

Chapter Three

HURTING

Hit Pools

The character's toughness in each of the three facets is represented by a **hit pool**. Hit pools essentially represent the PC's resistance to injury.

For each facet, find the value of the **fatigue pool** on the standards table (drop to the next lowest value if there is not an exact match). Read across to the *Standard* column and count the number of standards (trivial, simple, average, etc.)—each standard adds 1 hit to the hit pool for that facet. For example, a fatigue pool of 17 contributes 3 hits to the corresponding hit pool; you need 22 fatigue to reach the fourth hit in a facet.

The hit pool in each facet is also increased by 1 for each level in a **trademark** in that facet. The GM sets the number of trademark levels each PC starts with; as a rule of thumb, 10 levels works pretty well in most settings. Therefore, for a starting PC the hit pools will depend about evenly on trademarks and fatigue pools. Trademarks confer a wide variety of other advantages, but these will be discussed in a later section of the manual.

Calculating Hit Pools

<p>The 8 levels in positive trademarks in Asterion's physical facet are partly offset by 2 levels in negative trademarks, contributing 6 hits to the hit pool. His fatigue pool of 22 translates to a Tough or 4th standard, contributing 4 hits.</p>	<p>P trademarks: +8 -2 P F pool 22 → 4th standard P hit pool +8 -2 +4 = 10 hits</p>
<p>Asterion's mental facet includes 2 levels in positive trademarks (2 hits), and his fatigue pool of 25 translates to a Tough standard (4 hits).</p>	<p>M trademarks: +2 M F pool 25 → 4th standard M hit pool +2 +4 = 6 hits</p>
<p>Asterion's emotional facet trademarks nearly cancel out, only contributing 1 hit, and his original fatigue pool of 11 translates only to a Simple standard, contributing only 2 hits.</p>	<p>E trademarks: +2 -1 E F pool 11 → 2nd standard E hit pool +2 -1 +2 = 3 hits</p>

Each time levels in skills increase or levels in new skills, fitnesses, and trademarks are acquired, recalculate the hit and fatigue pools for each facet. Do not adjust hit pools downward due to temporary changes in values of trademarks or fatigue pools.

Advancing a Pool

<p>Asterion's recent advance of <i>charm</i> also increased the emotional fatigue pool to 12, which translates to the bottom of the Average standard. As a consequence the fatigue pool now contributes 3 hits to the emotional facet, so Asterion's emotional hit pool increases to a 4.</p>	<p>after <i>charm</i> advance E hit pool +2 -1 +3 = 4 hits</p>
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Ways to Wear Out

Ordinary wear and tear on characters is recorded as temporary reductions to the various pools that describe the character. **Fatigue** occurs because of voluntary effort or external strain and temporarily reduces the fatigue pools (and levels in trademarks) until the character rests. Serious injury reduces hit pools through a combination of concussion and bruising, called **hits**. **Effects** are conditions that may not be immediately life-threatening to the recipient, but in some way disable or reduce the victim's efficiency.

Injury

<p><i>Although individual buckshot pellets do not penetrate Parker's thick hide, they strike with a great deal of force, knocking him down. The blast hits him across the upper part of his body, striking more of him than a single bullet from a pistol might have. Dozens of tiny cuts sting, and the concussion has his shoulder, back, and arm bruised and battered. The shot was far from lethal, but it took Parker by complete surprise.</i></p>	<p><i>down effects [DD] volume effect [V] pain effect [P] hits [3] reversal effect [R] total injury: [VPDDR3]</i></p>
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Wounding Effects

Powerful attacks may knock down, immobilize, incapacitate, disarm, stun, or maim an opponent. The following list describes the **wounding effects** found in weapons, in outfits, and in tricks. The following list describes the various ways of using effects that represent some kind of injury; these contrast with **range effects**, which modify the control over the attack and which are described on later pages.

Wounding effects can be **reduced**—turned into hits that are subtracted from one or more hit pools—so long as all of the required pools have the points to cover the reduction. Reduction must be done as the injury is assessed—reduction cannot occur after the PC's next total. If one or more pools cannot cover the cost of the reduction, the effect must be taken, with the described consequences. In the list that follows, the reduction cost is listed in *italics* next to the effect name.

