Rovio (*Angry Birds Transformers*):** Cybertronians of this cluster are spherical of body shape, and split between avian Autobots and porcine Decepticons.
  - **Xobitor (*Robotix*):** Cybertron's counterpart here is called Skalorr, which is host to a war between the peaceful Protectons and the warmongering Terrakors. Skalorr's inhabitants were reptilian organics until their sun went nova and forced the planet's central intelligence Compucore to store their minds in mechanical "Robotix" bodies.
  - **Yayayarst (*Transformers: Go-Bots*):** This cluster's counterpart of Cybertron is a comet called Botropolis, and its inhabitants have, similar to those of our own reality, resisted the temptations of conflict. Unlike we, who devoted ourselves to scientific pursuits, the Transformers of this cluster instead devote themselves to aiding the primitive humans in various emergencies.

Select Era:

The next thing to consider is the era in which your game will take place. Most universal clusters feature a long conflict between the Autobots and Decepticons; does your game take

place before, at the beginning of, in the middle of, near the end of, or after the war? Many Primax clusters involve events taking place over a huge timeline. Perhaps in your setting Autobots and Decepticons are a distant memory, and instead have been replaced by Maximals and Predacons.

Dials

What follows is a list of considerations to take when constructing your game. It is good to at least discuss these issues so that all of your players are on the same page. These are called "dials" because they can be adjusted fairly easily.

Sliding Setting Scales

These scales will address many of the questions that must be asked about your setting. This is your setting, so why not make it exactly as you'd like it?

Mysticism Vs. Science Fiction

Transformers has always straddled the line between Science Fantasy and Science Fiction. "Mysticism" refers to the presence of things beyond the capability of Cybertronian technology, like the Matrix of Leadership, the AllSpark, and Vector Sigma, to name a few. Games with a more mystical bent are likely to involve powerful artifacts, while games which favor science fiction will likely give a mundane explanation for events; for example, a more "sci-fi" origin for the Transformers would be creation by the Quintessons (or perhaps evolution from naturally occurring gears and pulleys on Cybertron), while a more mystical origin will refer to Primus and the AllSpark.

A part of this consideration is mass shifting. In many streams, some transformers have the ability to change their mass between their alternate and robot modes: Megatron of Primax 984.17 Alpha, for example, changes size between a wieldable pistol and an imposing robot. The same universe's Astrotrain transforms from an average-sized robot to a spaceship that can carry all of the Decepticons. For some players, this strange ability causes no problems, while others will find it interferes with suspension of disbelief. Decide whether this has any place in your game.

In some clusters (notably Uniend), there is a very clear divide between Cybertronian technology and biology. This means that certain technologies will be for the most part only available at character creation, and that Mechanics checks to perform repairs on Transformers rather than vehicles require the **Medic** stunt.

This consideration also extends to other technologies: perhaps your group isn't interested in figuring out combiner technology, or maybe they just think Pretenders, Headmasters, and Targetmasters are kind of dumb.

Morality

"Morality" is a tricky concept – I know a certain purple 'bot who'll tell you all about that. However, this trickiness isn't, as one might expect, universal to all realities – indeed, in many incarnations of the Great War, one side is clearly in the right. So discuss what your group thinks the tone of your game should be: games with a more "black and white" sense of right and wrong, usually with insane, evil Decepticons and heroic Autobots, tend to have a bit more of a lighthearted feel, while games which blur the lines more can get more interesting as the characters have to grapple with their allegiances. Games where the players take the roles of Decepticons may benefit from less of a clear-cut Autobot moral superiority.

Fatality

Some realities are simply more dangerous than others. In some games, getting Taken Out more often than not leads to death, while in others, a 'bot can get blown to bits and get completely rebuilt in less than 22 minutes. This isn't just a gameplay consideration, it's a setting consideration as well: the Transformers of some realities are just more resilient than others. On the one hand, as mentioned, in the Aurex cluster, Cybertronians are durable even by Transformer standards, their sparks observed to survive unsupported in the vacuum of space. On the other hand, in the Tyran cluster, hard hits even from human weapons can have a 'bot's head rolling off his body like he thought Tyran 707.4 Delta was Primax 787.3!

Recognized Characters Vs. All-New Cast

Since non-player characters are made cooperatively, the group should be on the same page as to whether they want heavy involvement from well-known characters. Some players like the idea of taking orders from Optimus Prime and beating up Starscream, while others may prefer to populate a game with NPCs of their own design. In some games, players may wish to actually assume the identities of established characters, while in others, players may want to see what their original characters would do in the face of challenges they've previously seen play: what would have happened if a different crew from Optimus Primal's had pursued Megatron to prehistoric Earth and fought the Beast Wars?

Location, location, location

Next, decide a few things about where your game will take place. Here are a few broad setting ideas to get you started:

Cybertron: The home planet of the Transformers. Games taking place on Cybertron can be interesting for all sorts of things: pre-war drama, Great War military campaigns, post-war political issues. Just about any campaign can take place on Cybertron. Possible Setting Aspects include:

- o Anything could be a robot
- o Sprawling cities of steel

Earth: Why is Earth so important? Nobody knows. It's an exceedingly average planet, but it seems to fascinate the Cybertronians of countless realities. Possible setting aspects include:

- o Organic life is everywhere
- o Strange, silly humans

> **Setting Aspects**
>
> This will be the first time you start getting into Aspects, the driving force behind the FATE system. Setting Aspects are descriptors that will help set the tone and the place for your game. They aren't strictly necessary in the same way Issues are, but they can often provide a bit of color to your world and bring up things that aren't necessarily capital-I Issues, but could nonetheless create interesting situations through Invokes and Compels. Including too many can make things a bit convoluted, so we recommend including only one or at most two.

Space: The characters aren't particularly tethered to any single area, but are instead travelling through space, perhaps on the run or perhaps on some quest. Space is a great setting for games involving a lot of exploration, and can open up a lot of fun plots one wouldn't normally associate with the Transformers. If so inclined, a player character could even transform into the ship! Possible setting aspects include:

- o Seek out new life and new civilizations
- o Space is a scary place

A Space Station or Moon base: This kind of setting probably limits character movement the most, but allows the players to get involved in all manner of interesting political and military situations. Possible setting aspects include:

- o Nothing around for light years
- o Menagerie of Alien visitors

Some other planet: There are plenty of planets in the Multiverse besides Cybertron and Earth. Maybe you want to get involved in Junkion salvage law, or the intrigue surrounding the races on Velocitron. You could also design your own planet, and play an Autobot or Decepticon team sent to make contact with an entirely new civilization. Possible setting aspects include:

- o The organics worship us as gods!
- o Planet of Junk

Something weird: I don't know, you figure it out. Maybe you're a crew of Decepticons patching into a vast Autobot computer network, controlling digital avatars in a virtual reality. Maybe you're members of a civilization of Transformers which lives (perhaps unwittingly) on Unicron instead of Cybertron!

- o If you die in the game, you die for real!
- o Chaos Bringer, life giver?

Another bit of the setting you'll want to figure out is the **Squishy Organics**. Some Cybertronians find humans and other puny organic bipeds tiresome, so decide what role, if any, they'll play in the game. If you're designing your own planet, figure out what the inhabitants look like. What do they believe? What would they think of a thirty foot tall robot that's pretending to be their canoe?

Choose a Faction

Most universal clusters heavily feature a Great War, so figure out what your relationship with that war is. If you're not using an established stream, figure out what each side wants, who was the aggressor, and where your party fits into all this. Autobot freedom fighters? Decepticon privateers? Non-aligned refugees? Maximal explorers? Predacon inquisitors?

The specifics of this can be ironed out when it comes time to determine your game's Issues, but at the very least make sure everyone's on the same page about what badge they're wearing, if any.

Scale (FATE Core page 21)

Decide on a scale for your game – how much of the world do you expect your characters to regularly interact with? For exploration games, this can include the entirety of space. For some games, this can be a region as small as a single city. Most games probably average out to a single planet, and this can perhaps be considered the "default."

The scale of the game will affect the Issues your group comes up with. Games scaled to a single city will deal with local issues: a single field of battle or an organized criminal group or a series of smaller-scale emergencies and natural disasters. Some especially high-powered games can have Issues that affect the entire universe: the entirety of the Great War or maybe even Unicron.

Issues (FATE Core page 22)

Issues are the problems your characters will face. They are Aspects which will push the protagonists to action. As such, they should be designed to have something going on to rope in each of the Player Characters. Usually, this is best done cooperatively, since it gives every player a chance to speak up about what would interest their character.

