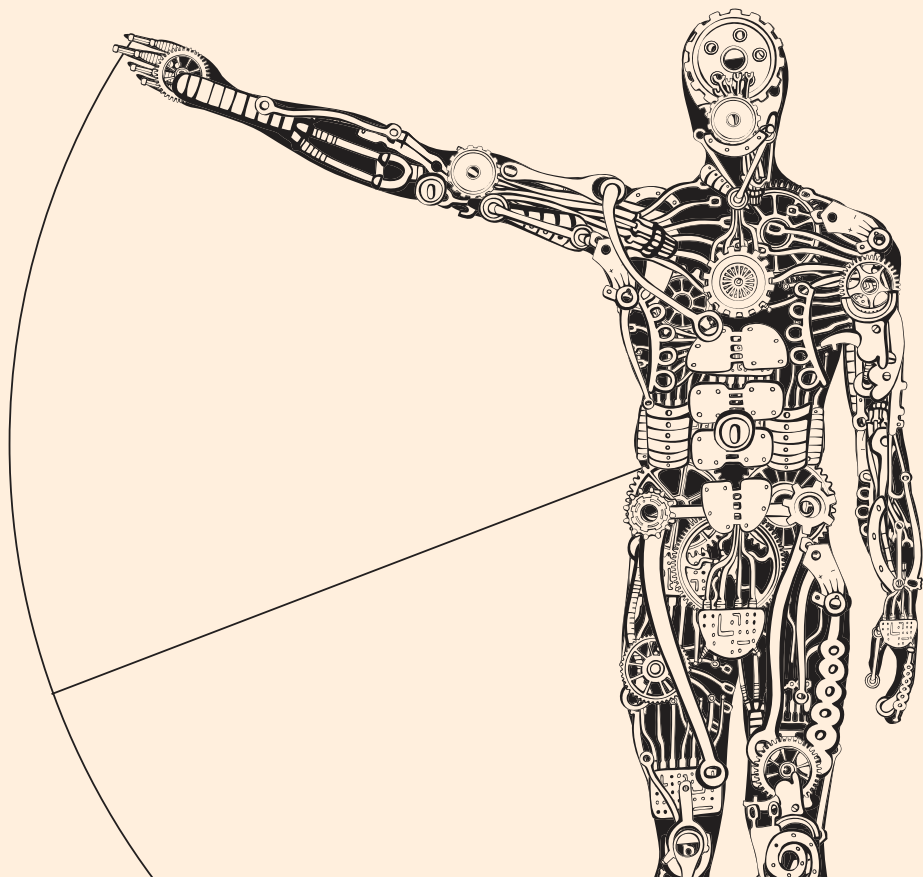
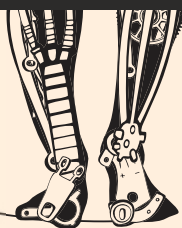


Ultimate Characters Guide



GET MORE OUT OF YOUR CHARACTERS



Ultimate Characters Guide

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Foreword

In my opinion, role-playing games have two major components: characters and the storyline those characters interact with. In the 'world' of *Savage Worlds*, the storyline is typically defined by the campaign setting or plot point campaign run by the GM. Characters are typically defined by the creativity of the player in the form of a character concept and background. The player then uses the *Savage Worlds* core rulebook, *Companion* books, and setting guides to translate that character concept and background into in-game mechanics. Pretty simple...

You may or may not know that I am part of DramaScape's *Savage Worlds* development team, and on one of our projects, we were constructing a collection of NPCs for use in sci-fi settings through a playing card medium for quick tabletop use. My job was to translate those NPC concepts and backgrounds into in-game mechanics through Attributes, Skills, Hindrances, Edges, and gear. These in-game mechanics were constructed using only the *Savage Worlds* core rulebook. I had a difficult time translating 100% of the character concepts and backgrounds using the existing game mechanics. I wanted new Hindrances, Edges and Skills to use. However, without writing an entire setting guide, this wasn't possible. Thus, the *Ultimate Characters Guide* was born!

The *Ultimate Characters Guide* is designed to do two things. First, it's designed to give players and GMs additional options for replicating their character concepts and backgrounds as in-game mechanics, and second, to utilize them during game play.

Why is this important? Because everyone should have the flexibility of turning whatever character concept and background they create into something they can use in-game. I'm not saying the *Savage Worlds* core rulebook doesn't do this, it's just that I found myself needing more options that could have drastically swelled the size of the core rulebook.

The following six chapters will hopefully provide enough options to allow players and GMs the flexibility to create whatever character they want and turn that into in-game mechanics.

Building a Template provides a listing of potential character traits that can be translated to bonus or penalty abilities for the sake of creating racial and cultural templates for use during character creation. These templates can then be used to differentiate between all characters due to their species, race, ethnicity, habitat, beliefs, homelands, or family. This is presented in a very generic manner allowing you to pick and choose the different characteristics of the template to be created and choosing positive and negative abilities to balance out that template. Remember, the standard human is given a free Edge during character creation, equating to a +2 character template. If removing that free Edge, the template should net +2. If building a setting with different levels of character heroics, maybe you'd rather have templates that net +4 or even -2. Regardless, these templates can provide purpose to a character's background.

Hindrances and Edges provides a collection of Hindrances and Edges that can be utilized across all settings. They are completely genre agnostic and are simply presented to provide more options for building characters. None of the Hindrances and Edges provided are duplicates from the *Savage Worlds* core rulebook or *Companion* books. If they are similar, they will definitely be different enough to

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provide another option. However, I can't guarantee there are no duplicates or similar Hindrances and Edges in the many Savage Worlds settings available.

Skill Tests provides new methods of using skills in and out of combat so that no matter how you mechanically translate your character, their skills are put to good use. In this regard, no skill should be considered impractical!

Knowledge is essentially an add-on to **Skill Tests** by providing a plethora of knowledge bases and how they can be used within the confines of the standard Savage Worlds mechanics and the new ones presented in the **Skill Tests** chapter.

Villain Creation is the creature side of translating character concepts and backgrounds. While PCs and NPCs have Hindrances and Edges, creatures have Special Abilities. This chapter provides ideas on creating new Special Abilities and how they pertain to different creature species.

Villain Combat Balance is the environment version of skills, Hindrances, and Edges. Instead of boosting a creature's difficulty through Special Abilities or NPCs through skills, Hindrances, and Edges, this chapter discusses how to manipulate the environment surrounding an encounter to adjust its difficulty. Additionally, it ends with an example that ties together Villain Creation and Villain Combat Balance.

I hope the *Ultimate Characters Guide* helps you create your characters exactly as you envision them in your head!

Aaron T. Huss

President

Mystical Throne Entertainment

Building a Template

One possible way of creating unique characters is by starting with a template. This template could pertain to the character's species (such as alien species), race, culture, ethnicity, beliefs, homeland, upbringing, or whatever. The way in which a template is created should conform to the GM's standard character build (such as every human get a free Edge). Always check with the GM first. Additionally, a GM could use these options when creating their own unique setting. This can be done when creating new races for a fantasy setting, aliens for a sci-fi setting, or monsters for a horror setting.

The purpose of these entries is to give the players, and GM, quick mechanics for creating their own unique templates by translating traits into bonuses and penalties. Each trait is described and presented with a number of potential penalties and bonuses ranging from (-2) to (+2). Human characters are given a free edge which equates to a (+2) template. To create new templates, the end result should be (+2) to balance the character with all the other characters. The option does exist to create templates that equate to a higher or lower number (such as a super hero or horror setting), but this should only be used when all player characters use that same result (for the purpose of balance). Ultimately, all player characters should be balanced with each other so that one doesn't have a mechanical advantage over the others.

Not all traits have to reference a physical aspect of that character. The traits listed are sorted by type: physical, mental, and environmental. Physical traits are those that can be seen, felt, or smelt. Mental traits are those that refer to a character's upbringing or history (such as education or evolution). Environmental traits correspond to a character's homeland. (Where they were raised, not necessarily where they live after character creation.)

Most traits listed below have multiple abilities. These are presented as options for the players, and GM. They can be mixed, and matched with other traits (or with themselves) to create the final (+2) for that template (or another number if desired). Mixing, and matching these abilities could truly bring out the mechanical translation of a character's concept or background.

The *Savage Worlds* core rulebook notes the use of (-3), and (+3) abilities, but are not always an integral part of this supplement. Some traits can easily correspond to an ability of this level, while others cannot. As such, the majority of the traits only have abilities that range from (-2) to (+2).

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READING THE ABILITIES

These abilities are given in shorthand. They list the skill, attribute, derived statistic, Hindrance or Edge that is associated with that ability, and includes the given bonus or penalty under the given conditions (in parentheses).

EXAMPLE: *Climbing d6 means that ability provides the character with a free d6 in the Climbing skill upon applying the racial background. +2 Vigor (poison) means the character gains a +2 bonus to all Vigor rolls to resist the effects of poisons. If no condition is given then default to (always). These bonuses, and penalties are cumulative with standard ones for difficulty.*

USING THE ABILITIES

As is, the given abilities are mechanical, but not flavorful. They are meant to provide a quick example of the different positives, and negatives that can be associated with a given trait. When using these abilities for creating new character races, each one should be given a purpose, and some type of description. The abilities are not meant to be used as simple modifiers but rather ideas for how to tie racial traits to defining attributes with in-game effects.

EXAMPLE: *The reason a creature with bioluminescence has +2 Intimidation could be explained as erratically glowing skin that frightens their opponents.*

All the listed traits are as opposed to the standard physical attributes of a human. That 'standard' would be considered two legs, two arms, one heart, endoskeleton, skin, bipedal, average senses, sentient, civilized, and more considering what makes up a human.

Physical

Physical traits are those that can be seen, felt or smelt. They can have a direct impact on how the character looks, and often affect their capabilities. These traits are not limited to visual attributes like wings or hooves but also include motor skills, and genetic make-up like poor manual dexterity or multiple hearts.

Bioluminescence

Bioluminescence is the production of light from a creature's body via an internal chemical reaction to oxygen. This light is considered as a 'cold light' and generates very little heat. This form of natural light production is very common in creatures that live in environments with little to no visibility, often being used to lure prey. The most common creature types are insectoid or aquatic. Many creatures cannot control when the light occurs.

+2 Abilities: Dark Vision

+1 Abilities: +2 Intimidation, +2 Taunt,
Low Light Vision

-1 Abilities: Outsider (Minor)(non-native lands)

-2 Abilities: -4 Stealth (visual)

Canid

Canids are members of the canidae family, also known as canines, that includes wolves, foxes, jackals, coyotes, and domesticated dogs. They are typically characterized as social creatures with non-retractable claws, excellent hearing and sense of smell, active hunters, and covered in fur.

+2 Abilities: +2 Charisma, Danger Sense

+1 Abilities: Tracking d6, Survival d6,
Low Light Vision, Notice d6

-1 Abilities: Loyal (Minor), All Thumbs (Minor)

-2 Abilities: -4 Climbing, -4 Repair

BUILDING A TEMPLATE

Carnivore

Creatures whose diets consist almost exclusively of other creatures are called carnivores. Their teeth and digestive system have adapted to a life of meat eating, and can rarely live off of anything else. Carnivores are characterized as having teeth to tear flesh and either hunt or scavenge their food. Due to their diet, and adaptive stomachs, carnivores are often resistant to ingested diseases.