Wounding Effect Reduction

<p><i>As the hallway fills with nurses, security guards, doctors, and patients, all brought by the noise, Parker uses his adrenalin rush to shake off the pain lancing across his triceps and shoulder.</i></p>	<p><i>[P] → 1 M hit. Parker still must apply [VDDR3].</i></p>
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Some effects incorporate an **effect rank** with them that usually handicaps the receiver's totals. The effect rank is found by finding the result on the Standards table and reading across to the Rank column. Effect ranks are cumulative—if more than one copy of the effect is taken, the ranks pile up.

Effect Rank

<p><i>Parker is disoriented for a moment, and fails to notice the amber-haired Dr. Rose Black trying to push through the crowd around him.</i></p>	<p><i>The [R] that Parker acquired takes the effect rank from the assailant's total of 14. 14 → Rank 6. Parker's next total will be handicapped by 6.</i></p>
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Fading, Sticking, and Power

Some effects **fade**, lasting only long enough to impart a certain type of injury or inconvenience. At the end of an increment of combat (called a *round*), any one fading effect is removed from your PC. Other effects **stick**—they last until removed by rest and natural healing or the help of an outside agency, usually by medical or magical treatment.

Effect Fading

<i>In spite of the help, several moments pass before Parker can stand. He tries twice, foiled once because a well-meaning orderly is holding him down and the second time because he cannot sort out his feet. Presently, his disorientation dissipates in the wake of a little ember of rage.</i>	<i>[D] → Fades. [D] → Fades; PC may rise.</i>
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The effect's **power** is a relative measure of the intensity of the effect. It also reflects the cost of effects so you can use XP to build them into weapons, costumes, and special maneuvers or devices of your own, but we'll cover this a bit later...

Wounding Effects List

Hits [#]: *power 1 (no reduction)*

Hits represent raw injury, usually associated with bruising, confusion, or stress. The victim subtracts each hit from a hit pool of his choice.

Exhaustion [E]: *power 1 (1 hit from any hit pool)*

The victim is stunned, shocked, or simply worn out through exertion, and loses 3 fatigue from one fatigue pool. This effect can be self-inflicted in an opposite form—sacrifice 1 hit to add 3 fatigue to the fatigue pool of the same facet. [E] fades as it is taken.

Down [D]: *power 2 (1 hit from the physical hit pool)*

The victim is knocked down and cannot spend fatigue for the rest of the round. Several [D] effects taken at the same time usually indicate that the victim was thrown a short distance. The [D] can also mean that the opponent has been disarmed (weapon knocked out of his hand), found his vision blocked, or had his ego thumped. [D] can also signify a weapon jam. [D] effects fade.

Pain [P]: *power 2 (1 hit from the mental hit pool)*

The victim is hampered by discomfort, possibly physical agony but also perceptive or psychological, as if from bright light in the face or blinding rage. For each [P] effect taken, each additional roll costs 3 fatigue extra. [P] effects fade.

Reversed [R]: *power 2 (1 hit from the emotional hit pool)*

The victim becomes distracted, startled, or confused. All totals this round are reduced by the [R] effect rank. This can mean that his grip on a weapon slipped, that he suddenly left himself open, that he was captivated by a disarming smile, or that he simply wasn't expecting this turn in the conversation. [R] effects fade.

Hold [H]: *power 4 (1 hit from physical and emotional hit pools)*

The victim is caught, trapped, or pinned. The resisting victim's totals are reduced by the [H] effect rank until the grip is broken. This need not be a physical hold; in certain circumstances, beauty, curiosity, mirth, amazement, or even fellowship can captivate more easily than a net. Willing victims of [H], as in might exist between companions, suffer no ill effects until they resist the grip. [H] effects stick.

Out [O]: *power 4 (1 hit from the mental and emotional hit pools)*

The victim is staggered, dazed, or vulnerable. An [O] sticks to its victim until the next injury is received, when it is exchanged for any 1 wounding effect of the player's choice. The replacement effect cannot be reduced or soaked. This could also indicate that an engine has vapor-locked, that an opponent dropped out of combat, that a weapon has spent its ammo, or that an opponent has lost his argument. Typically, if an [O] replaces an [O], the victim is rendered unconscious. [O] effects stick.

