

THE 5E SIDE TO INTRIGUE

HOW TO USE THE INTRIGUE FROM ASOIAF IN DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS 5E

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Every RPG-system brings a new chance to invent a game mechanic which has not been used before. Or use it in a new way. The 'A Song of Ice and Fire' RPG had a nice focus on intrigue. I have always liked the mechanic. Intrigue is not so strange if you read the Game of Thrones books or watched the series. Intrigue is as much a part of the world of roleplaying as is battle. With that in mind we tried to convert the Intrigue System of 'A Song of Ice and Fire' RPG to the world of Dungeons and Dragons 5e.

WHAT IS AN INTRIGUE?

In every D&D game, roleplay is as important as combat. However for combat many rules have been decided. For roleplay this is different. Basically you ask your player character to act out what he or she wants to achieve. A roll helps in defining the outcome.

By introducing the Intrigue System from the ASOIAF-rpg rules to D&D we can approach Role Playing in a more Combat-styled fashion. In an intrigue every spoken exchange in an encounter can be seen as a game of attack and defense. Just as in a debate one speaker can be declared the winner and the other the loser. With an intrigue you do not simply converse with an NPC but use words to the best of your ability to change the mind of the NPC or the way they view you. They on the other hand can decide to do the same to you.

You can try to warm an unfriendly shopkeeper to bargain for a better price. You can persuade a city guard to let you pass. You can seduce one of the ladies of court to give you important information. Or intimidate a goblin warrior to drop his weapons before combat even starts. An intrigue is every time you use words instead of Weapons to resolve an encounter.

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE?

The core of every intrigue is your objective, what you hope to achieve. An objective is your motivation, what you want your opponent to do, say, or a development you want to prevent. Without an objective, you don't have an intrigue.

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE?

1. Friendship
2. Information
3. Service
4. Deceit

FRIENDSHIP

Many intrigues involve cultivating alliances, forging friendships, whether for the short-term or long. Your expected outcome is to foment feelings of kinship with your target to make future exchanges easier or even unnecessary.

INFORMATION

Knowledge is power, and information stands as one of the most common objectives for engaging in an intrigue. With this objective, you hope to acquire information, learn rumors, gossip, or anything else you might need to gain an edge over your enemies.

SERVICE

When a service is your objective, you want your opponent to do something for you. What that something is can be just about anything, from loaning you a few gold to spying on the Queen, giving you a good deal on a new sword, or sparing your life when your opponent has every right to take it.

DECEIT

You may also engage in intrigues to dupe your opponent, feeding false information, setting up your foe for a potential double-cross, and masking your true intention behind a deceptive façade.

With a clear goal in mind, both you and the NPC will enter into the battle of words. Next you have to decide on your disposition. The DM will do so for the NPC.

WHAT IS THE DISPOSITION OF THE NPC YOU INTERACT WITH?

Any NPC you interact with will basically look at you in three ways:

1. Unfriendly
2. Indifferent
3. Friendly

The disposition of the NPC is the basis for your Intrigue. Before you choose to battle there is always the possibility to resolve the matter through talking or gently influencing, nudging and pushing an NPC in your desired direction. You try to move the NPC from Unfriendly to at least Indifferent and optimally to Friendly. The other way around a Failed Attempt can mean an Indifferent NPC becomes Unfriendly.

A GAME OF ATTACK AND DEFENSE

The DM decides on the disposition of the NPC you are trying to influence. You also decide on your disposition on entering the Intrigue. An intrigue is a game of attack and defense. So you must decide how best to attack the NPC. With what disposition will you enter the Intrigue? With what disposition will the NPC enter the Intrigue?

This information remains hidden at the beginning of the Intrigue. The DM might drop hints to the general demeanor of the NPC but will not give away it's Disposition. The goal of the Intrigue is your Objective: Friendship, Information, Service or Deceit. In game terms the goal is to move the disposition of the NPC in a direction that is favorable to your desired outcome.