+2 Abilities: Vigor +1 die type

+1 Abilities: Natural Weapons (Str+d6), Intimidation d6

-1 Abilities: -2 Charisma (herbivores)

-2 Abilities: -4 Survival (vegetation-only environment)

Chromatophores

Chromatophores are pigment-containing cells in a creature's skin that reflect light. The pigments in these cells can be adjusted to reflect different colors providing the creature with a type of camouflage. Some creatures are able to perform this change quickly while others exhibit a more gradual process. These types of cells are typically only found on cold-blooded creatures.

+2 Abilities: +4 Stealth (visual)

+1 Abilities: +2 Intimidation

-1 Abilities: Cautious (Minor)

-2 Abilities: Yellow (Major)

Claws

Many creatures depend on their claws for hunting, and general survival (such as to climb a tree). Most of these creatures have retractable claws that come to a sharp point. Additionally, there are supernatural beings that have

claws used for devious purposes. This could be the same as hunting, but they're not hunting for the purpose of survival.

+2 Abilities: +4 Survival (non-barren environment)

+1 Abilities: Natural Weapons (Str+d6), +2 Climbing

-1 Abilities: All Thumbs (Minor)(non-retractable claws)

-2 Abilities: Opponent +4 Tracking (non-retractable claws)

Cold-Blooded

Cold-blooded is the common term for ectotherm. Ectothermic creatures control their body temperature via environmental sources. They bask in the sun to increase their body temperature and cool off when the sun goes down. These creatures also exhibit low metabolic rates, allowing them to go many days without food.

+2 Abilities: +4 Survival

+1 Abilities: +2 Vigor (all climates except extreme cold)

-1 Abilities: Habit (Minor)(basking in sunshine)

-2 Abilities: -4 Vigor (versus extreme cold)

Crystalline

Creatures with crystalline bodies are fairly solid in nature. This bodily structure is made-up of a crystalline material, exhibits crystalline behavior, or mimics crystalline design. Often times, these crystalline bodies reflect light or appear very odd to alien eyes, especially when they look to be formed from hundreds of shards.

+2 Abilities: Natural Armor (All 2), +1 Toughness

+1 Abilities: Immune (poison)

-1 Abilities: Outsider (Minor)(non-native lands)

-2 Abilities: -4 Stealth (visual)

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Diapsid

Diapsid creatures, primarily reptilian, have two extra openings on each side of their skull. The arrangement of these openings allows for stronger jaw muscles and enables the jaw to open much farther than without. Creatures with this skull feature can clamp down hard with their teeth as a natural weapon.

+2 Abilities: Natural Weapons (Str+d8)(teeth)

+1 Abilities: +2 Intimidation

-1 Abilities: -2 Charisma

-2 Abilities: Wanted (Major)

Elemental (Earth)

Some creatures appears as though they've been fabricated from the very ground they walk on. Their bodies are rock-like, and exhibit many qualities of the earth. They are in fact elemental creatures, and their bodies can be composed of many different types of earth such as rock, gravel, sand, mud, granite, or even brick.

+2 Abilities: Natural Armor (All 2), +1 Size

+1 Abilities: +2 Vigor (all climates)

-1 Abilities: All Thumbs (Minor)

-2 Abilities: Weakness (sonic)(attackers +2 damage)

Elemental (Fire)

Some creatures have an innate control over fire. This may produce a variety of effects within their body or traits that are a bit more visual. Those elemental creatures of fire could have a body engulfed in flames or possibly a magical way of controlling flames.

+2 Abilities: Immune (fire), +4 Vigor (heat)

+1 Abilities: +5 Power Points (fire-based powers only)

-1 Abilities: -2 Vigor (versus cold)

-2 Abilities: Weakness (water)(attackers +2 damage)

Elemental (Water)

Some elemental creatures have an ability to control the water. This may produce a variety of effects within their body or traits that are a bit more visual. They may have damp bodies made of water or water-like magical abilities.

+2 Abilities: Aquatic

+1 Abilities: Swimming d6, +5 Power Points (water-based powers only)

-1 Abilities: -2 Vigor (heat)

-2 Abilities: Weakness (cold)(attackers +2 damage), Dehydration

Elemental (Wind/Air)

Rounding out the list of elemental beings is that of wind or air. These elemental creatures could have winds swirling about their bodies, like a tornado, or exhibit magical control over the wind and the air itself. They may find themselves in danger should the oxygen be burned from the air.

+2 Abilities: Flight, Pace 8

+1 Abilities: +5 Power Points (wind-based powers only)

-1 Abilities: -2 Vigor (poison & disease)

-2 Abilities: Weakness (fire)(attackers +2 damage)

Elemental characters could also receive a +2 Healing bonus when surrounded by a small amount of the element they are made of and a +4 Healing bonus when submersed in that element.

Characters with visible differences in their body composition, compared to the native population, will often be treated as outsiders in any non-native territory. Visible racial traits will list this as a **-1 Ability** and GMs are encouraged to role-play this fully.

Exoskeleton

Exoskeleton is an external bone structure on a creature. Should the exoskeleton be large enough it can become a full shell. These exoskeletons protect the creature's body but can be slow to heal.

+2 Abilities: Natural Armor (All 2), Natural Armor (Torso 4)

+1 Abilities: +2 Vigor (all environments)

-1 Abilities: -2 Healing, Outsider (Minor)(non-native lands)

-2 Abilities: Pace 3 (and d4 running die)

Extra Heart

The heart is a very important part of the body, and those with an extra one may be better adapted to environments that can force the heart to work harder. This extra heart can also be used should a foreign body be introduced to the creature's circulatory system that would normally slow them down.

+2 Abilities: Fleet-Footed, Fast Healer

+1 Abilities: +2 Vigor (poison & disease)

-1 Abilities: -2 Survival (lack of food)

-2 Abilities: Heroic (Major)

Extra Limbs

Extra limbs can be very useful, especially when they can be used as legs for running, and hands for all other activities. They can be used in any activity that requires hand strength or dexterity along with reloading a weapon at the same time it is being fired. The hard part is finding armor that will allow for those extra arms or legs.

+2 Abilities: Rapid Reload (1 less action to reload), Fleet-Footed, Two-Fisted

+1 Abilities: +2 Repair, +2 Climbing

-1 Abilities: Outsider (Minor)(non-native lands)

-2 Abilities: Armor cost +100% (torso, and arms)

Extra Lung

As an extra heart can help against foreign bodies and atypical environments, extra lungs can help to overcome dirty air or differing atmospheres. These creatures have adapted to environments that would normally pollute one's lungs, possibly causing cancer or shortness of breath. With the additional lung, these creatures are able to capture more oxygen (or whatever the creature breaths) from the air, and turn it into what the creature needs to survive.

+2 Abilities: Underwater Endurance (hold breath 6 + Vigor die)

+1 Abilities: +4 Vigor (atmosphere)

-1 Abilities: x2 Fatigue recovery time (inclement environment)

-2 Abilities: Weakness (fire)(attackers +2 damage)

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Feeble

Not everyone can be strong and tough. Some creatures are physically or intellectually weak. Those who are feeble often put up little in the way of defenses and spend their time dodging from shadow to shadow to remain within cover or out of sight. They also learn quickly how to survive in a world that does not favor their stature.

+2 Abilities: +4 Stealth (visual), +1 Parry

+1 Abilities: Streetwise d6

-1 Abilities: Anemic (Minor)

-2 Abilities: -1 Toughness

-3 Abilities: Strength cannot exceed d6

Felid

Felid creatures are members of the cat family. There are two subsets of felids: panthers and felines. Panthers are typically larger although many felines are not much smaller than their panther cousins. Regardless of what subset they belong to, felids carry the same characteristics such as their ability to jump, hunt, and see in dark light.

+2 Abilities: Dark Vision, Fleet-Footed, Leap 6 (any direction)

+1 Abilities: Low Light Vision, Stealth d6, +2 Tracking

-1 Abilities: Loyal (Minor)

-2 Abilities: Curious (Major)

Feral

Those who do not live in a society considered civilized are labeled as feral. These creatures live in a more natural state and are often found within nomadic tribes. Additionally, feral

creatures could be those who formerly lived within a civilized nation but have since become feral through years or decades of living in the wild.

+2 Abilities: Berserk, +4 Vigor (all environments)

+1 Abilities: Survival d6, Stealth d6, Intimidation d6

-1 Abilities: -2 Charisma

-2 Abilities: Cannot take Investigation, Repair, and Streetwise

-3 Abilities: Smarts cannot be raised above d6

Fur

Fur is very common on creatures that live in colder or temperate climates. Those in temperate climates typically shed most of their fur in the summer while those in colder climates may grow very thick in the winter. One big drawback is that the fur may end up all over when shedding or it could get bulky, and heavy when growing thick.

+2 Abilities: Natural Armor (All 2)

+1 Abilities: +4 Vigor (cold)

-1 Abilities: -4 Vigor (heat), Outsider (Minor)(non-native lands)

-2 Abilities: -1 Parry

Gills

Gills are especially important should one wish to live within the water. Some creatures have adapted to a life on land and water with gills and the ability to breathe standard oxygen (or whatever their planet's atmosphere is made of). The result could be an amphibious type creature or one that can simply walk the land (for a short period of time) without needing water to breathe.

+2 Abilities: Aquatic

+1 Abilities: Swimming d6

-1 Abilities: Outsider (Minor)(non-native lands)

-2 Abilities: Dehydration

Herbivore

Herbivores are creatures that survive by eating plants, algae, and other photosynthesizing bacteria. They are able to sustain life simply by eating nearby vegetation, but are often sources of food for carnivores. As such, herbivores are not typically suited to a life in barren environments.

+2 Abilities: +4 Survival (vegetative environments)

+1 Abilities: Immune (poison)

-1 Abilities: Racial Enemy (carnivores)

-2 Abilities: -4 Survival (barren environments)

Horns

Horns are bone-like material that protrude from a creature's head, and typically used for the purpose of combat. Unlike antlers, horns are thick and very solid allowing the creature to use them in a charge against their opponent. The tips are pointed and used as natural weapons.

+2 Abilities: Natural Weapons (Str+d8)

+1 Abilities: +2 Intimidation

-1 Abilities: Outsider (Minor)(non-native lands)

-2 Abilities: Heroic (Major)

Hydroskeleton

A hydroskeleton is a large fluid-filled cavity surrounded by muscle that allows a creature to change its shape, and produce movement. These creatures are typically soft bodied, and often cold-blooded. This ability to change shape can allow one to fit into very tight spaces.

+2 Abilities: +1 Parry, +4 Stealth (visual)

+1 Abilities: Immune (disease)

-1 Abilities: Outsider (Minor)(non-native lands), All Thumbs (Minor)

-2 Abilities: Weakness (fire)(attackers +2 damage)

Improved Senses

Improved senses can come in any form including sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. The benefits can range significantly but can also carry the detriment of severe sensitivity surrounding that sense. For instance, one with improved touch may be able to feel the smallest changes in a material's texture, but the creature becomes hypersensitive to hot, and cold.