Burn [X]: *power 4 (1 hit from physical and mental hit pools)*

The victim is under a continuous threat. Fire is the most obvious source but [X] can also come by drowning, poison, illness, falling, and possibly even lust or greed. Each [X] taken increases the reduction cost for each effect (except raw hits) by 3 fatigue, or, if the fatigue pool is empty, 1 hit. In cases where reduction comes from specific hit pools, this extra reduction must come from the matching fatigue pools. [X] effects stick.

Bleed [B]: *power 8 (1 hit from each hit pool)*

The victim is sliced open and starts to leak. For each [B], the PC takes 1 hit at the end of any combat round (or for each period of 1 minute if not in rounds). This effect is also particularly critical for car tires and space suits. [B] effects stick.

Unnerved [U]: *power 8* (3 fatigue from each fatigue pool)*

The victim's morale breaks, his focus on the events around him flags, or he is taken by complete surprise; for each [U] taken, he loses one action this round, and the cost of gaining actions increases for him by 3 fatigue, except for movement skills. [U] effects stick.

Stricken [S]: *power 16 (next 6 actions and -6 to Quickness)*

The victim is seriously wounded. Besides losing 6 hits from one pool (or 2 from each hit pool if the GM allows), some major injury occurs. This could mean that an appendage is broken or amputated, the victim is blinded, concussed, or comatose, that a special weapon or ability is destroyed, that a crisis of faith has resulted in loss of belief, or that some critical technical information is erased by brain damage. [S] effects stick.

Wild [W]: *power 16 (3 hits from one hit pool)*

The victim is subjected to things nastier than death, generally encapsulated in a single phrase: "victim gains a level in negative trademark Terrified;" "victim permanently loses 1 skill level from a mental skill;" "these effects are inflicted on any person touching this object," "for each 1 hit inflicted on victim, my PC gains [E]." GMs be warned, scrutinize each use of the wild effect carefully. Due to their highly variable nature, [W] effects cannot be built into outfits. Usually [W] effects stick, but not always—the choice is up the GM.

Range Effects

Attacks become more difficult if they are specialized in terms of shape, space, range, or duration: snipers may wish to select a specific body location as a target; demolition experts may need to fill a room with gas; and a spell-crafter may want to strike targets a long way off. To tailor tricks, weapons, and outfits, **CYCHOSYS** uses the following set of **range effects**. These are used in a similar manner to wounding effects, except that they cannot be reduced—each type represents a characteristic of the weapon or trick used rather than some kind of injuring force. Range effects fade as the attack connects.

CYCHOSYS keeps these kinds of measurement as abstract as possible—you won't find charts relating means of converting 18 meters or 22 minutes into game-mechanics terms. For most storytelling purposes, such a level of detail is either unimportant or under the control of the GM. For application of range, time, volume, and firepower modification, GMs should regard each additional unit as roughly a doubling of the "basic" range. GMs should keep in mind that environment plays an important role in determining what that basic effectiveness is. For example, straining to increase accuracy on a shot during a firefight (e.g. in rounds) will be harder than during a moment of quiet intensity in a sniper's foxhole, simply because the latter environment provides the better opportunity for concentration and aiming.

Range Effects List

Length [L]: *power 2*

The functional range (either in linear distance or time) of the weapon or effect increases. This can allow a sniper to build up an aim across a street, a dowser to search into deeper bedrock, or an enchantment to last for years instead of weeks.

Fast [F]: *power 4*

The weapon inflicts greater injury (for each [F], add +10 to a successful *result*) because of the number of times it strikes during a single use, or because of the velocity with which it strikes. This could include burst fire from a machine gun, intense poison, lightning strikes, and the effects of falling. Note that it cannot make a miss into a hit, because the bonus is only added after the target is successfully struck. Added to defenses, it reduces results by 10 to a minimum of 1; it does not change the actual defense.

Target [T]: *power 4*

The user takes a moment to refine his aim, focusing in on a specific target. While this obviously includes choosing the kneecap or forehead over whatever target is available, it can also be used to bypass cover or finding chinks in armor. Linking this effect to any 1 wounding effect bypasses one outfit soak phase (see *Outfit*)—such a link only requires specific designation of the linkage does not change the cost.