The standard number of Issues is two, one **current** and one **impending**. The number of Issues can be changed – reducing them to one focuses the game, while increasing them to three can represent a world that has more going on and players who are more strained for resources.

Here are a few ideas for Issues to get you started:

The War: Perhaps the most obvious force in Transformers is the conflict between the Autobots and Decepticons. A game taking place before the war could have an impending Issue like Revolution stirring in Kaon, representing the public discontent and criminal activity that precedes the foundation of the Decepticons. Games taking place during the Great War could have a current Issue representing your group's mission: Decepticon raiders in the Cygnus system, Rodimus Prime must die, Shockwave's experiments.

Resources: A recurring theme in Transformers stories is the struggle for resources. This can tie in with a group's role in the war (Exploit Earth's energy) or work as an Impending issue for a group stranded on a planet (Energon supplies dwindling).

Criminal Activity: If your group is less-than-interested in playing out some part of the Great War, criminals can make equally interesting antagonists. These criminals can be Cybertronian or Organic. In games where the war *is* taking place, a criminal third faction can represent an impending issue whose machinations complicate matters (M.E.C.H. is harvesting Cybertronian organs). In post-war games, criminal groups can represent the remnants of the war: Ex-Decepticon Pirates, Autobot protectors turned warlords, Swindle's "business" empire.

Unicron: The Unicron Phenomenon plays into the history of countless realities. In larger-scale games, this can be either the present or impending the threat of the Chaos-Bringer himself (Unicron will eat space). In smaller-scale games, this can be an impending issue in the form of his cultists trying to summon him (Heralds of Unicron) or even just some part of his body (Dark Energon corrupts everything).

Faces and Places (FATE Core page 26)

This is where you'll flesh out a little more of your setting. The GM or the group will come up with a few important locations and non-player characters.

Make Characters

Now it's time for your players to start telling their stories. Each player will create a protagonist for the game, and in the process you'll all learn a bit more about your setting. This will also involve determining a power level for your game, which we'll go over in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Character Creation

Character creation in the Transformers RPG is intended to be done with the whole group, at the same time that game creation takes place.

Power Level

First things first, it's time to figure out the power level for this game. This will determine where your characters stand in the universe – all FATE player characters (and indeed all Transformers) are extraordinary, but some are more extraordinary than others. Games at higher power levels will feature characters with better skills and more access to stunts and technology.

Rookie (6 refresh, 20 skill points, skill cap at +4): You're just starting out, yet to make your name known. You could be a civilian force, a group of criminals, or a small force sent to scout out a planet. At the beginning of the series, Optimus Prime's crew in *Transformers: Animated* was at this level (Optimus himself may have been Seasoned).

Seasoned (7 refresh, 25 skill points, skill cap at +4): You've started to make a name for yourself. You've been through some battles, and you've got some special talents and a few technological tricks up your servos. The protagonists of *Last Stand of the Wreckers* were around this level.

Veteran (8 refresh, 30 skill points, skill cap at +5): Now you're getting there. You're an important person in the universe, with some definite edges and talents. If he hasn't sacrificed himself yet, Optimus Prime knows your name. The protagonists of *Transformers: Prime* were around this level.

Prime (10 refresh, 35 skill points, skill cap at +5): You're the best at what you do, and everybody knows your name: Grimlock, Deathsaurus, Optimus Prime, Megatron. If you've been leader of the Autobots or the Decepticons, or if you've ever beaten up a leader of the Autobots or Decepticons, you're probably at this level.

Aspects

Aspects are the driving force behind the FATE system, little phrases that describe your character or her outlook. These are going to be the most important part of character creation, as they will define much of your personality, talents, and background. The key with making aspects is to make them a bit double-sided: this gives more opportunity for your character to both invoke for bonuses and take compels for extra fate points.

High Concept: If you ever have to describe your character in under six words, your High Concept is how you do it. This is perhaps the equivalent to your "class," although you'll want to flesh it out a bit. Sure, Wheeljack is a Scientist, but that's a bit of a weaksauce descriptor. Add a few aspects, and choose some choosier words: yes, Wheeljack is a scientist, but he's more of an Inventor, and quite the creative type rather than methodical, and quite the stunt driver as well.

Crackpot daredevil inventor says a good deal more about the character than Scientist. Here are a few examples to get you started:

- Zealous security officer
- Inspiring leader of the Autobots
- Cunning master of the skies

Trouble: Nobody's perfect, and whether it's an internal struggle or an external conflict everyone's got something that makes their life just a little harder. Your Trouble will be a good source for fate points, but it doesn't have to be entirely without benefit – Grimlock has a Primitive Brain, but what happens when there's a problem has all the scientists and complex thinkers stumped? Maybe it's time for a simple, primitive solution. It's times like those when a character's Trouble can end up saving the universe! Also, your trouble doesn't necessarily have to be something tangible; some 'bots just have bad luck (Why universe hate Waspinator?). A few examples:

- Hyper-paranoid
- Will die for the cause
- Chronic backstabber

3 Additional Aspects: Here's where Aspect creation opens up completely. You can just create them on your own, but I recommend following the phase trio laid out in *FATE Core*. Each phase asks a sort of question that gets answered with a story. The story should reveal something about your character, which will be turned into an Aspect.

Phase 1 asks the question "where did you come from," saying a little bit about your character's first adventure.

Phase 2 asks "how you met the party," and tells the story of an adventure you had involving one of the other PCs.

Phase 3 narrates another interaction with another PC, giving you the opportunity to play a supporting role in someone else's adventure.

Here are some ideas for aspects that can stand on their own or be used as part of the phase trio.

Faction: Most Transformers characters will find themselves belonging to a faction, usually the Autobots or Decepticons. If it's used with Phase 1, this can give a little background for why your character chose the side he chose. If used with another phase, it can explain a little bit about your character's outlook on the war or his function in his faction's ranks.

- Heroic Autobot
- Megatron must be stopped, no matter the cost
- Megatron's Lieutenant

Background with another character: This fits pretty snugly with Phases 2 and 3, but it's important enough to repeat even if you aren't using the Phase Trio. It's important to have something holding you with the other characters, or you risk dealing with the common problem of parties that don't seem to have any good reason to stay together. This also doesn't have to be exclusive to other PCs, and can be used to define a relationship with an NPC or even an antagonist, in which case it makes a great option for Phase 1.

- I owe Rung my sanity
- With Prowl from the very beginning
- My old colleague Skyfire

Motto: Many Transformers have catchphrases, and these can make perfect Aspects since they tend to define a character's outlook and competencies. The origin story for a motto can fit into any phase.

- Caution can never be overused
- Freedom is the right of all sentient beings
- Conquest is made of the ashes of one's enemies

The Alternate Mode

Of course, it wouldn't be *Transformers* if your characters didn't transform[1]. Your alternate mode will say a lot about how your character looks, and affect your character's abilities and available technology. See the next chapter for more information on constructing your character's alternate mode.

> **The Alternate Mode as an Aspect**
> If you prefer a rules-lite approach, you can scrap these and instead give your players an additional aspect, which they can invoke when it would be relevant: for example, a Fast Car is useful during a chase, and a Tyrannosaurus Rex is certainly useful during melee combat. This is fine, but I find giving them a little more crunch lets them take the central role transformation ought to have in a *Transformers* game. If you're using this variant, reduce starting refresh by 1.

Multiple Alternate Modes

The Multiverse is rife with Transformers possessing more than just a robot mode and single alternate form. If you want to play a character with multiple alternate modes, simply buy another alternate mode template and deck it out with its own stunts and technology. One of your Aspects should address this strange ability (Master of sea and sky, Extra form, extra personality)

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1 Yes, I'm aware of Action Masters. No, I don't like them.

Size

Size categories in FATE: Transformers are broad – a category increases every time height doubles (or mass cubes). Bigger characters are tougher and hit harder, but are easier to hit and dodge due to their size. For every size category of difference between two characters, the larger character gains a +2 bonus to weapon and defense ratings, and the smaller character gets a +1 bonus to attack and defense rolls.

Size (Descriptive)	Size (Numerical)	Example	Range (Feet)
Small	0	Human	4-8
Medium	1	Prowl	9-16
Large	2	Megatron	17-32
Huge	3	Jetfire	33-64
Gargantuan	4	Devastator	65-128
Colossal	5	-	129-256
Immense	6	Trypticon	257-512

In addition, add the difference in size to the smaller character's Stealth and Notice checks against the larger character. Each increase in size category beyond Medium costs one Refresh. Increases beyond Huge should be looked upon with suspicion by the GM. The table to the right gives measurements and examples from Primax 984.17 Alpha, but these are more a vague guide than a hard-and-fast rule. Also, it's perfectly fine to alter the "medium" – in the Beast Era of the Primax cluster, for example, the majority of Transformers are what this chart would call "small," so in that case you can just move the track down a notch.