UNFRIENDLY NPC

Some NPC's you meet just don't like you. Either they are inherently angry as evil characters or maybe they are wary of new faces in town. The town guard that is on watch might have a disliking of you. The shop owner might have bad experiences with traveller's ripping him off. On the left side of the spectrum we have the Unfriendly NPC's. The Unfriendly mindset of your NPC can be outed in three varying degrees. They might simply Dislike you. They might be openly Unfriendly. Or they might be Malicious. The Unfriendly Disposition is wary, closed and maybe a bit paranoid.

UNFRIENDLY NPC / MALICIOUS

A malicious NPC is simply out to hurt you. They have evil in mind and will start off any encounter with a large mistrust or are looking for an opportunity to do you harm. This is the worst disposition to start from. Basically at any given moment the encounter can turn into combat, but through clever use of words and persuasion there might still be a chance that things end up alright and you can maneuver the NPC to a friendlier disposition.

UNFRIENDLY NPC / UNFRIENDLY

An unfriendly NPC might not go so far as to actually want to do you harm, they are simply unfriendly. They do not trust you. They do not trust your kind or have had bad dealings with your race. Whatever the reason, these NPC's have a chip on their shoulder. Entering into an encounter will offer a chance that things turn from bad to worse. Or they might soften up to you if you offer the right kind of incentive.

UNFRIENDLY NPC / DISLIKE

The disliking NPC simply has no really warm feelings for you at the beginning of an encounter. They will not go so far as to be openly unfriendly or hostile but you can expect them to be cold and uncaring in their answers. Given the right incentive they might warm up to you to the point where they are simply indifferent about you and your wellbeing. NPC's with the dislike disposition can be city guards that are naturally weary of new faces and just do not like the look of you. They might be a barkeeper that has had a bad experience. Or might be someone you know from another time whom you apparently harmed in some manner.

DISPOSITION TABLE

		Unfriendly		Indifferent		Friendly	
	Malicious	Unfriendly	Dislike	Neutral	Amiable	Friendly	Affectionate
Steps	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3

INDIFFERENT NPC

Many NPC's will be indifferent about you and your party. You are just another band of adventurers passing through town. One of the many on the road. They can just as easily warm up to you with a few kind words as turn you in with the city watch if you step out of line. One of the many visitors to a well-known shop, one the patrons of a famous inn, you will be met with a neutral disposition. They have had no dealing with you before and will happily forget you afterwards.

FRIENDLY NPC

On the other side of the disposition spectrum is the Friendly NPC. Maybe it is in their nature to be open and friendly to newcomers or maybe you have had dealings with them in the past. Whatever the reason these NPC's already have warm feelings for you or a kinder disposition can be developed. These NPC's are open and willing to listen to what you have to offer. They might simply be Amiable – meaning they are generally warm and trusting individuals to begin with. Secondly they might be Friendly. And finally they might have real warm feelings and care for you. These NPC's have an Affectionate disposition.

FRIENDLY NPC / AMIALE

At the basis of the friendly spectrum of dispositions we find the Amiable NPC. This NPC basically is a good hearted soul, friendly to most folk and you just happen to be one of those folks. It is the good-hearted barkeeper with an easy laugh, the friendly bard wishing to share a story or the amused gnome shop owner. In the basis these NPC are open, warm and trust easily. This does not mean they are gullible however.

FRIENDLY NPC / FRIENDLY

Next on the Friendly Disposition is the Friendly NPC. This may be an NPC that has seen you more than once, did good trade with you or maybe your party did them a service and completed the task to satisfaction. Either way you are no longer a random face to these NPC but they have a genuine liking of you that goes beyond professional courtesy.

FRIENDLY NPC / AFFECTIONATE

When you and the NPC have been together for a longer time, the NPC might even develop an affectionate disposition to your character. This means the NPC is genuinely concerned about your wellbeing. With some, even romantic feelings might be involved. These NPC's will be easy to convince to join in a cause or will help you along the way to help you reach your goals.