+3 Abilities: Marksman

+2 Abilities: Alertness

+1 Abilities: Notice d6, Tracking d6

-1 Abilities: -4 Vigor (heat, and cold), -4 Vigor (sound)

-2 Abilities: Weakness (light or sonic)(attackers +2 damage)

Insectivore

Insectivores are creatures that survive by eating insects and similar small creatures. They are technically considered as a type of carnivore, but their diet consists of only insects and small creatures, not anything large such as herbivores.

+1 Abilities: Survival d6, Immune (disease)

-1 Abilities: Racial Enemy (carnivores), Outsider (Minor)(non-native lands)

Leathery Skin

Not all creatures have soft skin or fur. Many have skin that carries a leather-like texture, protecting them from the environment and predators. This leathery skin creates a natural armor, protecting the creature.

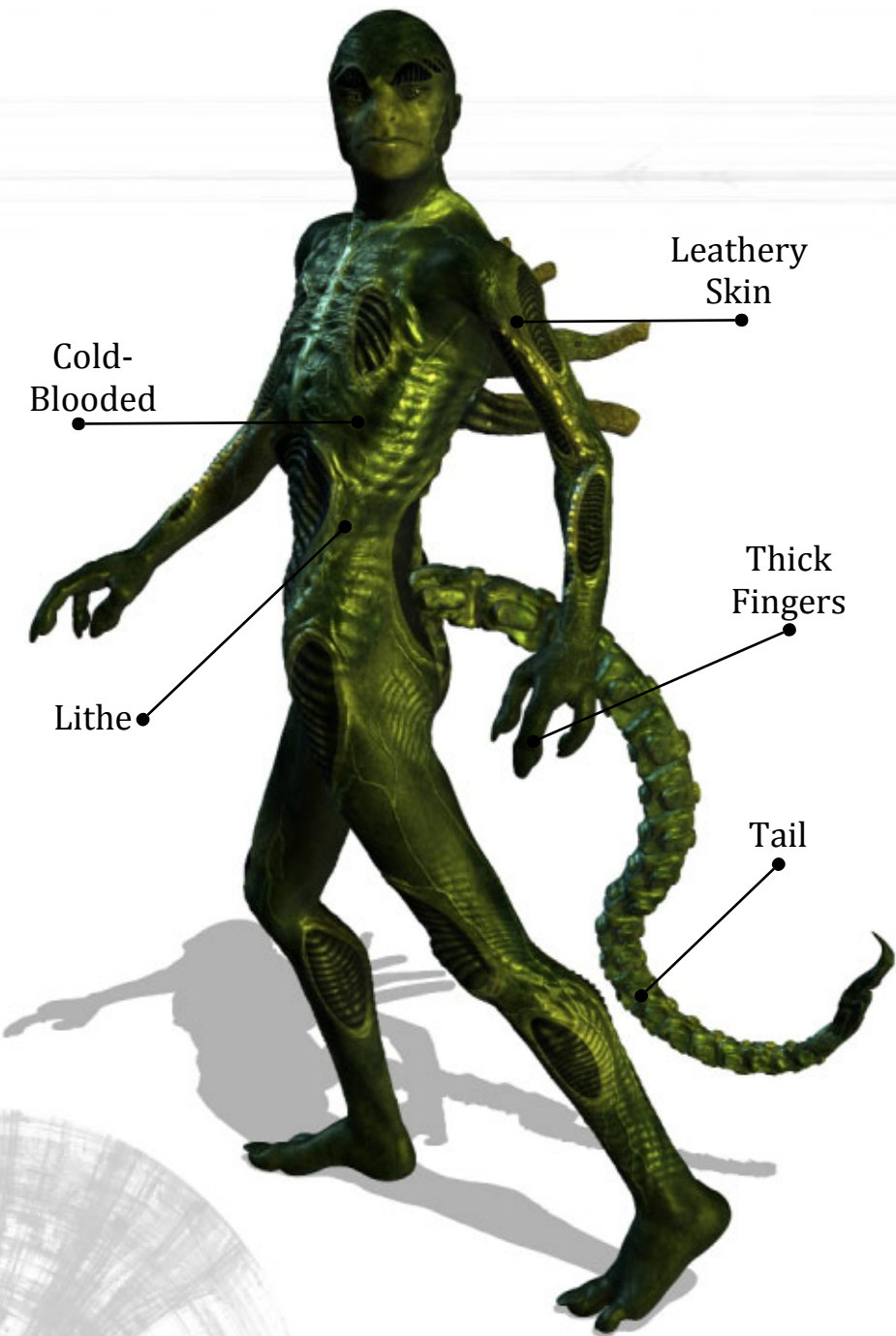
+2 Abilities: Natural Armor (All 2)

+1 Abilities: +2 Vigor (all environments)

-1 Abilities: -4 Vigor (disease), -2 Healing

-2 Abilities: -2 Vigor (natural healing)

Jungle Homeland



Lithe

Creatures defined as lithe are flexible, seemingly able to bend portions of their body that may seem unnatural to others. The reason behind this flexibility can range widely, but the result can be very visible. These creatures have an uncanny ability to dodge, and move unlike everyone else.

- +3 Abilities:** Dodge
- +2 Abilities:** +1 Parry
- +1 Abilities:** Acrobatic (+1 Agility when performing acrobatic move)
- 1 Abilities:** Anemic (Minor)
- 2 Abilities:** -1 Toughness

Long Arms

Long arms are often used for more than just improving one's reach. Many creatures with long arms actually walk on their front knuckles along with their back feet. This does not mean they cannot walk upright, it simply means they do better walking (and running) when using their arms in front too.

- +2 Abilities:** Brawler
- +1 Abilities:** +1 Reach, +2 Climbing
- 1 Abilities:** Outsider (Minor)(non-native lands)
- 2 Abilities:** Cannot attack if running

Long Legs

Unlike long arms, long legs do not improve one's horizontal reach. Instead, they increase one's stride and vertical reach (although vertical reach is not necessarily any more than with long arms). Creatures with long legs cover distances in shorter times than those without.

- +2 Abilities:** Fleet-Footed
- +1 Abilities:** Pace 8
- 1 Abilities:** Outsider (Minor)(non-native lands)
- 2 Abilities:** Weakness (legs)(attacks to legs receive +2 damage)

Some traits, such as Lycanthropic, Synthetic, Undead, and Vampiric, are not appropriate for most settings. These are presented for settings where those character types are common. This could include gothic horror settings where characters are the supernatural creatures or high-technology settings where not everyone is 'born' into the world.

Lycanthropic

Lycanthropic creatures possess the ability to transform into an animalistic version of their form or sometimes a larger-sized version of the animal whose characteristics they possess. Typically referred to as were-animals, the resulting transformation creates a humanoid animal or an animal that is significantly larger than it should be, and possesses some type of greater intelligence, and spirit. This can be acquired through a hereditary condition, being converted by another were-animal or a supernatural power. This ability is similar to animals that shapeshift, except that their natural form is the humanoid one.

- +3 Abilities:** Shapeshift into were-animal (Fleet-Footed and Natural Weapons Str+d6 or Natural Armor (All 1))
- +2 Abilities:** +10 Power Points (shapeshifting, and creature interaction powers)
- +1 Abilities:** Low Light Vision
- 1 Abilities:** Mean (Minor)
- 2 Abilities:** -4 Charisma (those who know your affliction), Wanted (Major)

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Piscivore

Piscivores are creatures that sustain their lives by eating primarily fish. Many of these creatures are completely piscivores while others are only partially piscivores (those who can live off other foods but is not their primary source of food). These creatures are typically found living in or at least very near water, and struggle to sustain life away from that type of habitat.

+2 Abilities: Agility +1 die type

+1 Abilities: Swimming d6

-1 Abilities: Racial Enemy (aquatic creatures)

-2 Abilities: -4 Survival (no water readily available)

Scales

Scales are small, rigid plates that grow out of an animal's skin to provide protection and sometimes camouflage. Some scales are large enough to be visibly seen while others are small, powder-like scales that are pigmented.

+2 Abilities: Natural Armor (All 2)

+1 Abilities: +4 Stealth (visual, environments that match the scale's color)

-1 Abilities: -4 Vigor (cold)

-2 Abilities: -4 Stealth (visual, environments that do not match the scale's color)

Short

Short is not in reference to a character that is short for her race. Short is in reference to a race that is much shorter (and possibly smaller) than the average human.

+2 Abilities: +1 Parry

+1 Abilities: +2 Stealth (visual)

-1 Abilities: Pace 5

-2 Abilities: -1 Toughness

Short Fingers

Regardless of a creature's size, they may have short, stubby fingers that inhibit manual dexterity, and make general use of the hands that much more difficult. These creatures may be able to hold a weapon and ride a horse, but use of tools or other delicate items is complicated.

-1 Abilities: All Thumbs (Minor)

-2 Abilities: Cannot use weapons that require Strength d8 or higher

Short Legs

Like short fingers, short legs can be a real detriment to a creature. Their stride is smaller than the average human, and activities that require use of the legs becomes more complicated (such as driving a car). These creatures are typically not very quick on their feet either.

-1 Abilities: -4 Driving (automobile, motorcycle)

-2 Abilities: -1 Parry, Pace 3 (d4 running die)

Stocky

Stocky is a general physical quality of a creature meaning they are bulky, sturdy, squat or possibly just overweight. Stocky creatures have a natural toughness due to their bulk but tend to be slower than others.

+2 Abilities: +1 Toughness

+1 Abilities: +2 Vigor (all environments)

-1 Abilities: Pace 5, -2 Swimming, -2 Stealth (visual)

-2 Abilities: -1 Parry

Synthetic

Not all creatures are born and raised. Some are designed and built by combining a number of different processes and materials. These creatures have distinct characteristics that mimic a certain other creature, or

human, but lack every other quality. They are typically powered by technology but do not look like robots or constructs.

+2 Abilities: +1 Toughness, +4 Vigor
(all environments except water)

+1 Abilities: +1 Common Knowledge

-1 Abilities: -2 Charisma

-2 Abilities: Weakness
(water)(attackers +2 damage)

-3 Abilities: Spirit cannot advance past d6

Tail

Tails, such as those found on lizards, can serve a variety of purposes. Amphibious creatures use their tails to swim faster. Land creature use their tails to make sharp turns while running. Mounted creatures can use their tails to provide balance while riding. One of the most common uses for tails (dismounted) is for balance.

+2 Abilities: +4 Swimming, Steady Hands, Agility +1 die type

+1 Abilities: d8 running die, +2 Riding

-1 Abilities: Outsider (Minor)(non-native lands), -2 Stealth (visual)

-2 Abilities: Opponent receives +4 Tracking

Tail (Prehensile)

Some tails are prehensile which allows them to be used for grabbing or holding onto objects. Fully prehensile tails can even be used to manipulate objects, acting as an additional hand. One of the most common uses is to aid in climbing trees, especially by those who live in jungles.

+2 Abilities: +4 Climbing

+1 Abilities: +2 Repair, Natural Weapon (Str+d6)(tail)

-1 Abilities: Outsider (Minor)(non-native lands)

-2 Abilities: Weakness (tail)(attacks to tail receive +2 damage)

Tall

Tall is not in reference to a character that is tall for her race. Tall is in reference to a race that is much taller (and possibly bigger) than the average human.