Skills

Now it's time to define your character's skills. The list of skills and uses for those skills will be dealt with in chapter 7.

FATE: Transformers limits your choice of skills in two ways: depending on power level, you will have a skill cap that gives an upper limit to your choice. You also must follow the skill column rules: you can't have more skills at a higher level than you have at any of the lower levels. Visually, this means that your skills form "columns": The higher level skills must be "supported" by lower-level skills.

Stunts and Technology

Next, you can spend refresh on any number of special abilities which are divided into two categories: **stunts** and **technology**.

Stunts allow you to use skills in different ways, either by providing a situational bonus or by allowing a skill to be used in a way that it normally cannot. Stunts are extraordinary but usually mundane talents that always cost one refresh. Optimus Prime's ability to give incredibly inspiring speeches, Wheeljack's talent for inventing strange gizmos, and Starscream's gift for talking his way out of trouble are all examples of stunts. Stunts are explained more fully in chapter 8.

Technology is a blanket term for special gadgets, mysterious powers, and incredible abilities that go well above and beyond the capabilities of normal Cybertronians. Technologies can cost more than one refresh. Trailbreaker's forcefield projection, Megatron's fusion cannon, and Blurr's incredible speed are all technologies. Many common special abilities, like mass shifting, combiner technology, and Targetmaster partners are also considered Technologies. Many examples of Technologies are given in chapter 9.

> **What's the difference between Technology and Stunts?**
> There isn't really one, at least not a hard line. Anything that costs more than one refresh is a technology, but some technology costs only one refresh. The difference is more narrative than mechanical. If you design a new ability and you can't figure out whether it's a stunt or a technology, don't sweat it. Just pick.

You can take any combination of stunts and technologies that you want, as long as your refresh does not fall below one.

Stress and Consequences

Transformers are a good bit more resilient than organics, so physical stress and consequences operate on a different scale. This causes a mechanical change to the stress box system and a narrative change to the Consequence system. Rather than just one, Transformers are allowed to check up to two stress boxes on any given hit before suffering Consequences. Moreover, the Aspects caused by Consequences are a good deal more dramatic: in most Transformers stories, an Amputated Limb is only a moderate consequence, and even a Decapitated head isn't always anything more than an immediate inconvenience. Depending on the cluster, these specifics may change (decapitation kills Tyran Transformers, and Uniend Transformers don't have the scientific know-how to easily replicate Cybertronian body parts), but Transformers are universally able to absorb a *lot* more physical trauma than organics.

Roll out!

Your character's finished, now it's time to begin your story.

Chapter 4: The Alternate Mode

Transformers transform. A character's alternate mode affects her size and the availability of certain technologies, and often reflects on the character's personality. Alternate modes are incredibly various, but they can roughly be categorized into three categories.

All characters with an alternate mode gain the following Technology:

Transformation (-0 or +1): You have the ability to transform. By default, this is a supplemental action, incurring the -1 skill penalty for the turn, but in some clusters (notably Tyran), this is an especially fluid action that incurs no penalty at all. As long as two points of technology are specified as limited to either your alternate mode or robot mode, you get a +1 bonus to your refresh.

Vehicle (-1)

Vehicle modes are the most common type of alternate form, including cars, tanks, aircraft, boats, and spacecraft. All characters with vehicle forms gain the following ability:

Movement (-1): When in your alternate form, you gain a +2 bonus to Athletics checks to move through the terrain designed for your alternate mode. By default, this is flat land, but with the purchase of flight, spaceflight or aquatic technologies, this can become air, space or water. "Off-road" land vehicles get the bonus to moving through uneven terrain, but get no bonus to move over flat surfaces. This ability is augmented further by purchase of speed-related technology.

You are the vehicle (-0): Although superficially a vehicle, you use Athletics, not Pilot, for movement checks in your Alternate Mode.

Examples:

Boring old car (-1): Movement (flat land)

Beast (-1)

Beast modes are the second most common category of alternate form, and they encompass all manner of animals, alien monsters, and mythical creatures. A "Beast" mode can also represent an alternate robot mode. All characters with beast modes gain the following ability:

Skill Shuffle (-1): When taking a beast mode (at character creation), specify a certain number of skills that rearrange when you transform. The skills must be at least tangentially relevant to your new form (no Data bonus for turning into an armadillo). Skills that would take a lot of justification to be improved include Contacts, Mechanics, Swindle, Pilot, Investigate, Data, Rapport, Resources, and Shoot. Most beast modes switch out for better bonuses to Notice, Melee, Brawn, Athletics, or Stealth.

Examples:

Cow (-1): Skill shuffle (+Brawn, +Notice)

Thing (+0)

Objects which cannot move under their own power are Things. This is the least common (varying by cluster) but most diverse type of alternate mode, and includes weapons, audio gadgets, cameras, memory sticks (*ahem*), buildings, cities, plants, and "ornaments."

There is no refresh cost for a Thing Mode, making it the most customizable alternate form, but it cannot purchase certain technologies.

Immobile (+1): when in Thing Mode, a Transformer is very limited in actions, and cannot perform any actions that require movement, including most checks for Athletics, Pilot, Fight, and Shoot.

Just a Thing (-1): when in Thing Mode, a Transformer makes no noise and gains a +2 bonus to Stealth checks to avoid detection (size penalties and common sense apply). In addition, when in an environment where your alternate form would not be out of place (such as a refrigerator in a kitchen, or a tree in a forest) you may spend a fate point to avoid detection entirely either until you move or for the remainder of a Scene, without a roll.

Examples:

Boulder (-0): Immobile (+1), Just a Thing (-1)

Multiple Alternate Modes

The Transformers multiverse is full of characters with multiple alternate modes. These are obtained by simply purchasing multiple alternate modes.

Chapter 7: Skills and Stunts

Here is a list of skills, associated actions, and associated Stunts. Skills marked with an asterisk*
are somewhat situational, and may not be appropriate for use in some campaigns.

Athletics represents physical dexterity and speed. It is also the skill associated with driving a
vehicle alternate mode.

- **Overcome:** Athletics is used to bypass obstacles requiring physical movement. It is the
  skill you usually use to bypass obstacles between zones in a conflict.
- **Create Advantage:** Jump to high ground, tuck and roll around foes.
- **Attack:** Cannot usually be used in this way. (except when ramming in vehicle mode,
  although this inflicts the same amount of damage to you)
- **Defend:** Athletics is the default skill used to defend against close-quarters and ranged
  attacks, as well as to physically interfere with someone attempting to move past you.

Brawn is the brute side of Athletics, representing a character's physical strength and toughness.
It grants additional physical stress and consequence boxes: +1 or +2 Brawn grants a 3-point
stress box, +3 or +4 Brawn grants a 3-point and 4-point stress box, and +5 Brawn grants an
additional mild consequence box (only usable for physical harm) in addition to a 3-point and 4-
point stress box.

- **Overcome:** bypass obstacles that require physical strength or endurance, lifting gates,
  bending bars, and the like. Avoid complications from environmental factors like extreme
  cold.
- **Create Advantage:** Tackle and grapple.
- **Attack:** Cannot usually be used in this way
- **Defend:** Cannot usually be used in this way

Computers* covers your aptitude with computer systems, both Cybertronian and alien. In games
where you don't expect computer systems to play a central role (for example, in many games
primarily involving Earth's 1980s, Computers will play a smaller role), these functions can be
divided between Espionage and Data.

- **Overcome:** Retrieve data, use unfamiliar systems
- **Create Advantage:** Scramble enemy communications in mass combat, assist data or
  mechanics checks when data aggregation would be useful.
- **Attack:** Hack into computer systems.
- **Defend:** Actively defend systems from attacks.

Contacts* represents how well-connected you are. In games where players are isolated from
wider Cybertronian society, such as games taking place primarily on a foreign planet, Contacts is
probably not an important skill.

- **Overcome:** Find someone you need.
- **Create an Advantage:** declare that you know someone who can help you with a problem. Plant or acquire information with an information network.
- **Attack:** Cannot usually be used in this way.
- **Defend:** defend against social advantages where your information network is relevant, or use your network of allies to defend against Investigate checks to track you down.

Data represents the sum of a character's education and knowledge.

- **Overcome:** bypass any obstacle that requires special information.
- **Create Advantage:** uncover aspects and information relevant to the situation.
- **Attack:** Cannot usually be used in this way
- **Defend:** Cannot usually be used in this way

Empathy is the social/emotional Notice skill, used to perceive changes in a person's attitudes and spot lies.