CHARISMA VERSUS WISDOM AND INTELLIGENCE

CHARISMA CHECKS

A Charisma check might arise when you try to influence or entertain others, when you try to make an impression or tell a convincing lie, or when you are navigating a tricky social situation. The Deception, Intimidation and Persuasion Skills reflect aptitude in certain kinds of Charisma Checks. For the purpose of the Intrigue we will focus on only three skills. Deception, Intimidation and Persuasion.

DECEPTION

Your Charisma (Deception) check determines whether you can convincingly hide the truth, either verbally or through your actions. This deception can encompass everything from misleading others through ambiguity to telling outright lies. Typical situations include trying to fast-talk a guard, con a merchant, earn money through gambling, pass yourself off in a disguise, dull someone's suspicions with false assurances, or maintain a straight face while telling a blatant lie.

INTIMIDATION

When you attempt to influence someone through overt threats, hostile actions, and physical violence, the GM might ask you to make a Charisma (Intimidation) check. Examples include trying to pry information out of a prisoner, convincing street thugs to back down from a confrontation, or using the edge of a broken bottle to convince a sneering vizier to reconsider a decision.

PERSUASION

When you attempt to influence someone or a group of people with tact, social graces, or good nature, the GM might ask you to make a Charisma (Persuasion) check. Typically, you use persuasion when acting in good faith, to foster friendships, make cordial requests, or exhibit proper etiquette. Examples of persuading others include convincing a chamberlain to let your party see the king, negotiating peace between warring tribes, or inspiring a crowd of townsfolk.

DISPOSITION AND YOUR CHARISMA SKILLS

The Disposition of your target has an effect on your Charisma Roles and the skill you use. As can be seen in the table below. Deception and Intimidation will give you an advantage on the left Unfriendly side of the Disposition, Persuasion will have a disadvantage on this side. On the other hand Persuasion will be easier on Friendly NPC's and Deception and Intimidation will be harder. In the exact middle, you will find Neutral. This will give you neither an advantage or a disadvantage regardless of the Skill you wish to use.

DECIDING ON THE TECHNIQUE, SKILL AND SPECIALTY YOU WISH TO USE.

From your Charisma Skills – Deception, Persuasion or Intimidate – you can specify which special technique you want to use. There is more than one way to try to change someone's disposition. Do you wish to charm the NPC by acting or lying? Or do you wish to Incite the NPC into action by Bluffing, Intimidating or Inciting the NPC? There are subtle nuances in how you achieve your goals as you can see in the table below. There are seven basic techniques. These can be approached in one of three ways: through deception, persuasion or intimidation. Choosing the skill and the technique gives you the way you will change the disposition of the NPC.

DISPOSITION VERSUS CHARISMA CHECKS

	Malicious	Unfriendly	Dislike	Neutral	Amiable	Friendly	Affectionate
Malicious	D/I= +3 P = -6	D/I= +2 P = -4	D/I= +0 P = -2	D/I= +0 P = -0	D/I= +0 P = -2	D/I= +2 P = -4	D/I= +3 P = -6
Unfriendly	D/I= +2 P = -4	D/I= +2 P = -4	D/I= +1 P = -2	D/I= +0 P = -0	D/I= +1 P = -3	D/I= +2 P = -4	D/I= +2 P = -4
Dislike	D/I= +0 P = -2	D/I= +1 P = -3	D/I= +1 P = -2	D/I= +0 P = -0	D/I= +0 P = -2	D/I= +1 P = -2	D/I= +1 P = -2
Neutral	D/I= +0 P = -0	D/I= +0 P = -0	D/I= +0 P = -0	D/I= +0 P = -0	D/I= +0 P = -0	D/I= +0 P = -0	D/I= +0 P = -0
Amiable	D/I= +0 P = -2	D/I= +1 P = -3	D/I= +0 P = -2	D/I= +0 P = -0	D/I= 0 P = +1	D/I= -1 P = +3	D/I= -2 P = +5
Friendly	D/I= +2 P = -4	D/I= +2 P = -4	D/I= +1 P = -2	D/I= +0 P = -0	D/I= 0 P = +1	D/I= -1 P = +3	D/I= -2 P = +5
Affectionate	D/I= +3 P = -6	D/I= +2 P = -4	D/I= +1 P = -2	D/I= +0 P = -0	D/I= 0 P = +1	D/I= -1 P = +3	D/I= -2 P = +5

