

Chapter Two

DOING THINGS

Skills and Finesses

The basic abilities of characters are reflected by relative levels in **skills**. Each skill is broad and generalized, and many of them overlap; since there is usually more than one way to solve a given problem, PCs may use one of several skills to try to solve the same problem. Each increase in a skill costs XP equal to the new level acquired. Levels must be acquired in order without skipping (from 0 to 1, then to 2, then 3, etc.).

Skill Increase

<i>Asterion's player chose to give the minotaur detective a good basis for noticing details about his environment, shown as 4 levels of the skill <u>observe</u>. Less important was his ability to be stealthy—he's so big, the effort is usually futile—so his relatively weaker <u>sneak</u> was given only 1 level.</i>	4 levels cost: 1 +2 +3 +4 =10 XP. 1 level cost: 1 XP.
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Finesses represent a more refined, deeper understanding of some component of a skill. Each finesse is usually combined with its default skill when used, but for unusual circumstances the GM may use it in conjunction with other skills or by itself. Finesses are more difficult to learn than skills; the XP cost of increasing a finesse by one level is twice the new level. A finesse may be increased to a level higher than its default skill.

Finesse Increase

<i>Asterion can use most types of ballistic firearms, so 2 levels in the skill <u>shoot</u> made sense; but Asterion favors a shotgun, represented by 2 levels in the finesse <u>shoot/shotgun</u>. As a minotaur, Asterion is very good using his horns as weapons, shown by 3 levels in the finesse <u>brawl</u> and 3 in <u>brawl/horns</u>.</i>	2 skill levels: 2 +4 =6 XP. 3 finesse levels: 2 +4 +6 =12 XP.
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Improving Characters

During play, each time the player rolls Ⓞ or Ⓢ, the PC will earn an **experience point**; these points are often collectively called **XP**. Improving skills and fineses during play (**advancing**) is done the same way as gaining them during creation. Each new level costs XP equal to the skill level acquired, or equal to twice the new finesse level. Each time a PC earns and spends 100 XP, the player may add a trademark level. Due to the time that such learning takes, no advancements can occur during combat.

Advance During Play

<i>Parker locks the office behind him after a tough day. A prospective client, Mme. Fayen, had serious reservations against hiring a minotaur. It took all his wit and friendliness to persuade her to let him take her case—the search for a missing family heirloom, a red gemstone known as the Heart of Man. Feeling he's now found a solid new lead on the diadem, Parker wonders as he walks down to the street about how a chiseled stone gets named after a mythical creature.</i>	Gain of 2 XP during play. <u>charm</u> 1 → 2 costs 2 XP.
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The following three pages feature eleven basic skills for each facet and what tasks each one covers.

Skills of the Physical Facet

Bash covers attacks using blunt or crushing weapons, particularly staves, big sticks, or pistol grips. This also applies to special shields or armor designed for striking, such as bucklers and gauntlets.

Brawl involves attacks using fists, feet, elbows, foreheads, and so on, either to injure, such as kicks, punches, or bashes, or to grab and hold, including tackles, and pounces. Animal combat, using claws, bites, and kicks, or weapons simulating such tools is also included.

Climb includes movement on nearly vertical surfaces, particularly trees, walls, portcullises, and the occasional cliff. The use of rope or other climbing aids increases the speed of movement to normal ranges; without it, speed should be a third or quarter of normal.

Cut covers attacks using edged or cutting weapons, particularly swords, axes, knives, pole arms, and energy weapons.

Drive includes the control of several forms of mechanized ground transport, including car, motorcycle, bicycle, speedboat, canoe, and luxury liner.

Evade is the primary defense skill, in which the defender simply tries to get out of the way. This can be applied to any type of weapon attack, including those from swords, arrows, gunfire, and lightning bolts.

Flex is the skill for athletic control, mainly bending, balancing, or sliding some or all of the body through small openings. This skill is also useful for catching oneself in a fall or performing graceful maneuvers.

Heave is the skill for strength feats, in which one pulls, pushes, lifts, or simply tries to break or deform objects through sheer muscle power. Sustaining a grip on a captured opponent also comes under this skill.

Move deals with covering distance, usually by running, particularly during chases. This skill also includes scrambling and jumping. The acrobatic ability to roll out of falls or land on one's feet also falls under this skill.

Throw covers attacks using a muscle-powered ballistic weapon, such as a rock, spear, knife, or grenade. This skill also comes into play for sports, particularly football, baseball, and darts.

Whip includes attacks using a flexible weapon such as a riding crop, lasso, net, whip, flail, or chain. Grappling irons, climbing ropes, and flexible blades like foils, rapiers, and sabers can also be manipulated under this skill.

Skills of the Mental Facet

Analyze covers the ability to organize available information to deduce hidden patterns. This permits formulating and performing experiments, interpreting results, and arriving at the crime scene before the cops (or even the criminal).

Concentrate deals with defense against mental disruption such as pain, shock, loud noise, or distorted perception. This also governs the PC's recognition of illusions, lies, and misinformation, as well as his memory of events.