+2 Abilities: +1 Toughness, Two-handed weapons can be used one-handed

+1 Abilities: Pace 8

-1 Abilities: Armor Cost +50%

-2 Abilities: -1 Parry

Tetrapod

Tetrapods are four-limbed creatures, in reference to their legs. Unlike the standard quadruped (also four-limbed), this trait represents creatures that have four limbs who normally walk and run on all fours but are able to stand on their rear limbs during combat or use their front limbs for manipulation purposes (such as while sitting). They may be able to function while standing on their rear limbs, but only briefly.

+2 Abilities: Fleet-footed

+1 Abilities: Pace 8

-1 Abilities: All Thumbs (Minor)

-2 Abilities: Cannot attack if running

Thick Fingers

While thick fingers might make great weapons when balled into a fist, they definitely hamper one's ability for finer manual dexterity use. Thick fingers could even get in the way when pulling the trigger of a gun.

+1 Abilities: Natural Weapon (Str+d6)(fist)

-1 Abilities: -2 Repair

-2 Abilities: -4 Shooting (guns)

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Undead

Undead characters are those who have either died, and been raised into undeath or is a character who's spirit has been ripped away, leaving them an undead empty shell. This character trait is not a reference to the bestiary trait but rather a quality for creating unique characters.

+2 Abilities: +1 Toughness, Strength +1 die type

+1 Abilities: +2 Vigor (all environments), Immune (disease)

-1 Abilities: Enemy (Minor)(undead hunter), Wanted (Minor)

-2 Abilities: Weakness (divine)(attackers +2 damage), healing and greater healing cause Fatigue instead of healing wounds

-3 Abilities: Spirit requires two points per step to raise during character creation and two advances must be dedicated for raising it during game-play.

Ungulate

Ungulate refers to creatures with hoofed feet. The evolution of ungulate creatures has developed strong legs and a lack of canine teeth in addition to the hoofed feet. These hooves are commonly found in creatures that sleep standing up.

+2 Abilities: Encumbrance equals ten times Strength die before incurring any penalties

+1 Abilities: d8 running die

-1 Abilities: Outsider (Minor)(non-native lands)

-2 Abilities: Weakness (legs)(attacks to legs receive +2 damage)

Vampiric

Vampiric creatures are those who sustain their life by drinking the blood of others. They have long, sharp canine teeth to bite through the skin of their victim to drink their blood. Vampiric does not have to mean Vampire in which

the victim of the bit turns into another Vampire. This trait could pertain to creatures, such as bats, which are vampiric in nature.

+3 Abilities: Frenzy

+2 Abilities: Nerves of Steel, Vigor +1 die type

+1 Abilities: Natural Weapon (Str+d6)(teeth), Immune (poison)

-1 Abilities: Enemy (Minor)(vampire hunter), Wanted (Minor)

-2 Abilities: Bloodthirsty (Major), Bloodlife (gain a level of Fatigue every day that blood is not drank until incapacitated; the following day they die)

Webbed Hands

Webbed hands consist of webbing that grows naturally between a creature's fingers. These are most common with amphibious creatures and reptiles that spend much of their time in the water. Their primary use is to aid in swimming.

+2 Abilities: +4 Swimming

+1 Abilities: +2 Climbing, Wall Walker

-1 Abilities: All Thumbs (Minor)

-2 Abilities: -4 Shooting

Wings

Wings come in all shapes, and sizes, and can be covered in anything from leathery skin to feathers, but they generally have the same purpose. Flight is the most common attribute associated with wings, but not all creatures with wings fly. Additionally, depending upon the thickness of the wings, they can be used for more than just flight.

+2 Abilities: Flight, +2 Armor (wings wrapped around body)

+1 Abilities: Intimidation d6

-1 Abilities: Pace 5, Outsider (Minor)(non-native lands)

-2 Abilities: -4 Swimming (under the water)

Mental

Mental traits are those that involve one's beliefs, attitude, and general demeanor. They cannot be physically seen, but are often understood while interacting with that individual. Mental traits can also encompass religious in addition to moral beliefs.

Agnostic

Agnosticism is the skeptical belief in religious deities. They do not fully disbelieve these deities exist but they do question that existence. Agnostics take a very neutral stance when it comes to religious beliefs.

- 1 Abilities:** -2 Intimidation, May never take the Arcane Background (Miracles) Edge
- 2 Abilities:** -4 Persuasion (religious)
- 3 Abilities:** Spirit cannot be raised above d6

Aloof

Aloof is being emotionally, mentally, or socially distant from others; often with friends, family, or social groups. Those who are aloof tend to withdraw from group interaction. This behavior can range from a general shyness to being too arrogant to interact with certain other people.

- +1 Abilities:** +2 Taunt
- 1 Abilities:** Outsider (Minor), Cautious (Minor), -2 Notice
- 2 Abilities:** Overconfident (Major)
- 3 Abilities:** Charisma cannot be raised above 0

There are few bonuses associated with these mental traits. This is intentional as most of them are to the detriment of the character, and meant to be used for role-playing opportunities.

Atheist

Atheism is the complete denial that religious deities or supreme beings exist. They do not simply question that existence; they fully disbelieve in that existence and are often unafraid to share their opinion. Atheists are essentially anti-religious. Sometimes the disbelief of religion can clear one's mind for more scientific purposes.

- +2 Abilities:** Smarts +1 die type
- +1 Abilities:** +2 Smarts (Common Knowledge)
- 1 Abilities:** May never take the Arcane Background (Miracles) Edge, Enemy (Minor)(religious zealot)
- 2 Abilities:** -4 Charisma, Delusional (Major)
- 3 Abilities:** Spirit cannot be raised above d6

Corrupt

This corrupt trait refers to those who are dishonest, lack morals, or are generally wicked. Corruption can take many forms from a public official who is simply dishonest to those who succumb to dark temptations such as bribery or perversion.

- +1 Abilities:** +2 Intimidation
- 1 Abilities:** Corrupted (Minor)
- 2 Abilities:** Greedy (Major), Arrogant (Major)

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Devout

Devout characters are those who are fully devoted to religious worship and services. They rarely miss their designated Church or temple time with those rare cases being augmented by private worship. The devout have a stronger bond with their deity and are able to easily channel their deity's power.

+2 Abilities: Spirit +1 die type

+1 Abilities: +5 Power Points (Arcane Background (Miracles))

-1 Abilities: Doubting Thomas (Minor)

-2 Abilities: Pacifist (Major)

Dishonest

Those who are dishonest do not simply bend the truth. Much of what they say is filled with lies, and often times it becomes difficult to find the truth. The world around them lacks any semblance of right or wrong as everything they speak of is filled with fabricated stories that may or may not be real.

+1 Abilities: +2 Taunt

-1 Abilities: -2 Charisma, Big Mouth (Minor)

-2 Abilities: Liar (-4 to all rolls for convincing others)

Empathetic

Empathic characters are those who understand or are at least aware of the feelings, and thoughts of those around them. They find ways to ease the mind of those in despair and often attempt to heal the mentally or emotionally scarred.

+2 Abilities: +2 Charisma

+1 Abilities: Knowledge (psychology) d6, Knowledge (psychiatry) d6

-1 Abilities: -2 Taunt

-2 Abilities: -2 Tests of Will

Foolish

Foolishness is characterized by a lack of common sense resulting in performing unwise actions. Foolish characters do not have a death wish, but they do make decisions that place their life at risk. These decisions are typically made without considering for those around them.

-1 Abilities: Gullible (Minor)

-2 Abilities: Heroic (Major), Curious (Major)

Honest

Honest characters cannot tell a lie, or at least struggle to fabricate untruths. For those documenting the details of an event, this honesty is relied upon to understand the full truths of that event. However, honesty can also have its drawbacks to those who wish to remain anonymous regarding the documented event.

+2 Abilities: +2 Charisma

+1 Abilities: Astute (Opponent receives -2 Persuasion)

-1 Abilities: Enemy (Minor)(one person who desired anonymity), -2 Streetwise

-2 Abilities: -4 Taunt

Immoral

Immoral individuals do not adhere to the social ethics established by the society they live in. These immoral views are only considered as such because of the moral standards set by that society. Should one decide to move, their views may no longer be viewed as immoral.

+1 Abilities: +2 Intimidation

-1 Abilities: -2 Streetwise, Delusional (Minor)

-2 Abilities: -4 Charisma, Enemy (Major)

Intelligent

Intelligent characters are smart and adept at retaining knowledge. They may prefer research and development over combat. Other characters may be very intelligent with battle tactics and despise books. This intelligence enhances one aspect often at the detriment of another.

+2 Abilities: Smarts +1 die type

+1 Abilities: Knowledge (battle tactics) d6, +2 Investigation

-1 Abilities: Cautious (Minor)

-2 Abilities: Overconfident (Major)

Naïve

Naïve characters are simple and often lack formal training in one or more areas where they are expected to understand. These characters are not dumb; they simply lack the sophistication those around them expect from any individual who is dealing with that area of expertise.

-1 Abilities: -1 Common Knowledge, -2 Investigation

-2 Abilities: Smarts requires two points per step to raise during character creation, -2 Knowledge (All)

Narcissistic

Narcissists are overly self-involved and selfish. They derive gratification from admiration of their own attributes, feeling invulnerable to the world around them. Narcissists often suffer from the sexual desire of their own body in addition to their selfish behavior.

-1 Abilities: -2 Charisma, -2 Notice, Stubborn (Minor)

-2 Abilities: Arrogant (Major), Clueless (Major), Overconfident (Major)

Schizophrenic

Schizophrenia is a breaking down of the mind, accompanied by a loss of emotional responses. Schizophrenics experience many side effects due to their disorder including hallucinations, delusions, and disorganized speech and thought. Schizophrenic symptoms are often regarded as manifestations of psychosis.

+1 Abilities: -2 Fright Table (due to lack of emotional responses)

-1 Abilities: -2 Charisma, Delusional (Minor)

-2 Abilities: -2 Tests of Will, Delusional (Major)

-3 Abilities: Smarts can never advance beyond d6

Sympathetic

Sympathy is a general reaction to the distress or needs of another person. While empathy is a more specific understanding of the person's emotional state, sympathy is a generalized concern for that person's well-being. Sympathy also includes paying close attention to the specific needs of the person and their situation.

+2 Abilities: +2 Charisma

+1 Abilities: Keen Sense, Knowledge (psychiatry) d6

-1 Abilities: Loyal (Minor), -2 Intimidation

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Virtuous

Being virtuous refers to one who conforms to moral and ethical principles. This includes prescribing to the four cardinal virtues of temperance (restraint), prudence (using reason), courage (confronting fear and pain), and justice (moderating between selfishness and selflessness). In addition to the below, virtuous characters would never take Hindrances that go against their virtues such as: Arrogant (Major), Bloodthirsty (Major), Death Wish (Minor), Greedy (Minor, and Major), Mean (Minor), and Vengeful (Minor and Major).

+2 Abilities: +2 Charisma

-1 Abilities: Loyal (Minor), Cautious (Minor), Poverty (Minor)

-2 Abilities: -4 Tests of Will

Environmental

Environmental traits pertain to the region or community in which the character or her race is native to, was

raised in, or is accustomed to. These traits represent the natural things the character learned during their youth, the basic survival tactics they were taught, or the general lessons they were taught by their elders.