DECIDE ON THE TECHNIQUE

BARGAIN

When you Bargain, you are asking the target to do something in exchange for recompense in some form. Bargain can be used to bribe a guard, form alliances, attain services, and so on, but it only works so long as you live up to your side of the bargain. Bargain is used to negotiate a service in which the target does something for you in exchange for something you provide. This can be as simple as a monetary transaction, exchanging money for some good or service, or it could be some other form of arrangement.

CHARM

Use Charm whenever you would cultivate a friendship, improving the target's disposition to make him or her more amenable to your position in future intrigues. When you use this technique, you ply your target with complements, empathizing with their plights and conditions, and work to adapt yourself to your subject's desires. When you defeat an opponent using charm, you improve the target's disposition by one-step. The improved disposition lasts until circumstances would worsen their disposition against you—such as a betrayal on your part or a rival inciting the opponent against you.

CONVINCE

Sometimes a forceful argument can get your point across where charm or seduction might fail. Convince imparts your position or idea by simply putting the idea out there in a reasoned and logical manner. It is often less effective because it isn't backed up by a threat and there may not be something in it for the subject. Thus, it often takes longer to convince a subject of your position especially when they are ill-disposed against you. A use of convince does nothing to improve the target's disposition, but instead gets them to support your position or grant you assistance. Even dire enemies can be convinced to help provided they have sufficient cause, though there's nothing to say the enemy won't use the opportunity to betray you later. A convinced target assists you through the particular trial but no further.

INCITE

Incite is used to make your subject angry, to fill them with loathing or rage against someone or something. Incite is risky since the unchecked emotion created can cause the subject to react brashly. Inciting a target involves turning the opponent against another opponent, usually by producing evidence of betrayal, vile acts, or revealing any other sordid details your opponent might find repugnant. Incite is powerful but it produces short-term effects.

INTIMIDATE

Intimidate uses bluster and threats used to frighten or cow your opponent. A successful use of intimidate either drives off the target if he can flee or improves his disposition to amiable (or one-step better if already amiable), for as long as you remain in the target's presence if the target cannot flee. The target does as you ask, reveals information and possibly lies if he believes he has no other recourse to escape your presence. An intimidated target's disposition in future intrigues is always unfriendly or worse.

SEDUCE

Of all the techniques, seduction is the most subtle. Use of this technique requires patience and practice, a keen eye for body language and innuendo to guide your own words and behavior. If you defeat an opponent using Seduce, you fill the subject with feelings of desire or at the very least the willingness to give into your advances. If the target is attracted to you, capable of physical love, and as it least friendly, he or she gives in. As such, it may take several intrigues to seduce a target properly.

Each day after the encounter, the target's disposition shifts down one until it falls to one step below their starting disposition. You can sustain the feelings of attraction by courting the individual and using charm to create a more permanent improvement in disposition. Characters with dispositions that started at dislike or worse but who are seduced pretend to be attracted and even go so far as to engage in lovemaking or some other act of passion. They only follow through if they believe such an act will advance their position or give them some advantage over you—whether it's to plant a bastard in the womb or a knife in the throat.

TAUNT

Taunting is risky. You goad another character into action based on barbs and insults. You can use taunt to provoke the character to do something but at the cost of worsening their disposition toward you. An opponent who has an amiable or better Disposition does what you want but after completing the task, Disposition worsens by one step. An opponent whose Disposition is indifferent or dislike may or may not perform the task based on the danger posed to them. Again, their Disposition worsens by one-step. Finally, opponents with dispositions worse than dislike attack you, or flee if attacking is not an option.

DECIDE ON THE SPECIALTY

ACT

You play at being interested or understanding what the opponent is going through.

BARGAIN

Coming to an agreement between two or more people or groups as to what each will do for the other.