Invent deals with artistic or creative expression, including painting, cooking, music, photography, and writing.

Mend covers the principles of medical treatment, including first aid, diagnosis, surgery, and good bedside manner.

Navigate deals with map-reading and ability to find ones' way, but also includes area knowledge, street savvy, and familiarity with regional lore, such as where edible plants grow or where the underworld connections hang out.

Observe is the primary skill for noticing important details in casual situations, using any of the five ordinary senses. This skill can be used passively, as in overhearing a conversation, or directly, as in tasting for specific poisons.

Pilot includes the control of an atmospheric craft, such as an airplane, helicopter, dirigible, hot-air balloon, glider. This skill also covers control of spacecraft.

Recall deals with direct knowledge of science, history, law, or other technical fields, as well as the procedures required to perform investigations in those fields.

Search covers the attempt to find objects or information by concerted effort, either with forensic care, ransacking an apartment, or tracking prey. This skill also incorporates the extraction of information from archives and online sources.

Shoot involves attacks using a ballistic ranged weapon, particularly those with a sling, bow, rifle, pistol, or beam weapon.

Tinker involves the design, manufacture, and repair of mechanical, electronic, and other technological devices, including programming of VCRs or computers, use of explosives or missile weapons, and construction of wind-up toys.

Skills of the Emotional Facet

Bluff covers attempts to mislead an opponent, including everything from acting horrified about the "thing" behind him to clever disguises or concealment, using makeup, outfits, or camouflage.

Brave covers the endurance of harsh conditions, whether they be long term, such as surviving a blizzard or a long-distance swim, or short term, such as absorbing incoming strikes or repeated pummeling.

Charm includes attempts to sway an opponent's view by encouraging kinship, curiosity, devotion, rapport, or lust. This skill also covers the ability to urge animals to respond predictably.

Command includes attempts to instruct or lead, either singly or in groups. This skill also covers group organization and tactics for such operations as business, government, and war.

Dress is the skill for enhancing one's appearance through hygiene, style, and manners, particularly appropriate for etiquette and comportment.

Gamble covers not only the ability to play games of chance but also to play hunches, judge distance across a chasm, anticipate an opponent's next move, or perform simple sleight-of-hand operations.

Negotiate involves haggling, cajoling, or diplomatic discussion of the cost of rations, human rights, terms of surrender, or reasons not to kill me. This skill also covers sub rosa underworld, government, or corporate networking.

Resolve is a willpower defense against outside influence or control, particularly persuasion, temptation, hypnosis, or telepathic interference.

Sneak covers any movement or operation intended to be hidden from another person, both from concealing objects on one's person to crawling into the villain's lair while he isn't looking.

Talk deals with the knowledge of communication, particularly verbal and written, but also possibly gestural, musical, or in code. This skill also covers communication without language, public speaking, and teaching.

Torment covers attacks against an opponent's willpower, intended to terrify, awe, or intimidate him into submission. Also governs teasing, goading, and attempts to enrage.

Fatigue Pools

Fatigue pools represent the stamina of the PC for tasks in each facet. The total number of levels in skills and finesses in each facet provides the fatigue pool for that facet. A few trademarks add points to a fatigue pool, but the *levels* of trademarks do not. The fatigue pool should be kept updated as new levels are added to each facet, either during PC creation or during play.

Calculating Fatigue Pools

<p>Asterion's mental facet contains 7 skills and 2 finesses. Adding the levels of these entries together provides him with a mental fatigue pool of 25.</p>	<p>skills: 4 +2 +2 +4 +3 +4 +2 finesses: +2 +2 total: 25</p>
<p>Asterion's physical fatigue pool has 16 from the 6 skills and 1 finesse. The trademark <u>large</u> adds 6F more to the fatigue pool, for 22.</p>	<p>skills: 2 +2 +2 +3 +2 +2 finesses: +3 trademarks: +6 total: 22</p>
<p>Asterion's emotional pool is relatively small, gaining only 11 fatigue from levels in 6 skills. His recent advance of <u>charm</u> to level 2 also increases the fatigue pool by 1 to 12.</p>	<p>skills: 2 +2 +1 +2 +3 +1 <u>charm</u> adv: +1 total: 12</p>

Using Skills

A PC's attempt to accomplish a task usually requires an **action total**. The first step is to figure the **action base**, which is the total of current levels in one skill and one finesse. Frequently, the PC will not have an appropriate entry for each of these parts of the base, which simply means the base will be low.

Action Base

<p>Parker walks through the tenebrous concrete canyonland that is downtown Cityscape after nightfall, ruminating over his new case. He needs to remember the route to Dr. Rose's office, which calls for a <u>navigation</u> action. And being of the suspicious sort, Parker always keeps an eye on the shadows behind him, which is an <u>observe</u> action.</p>	<p><u>navigation</u> 2 + <u>navigation/Cityscape</u> 2 = 4 <u>observe</u> 4</p>
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Each action total automatically gets 1 die roll. The PC may add an additional die roll by **fatiguing**, temporarily reducing the facet's fatigue pool by 1 point. The process may be repeated for a second roll, then more, up to a number of rolls equal to the action base. In the examples that follow, die rolls that cost a fatigue point are shown as filled circles with numbers, such as ③, ④, and ⑤, while other die rolls are shown as numbers in white circles, such as ③, ⑩, and ⑩. Each roll is added to the final action total. The action total is then compared by the GM to a difficulty rating or to an opponent's resistance total. If the action total is higher than the resistance or difficulty, the action is a success. The difference between the action total and the difficulty (often called the **result**) measures the relative degree of success.