- **Overcome:** Cannot usually be used in this way
- **Create Advantage:** "Read" a person, discovering aspects and determining circumstances under which you can attack a person mentally.
- **Attack:** Cannot usually be used in this way
- **Defend:** Counter attempts to Swindle you, defend against attempts to create social advantages

Espionage is the catch-all skill for thievery and skullduggery, actions related to stealing things and getting into places you don't belong. For the most part, it is the Burglary skill from FATE Core, but with a more military context.

- **Overcome:** Bypass locks and traps, pilfer items, cover your tracks to avoid being followed
- **Create advantage:** Scout out a location before infiltrating. Set up security measures in a location.
- **Attack:** Cannot usually be used in this way.
- **Defend:** Cannot usually be used in this way.

Fight covers close-quarters combat, be it with fist, claw, or sword.

- **Overcome:** Cannot usually be used in this way
- **Create Advantage:** Spot weaknesses in an opponent's fighting style, perform various combat maneuvers like disarming and tripping.
- **Attack:** Attack.
- **Defend:** defend against Fight attacks.

Investigate is used to uncover information. In many ways, it is the active counterpart to Notice.

- **Overcome:** Uncover information hidden either deliberately or by inconvenience.
- **Create Advantage:** Discover aspects through examination. Investigate can be used to uncover most hidden aspects, but is limited by its time-consuming nature.
- **Attack:** Cannot usually be used in this way
- **Defend:** Cannot usually be used in this way
-

Mechanics deals with your skill at constructing devices, fixing vehicles, and (sometimes with the Medic stunt) healing injuries. It is the physical counterpart to Data: theoretical scientists like Perceptor will have higher Data, and inventors like Wheeljack will have higher Mechanics.

- **Overcome:** Heal injuries (sometimes requires Medic stunt), invent contraptions.
- **Create Advantage:** Manage systems in starship combat, spot flaws in a mechanical structure.
- **Attack:** Cannot usually be used in this way
- **Defend:** Cannot usually be used in this way
  - o **Medic:** You can use Mechanics to heal transformers' injuries. Roll Overcome against a physical consequence (difficulty equal to the value of the consequence) to downgrade it.

Notice covers physical perception, awareness, and the ability to pick out details. Where Investigate is long-term, Notice represents awareness in a shorter time-frame.

- **Overcome:** Cannot usually be used in this way
- **Create Advantage:** discover aspects based on direct observation.
- **Attack:** Cannot usually be used in this way
- **Defend:** counter Stealth checks made against you.

Pilot is used when operating vehicles (or mounts) that aren't part of your own body. It functions for the most part exactly as Athletics.

- **Overcome:** Dodge obstacles, participate in chases and races.
- **Create Advantage:** Maneuver in vehicle-to-vehicle combat. Act as a copilot.
- **Attack:** Cannot usually be used in this way (except when ramming, although this inflicts the same amount of damage to your vehicle)
- **Defend:** Avoid damage to your vehicle.

Provoke is the "mean" social skill, used for insults and intimidation.

- **Overcome:** get someone to do something with taunts or intimidation.
- **Create Advantage:** Create momentary emotional states related to negative emotion.

- **Attack:** Make mental attacks, dealing mental stress, provided you have some relationship with or knowledge about the opponent.
- **Defend:** Cannot usually be used in this way

Rapport is the "nice" social skill, used to become liked or trusted, either by an individual or by a crowd.

- **Overcome:** charm or inspire people to do what you want.
- **Create Advantage:** establish a positive mood or sense of trust in a target.
- **Attack:** Cannot usually be used in this way
- **Defend:** contest attempts to damage your reputation or make you look bad in front of others.

Resources* represents material wealth, either in Energon cubes, currency, or barter. Resources may not always be a necessary skill, for example in games taking place in a military context where personal wealth is meaningless or in games where players prefer to track resources in more measured terms rather than an abstract skill.

- **Overcome:** bribe your way out of a situation or otherwise throw money at a problem.
- **Create Advantage:** grease palms, buy drinks, declare that you have an item on hand, or perhaps even throw money to a crowd to create a distraction.
- **Attack:** Cannot usually be used in this way
- **Defend:** Cannot usually be used in this way

Shoot is the ranged counterpart to fight, representing both firearms and thrown weapons.

- **Overcome:** Cannot usually be used in this way
- **Create Advantage:** Lay suppressing fire or perhaps even spot a weakness in a foe's firearm.
- **Attack:** make attacks from up to two zones away (a weapon can change the range).
- **Defend:** Cannot usually be used in this way

Stealth represents being physically sneaky, avoiding detection. It has close ties with the Espionage skill.

- **Overcome:** bypass an obstacle requiring that you not be seen.
- **Create Advantage:** Set up an ambush or sneak attack.
- **Attack:** Cannot usually be used in this way
- **Defend:** foil Notice and Investigate attempts to find you.

Swindle represents checks to lie to or misdirect people.

This skill has been renamed from the "Deceive" skill of FATE: Core in recognition of a generous contribution to this project by the proprietors of Swindle, Swindle, and Swindle, Axiom Nexus' one-stop shop for every upgrade you can imagine, and some you can't.

- **Overcome:** bluff your way past someone or make someone believe something false. You can also use Deceive for disguises, although this will be limited by time, available resources, and the fact that you are an enormous metal robot.
- **Create Advantage:** Feint in combat, create distractions, or trick someone into revealing information (or an aspect).
- **Attack:** Cannot usually be used in this way
- **Defend:** use false information to throw off Investigation, defend against Empathy checks to discern motives.

Tactics* is the intellectual side to conflict, representing a character's ability to organize and command troops, as well as take advantage of an enemy's weaknesses. In smaller-cast games where mass conflict won't take place, these functions can be covered adequately by Fight and Notice.

- **Overcome:** Analyze situations to figure out the best course of action.
- **Create Advantage:** Direct allies in combat or exploit enemy weaknesses, both in mass combat and personal-scale combat.
- **Attack:** Order troops in mass combat.
- **Defend:** Lead defense in mass combat.

Will is your mental fortitude and conviction. It grants additional mental stress and consequence boxes: +1 or +2 Will grants a 3-point stress box, +3 or +4 Will grants a 3-point and 4-point stress box, and +5 Will grants an additional mild consequence box (only usable for Mental harm) in addition to a 3-point and 4-point stress box.

- **Overcome:** bypass obstacles when focus and willpower are required.
- **Create Advantage:** place an aspect on yourself, representing deep concentration.
- **Attack:** Cannot usually be used in this way
- **Defend:** avoid mental stress from Provoke checks.

Approaches are an option which can readily substitute the standard skill system.

The "Tech Spec" package

As an alternative to the standard skills, you can use this system, which duplicates a series of dubious Quadwal-cluster technical readouts which mysteriously fell into human hands at some point in their 1980s. If you use this skill variant or the approaches variant, there is no "Skill Shuffle" for a beast alternate mode, and so a beast mode costs no refresh.

- **Strength** governs melee combat, heavy lifting, and other brute-force tasks.
- **Intelligence** governs all Mechanics, all Data, Most tactics, some Swindle, some Espionage, some Investigate, and some Notice checks.
- **Speed** governs Athletics checks.
- **Endurance** governs physical stress boxes and Brawn checks to endure elements.
- **Rank** governs some Tactics, Resources, and Contacts checks, as well as social skills.
- **Courage** governs Will checks and some social skills.
- **Firepower** governs ranged combat. This skill can be renamed **Fireblast**, which is dumb.
- **Skill** governs most espionage, stealth, and pilot checks, along with some swindle checks.

This variant has no explicit skill for most social skills, so the stat used for those checks should be decided based on the situation and the character's approach to the task.

Chapter 9: Technology

Technology is the catch-all term for abilities that go above and beyond what is available to normal Cybertronians. It is a sort of amalgam of superpowers, techno-magic, and gear.

Make up your own: No list could fully represent the special abilities available to any Cybertronian in the Multiverse. Just remember that each point of refresh spent on a technology should be roughly equivalent in power to a stunt, two shifts of effect or a new use for a skill. Don't sweat it too much, but if you're a player and your technology ability gets knocked down a peg or two after testing, don't get upset.

Combiners

Combiner technologies allow your character to join with other characters, either as a power up or to form an entirely new person.