BLUFF

Your objective is to let the other think you hold the right cards or are telling the absolute truth while it's damn sure you don't. \pag

BULLY

To use strength or influence to harm or intimidate those who are weaker than you to get what you want.

CHARM

You try to act very pleasant or attractive (likeable).

INCITE

You try to encourage or to stir up (usually unlawful behavior) or even to get someone (or a group) to act in a violent way.

LIE

The act of imposing a distorted reality which entitles you to something otherwise not deserved.

SEDUCE

Entice (someone) into sexual activity or entice (someone) to do or believe something inadvisable or foolhardy.

TAUNT

You use insults, provocations or challenges in order to anger, wound, or provoke someone.

THE NPC CAN COUNTER YOUR ATTEMPTS WITH INTELLIGENCE AND WISDOM CHECKS.

INTELLIGENCE CHECKS

An Intelligence check comes into play when you need to draw on logic, education, memory, or deductive reasoning. The Arcana, History, Investigation, Nature, and Religion Skills reflect aptitude in certain kinds of Intelligence Checks. For the purpose of Intrigue we will only focus on Investigation.

Investigation. When you look around for clues and make deductions based on those clues, you make an Intelligence (Investigation) check.

WISDOM CHECKS

A Wisdom check might reflect an effort to read body language, understand someone's feelings, notice things about The Environment, or care for an injured person.

INSIGHT

Your Wisdom (Insight) check decides whether you can determine the true intentions of a creature, such as when searching out a lie or predicting someone's next move. Doing so involves gleaning clues from body language, speech habits, and changes in mannerisms.

PERCEPTION

Your Wisdom (Perception) check lets you spot, hear, or otherwise detect the presence of something. It measures your general awareness of your surroundings and the keenness of your Senses.

FOUR OUTCOMES

When you roll the dice, either you're going to fail, tie, succeed, or succeed with style. Every roll you make results in one of four outcomes, generally speaking. The specifics may change a little depending on what kind of action you're taking, but all the game actions fit this general pattern.

FAIL

If you roll lower than your opposition, you fail. This means one of several things: you don't get what you want, you get what you want at a serious cost, or you suffer some negative mechanical consequence. Sometimes, it means more than one of those. It's the GM's job to determine an appropriate cost.

TIE

If you roll the same as your opposition, you tie. This means you get what you want, but at a minor cost, or you get a lesser version of what you wanted.

SUCCEED

If you roll higher than your opposition by 1 or 2 shifts, you succeed. This means you get what you want at no cost.

SUCCEED WITH STYLE

If you roll higher than your opposition by 3 or more shifts, you succeed with style. This means that you get what you want, but you also get an added benefit on top of that.

SERIOUS COST VS. MINOR COST

When you're thinking about costs, think both about the story in play and the game mechanics to help you figure out what would be most appropriate.

A serious cost should make the current situation worse somehow, either by creating a new problem or exacerbating an existing one.

A minor cost should add a story detail that's problematic or bad for the PC, but doesn't necessarily endanger progress. It's okay if the minor cost is mainly a narrative detail, showing how the PC just barely scratched by.

FAIL OR SUCCESS TABLE

	Fail	Tie	Succeed	Succeed
Malicious	End of Intrigue; Combat or Worse	Nothing changes; Cost just went up	Halfway to success move up +1 step	Success move up +2 steps (dislike)
Unfriendly	-1 step	Nothing changes; Cost just went up	Halfway to success move up +1 step	Success move up +2 steps (neutral)
Dislike	-1 step	Nothing changes; Cost just went up	Halfway to success move up +1 step	Success move up +1 steps (neutral)
Neutral	End of Intrigue	Nothing changes	Success move up +1 step	Success move up +1 steps (amiable)
Amiable	-2 steps (dislike)	Success at a cost	Success move up +1 step	Success move up +1 steps (friendly)
Friendly	-2 steps (neutral)	Success at a cost	Success move up +1 step	Success move up +1 steps (affectionate)
Affectionate	-2 steps (amiable)	Success at a cost	Success move up +1 step	Success + bonus effect (information, service, discount etc.)