Alpine

Alpine environments refer to the climate, and communities that live above the tree line at high altitudes. These areas are cold, the air is thinner, and snow is a common occurrence. Those who grow up in these environments tend toward being hardy, but may find themselves extremely uncomfortable at warmer temperatures.

+1 Abilities: +4 Vigor (cold), Climbing d6, Ignore climbing penalties for scarce or thin handholds, +2 Tracking (snow), Keen Sense (mountainous regions), +2 Survival (mountains)



BUILDING A TEMPLATE

Coastal

Coastal environments refer to communities near major bodies of water, such as a sea or ocean. These areas typically have smaller ranges of temperature variance throughout the year, and when peaks occur, they tend to be short. For example, a community in a colder climate zone would not get as cold in the winter due to the winds coming off the ocean versus a community in the hinterlands.

+1 Abilities: Swimming d6, +2 Survival (coast, lakes), Boating d6

Democracy

Democratic communities, states, and countries are those where the people have a say in what the government does, and which officials get elected. Their basis is an equal right for everyone. Although they may view certain people as being more elite than others, no one is treated as an aristocrat.

Hindrances associated with those growing up in a democratic society should be linked to their involvement in that society. For example, those who have Pacifist (Minor) may be involved in charity organizations. Those with Pacifist (Major) may be members of a peace-keeping organization that detests violence. Being a democratic society, the people have a right to express their views as they please and involve themselves in the community however they deem appropriate.

+1 Abilities: Knowledge (politics) d6, Streetwise d6

-1 Abilities: Pacifist (Minor), Vow (Minor)(laws of their homeland)

-2 Abilities: Pacifist (Major)

Desert

Desert environments are harsh, barren lands where very little survives. Desert communities may be nomadic (moving depending on the season), only living in

the desert for short periods of time in temporary shelters. If they're lucky, they may have a community built at an oasis large enough to support life.

+2 Abilities: +4 Vigor (all environmental effects)

+1 Abilities: +2 Tracking (sand), +2 Survival (desert, barren lands)

Feudal

Feudal communities are those that follow legal and military customs defined by their lord or equivalent. Their land was given to them in exchange for service to that lord during times of need (such as war). Characters from these communities should have some obligation to their lords, forcing them to possibly be called away at a moment's notice. If they have fled their feudal lord, they would instead have the Enemy (Major) Hindrance. However, if they are a fierce warrior dedicated to their feudal lord, they may be paid extremely well.

+2 Abilities: Rich

+1 Abilities: Knowledge (farming) d6

-1 Abilities: Poverty (Minor)

-2 Abilities: Vow (Major)(feudal lord), Enemy (Major)(feudal lord)

High Gravity

High gravity is a sci-fi environmental concept whereas the amount of gravity alters the development of subsequent generations, making them short and stout. Although this is theoretical, it can be easily embellished.

+2 Abilities: Brawny, Strength d6, Vigor d6

-1 Abilities: Pace 5

-2 Abilities: Pace 3 & d4 running die

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Jungle

Jungle environments refer to communities built within dense jungles, and rain forests. These are not simple wooded areas, but rather places where bugs carry numerous deadly diseases and the threat of the surrounding wildlife is constant.

+2 Abilities: +2 Survival

+1 Abilities: Climbing d6, Keen Sense, Immune to disease, Stealth d6, Tracking d6

-2 Abilities: Curious (Major)

Monarchy

Monarchy communities are those ruled by a single individual, the monarch. When ruled by a King or Queen, the community is considered to be a kingdom. These types of communities have some type of legal restraint on the individual ruler; otherwise it would be called an autocracy. The ruler may have advisors or a separate governing body which they oversee. The ruler may come into their position through election, heredity, or by overthrowing the previous ruler.

+1 Abilities: Knowledge (heraldry) d6

-1 Abilities: Loyal (Minor), Vow (Minor)(monarch)

Monastic

Monastic communities are those built around a religious way of life. This doesn't mean everyone goes to church, but rather the Church is essentially the main governing body within the community. Although there is a separate city or state government, everyone in this particular community takes direction from the Church.

Besides the abilities listed below, a character from a monastic community would have other drawbacks such as being unable to take many Hindrances associated with violence including: Bloodthirsty (Major), Death Wish (Minor), and Vengeful (Major).

+3 Abilities: Spirit d8

+2 Abilities: Spirit d6

-1 Abilities: Poverty (Minor)

-2 Abilities: Pacifist (Major), Vow (Major)(law of the Church), Code of Honor (Major)

Mountainous

Mountainous environment communities are built somewhere in the mountains, whether they be high and rocky or low and rolling. Although alpine environment communities are built in the mountains, this refers to those living below the tree line, possibly even away from the snow. These environments are also often covered in trees and maybe the occasional mountain lake. Please note: this includes foothills.

+2 Abilities: Trademark Weapon (choose one axe)

+1 Abilities: Climbing d6, Ignore climbing penalties for scarce or thin handholds, +2 Tracking (rocks, mountains, woods), +2 Survival (mountains), Keen Sense

Polar

Polar environments are harsh, frozen, barren lands where very little survives. They are dominated by ice caps and may even be comprised of only glaciers with no earth attached to them. Those who live here often do so out of necessity.

+2 Abilities: Hard to Kill, +2 Survival

+1 Abilities: +4 Vigor (cold)

Primitive

Primitive communities are those that eschew technology and live a fairly simple life. They don't have to be prehistoric, but there are no signs of economic development within their community.

+2 Abilities: +2 Survival, +2 Tracking

+1 Abilities: Keen Sense

-1 Abilities: All Thumbs (Minor), Poverty (Minor)

-2 Abilities: Clueless (Major)

Rural

Rural communities are those outside of city limits. They have a low population density, form small settlements, and often receive most of their daily sustenance by using their surrounding natural environment, such as farming.

+1 Abilities: Shooting d6, Tracking d6, Immune (poison)

-1 Abilities: Cautious (Minor), Vow (Minor)(family), -2 Vigor (disease)

Spacecraft

Not everyone is born planet-side. For those settings placed amongst the stars, it's common for many individuals to know no other life outside of that on a spacecraft.

+1 Abilities: Knowledge (computers) d6, Piloting d6, Repair d6

-1 Abilities: Anemic (Minor), Doubting Thomas (Minor)

Tribal

Tribal communities are small, close-knit societies. They are tightly organized, often on a social or familial basis. They are self-governed and when the tribe makes a decision, everyone within that tribe conforms to the decision. Often times, members of the tribe have very specific roles to fulfill to support the overall survival of the tribe.

+1 Abilities: Fighting d6, Shooting d6, Tracking d6, Keen Sense (sight or hearing)

-1 Abilities: Loyal (Minor)

-2 Abilities: Vow (Major)(tribe)

Tropical

Tropical environments are hot and humid, surrounding the Equator of a planet. They are moist year-round, although they typically have a wet and dry season. Many of them include rain forests and harbor many disease-bearing insects.

+2 Abilities: Immune (poison, disease), +2 Tracking

+1 Abilities: Boating d6, Tracking d6

-1 Abilities: Cautious (Minor)

Underground

Underground communities can include simple habitats or sprawling cities. They are always contained beneath the surface of the earth, whether that be carved into a mountain or plummeting miles below through a series of caves and caverns. They are dark and damp and survival can be quite difficult.

+1 Abilities: Low Light Vision, Infravision, Wall Walker, Keen Sense (hearing)

-1 Abilities: Light Sensitive (-2 penalty in extreme light)

Urban

Urban communities are the hustle and bustle of the big city. They are crowded and space is often at a premium. More often than not, buildings are tall to compensate for lack of space. Crime may be out of control and many learn to survive a life on the streets the hard way.

+2 Abilities: Rich, Connections

+1 Abilities: Fighting d6, Gambling d6, Investigation d6, Knowledge (choose one) d6, Lockpicking d6

-1 Abilities: Delusional (Minor), Enemy (Minor)

Example

David has a character in mind for a sci-fi adventure, but it doesn't match any that are already part of the setting. He works with his GM to construct a template to represent that character's species and provide it with a net +2 bonus, the equivalent of a free Edge. The traits are as follows:

1. Chromatophores
2. Diapsid
3. Lithe
4. Tail

David works with this GM to put together a template using those traits with the following result:

1. +4 Stealth (+2); +2 Intimidation (+1)
2. -2 Charisma (-1)
3. Anemic (Minor) (-1)
4. d8 running die (+1)

His resulting template nets +2 and his reptilian character has a uniqueness about him that sets him, and his species, apart from the other characters.

Hindrances and Edges

Hindrances and Edges are a great way of refining your character. They can add personality, purpose, quirks, or provide that much-needed boost to survive in the chosen setting. When creating the background for a character, it's imperative to let the imagination flow without getting bogged down in the available mechanical options. However, once that background is defined, converting that into in-game mechanics may prove difficult if the desired Hindrances and Edges are not available. Many published and unpublished settings resolve this by presenting setting-specific options, but here is a collection of universal Hindrances and Edges that can be applied across most, if not all, settings.

HINDRANCES

The following Hindrances are designed to augment those available in the *Savage Worlds* core rulebook and *Companion* books. They are not meant to replace those within a published setting and are instead presented in a setting and genre neutral format.

Aggressive (Minor)

The character is easily goaded into action by the enemy, leaping forth without properly forming tactics about what he should do next. He incurs a (-2) penalty to Tests of Will (Smarts) to oppose Taunt.

Always Late (Minor)

Even when wearing a watch or carrying a timepiece, the character is always late to every get-together. It's not that she wishes to keep everyone waiting; she's just a bad judge of how long it takes to get from one place to another. If arriving late to an important occasion, she may also irritate those she's meeting, causing her to suffer a (-1) penalty to Charisma during that occasion.

Clumsy (Minor)

The character is far from a ballerina and often finds herself stumbling over the smallest abnormalities in terrain.

Although walking is not a problem, she suffers a (-1) penalty to her running die rolls and Agility rolls (e.g. evading, athletic maneuvers, acrobatics).

Conflicted (Minor)

The character is mentally conflicted, causing undue stress in his thoughts. His lifelong decisions are caught between his desires and the desires of someone he aims to please. Whenever making an important decision, he always considers that other person first before considering his own destiny. If the decision is important enough, this may force him to make a Spirit roll to overcome his conflicting thoughts.

Corrupted (Minor or Major)

The character has strange desires that could get him into trouble. He is easily swayed by individuals playing on these desires, clouding his mind, all-but forcing him to make decisions without considering their consequences. His opponent gains a +2 bonus to Persuasion when playing on those immoral desires, feeding the character what he wants or what he wants to hear.

If the desire is weird, but not dangerous, this is a Minor Hindrance. If the desire is dangerous, immoral, or angers those around him, the character also incurs a (-2) penalty to Charisma for his corruption.

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Diseased (Minor or Major)

Not everyone is blessed with a good immune system or disease free genes. Whether hereditary or contracted, the character has some type of disease that plagues them for life.

A Minor Disease is annoying and may flare up from time to time, causing discomfort. Every week, roll a d6. On a 1, the character suffers from a flare-up and gains one level of Fatigue that lasts for 12 hours. A Minor Disease can be bought off, depicting the character going through intense treatment or finally recovering after regular treatment, for the cost of one Advance.