Counter [C]: *power 8*

Countering allows the defender to reverse the attack, wounding the original assailant. A successful counter becomes an attack; the former attacker may attempt another counter as a defense or takes the result as an injury. Counters are generally one weapon aimed at another; the GM must pick which weapon or trick is having the greatest impact on a character or area and use its effects to resolve a successful counter. This effect cannot be built into armor but can be used in tricks at GM's discretion.

Volume [V]: *power 8 (1*)*

The weapon or effect fills a relatively large space, after the fashion of explosives, gas, heat and fire, or a swarm of locusts. When added to an attack, each [V] effect bypasses an outer layer of protection (cancels one soak step—see *Outfit*) on anyone inside the space—if there is no soak

step to bypass, all of the wounding effects are applied an extra time instead. When the [V] is added to an outfit, it can help represent size for objects like cars, monsters, or starships and each [V] confers an extra soak step. For tricks involving only light and/or sound, the effect is power 1 instead, so music, taunts, and illumination can fill a void with relative ease.

Range Effects

"Aren't you supposed to be wearing gloves for this?" Parker growls after a few minutes of gritting his teeth. Dr. Black has been extracting pellets out of the back of Parker's bony head while the minotaur grips the edge of gurney with white-knuckled hands.

"I'm cursed undead, dear," Rose replies sweetly, wiping a smudge of blood from Parker's tiny wound with a fingertip. "Very antiseptic; nothing here for bacteria to eat." She sucks on her finger for a moment, then waggles it at him. "You should be more careful, Parker. You've been rattling certain cages out there a little too vigorously lately."

He gazes at her somberly. "I think I've lead them right to you."

She pats his arm affectionately. "Certainly not. Anyone who wants to know where I am merely looks me up in the phonebook. They shot at you, not me; you've irritated one of Carver's men. Maybe all of them."

"And I thought he just didn't like my coat," Parker sighs. The buckshot punched through the right sleeve, back, and collar of the heavy denim, but the fabric barely slowed the pellets down. "Who is it this time?"

Rose nods. "I heard Carver has contracted a hit on you." When Parker laughs, she shakes her head. "This one's different. I'm not sure, but I think this one is an elemental."

Parker sobers and gazes at her.

"If I'm not mistaken," Rose says thoughtfully, "that makes him immortal."

The shotgun blast included [V], which bypasses Parker's armor and hits more of him than a single slug would have.

Weapons

Weapons have two characteristics. Their **speed** is a relative measure of the velocity of the strike. Speed adds to attack totals, because fast weapons (such as bullets, arrows, or laser beams) are very hard to dodge. Their **edge** is one or more effects and hits. The weapons are organized in categories based on their typical mode of use.

Weapons Tables

<u>Hand to Hand Combat</u>	<u>speed</u>	<u>edge</u>
brass knuckles	0	1
club, long	2	D2
club, short	1	D
dagger	2	1
elbow, head butt	0	R1
kick	0	D2
knee	0	D

<u>Heavy Weaponry</u>	<u>speed</u>	<u>edge</u>
ballista	3	BP6
cannon, large	5	FSD4
cannon, small	4	BD4
catapult	2	SD3
clout of arrows	4	FFR7
howitzer	3	FO6
lance	3	DBR3

<u>Nature's Weaponry</u>	<u>speed</u>	<u>edge</u>
alcohol, per drink	7	R
bite, large	3	B3
bite, small	2	B
charge, half-ton animal	4	VDDO1
claw, large	3	BP1
claw, small	1	PD
fire, per round	7	RRX
electricity	10	SX3
free fall, per second	5	F4
freezing, per hour	5	R2
pounce, large	4	HHDD3
toxin, lethal	10	X

<u>Melee Weaponry</u>	<u>speed</u>	<u>edge</u>
ax, war	2	B2
bayonet	1	P
mace	1	DR
machete	1	R2
pick	1	P1
pole arm, catcher	0	HHD1
pole arm, edged	2	B3
pole arm, points	2	PH2
rapier	3	P
sai	1	R1
staff	2	D2
sword, broad	3	B3
sword, long	2	B2
sword, short	3	R2
sword, two-handed	0	BD1
sword catcher	2	RH
war hammer	1	O