Combiner (-varies): You have the ability to combine with some number of allies to form a single giant robot. This capability requires that you possess an Aspect that addresses this ability (Left leg of Devastator, Scramble Power!, Combine to form Omega Prime!). To combine, the leader (or a member of the team) must spend a fate point.
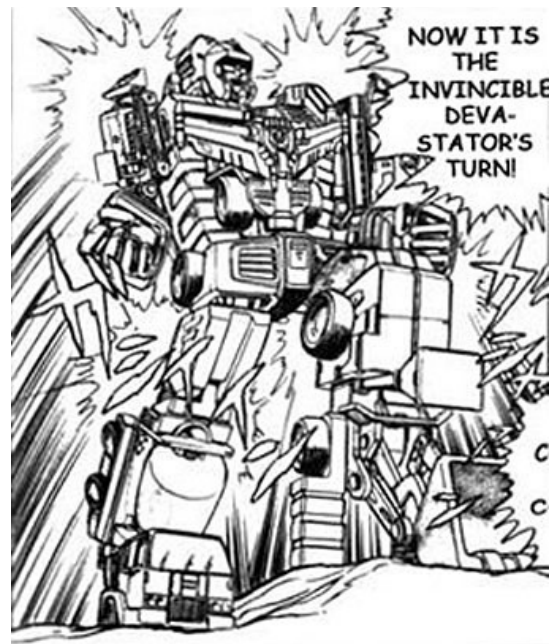
- When combined, the characters act as a team (*FATE Core page 174, "Teamwork"*); for any given action, use the highest skill bonus on the team with a +1 each for every team member with at least a +1 bonus in the skill.
- In addition, set aside a number of refresh points for Stunts and Technologies that you provide for the combined form. The combiner possesses all of those stunts and technologies, but not those belonging to the base robots. As long as you set aside at least 2 refresh, this technology is free. Otherwise, it costs one refresh.
- The team "pools" its stress boxes and consequences, dividing stress and consequences taken among the component robots, allowing the combiner to take huge amounts of punishment. In addition, a combiner can cross off one additional stress box (total 3) before taking consequences. Rather than take a consequence (except a Severe consequence), the combiner can break apart into its component robots.

Powerlinx (-1): You can attach yourself to a larger Transformer, releasing some number of refresh worth of stunts and technologies chosen by the larger robot at character creation. This is a somewhat unusual ability primarily associated with the Mini-Cons of the Aurex cluster.

- **Bulk (+2):** The counterpart to Powerlinx, you have some number of refresh worth of abilities that are only available when power is provided to you by a smaller Powerlinx partner. As long as you specify at least 2 refresh of stunts and technologies, this ability gives a +2 bonus to your refresh.
    - Instead of Powerlinx technology, these abilities can be activated by a Cyber Key, which is summoned by spending two fate points. Whether Cyber Keys or Powerlinking activates these abilities is determined at game creation.
    - This ability is effectively free because, in streams where Mini-Cons or Cyber Keys exist, it is assumed that all Transformers have some ability locked behind Powerlinking.

Hot Shot with Jolt
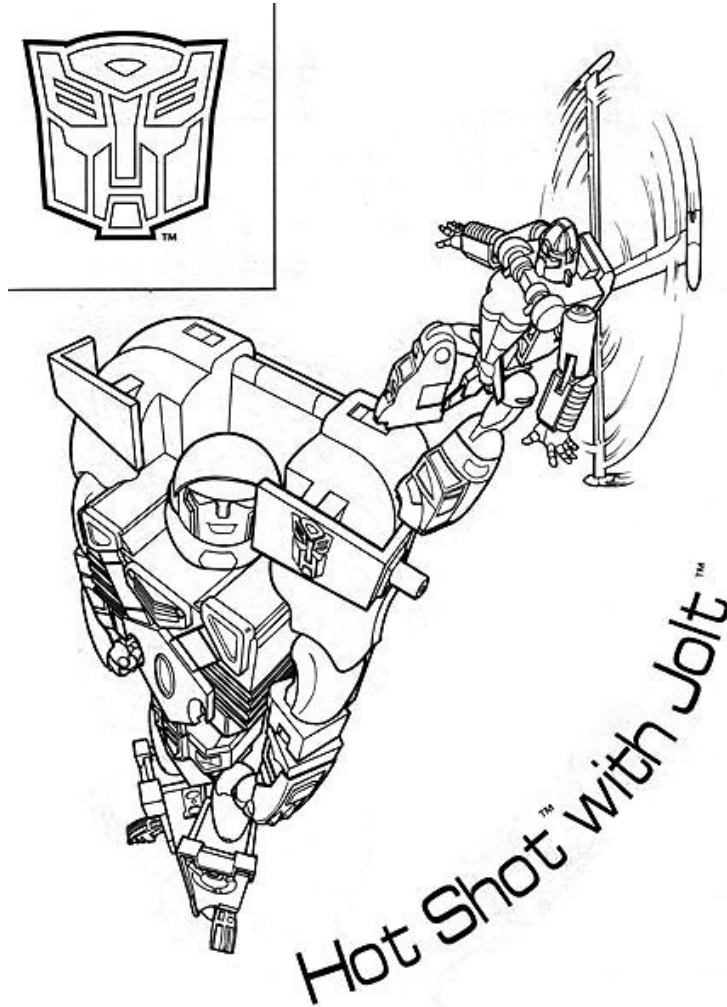
Companions

Companion technologies have to do with secondary drones or characters closely tied to your character. Standard companions (such as a targetmaster, deployer, or drone buddy) are Stunts represented by the rules at (http://www.efpress.net/blog/press.net/2014/12/companions.html). A companion starts out as a size 0 nameless NPC with one refresh worth of stunts and technologies (you can spend your own to increase this). In some cases, it may be better to fully stat out companions as separate characters, although this gives the game master control over the character rather than the player.

Mobile Platform (-1): Some part of your alternate mode transforms into a mobile platform that provides the necessary tools for and grants a +2 bonus to a certain use of a skill.

> o Alternatively, the platform can have the ability to perform a certain skill independently, at +2.
> > ▪ **Complex Platform (-1):** For an additional refresh, the independent skill's bonus increases to +3, and it gains an additional skill at +2.

Example (Primax 984.0 Kappa): Ratchet's medical bay grants him a +2 bonus to Mechanics checks to perform repairs on Transfomers when better medical tools are not available. Ironhide's battle platform grants him a +2 bonus to Shoot checks to create an advantage by laying down suppressing fire. Optimus Prime's mobile repair bay can perform Mechanics checks independently at +3, as well as Shoot at +2.
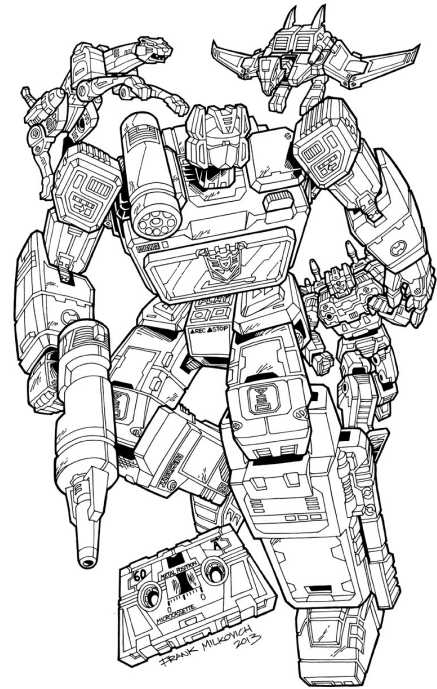
Transtector (-1): You are actually a roughly human-sized robot which transforms into a Cybertronian head, possessing a larger artificial body called a Transtector. You can split off from the larger body and operate as a size 0 robot, with all the usual benefits and penalties for that size. You can use other Transtectors as well (effectively trading bodies with another Transformer), gaining access to any technologies connected to that body.

- **Headmaster (-2):** you gain a size 0 character as a companion, usually an organic in powered armor but also possibly a Cybertronian. This means that the head and body can act independently (and are in fact different characters). This companion can be upgraded as normal. The body takes a -1 penalty to all skill checks when separated from the head, but when connected gains a +1 bonus to three skills instead. This ability requires an Aspect that addresses your relationship with your companion.

Enhancements

Enhancements are things that make something about your character *better* than other Transformers. You are stronger, faster, or tougher than other 'bots.

Extraordinary Speed (-2): You move a good deal faster than your average Transformer. Your Notice is at +4 for the purpose of determining initiative. All your Athletics checks are made at +1, including dodging. When sprinting, this bonus increases to +2. When moving as part of another physical activity, you may move one zone without incurring the -1 penalty for a supplemental action. You reduce penalties to Stealth for moving by 2.