A Major Disease is chronic and flares up often, causing more than discomfort. Every week, roll a d6. On a 1 or 2, the character suffers from a flare-up and gains one level of Fatigue that lasts for 24 hours. A Major Disease cannot be bought off.

Dizziness (Major)

The character succumbs to periodic spells of dizziness that cloud his mind and sometimes affect his vision. This could be caused by a disease, injury, congenital condition, or implant. These spells are typically brought on by physical or mental trauma, causing the dizziness to return.

When the character takes a Wound, including from being Shaken twice, he must make a Vigor roll (ignoring Wound penalties). On a success, nothing happens. On a failure, he succumbs to the dizziness and gains one level of Fatigue for the next hour.

Ex-convict (Minor)

Sometimes heroes follow the wrong path early in life before turning a new leaf. The character was sentenced to prison time earlier in his life, but has

since changed his ways and walks the path of good. However, those who know of his previous conviction view him with scorn, and he incurs a (-2) penalty to Charisma. Additionally, they may treat him differently, even going so far as ignoring his requests as they find his previous actions to be reprehensible.

Forgetful (Minor)

The character is constantly forgetting things: where she put her keys, when's her friend's birthday, how you kill vampires, etc. When attempting to recall facts, Knowledge or Common Knowledge, she incurs a (-2) penalty unless explicitly writing down the facts and keeping them nearby. If time is of the essence, she may not be able to retrieve those written facts and simply suffers the (-2) penalty.

Gullible (Minor)

The character is easily persuaded by the words of others. She listens intently, hanging on every word, regardless if they are truth or fiction. Her opponent gains a +2 bonus to Persuasion to convince her of those truths or lies. However, she won't go as far as caving on issues she finds reprehensible or immoral.

Hallucinations (Minor)

The character suffers from hallucinations caused by a mental deficiency or a previous traumatic event. Often times, she has to sort through her mind to determine what's real and what's not. When making a Notice roll, she must first succeed on a Smarts roll to avoid suffering a (-2) penalty to Notice due to her hallucinations.

Introvert (Major)

The character is uncomfortable in social situations. He prefers the company of his friends and family, but only in small groups. His ultimate preference is to spend time alone. He is predominantly concerned with his own interests including his mental and physical life. He incurs a (-2) penalty to Persuasion and Streetwise in public environments or when with a large group of people.

Kleptomaniac (Minor or Major)

Some people have sticky fingers, and the character shows no desire to rid himself of this habit. When opportunity arises, he calmly palms the shiny object and hopes that no one is looking.

A Minor Kleptomaniac steals items of non-value, finding them to be somehow sentimental. The items can either be easily replaced or they're undesired in the first place. Anyone seeing him happen may question the character, resulting in an uncomfortable confrontation.

A Major Kleptomaniac steals items of value, either wishing to keep or sell them. Theft of these items would most likely result in jail time or a stiff fine should the character be caught.

If the GM defines an item the Kleptomaniac would desire, he can make a Spirit roll to prevent himself from stealing it. If he wishes to steal it without anyone seeing, he can make a Stealth roll, often opposed by a Notice roll, to hide his devilish deed.

Megalomaniac (Major)

The character is power hungry and wishes for everyone to be under his command. If that were to happen, he would act like a dictator and most likely take as many freedoms away as possible. He has an extremely inflated self-esteem and is probably narcissistic too.

The character goes above and beyond being arrogant and greedy and wants to

'rule the world.' He continually barks out orders that few listen to and when looking in the mirror, he sees a godlike being that needs to be in command. He strives to do whatever he can to place himself in positions of command, regardless of the toes he needs to step on to do it.

Megalomaniac characters forcibly strive to be in command and get angry when others don't do what they're being ordered to do. If not in a position of command, they will do everything they can to ensure the commander's orders are followed perfectly.

Overzealous (Minor)

The character is excessively devoted or passionate about a certain group, society, or subject matter. If a discussion ever occurs regarding what she's passionate about, she'll go to great lengths to discuss her views or attempt to make others understand them. Some may find this behavior annoying while others find it a great way to socialize. Either way, the character is extremely enthusiastic when discussing what they know or believe.

Passive (Minor)

Not everyone can overcome their willpower when staring down an enemy. The character is passive when it comes to scare tactics, leaving her vulnerable to intimidation. She incurs a (-2) penalty to Tests of Will (Spirit) to oppose Intimidation.

Philanthropist (Minor)

The character is a charitable person who finds it necessary to always give back. Whatever treasure, loot, land, or goods she receives from her adventuring work is partially donated. The character always gives 25% of what she collects to charity causes or anyone in need.

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Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Minor or Major)

The character was involved in a traumatic event at some point in his past that continues to haunt him today. These hauntings cause undue mental stress when he's placed within situations similar to the one when the traumatic event occurred.

If the character is ever placed within a situation similar to the traumatic event, they must make a Spirit roll to avoid panicking. On a failure, he can no longer act due to the PTSD, becoming Shaken (this can cause a Wound).

With a Minor PTSD, the traumatic event is uncommon and the character is rarely placed in a similar situation. With a Major PTSD, the traumatic event is more common and the character is often placed in a similar situation.

Sentenced (Minor)

Not everyone chooses their path; some are forced into it. For some reason, the character has been forced into this life of, possibly false, heroism due to a previous deed. His sentence was to serve the public through military or exploration means, or spend the rest of his life, or a large portion of it, in prison. Due to being assigned his position, rather than enter it willingly, the character suffers a (-1) penalty to Charisma.

Sociopath (Major)

The character suffers from sociopathic tendencies, although he wouldn't be labeled as a full psychopath. This comes through as a personality disorder with antisocial behavior, making him suffer from a lack of empathy and sympathy. His disorder may be genetic, environmental, or biochemical. He suffers a (-2) penalty to Charisma, never feels remorse for his actions, and is easily agitated.

EDGES

The following Edges are designed to augment those available in the *Savage Worlds* core rulebook and *Companion* books. They are not meant to replace those within a published setting and are instead presented in a setting and genre neutral format.

Ardent

Type: Background

Requirements: Novice

(Choose an organization, family, or belief.) The character is extremely dedicated to someone or something, making it extremely difficult to change the decisions and ideals they have regarding that dedication. Opponents receive a (-2) penalty to Intimidation, Persuasion, and Taunt when attempting to force the character to think otherwise regarding the chosen organization, family, or belief.

Card Shark

Type: Background

Requirements: Novice, Gambling d8+

The character has a natural affinity toward games. He's probably a frequent guest at numerous casinos and is often treated like a high-roller. He gains a +2 bonus to all Gambling rolls.

Crack Shot

Type: Combat

Requirements: Wild Card, Veteran, Agility d8+, Strength d8+, Shooting d10+

Target practice isn't just a hobby, it's how the character hones his skills for use in the field. While his aim is seemingly all-but perfect, his ability to compensate for environmental, physical, and mental factors is second-to-none. The range brackets for all his Shooting ranged attacks increases by +3/+6/+12.

Diver

Type: Professional

Requirements: Novice, Strength d6+, Vigor d6+, Notice d8+, Swimming d8+

Divers are adept at maneuvering underwater in all types of gear. Their love for the water knows no bounds and not even the lack of penetrating light bothers them.

Divers gain a +2 bonus to Notice and Swimming while underwater as well as Knowledge and Common Knowledge rolls to identify underwater creatures. Additionally, they halve all combat penalties for fighting underwater and can hold their breath for twice as long as usual.

Empathetic

Type: Background

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d6+, Notice d8+

The character is able to identify with the moods of those around her. This is either due to life experiences or an understanding of psychology. She gains a +4 bonus to Notice to discern and understand the feelings, thoughts, and attitudes of others.

Insightful

Type: Background

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d6+, Notice d8+

Even the best liars are no match for the character. He can see through almost any ruse and is able to get to the real meaning of things. He gains a +4 bonus to Notice to know when someone is lying and discern the true meaning behind their words and actions.

Medic

Type: Professional

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d8+, Healing d8+, Knowledge (Medicine) d8+ or Knowledge (Nursing) d8+

The character is a doctor or nurse and specially trained to treat injuries. She

knows how to remain calm when treating life-threatening injuries and keeps her composure regardless of the surrounding distractions. When making a Healing roll, she ignores all wound level penalties, including her own.

Mountaineer

Type: Professional

Requirements: Novice, Vigor d6+, Climbing d8+, Survival d8+, Tracking d8+

Mountaineers enjoy the thrill of scaling a mountain and spending time amongst the rugged terrain. They are great hunters and can scale cliffs with ease.

Mountaineers gain a +2 bonus to Climbing, Survival, and Tracking as well as Notice rolls that relate to mountain-native animals. Additionally, they ignore movement penalties for rough terrain while moving throughout the mountains.

Officer

Type: Leadership

Requirements: Wild Card, Veteran, Command, Spirit d8+, Charisma 1+

Whether he is a corporate or military officer, the character knows how to demand respect and exudes leadership qualities. Everyone beneath him shows their undivided attention and executes all orders given to him.

While interacting with subordinates, followers, troops, or anyone that reports to the character, he adds his Charisma bonus to any necessary rolls. This includes Knowledge (Battle) during Mass Battles. This bonus stacks with the Charisma bonus already applied to Persuasion or Streetwise rolls, but only when interacting with subordinates.

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Psychotherapist

Type: Professional

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d6+, Spirit d6+, Healing d8+, Knowledge (Psychology) d8+

Psychotherapists are healers of mental trauma. The character is able to use her knowledge of psychology to improve her compatriots' mental health. She may make a Healing roll after the target acquires a Minor or Major Phobia due to rolling on the Fright Table. On success, a single Minor Phobia is removed or a single Major Phobia becomes a Minor Phobia. Additional rolls are not allowed should she fail, successfully turn a Major Phobia into a Minor Phobia, or other Phobias exist.

During combat, the Healing roll incurs a (-2) penalty due to external stimulation. Outside of combat, there is no penalty to Healing.

Additionally, the psychotherapist and up to five companions travelling with her receive a +2 bonus to their Spirit rolls to recover from Shaken results received from rolling on the Fright Table.

Resilient

Type: Background

Requirements: Novice, Vigor d8+

The character was either raised in a harsh environment or has a body acclimated for survival. She gains a +2 bonus to Vigor to resist Fatigue due to the environment.

Sneaky

Type: Combat

Requirements: Novice, Stealth d8+

The character is extremely good at sneaking around without attracting too much attention by blending in with his surroundings. He gains a +2 bonus to Stealth.

Socialite

Type: Background

Requirements: Novice, Charisma 0+, Streetwise d8+

The character is a smooth talker and always holds the interest of those around him during a conversation; his ability to socialize is unmatched by most. He gains a +4 bonus to Streetwise.

Spelunker

Type: Professional

Requirements: Novice, Agility d6+, Climbing d8+, Notice d8+, Tracking d8+

Spelunking, or caving, is the pastime of exploring cave systems and caverns. The character has a special love for this type of environment and can maneuver through a cave with ease.

While traveling through a cave, cavern, mine, pit, or dungeon, spelunkers gain a +2 bonus to Climbing, Notice, and Tracking. Additionally, they ignore movement penalties for rough terrain (but not penalties for running) as they know where to step to traverse the underground with ease.