<u>Flail</u>	<u>speed</u>	<u>edge</u>
bolas	3	RH2
cat-of-nine-tails	4	FPH2
chain, long	5	BH1
chain, short	4	H3
flail, long	4	PR
flail, short	3	P1
nanchaku	4	R2
net	5	HH
whip	6	PH2

Projectile Weaponry	speed	edge
blowpipe	3	R
bow, comp./recurve	5	P2
bow, long	5	S
bow, pulley compound	6	P2
bow, short	4	P
crossbow, light	3	P1
crossbow, windlass	4	P3
flame-thrower	7	FX
hand cannon	4	D1
machine gun	9	VFFSBD2
black powder musket	2	SBD1
pistol, small caliber	5	B
pistol, energy	7	FXDR3
pistol, machine	6	FBDR
pistol, medium caliber	5	B1
pistol, large caliber	6	BD1
rifle, large caliber	9	SBD2
rifle, energy	8	VFXDR3
rifle, medium caliber	8	BD2
submachine gun	7	VFBDR
rifle, small caliber	7	B2
shotgun, shot load	7	VPD2
shotgun, bag load	5	PR1
shotgun, incendiary load	5	SXX1
slings	3	D
taser	6	XPEE2

Thrown Weapons	speed	edge
chakram	4	P
dagger, thrown	2	R2
shuriken	3	1
spear, long	3	B2
spear, short	4	B

Explosives	speed	edge
grenade, energy	15	VXDD5
grenade, fragmentation	10	VSB5
grenade, incendiary	10	VXX5
grenade, percussion	10	VDDRO4
missile, energy	30	VVFFSP10
missile, large	20	VVFFSOD8
missile, nuclear	60	VVVFFSXO20
missile, small	15	VFSDR6

Inanimate Objects	edge
cloth/paper	4
earth/plastic	12
flesh	8
glass	2
stone/steel	16
water	6
wood/bone	10
add again for each size V	
halve again for each size T	

Weapons

<p>"I'd like to know what that guy hit me with," Parker complains. "I know shotguns, and his must be a custom job."</p> <p>"Quit that," she says as she slaps his hand away from the dressing she has just applied. When he guiltily lowers his arm, she puts something in his palm.</p> <p>Parker recognizes it instantly. "What are you doing with this?" Parker demands. The pistol she has given him is decorated with runic inscriptions. "Don't you know how dangerous it is, particularly for you?"</p>	<p>ordinary shotgun 7 VPD2</p> <p>normal pistol 6 BD1</p>
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Inanimate Objects

Characters in a story are eventually flung into a wall, struck with a chair, or fall from a tenth-story window. In order to help assess the injury from such an event, these guidelines for the hits for inanimate objects are suggested. These values should be added again for each size-related V in the proposed object's outfit, or halved for each size-related T—the GM should apply a little common sense when computing these values, and consult the guidelines for Size a bit later in the manual.

stone/steel	16	flesh	8	glass	2
wood/bone	12	water	6		
earth/plastic	10	cloth/paper	4		

Objects like doors, plasterboard walls, windows, chain-link fences, and cement pillars can each be given hits. The hits may also qualify as the edge if the object is used as a weapon. Thus, a stout chair has (1/4 x wood) 3 hits; a trash dumpster has 32 hits (2 x steel); and an innocent bystander has 8 hits. The GM may wish to turn some hits into wounding effects if these objects are used as weapons; if so, switch them according to the hits they do—remember, the above values aren't experience points. Thus, that dumpster might be used as a SBBOODDD12 weapon, if there's something big enough to wield it.

Falling or Colliding

To simulate the impact from high-velocity collisions, such as being thrown into (or through) a wall or falling from a height, add the fast effect [F] to represent relative velocity. The edge at impact is figured by the combined hits from the target substance plus any [F] effects granted by the speed. A single story fall into a bunch of bushes doesn't warrant an [F], but impact with the twigs and leaves still inflicts 6 hits [1/2 x wood]. A three story fall onto solid ground results in F10. Some effects might toss a character like a ragdoll through the air to impact on a brick wall—rarely, the fast effect might come into play here, but the incurred 16 hits is not funny.