- **Incredible Speed (-4, replaces Extraordinary Speed):** You are very, very fast, faster even than really fast Cybertronians. You always go first in initiative order in conflict (unless someone else also has Incredible Speed, in which case initiative is determined normally). You make all Athletics checks at +2, or +4 for sprinting. You may move two zones without taking the supplemental action penalty. You reduce movement penalties to Stealth by 4.
  - **Ludicrous Speed (-6, replaces Incredible Speed):** Your name is Blurr. You always go first in initiative order in conflict ('bots with Incredible Speed can suck it). You make all Athletics checks at +3, or +6 when sprinting. You may simply declare that you keep up with any character or vehicle. You may move up to three zones without taking the supplemental action penalty. No one ever gets a bonus to spot you when you move while using Stealth.

Extraordinary Strength (-2): You can lift more and hit harder than an average 'bot of your size. When lifting or breaking inanimate things, you get a +3 bonus to your Brawn score. Roll Brawn at +1 when grappling, and inflict a 2-shift hit on an opponent as a supplemental action during a grapple. Fight attacks and Shoot attacks to throw weapons gain Weapon: 2.

- **Incredible Strength (-4, replaces Extraordinary Strength):** Your strength is far beyond that of most Cybertronians. You gain +6 to your Brawn score to lift or break inanimate things. Roll Brawn at +2 when grappling, and inflict a 3-stress hit as a supplemental action during a grapple. Your fight attacks and thrown weapons gain Weapon:4.

Extraordinary Toughness (-2): You're tougher and can take harder hits than your average Cybertronian. You have Armor:1 against all physical stress, and two additional physical stress boxes.

- **Incredible Toughness (-4, replaces Extraordinary Toughness):** You're so tough it could be said you have an iron hide. You have Armor:2 against all physical stress, and four additional mild physical stress boxes.

Movement

Movement technologies give your character access to some special form of movement.

Aquatic (-1): You're especially adept at getting around in water or other liquid environments. You may ignore all water-based borders while swimming. You get a +2 bonus on checks to resist environmental effects in the water.

Wall Crawler (-1): You can climb on things like a spider, or have magnets in your feet or wheels. When climbing, you treat any surface as no more difficult than a vertical wall with abundant handholds, no matter the angle. This includes ceilings.

Flight (-1): You have wings or some other means of flight, allowing you to ignore certain borders and travel upwards into zones that can't normally be reached. This is governed by the Athletics skill, as usual.

- **Escape Velocity (-1):** You have the ability to leave planetary orbit, able to make trips within a single solar system at sub-light speeds.
  - **Interstellar (-1):** You can not only make trips between planets of the same system, but can even travel between systems. At the very least, you can make the trip between Earth and Cybertron. The amount of time this takes is whatever is typical for interstellar travel in your universe; you may have sub-light engines but an extraordinary fuel capacity, or you may possess a means of faster-than-light travel.
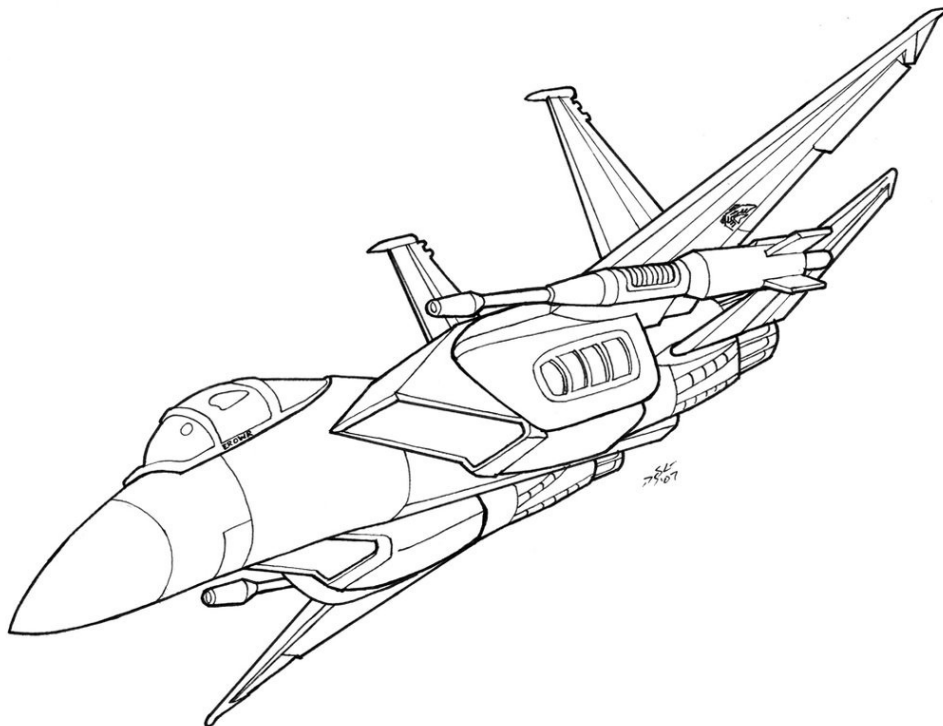
Special abilities

Special Abilities are the weird things a character can do, the things that set some 'bots far apart from others.

Cerebro-Shell (-4): When you have access to a helpless captive, you can implant a mind-control device called a Cerebro-Shell. To do this, you conduct a procedure where you use Mechanics to inflict mental stress. If your target is taken out, you can control its actions, using all of the target's physical skills and most of its mental skills. When someone has a reason to be suspicious, you must use your Swindle skill to avoid discovery. When forced to do something that particularly violates the target's nature, like attacking allies, the target can spend a fate point to attempt a contest between his Will and your Mechanics. If successful, the target can act normally for a round, and can indicate to his allies that something is amiss or even attack you (under most circumstances, the target cannot remove the Cerebro-Shell on its own), although after that round you regain control.

Forcefield (-3): You can use Will to create advantages in combat. By spending a fate point, you can create an impassable border between two zones or around one zone that lasts until you dismiss it, leave the scene, or the scene ends. You can also use Will to perform miscellaneous actions where forcefield projection would be useful, such as temporarily blocking a hull breach in a spaceship.

Hologram Projection (-1): You can use Espionage to create lifelike illusions, allowing you to create advantages in combat through distraction and otherwise deceive and disorient your enemies.

- **Holographic Driver (-0):** In some clusters, all or most Transformers have a limited form of this ability that allows them to emulate an organic operator in their cockpits. In those clusters, this lesser form of hologram projection is a free ability.

Invisibility (-2): You can spend a fate point to become invisible for the rest of the scene or until you dismiss the ability, gaining the invisible aspect and the following benefits:
A constant +2 bonus to Stealth checks relying on sight. You can make Stealth checks at any time, even when there is nothing to hide behind.
A +1 bonus to Fight checks to create an advantage in combat when you would benefit from being invisible.
A +1 bonus on Athletics checks to defend against ranged attacks.

Magnetic Telekinesis (-3): You can use Will in place of Brawn when moving metal objects, including other Transformers, and can do so at a distance (within two zones). In addition, you may use Will in place of Shoot to throw metal objects. You treat your size as one category larger for these actions (granting Weapon:2 for magnetic attacks).

Smokescreen (-1): You can emit a thick cloud of (often magnetic) smoke, allowing you to use Espionage to create advantages in any situation where engulfing a target in smoke would be useful, including combat.

Special Sense (-1): You have some extra sense on top of your normal senses. Perhaps you can see in complete darkness, or hear the fear in a 'bot's spark.

- **Extra senses (-1):** For an additional refresh, you may define a set of up to three thematically related senses.
- **Crazy sensors (-2):** Alternatively, for two additional refresh, you can sense all sorts of weird things, easily up to a dozen different special senses.

Teleportation (-4): You can teleport. Usually, this ability is used primarily to push people down stairs. You may move any number of zones at any point in combat, but still take the supplemental action penalty. As long as you are conscious, you may spend a fate point to leave any scene (barring anti-teleportation fields)

These are the Decepticons! They hate Autobots! Soundwave is sneaky! He can hear everything! Rumble is strong! He can make earthquakes!

Transformation

Transformation technologies enhance or alter your 'bot's ability to transform, specifically affect your alternate mode, or in some cases provide a pseudo-mode of their own.

Jump-start (-1): You can transform especially quickly, and never take the multiple-action penalty for transforming in the same round that you do something else. This technology only needs to be purchased in streams where transformation isn't instantaneous.

Tiny (-1, usually requires Thing mode): You have the ability to mass-shift significantly upon transformation, and your alternate form is tiny, usually small enough to be used as a tool. In most clusters where this type of mass-shifting exists, you have enough control over the mass-shifting that you can choose whether you are small enough to be used by a Cybertronian or by a human. While Tiny, you gain a +3 bonus on Stealth checks (this stacks with the +2 granted by a Thing Mode).