Technician

Type: Professional

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d8+, Repair d8+, at least one engineering science Knowledge skill at d8+

The character is learned in the ability to troubleshoot and make repairs. He can mentally disassemble a device or system to better understand what's wrong with it. He gains a +2 bonus to Repair and reduces the time for those repairs by 25%.

Wrestler

Type: Combat

Requirements: Novice, Agility d8+ or Strength d8+, Fighting d8+

The character is trained in wrestling and knows how to make moves to properly pin or subdue an opponent. He gains a +2 bonus to Fighting when grappling. Additionally, he gains a +2 bonus to maintain the grapple.

Skill Tests

Savage Worlds keeps things pretty simple when it comes to skills and skill usage. When you dig down into it, there are really only two types of skill rolls: personal and team. Personal skill rolls are those that only involve the character and his capabilities. This could be a single skill roll, opposed roll, social conflict, dramatic task, or even mass battles. Team skill rolls are those that involve a lead character assisted by other characters or a group of characters rolling as one. This could be a cooperative roll, group roll, or multiple rolls (such as a chase scene) where everyone is performing a different function.

However, during character creation and gameplay, players and GMs may have ideas that aren't so simple or they want to use their skills in ways that aren't readily defined. While it may be easy enough for the GM to create house-rules at the table to compensate, keeping it consistent and laying down a foundation of rules to follow may be cumbersome and cause that game session to grind to a halt. The *Ultimate Characters Guide* presents two more functions for skills: supporting and complementary.

Supporting Skills

Supporting skills are those that could feasibly be used within a cooperative roll to benefit the lead character. Although the *Savage Worlds* core rulebook clearly states a character cannot make a cooperative roll without having the same skill as the lead characters, this skill function states otherwise (with an emphasis on feasibility).

During a cooperative roll, a task is chosen that the entire team is a part of or is capable of assisting a single character performing the task. A lead character is chosen to make the skill attempt while his allies make skill attempts that add bonuses to the leader character's roll. They are assisting in that character's efforts, probably because he has the highest die type. However, who's to say skills other than the chosen task skill cannot be used. This is the function of supporting skills.

Supporting skills come into play when the chosen task the lead character is attempting can feasibly be assisted by other skills. This is especially true if the player can provide a reason why that skill can be applied as a supporting skill. While it sounds as though this could break the game's mechanics, a lead character still needs to be chosen and that character must possess the skill required to perform that task. Everyone else is simply providing support through other actions.

Here's an example: Ardricai has been chosen to lead his team through the woods, following the trail of the dastardly Darsal'quin. Within the team, Ardricai has Tracking d8 while only one of his compatriots, Mountain, has Tracking, but at d6. Thus Ardricai is elected to lead the team and the cooperative roll. However, the players have proven to the GM that their characters can support the Tracking roll through other means. Mountain has Notice d8 and is using his skill to look for awkward disturbances through the woods such as drops of blood, spilled water, scratches on trees, or a dropped weapon. Cyril has Climbing d8 and intends to climb the trees to get a better vantage point and let Ardricai know where the optimal paths

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through the woods are. Drenimor has Survival d8 and uses his knowledge about where the best places to find food and water are along with optimal places for shelter are to theorize the best way through the woods.

During the cooperative roll, Ardricai is the lead character and rolls Tracking. Three characters have pointed possible supporting skills and proven to the GM how those skills can be applied to the task. Because they don't have Tracking, they cannot take the lead, but they can help Ardricai while using his Tracking skill. Mountain rolls Notice, Cyril rolls Climbing, and Drenimor rolls Survival. All three get one success and thus add +3 to Ardricai's Tracking roll.

The above is a very basic example, but it demonstrates how it's possible for other skills to apply to cooperative rolls. From here, the GM is free to make a determination as to whether or not a skill does apply, how well it applies, and how many times it can be used.

Here is a listing of every skill and example supporting skills depending on the task being performed. Please note: supporting skills **must** match the task being performed. The lead skill (the skill chosen by the lead character for the cooperative roll) has multiple uses, but supporting skills must feasibly align to the chosen use of that lead skill. (Although this is a comprehensive list, it's not exhaustive and players are encouraged to create their own supporting skill connections.)

Here are some simple rules when using supporting skills for cooperative rolls:

1. The player must prove why or how the skill supports the lead character.
2. No supporting character may choose a skill already chosen by another supporting character at the same time. If the task is broken into rounds, then "at the same time" means each round. If the task is a single task that just takes a long time, then "at the same time" means the entire task.
3. If the supporting skill directly applies as proven by the player, each success and raise adds +1 to the lead character's roll.

If there is some debate on whether or not the supporting skill truly applies or only indirectly applies, halve the bonuses applied, rounded down.

Boating

Boating covers a wide array of boating activities including handling the boat, activities on the boat, and traversing the water. While driving (or sailing) a boat or performing functions typically only found on a boat, the Boating skill is usually the only thing that applies. When traversing the water, other skills can support the task at hand.

Notice: Navigating near a coastline can be dangerous work. Finding someone to serve as a lookout can aid the helmsman steer clear of any obstacles or watch the nearby land to estimate how deep the water may be.

Repair: If the boat is in need of repair or is fleeing after being attacked, a character could run down below to make repairs, allowing the boat to continue moving at full speed. Alternatively, he could be jerry-rigging something to help the boat move faster.

Shooting: For small boats, it may be imperative for someone to distract a pursuer by firing off their weapon, albeit with the standard penalty for unstable platform. This could help to slow the pursuer down or force the driver of the other boat to become distracted, veering slightly and being forced to recover.

Climbing

When everyone is climbing at the same time, no one's really available to assist their compatriots. But when a single character is climbing to establish the proper footholds and break points the rest of the team will use to ascend or descend a vertical surface, those on the ground, or up above, can offer their assistance.

Notice: If a character on the ground has a good vantage point of what the climbing character is going to encounter, and they can still be heard, the supporting character can alert the climbing character of rock hazards, possible loose ground, or optimal locations to grab onto. Being heard can be a case of within yelling distance or across a radio communication.

Driving

The Driving skill is really only necessary under stressful conditions. During these times, it pays off to have someone monitoring the surrounding so that the lead character can solely concentrate on driving.

Investigation: Investigation is used for gathering information from electronics devices. Nowadays, getting up-to-the-minute reports on traffic, construction, and weather from a handheld device can make a big difference when time is of the essence and the driver can't do it himself.

Notice: Being on the lookout for what's immediately in front of or around the driver can provide better clues for where he needs to go. Things like watching for red lights, deer crossing the road, busy street markets, or even keeping an eye on a pursuers' maneuvers all provide vital information to the driver's decisions.

Streetwise: Calling someone up on the phone can be just as valuable as looking up information on a handheld device. While letting someone else do the monitoring, the character on the phone can relay important messages to the driver for determining an optimal route.

Throwing: If you're being pursued, maybe there are large items in the back of the SUV that can be hurled at the pursuer. A good throw into the street forces the other car to go around the obstacle, causing them to slow down slightly, giving the characters a bit of an edge.

Fighting

When combat begins en masse, Fighting cannot be supported as everyone is doing their part to combat the opposition. But what happens when there's only one big bad villain left and only one character can feasibly Wound him? The GM can opt for a cooperative roll using supporting skills, giving the lead character some type of edge in the combat. (In a gentleman's duel, this would never be acceptable!)

Intimidation: If the supporting character can find a way to make the villain hesitate or flinch, the lead character can find a better chance to make their strike.

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Notice: Maybe the supporting character has been watching the villain's moves and knows that when after he leads with his left foot, he makes his right side vulnerable.

Taunt: If the supporting character can get into the villain's field of vision, he could attempt to distract the villain, pulling his eyes away from the lead character.

Throwing: Without causing damage, the supporting character could throw a small rock at the villain that pulls his attention away just long enough for the lead character to come in with a deadly attack.

Gambling

Gambling is one of those skill tasks that rarely allow for others to assist. However, the assistance could come before the gambling task, giving the lead character better odds for succeeding. This is only applicable when the supporting characters can physically interact with the gambling medium, and not when that medium is completely out of their hands.

Intimidation: If the characters find themselves preparing for a deadly game of poker against a truly professional player, they may choose to send a couple supporting characters to the opponent's room first to intimidate him into losing. What they offer or do to that opponent is up for moral debate, but the fact is the opponent becomes scared and provides the lead character a bit of an edge.

Notice: Maybe the opponents are cheating or maybe the supporting character is watching the body language of the opponents. Either way, they're able to relay a message to the lead character so that he better understands how his opponents are playing.

Healing

Outside of specific Knowledge bases, Healing is a difficult skill to support without having the Healing skill. When time is **not** of the essence or the characters have the right technology, support is possible.

Investigation: In modern or sci-fi settings, it's feasible for a supporting character to assist the healer by looking up scholarly or speculative information available on the internet or in medical books. Not that she could diagnose a problem for the healer, but she could help narrow down the symptoms.

Survival: A lead character attempting to heal may require water or food to bring the injured character's energy level up. A supporting character can use their Survival to find clean water and forage for berries or herbs to bring to the healer as she treats the injuries.

Intimidation

Intimidation use during a Test of Will is a personal affair with already allowed bonuses for actions taken by the aggressor. When used in other situations, such as interrogation, it can be a group function where at least two characters are attempting to frighten the target.

Fighting: When playing a game of 'good cop, bad cop', one character is the interrogator while the other is the bully. The interrogator is using Intimidation while the bully is roughing up the subject a bit using Fighting. If the subject is restrained, the Fighting roll should get a pretty hefty bonus.

Notice: Having another character pay close attention to the subject can be advantageous to the interrogator. She may be sensing body language or visual cues

that provide a sense of how the subject is reacting to the interrogation. She can then relay that information to the character using Intimidation to give him an edge.

Persuasion: Following-up to the 'good cop, bad cop' scenario, maybe the characters are attempting to confuse the subject. One is using Intimidation while the other is using Persuasion. This type of back and forth could become so overwhelming that the subject gives in due to mental strain.

Investigation

Searching through print or electronic media can be quite taxing. Characters with the right abilities can offer their assistance to the investigator to make the task that much easier to complete.

Notice: Notice isn't very helpful when using electronic media. However, when you're in a library or searching through newspaper archives, Notice can help the investigator narrow down the location of the information. Maybe the supporting character is searching for signs or scanning the shelves to better understand where the information is located.

Persuasion: When looking through media in a public location, it's common to ask the right questions and getting someone else to help. Particularly persuasive characters can find a way to get others to aid in the search, making the location of the information that much easier or faster.

Streetwise: When information is hard to find, maybe the lead character struggles to understand where to start. A supporting character can hit the streets and ask around, learning if anyone else has heard of or sought out the same or similar information before and knows where to find it. This can then be relayed to the lead character, providing them with direction.

Knowledge

The list of focuses for Knowledge is quite vast. That is why it has its own chapter. For information on supporting skills for the different knowledge focuses, see the **Knowledge** page 43

Lockpicking

Small locks are rarely a team effort; large ones can be a different story. Large locks may include electronic security systems, bank vaults, or traps. In these events, it's quite possible for the entire team to get involved.