Action Total

<i>Parker is familiar with this short route to the hospital, so the navigation task isn't very difficult and doesn't require a lot of effort. Instead he focuses on observing the sounds of rattling pebbles behind him, the muted footfalls, and occasional hissing breaths. Half way to the hospital, Parker decides he's being followed.</i>	<i>base 4 + ⑨ =13</i> <i>base 4 + ⑧ + ⑤ + ① + ⑦ =25</i> <i>temporary reduction of 3F from M fatigue pool</i>
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Some tasks may require a total for a skill or finesse in which the PC has no levels. This case the total is made with an action base of 0, or essentially just a die roll. Obviously, without skill or finesses levels, the PC has no option to fatigue to gain an additional roll.

Action Base of Zero

<i>Parker stops and tries to goad his stalker into view, even though cutting repartee usually eludes him. His witty jab comes out as a faltering request, but Parker is certain that just out of his sight, his stalker is also waiting.</i>	<i>no levels in <u>torment</u></i> <i>0 + ② =2</i>
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If the fatigue pool for a facet is empty, the PC cannot fatigue for additional rolls for skills under that facet until he has rested to regain fatigue. More about resting later...

Three points from any one fatigue pool may be spent to **start over on a action total**. A player starting over on a total must do so before ending the roll (either by declaring the total or by rolling a ①). All fatigue spent on the original total is returned and the player starts the roll over.

Starting Over

<i>When the shotgun blast comes out of the night, Parker isn't incredibly surprised, but in spite of his boxer-trained reflexes his evasion of the attack starts out poorly. A burst of adrenalin turns what might have been a stumble into the line of fire into a skin-saving dive for cover. Pellets scatter a pile of trash instead of hitting Parker, throwing debris around the alley while Parker lands behind a dumpster. Breathing hard, Parker peers into the darkness, wondering who he's annoyed tonight...</i>	<i>evade 2 + ③ + ② + ② ... =13</i> <i>Spends 3F from P pool to start over.</i> <i>evade 2 + ⑩ + ⑨ + ⑦ =32</i> <i>Total of 5F spent from P pool on this action.</i>
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Combining Effort

The PC may be required to combat or defend against **several opponents**; and occasionally, several PCs may opt to **work together** to accomplish a task. A **leader** exists (generally elected by the team) for any team effort; the leader generates the action total for their side. Each **follower** generates a total on the same skill; their action total is found on the standards table, then converted to a modifier by reading across to the Rank column. Each follower's modifier adds to the leader's action total. A crash on any helper's total (or by the leader) disrupts the team effort, and the group action fails.

Working Together

<p>The lock clicks, and a black-clad figure pushes open the door to Parker's office. The leader motions the others to look around, but no sooner have they quietly begun the search than one figure stumbles over the waste can, bangs his head on the desk, and sweeps the desktop clean as he sprawls noisily on the floor. Once he is sent to watch the hallway for the security guard his clumsiness has probably alerted, the other two try again. After carefully sliding out each desk drawer, they find a sheaf of papers describing Parker's new contract and a photograph.</p>	<p>leader's search 3 each follower's search 2 Follower 1 total =0, crash Total 0</p> <p>Follower 2 total =11 → Rank +5 Leader total is 12 +5 from follower =17.</p>
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The Time it Takes

Some actions, such as library research, vehicle repair, fort construction, and field surgery, make take a while to accomplish, or comprise several fiddly details that would bog down the game if each were actually rolled. In order to shortcut the tedium, the GM may opt to have each PC involved in a long-term task multiply his skill base by the number of hours spent on the job before making the action total. The GM may decide to use a different period of time as the step, depending on the conditions and task.

Time

<p>Worried that he might lead his trigger-happy assailant right to Dr. Black at the Lanemount ER, Parker deliberately wanders through numerous back alleys, hoping to lose him in the urban labyrinth. Parker's knowledge of Cityscape's layout helps hi as he twists and turns for an hour, eventually emerging near Lanemount's rear entrance. There Parker pauses, listening, but the sounds of pursuit don't re-occur. As Parker pulls open the door, something slams into his shoulder and spine, throwing him forward. As the shot echoes in his ears, Parker realizes his shadows knew where he was headed.</p>	<p>GM says: 20 min intervals:</p> <p><u>Parker's sneak</u> 1+ <u>navigate/Cityscape</u> 2+ rolls: ⑥ + ④ + ⑤ + 15+ (3× skill base) <u>9</u> Action total = 27</p>
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