Mass Shifting (-1): You can change your size by one category when transforming. This confers all the benefits and penalties of being bigger or smaller. If your alternate form has enough empty space, you can house four robots of your size comfortably per size increase. You can purchase this ability multiple times for more increases.

> *Example (Primax 984.17 Alpha): Astrotrain, a size 2 robot, has two or three of this upgrade, allowing him to house most of the Decepticon army, including the enormous Devastator, in his vehicle mode as a size 4 or 5 space shuttle.*

Makeshift Mimic (-2): You are able to mimic any other Transformer of your size's appearance and voice. This requires some amount of preparation, since you need to study your target. If you study your target perfectly, you roll Swindle to imitate them at +4. The bonus decreases the less you prepare.

Pretender (-1): You have a Pretender Shell, a covering of synthetic flesh that allows you to be fully disguised as an organic creature. Yes, this allows a Transformer to disguise herself as a human (usually coupled with Mass Shifting). This shell can protect the 'bot entirely from the background radiation, atmosphere, and other environmental effects of the environment from which the creature your shell emulates comes. In campaigns where disguise does not play a central role, this Technology costs nothing.

Primal Carryover (-1, requires Beast mode): Even when in your robot form, your Beast mode grants you some enhanced abilities.

- You get a +1 bonus whenever your beast mode's sensory abilities (such as enhanced smell, hearing, or sight) would be relevant to a Notice check.
- You have the ability to do one minor thing that normal robots can't do, related to your beast mode. For example, tracking by scent for a wolf, seeing by echolocation in

darkness for a bat, or shooting sticky webbing for a spider. This allows you to perform actions relevant to that ability.

- o Alternatively, you can choose a skill and create a narrow circumstance under which you receive a +1. For example, if you had a rhinoceros mode, you could get a +1 bonus to Fight attacks while charging.

"Super Mode" (-2): You have the ability to overcharge your spark, combine with a trailer, or otherwise "power up" for a limited amount of time by spending a fate point. Choose four refresh worth of stunts and technologies. By spending a fate point, you can gain access to those abilities for the remainder of the scene.

Tool (-1, requires Thing mode): You are a tool. Not like Prowl, but like a microscope or weapon. If you are a handheld tool, you can only be used by a character at least a size larger than you (this pairs nicely with Tiny). When used for your alternate mode's function by another Transformer, you grant that character a +2 bonus to the roll. In addition, you can grant thematic Stunts and Technologies that you possess to the character that uses you.
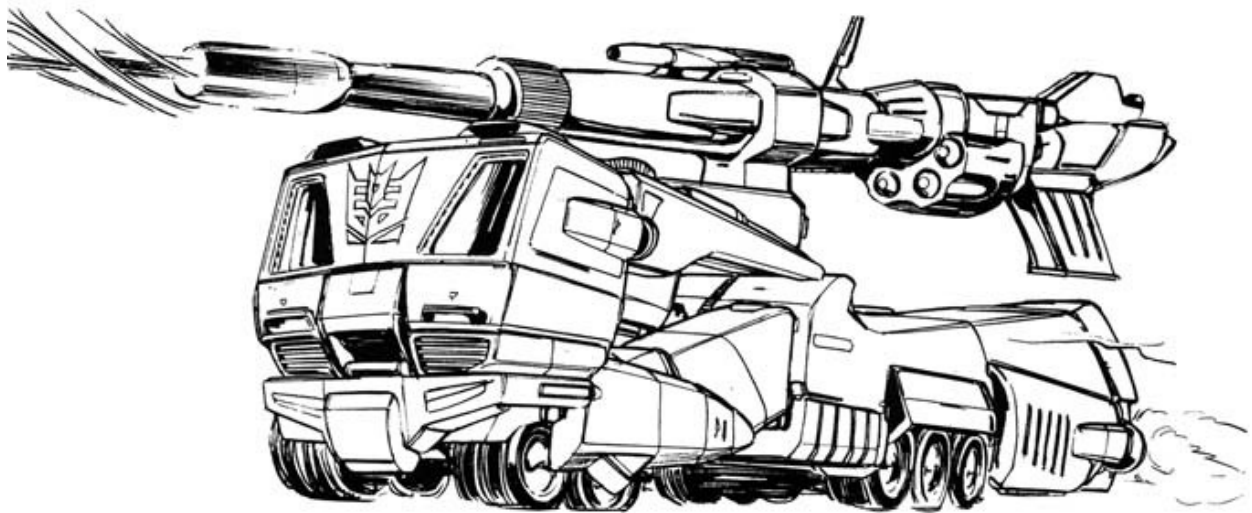
Weapons

Weapons are weapons.

Black Beam Gun (-1): You have a weapon that shoots a beam of light-absorbing gas, allowing you to use Shoot to place a blinded aspect on a target, which in addition to standard effects of the create advantage action gains an additional free invoke.

Breath Weapon (-2): You can generate a projectile weapon with your body, usually some sort of fire or energy weapon emitted from a Beast mode's mouth. This acts as a Weapon: 2 ranged weapon that uses Brawn instead of Shoot to attack. If you can justify it, you can use this to create advantages on the environment or your opponent.

Glass Gas (-3): You possess a weapon which can make metal as brittle as glass. When you use the create advantage action using Shoot in combat (placing an aspect like brittle on the target), if successful you can reduce your target's defense rating by 2 for the rest of the scene. This can bring the target's defense rating below 0. In addition, you can use the weapon to bypass metal obstacles by shattering them. This can even bypass solid walls or floors.

Natural Weapons (-1, usually requires Beast mode): You have teeth, claws, a slapping tail, or some other weapon that's part of your body. Your natural weapons act as Weapon: 2 for your Fight attacks. This stacks with any weapon ratings based on size and strength.

Piledrivers (-1): You can use Brawn to shake the landscape, placing an earthquake aspect (or something similar) on the scene. The result of the Brawn check is the difficulty of the Athletics check required for any character to move into or out of the zone.

Sonic Weapon (-1): You have some sort of sound emitter that can be overcharged to disorient and deafen your enemies. You can use Data to create advantages in combat. When used at a lower volume, it can function as a bitching stereo system.

- **Sound Waves (-1):** For an additional refresh, you can use Data to attack, dealing mental stress instead of physical.

Water Gun (-1): You've got some means of dispensing a variety of liquids, allowing you to put out fires and create advantages with Shoot when liquid nitrogen, molten lead, or water would be helpful. You can dispense molten lead or liquid nitrogen as a weapon:1 ranged attack.

Signature Weapon (-varies): You have a particularly potent weapon, like an energo-sword or fusion cannon. This weapon has a High Concept, a Trouble, and a weapon rating. For one refresh, the weapon has Weapon:2. For two refresh, the weapon is exceedingly powerful, and has Weapon:4.

Venom (-1): One of your attacks is imbued with some sort of poison. When you deal at least two shifts of damage with that attack (before defense ratings), you can forgo two shifts of damage in order to place a poisoned aspect on your target with a free invoke.

Chapter 11: Running the Game
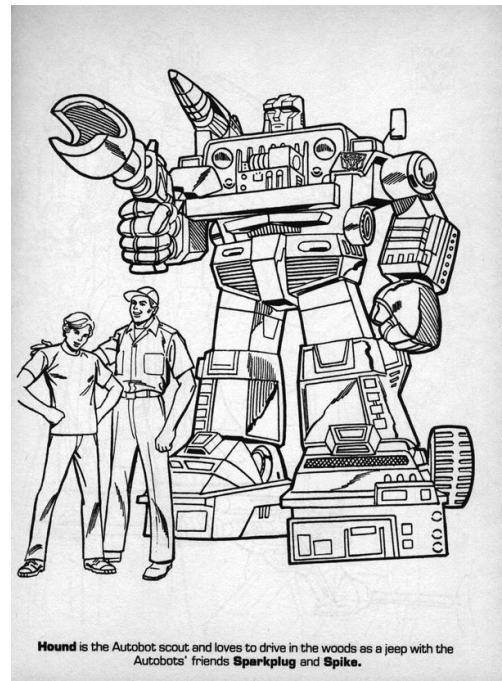
Creating NPCs

Standard NPCs [Fate Core Page 213)

NPCs are for the most part handled the same way as in *FATE Core*. See Chapter 13: Multiverse Persons of Interest for a database of ready-made NPCs should the need arise. Between Chapter 13 and the quick-and-dirty rules, you should never want for NPCs.