Victims of falls or collisions may use the brave defense and outfit to alleviate some of the injury. As with other defenses, this is not a combat action. The GM should not allow other forms of defense (evasion, counter, parry, etc.) except in very unusual circumstances: in other words, the Earth doesn't miss.

Tricks

Players can customize certain types of attacks or actions by adding effects to the existing list (as with a weapon) or by starting from scratch where appropriate. Special techniques or recipes used by PCs, such as trick shots, throwing a lightning bolt, communing with spirits, exercising an energy-draining power, building a device, raising the dead, etc., are the central power base for PCs in many campaigns. These modified actions are called **tricks**, and in **CYCHOSYS** they come in two types: **improvised** and **practiced**. In tricks, each type of effect can be added in levels, just like skills and finesses. The costs for each effect level, however, is multiplied by the effect's **power**.

Using Improvised Tricks

Constructed on the fly, these tricks are harder to perform than practiced tricks. The action total occurs simultaneously with trick fabrication, so the cost of each effect (level x power) added to the action reduces the action total. Improvised tricks should be built on the KISS principle—a total reduced to or below 0 is automatically a failure, and it will also have to overcome any defense the opponent might offer.

Improvised Tricks

<p><i>Curator of Antiquities, Professor Bill Grough wasn't expecting visitors tonight. As he unlatches the front door, three heavyset hooded thugs barge in, smashing the door and knocking Grough to the floor. As they try to tie him up, he gets one good kick in, trying to hit edge-on. His attackers aren't expecting this much resistance, and he clips one of them hard, throwing him back and leaving him gagging with a shoeprint on his chest; but in the end they have him bound while they ransack his illicitly assembled art collection. When they leave, one of them pockets a jeweled pendant and coughs as he tells his companions that he'll have to be more careful the next time they're sent to mess with a satyr.</i></p>	<p><i>brawl</i> 4 +roll = 28 Adds DP4 = -2 -2 -10 Total 14 DP4 opponent's defense = 5 Result 9 DP4</p>
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Creating a Practiced Trick

Practiced tricks are not designed in the midst of combat, but instead are painstakingly rehearsed during more relaxed periods. They represent personal familiarity with a specific process or function. The GM and player should decide what the practiced trick is supposed to do. The trick must have three components—(1) an associated **action base**, (2) a **speed**, and (3) an **edge**. Its speed and edge components are just like those for weapons. The trick speed is equal to the action base on which the trick is based; this value grows as the action base increases over time. The edge of the trick costs XP equal to the cost of the effects (level x power) built into the trick. After its creation, the trick can be advanced with XP during play (although not during combat).

If a practiced trick is designed by modifying a conventional weapon, trick construction begins with the weapon's original speed and range effects.

Practiced Tricks

<p><i>"It is precisely because Cityscape is full of people like me that I modified the thing," Rose says, gesturing at the gun. "Now pay attention. The first two settings won't be much help against Byrne, I think, because the first shoots a flame jet, and the second is a longer-ranged incendiary goo. Both are very persuasive arguments to other hemotrophs that they don't want a taste of me, but poor against a creature composed of fire. The middle setting sprays pellets that become flesh borers, also ineffective against a fleshless creature. However, I think these two settings will help; the percussion explosive here, and this last one is a cryonic blast—should freeze him solid."</i></p> <p><i>"Great," Parker says, staring at her with a mixture of alarm and admiration. "Now if only I knew where he was."</i></p> <p><i>Rose dimples. "I can help you with that, too."</i></p>	<p><i>Original large pistol speed 6.</i></p> <p><i>flame jet 6 LXP3</i> [L] = 2 XP [X] = 4 XP [P] = 2 XP [3] = 1 +2 +3 = 6 XP total = 14 XP</p> <p><i>incendiary 6 LLXX (18 XP)</i> <i>borers 6 FB2 (15 XP)</i> <i>percussion 6 OD5 (21 XP)</i> <i>freeze 6 VXH (16 XP)</i></p>
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