Squishies

"Squishies" are NPCs that represent the various kinds of organic life present throughout the multiverse, especially humans. A lot of times, a squishy NPC won't even warrant a character writeup – your standard human bystander can be assumed to have little to no bearing on any Transformer-scale situation; offing a busload of them is more a matter of narration than mechanics.

However, every so often a squishy will have some bearing on the plot greater than that of a pancaked pedestrian. In these cases, squishy NPCs can be made as normal, except that they are always size 0, have a defense rating of -2, and lack any physical stress boxes. Any amount of damage from a Transformer or Transformer-scale weapon will have consequences on a human, and more often than not it can be assumed that a human dealt damage by a Transformer is killed.

Hound is the Autobot scout and loves to drive in the woods as a jeep with the Autobots' friends **Sparkplug** and **Spike.**

There are some special cases that can level the physical playing field between squishies and Cybertronians. Many squishies employ armored vehicles when faced with Transformer-scale threats. Some squishies, such as the human and Nebulon headmasters and targetmasters from Primax 984.17 Alpha, wear powered armor to fit in with their Cybertronian buddies, in which case they can be mechanically treated as Transformers (such a squishy could even be appropriate for play as a PC!). Nevertheless, an armored squishy is still a squishy, so vehicles and power-armored squishies almost always will have an aspect like Gooey Center to reflect the fragile flesh creature within. Other humanoids may possess super-human capabilities, and can also be represented as standard characters rather than squishies.

Quick-And-Dirty NPCs

Say you need an NPC really quickly, and you're blanking on how to stat them out. Well, I may be able to help you out. For some mysterious reason, there exists an extensive library of technical specification documents in the Quadwal cluster, corresponding to a variety of Beta-designated streams. These "Tech Specs" actually function pretty well as FATE character sheets, and can be found at http://tfu.info/.

Use the "Tech Spec Package" of skills (these can be used alongside players and NPCs using the standard package). Then subtract 5 from each of the numbered statistics.

Then it's time to figure out Aspects. Every sheet includes two ready-made aspects, a "function" which roughly corresponds to the character's High Concept (you can include the character's faction in this, e. g. Decepticon Leader instead of Leader), and a "motto." If you have more than 15 seconds, feel free to skim the biographical information for another aspect or two.

With that, you should have a fairly functional NPC, suitable for play. If you have more than a minute, pick out any technologies and stunts that seem to make sense. Your players will be none the wiser. Here are some examples:

Trailbreaker

Alternate Mode: Truck (Movement: Flat Land)

Aspects: Defensive Strategist, An Autobot's only as good as the fuel in his tank, Low Self-Esteem

Skills: +2 Strength, +1 Intelligence, -1 Speed, +5 Endurance, +2 Rank, +4 Courage, -2 Firepower, +2 Skill

Technologies: Forcefield

Spinister

Alternate Mode: Helicopter (Movement: Air)

Aspects: Aerial Assault, Respect your foes' abilities as you would your own

Skills: +1 Strength, +3 Intelligence, +1 Speed, +1 Endurance, +2 Rank, +4 Courage, +4 Firepower, +3 Skill

Technologies: Flight

Polar Claw

Alternate Mode: Polar Bear

Aspects: Infantry Battle Commander, Hunter's Instinct, Ballistic Bear

Skills: +4 Strength, +2 Intelligence, -1 Speed, +1 Endurance, +3 Rank, +4 Courage, +3 Firepower, +2 Skill

Technologies: Companion: bat drone (flight, sensors)

Chapter 12: Sample Scenario – Primax 515.19 Kappa

Cygnus system – Temples of Syrinx

Macaddam's?

Chapter 13: Multiverse persons of interest

- Aurex (Unicron Trilogy)
- Gargent (GoBots)
- Malgus (Animated)
- Nexus (TransTech)

Primax (G1)

Primax 984.17 Alpha

Optimus Prime

Inspiring Leader of the Autobots

Trouble: Will Die for the CAuse

Other Aspects: Alpha Trion's Perfect Warrior, Megatron must be stopped, no matter the cost, Matrix Bearer

Alternate Mode: Tractor Trailer (Movement: Flat Land)

Size: 2

Skills

+4 Brawn, +2 Data, +3 Empathy, +1 Espionage, +5 Fight, +1 Investigate, +2 Notice, +2 Provoke, +3 Rapport, +4 Shoot, +1 Swindle, +3 Tactics, +4 Will

Stunts

Companion (-1): Roller

Take the hit (-1): Defend with Brawn instead of Athletics in combat.

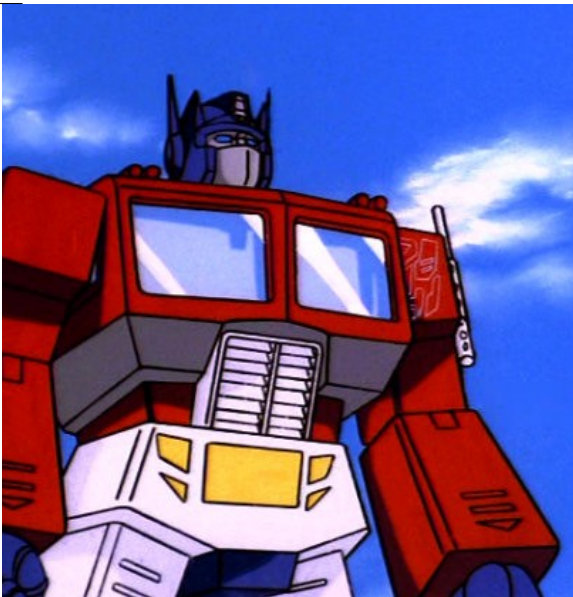**Technologies:** Extraordinary Strength (-2), Extraordinary Toughness (-2)

Mobile Platform (-1) (robot mode only), Complex Platform (-1): Mobile repair bay, +3 Mechanics, +2 Shoot

Stress

Physical: ☐☐☐☐☐   Mental: ☐☐☐☐

Refresh Cost: -9

Roller

One tough Little Autobot

Skills: +1 Stealth   **Size** 0

Stunts

Off-road (-1): +2 Athletics checks to navigate difficult terrain

Bumblebee

Little Yellow Guy

Trouble: Physically weak

Other Aspects: Eager Autobot scout, Human buddies, Prove my worth

Alternate Mode: VW Beetle (Movement: Flat land)

Size: 1

Skills

+1 Athletics, +1 Contacts, +2 Empathy, +3 Espionage, +2 Investigate, +3 Rapport, +2 Notice, +4 Stealth, +1 Swindle, +1 Will

Stunts

"You've gotta fight it!" (-1): Can use Rapport to create advantages for allies resisting mind control effects, and gains a +2 bonus when doing so.

Stress

Physical: ☐☐   Mental: ☐☐☐

Refresh Cost: -2

Chip Chase
Teen genius

Trouble: In a wheelchair

Other Aspects: No one's ever really disabled so long as he has courage!

Skills   **Size:** 0

+3 Computers, +3 Data, +1 Mechanics,

+2 Will

Stress

Physical: -   Mental: ☐☐☐

Spike Witwicky
Token Human

Trouble: Out of his depth

Other Aspects: Hard hat, 'Bee's best bud

Skills   **Size:** 0

+1 Investigate, +1 Rapport, +2 Stealth

Stunts

"Help!" (-1): If in mortal danger, may spend a fate point to be saved by some Autobot.

Stress

Physical: -   Mental: ☐☐

Megatron

Paragon of Evil

Trouble: The Best-laid Plans

Other Aspects: Master MAnipulator, I'll crush you with my bare hands, Decepticons, retreat!

Alternate Mode: Handgun

Size: 2

Skills

+4 Brawn, +2 Data, +4 Fight, +1 Empathy,
+1 Espionage, +5 Shoot, +1 Mechanics, +2 Notice,
+3 Will, +3 Rapport, +2 Swindle, +3 Tactics,
 +4 Provoke

Stunts

Take the hit (-1): Defend with Brawn instead of Athletics in combat.

Technologies: Extraordinary Strength (-2), Extraordinary Toughness (-2), Signature weapon (Fusion Cannon, -2)

Tiny (-1, gun mode only), Tool (-1, gun mode only)

Stress

Physical: ☐☐☐☐☐   Mental:☐☐☐☐

Refresh Cost: -9

Fusion Cannon (Weapon:4)

Trouble: Bulky

Primax 1005.19 Gamma

Primax 496.22 Alpha (Beast Wars)

- Quadwal (Real World)
- Tyran (Live Action Movie)
- Uniend (Aligned)
- Viron (RiD)