Climbing: When overcoming a trap, it can be advantageous to have a bird's eye view of the situation. By being able to look down at the entire trap, the supporting character can provide more detailed information as to how large or intricate the trap is or how many different objects need to be disabled.

Investigation: If the lock is a large electronic one, it's possible that information regarding the lock can be found through electronic media. This probably isn't legal as information like this would never be public, but don't put it past the supporting character should they have a devious side to them.

Notice: Locks with lots of moving parts probably make some type of noise. While the lead character is concentrating on the lock, a supporting character could concentrate on the noises the mechanisms are making. If something sounds horribly out of place, the supporting character can let the lead character know they're doing something wrong.

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Repair: Mechanical traps that connect to a series of other traps could be disabled in the same way the objects are repaired. While there may only be a single trip point, which the lead character is working on, a supporting character may be able to disable other traps linked to the trip point.

Notice

Notice is a difficult skill to support. As a use of the five senses, there's little outside of other Notice rolls that can be considered supporting. When used as insight or searching, the case can be made that supporting skills could work.

Investigation: When searching a large area, it can be advantageous to have a map of that area or notes from someone who previously searched that area. These notes could be electronic or print and a supporting character can use their time to discern the facts from the map. This way the lead character can concentrate on their search.

Persuasion: Someone who is really good at lying may be really good at understanding when other people are lying. By knowing a lie when it's stated, the supporting character can inform the lead character who then begins to better understand visual cues, such as body language, the subject is giving off.

Persuasion

Persuasion can be thought of as two active parts: preparation and delivery. The delivery is in the hands of the lead character, but the preparation can be done by the supporting characters. Their supporting skills ultimately lead to the improvement of the lead character's delivery.

Investigation: By hitting the books, newspaper, or computer, the supporting character can learn what concerns the audience has. This may include social or political concerns or even the general welfare of their community. By addressing the most important concerns, the audience will be more likely to listen and agree with the speaker.



Notice: Notice can be used during the delivery as a preparation for the speaker's next discussion point. The supporting character monitors the audience's reactions and determines what part of the speech had a positive or negative impact. This can be relayed to the speaker, maybe through a sophisticated sign language, that allows her to adjust her speech to increase the positive response.

Streetwise: Much like Investigation, speaking to the general populace before they become an audience can help discern the issues they are most interested in. Find out which ones are repeated the most often and ensure the speaker touches on those points within her speech.

Piloting

Pilots and co-pilots use Piloting, but what about anyone assisting during a dangerous situation? Much like Driving, the lead character could benefit from supporting characters watching the space around the craft.

Healing: Injuries don't have to be physical, they can be mental too. A good healer may be just as capable as soothing the mind as they are at stopping bleeding. By soothing the lead character's anxiety, he's able to fly smoother and without distraction.

Investigation: Electronic media, flight maps, and topology maps can be very valuable during a dire situation. While the lead character is busy controlling the plane, a support character can decipher the terrain where the craft is flying or if needed to find a safe place to land (or crash).

Notice: A pair of binoculars can make a huge amount of difference when the pilot doesn't have technology to guide them. The supporting character could serve as a look-out for a pursuer or monitor the terrain below to see if an optimal place to land passes by.

Repair: If the craft has been damaged, a technician or engineer may be needed to make repairs for a safe landing. Even if the repair is quick and dirty, it could be enough for the craft to land instead of crash.

Repair

Proper repair requires the right tools, documentation, and know-how. When time is limited, the character making the repairs may be able to delegate some of his functions to supporting characters.

Driving: If the lead character is fixing a car, supporting characters may have incredible knowledge about the workings of their car. They may not be able to troubleshoot like the lead character, but at least they can guide him to where the problem may be.

Investigation: Sometimes a technician needs to find the right information to start a repair job or keep him going. To prevent him from having to constantly check a manual or read through someone's electronic information, a supporting character can read it aloud. The lead character can then look at the object being fixed while the information is being relayed.

Piloting: If the lead character is fixing an aircraft, supporting characters with intimate knowledge of that aircraft can help narrow down which system is malfunctioning. They can also help in testing the various systems to determine which ones are still working properly and which ones are not.

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Riding

It's probably rare that a cooperative roll would be called for using Riding. When each character has a mount, each one is responsible for controlling that mount. When the mounts get much bigger, like a massive war elephant, there may be a team of handlers controlling the mount.

Climbing: If the beast is large enough, there may be multiple characters hanging off ropes to clear the path for the beast or remove anything that tries to interfere. The ability to hang on to and ascend and descend quickly may give the supporting character an edge for keeping the beast safe.

Notice: With a team of handlers, someone should be a look-out. The supporting character can watch for obstacles to avoid or targets to trample.

Tracking: If following a target or being pursued, a supporting character with superior tracking abilities may be able to provide hints on how the handler should maneuver the beast to either keep pace or outrun.

Shooting

Like Fighting, Shooting cooperative rolls are not applicable during combat en masse. Some of the same principles can be applied should the need to distract a villain that only one character can handle arise. Instead of repeating the supporting skills from Fighting, here are other possibilities.

Notice: If one is shooting for sport or as a display of ability, helping to judge distances can be vital. This allows the lead character to ignore various distractions or adjust for variances (like wind).

Stealth: If hunting in a group, a supporting character could attempt to sneak up on a target and scare them out into the open. The direction the target travels is important, forcing the supporting character to approach from just the right angle.

Throwing: A well-placed rock can scare a flock into taking flight. If the lead character is hunting, they'll need a better view of the target, especially if it flies. Someone needs to scare it into action.

Tracking: Hunting often requires someone to find the optimal location where a target could be found. An expert tracker knows what signs to look for to determine if the spot is one the target frequents.

Stealth

Moving silently as a group doesn't use cooperative rolls. When the team is operating as a clandestine task force with each character being assigned a different duty, they can feasibly support a lead character attempting to cross vast distances quietly, possibly even behind enemy lines. Like Persuasion, these support rolls are akin to preparation before the lead character makes his next move.

Investigation: Understanding the layout of the land can make the lead character's infiltration a lot easier. By understanding the natural and unnatural obstacles, the lead character can avoid them and prevent detection.

Notice: While the lead character is covering the vast distance, they may need someone to be on constant watch. The supporting character could use high-powered binoculars to watch the terrain ahead of the lead character, relaying vital information before their next move is made.

Throwing: If the lead character's Stealth moves are being actively opposed, a supporting character can throw rocks in the other direction to distract the guards. They may not run to see what the noise is, but at least their attention will be drawn to it.

Streetwise

Sometimes being charismatic only goes so far when attempting to discern information from people. When the subject is in dire need of something, it may be more advantageous to cater to those needs instead of worrying about how jovial the lead character is.

Gambling: When playing to someone's vices, a supporting character can engage in a friendly game of cards to loosen up the informant. This allows the lead character to break through any social barriers as the informant is enjoying themselves.

Healing: If gathering information from a crowd of injured individuals, someone attempting to heal their wounds could get a much better response than those ignoring the true dangers of the situation.

Investigation: Sometimes knowing the subject better can get the lead character much further in their probes. In modern days, this could be as easy as looking up someone using social networks. This information can be used to better understand the subject and hopefully gather more information.

Survival

Finding food, water, and shelter can definitely be a team effort. The lead character is spearheading the efforts due to his vast knowledge of the terrain or environment, and delegates individual tasks to the others. This way, the whole group benefits from the cohesive team effort.

Climbing: Rugged terrains may require a lot of climbing. Supporting characters particularly skilled in climbing can gather information about the terrain to relay back to the lead character. This may pinpoint a possible source of water, optimal terrain for building a shelter, or even an understanding of where wild game may reside.

Notice: Surveying the land provides a wealth of information to the lead character. The surveyor could provide information about the bushes they found while the lead character is able to discern whether or not the berries on that bush are safe to eat.

Repair: Maybe the lead character already found shelter, but it's in desperate need of repair. With the right tools, the supporting character could help the lead character determine if the shelter is salvageable.

Shooting: While the lead character may know the best places to hunt, someone needs to do the actual hunting. Support characters with excellent aim can quickly fill the need to bring down the located wild game.

Tracking: If the land has been used at least once for outdoor survival, a support character with tracking abilities could follow signs of use that point to areas where food, water, or shelter could be found.

Swimming

How well or fast a character swims is a personal effort; understanding the water they're swimming in can be a team effort. This can come into play when salvaging wrecked ships or gathering lost treasure. The lead character serves as the diver while the others keep an eye on things above water or monitor action below it.

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Boating: Those who spend time on the sea are good at understanding weather patterns and wave movement. Even if they're not good swimmers, they can relay information to the diver to compensate for things like underwater currents, inclement weather, or obstacles.

Investigation: Nowadays, many bodies of water have been surveyed for a better understanding of their underwater topography. The supporting character reads electronic or printed maps to help the diver better understand the lay of the underwater land.

Survival: Experts in survival understand extreme environments. The supporting character may have innate knowledge about the variances of the body of water and its underwater geography.

Taunt

Taunting an individual can be even more effective when the lead character knows what they're talking about or has knowledge about the secrets held by the target of the jeering. This could make provocation from the target that much easier as the lead character is preying on the target's incompetency.

Boating: If the target is a shipmate, the supporting character may recognize the subject's inability to tie a knot.

Notice: Support characters who quickly pick-up on visual clues from the target can tell what statements from the lead character are having the most effect.

Throwing

Throwing is usually only used for weapons. When it's employed during a contest, supporting characters may be able to help out. Not that they can grab the item and help throw it, but rather they can assist the lead character is making a better throw.

Notice: Supporting characters that can judge environmental variances well can help the lead character to compensate for those variances. This could include understanding the speed and direction of the wind, where deviations in the terrain might be, or where the lead character should start their run as they build momentum for their throw.

Shooting: Skilled marksmen also know how to compensate for environmental variances. The supporting character may use their knowledge of skeet shooting to improve the lead character's ability to hit a target.

Tracking

When pursuing someone, tracking can be as simple as following their trail or as complicated as understanding where they would go to survive. In the latter situation, tracking can be a massive team effort where many factors are considered.

Climbing: When tracking a subject through the woods, it may be vital to climb the trees to gain an optimal vantage point. The character may be surveying the woods from the top of the tree or installing a monitoring device that scans a large area.

Investigation: Reading maps or referencing electronic references to geography may aid in determining the path of least resistance for the subject to follow. This may also help to point out where sources of water are, necessary for the subject's survival.

Notice: Following footprints and signs of disturbances can be augmented by someone with a keen sense of vision to spot those signs. The lead character would still be needed to discern their importance, but the supporting character can at least find them.

To keep things simple, the complementary skill bonus is based on the die type of that knowledge base as follows:

Knowledge Die Type	Complementary Skill Bonus
Common Knowledge	+1
d4	+1
d6	+2
d8	+3
d10	+4
d12+	+5
Bonus from Scholar Edge	+1

Riding: Support characters could scout a large area, looking for additional signs of disturbances. Maybe they come across an area where a fire was built or where a tent was pitched.

Survival: Experts in understanding the environment would have a good guess about where the subject would need to go to survive within that environment. This provides the lead character with direction on the best places to find signs of the subject.

Complementary Skills

Unlike supporting skills, complementary skills are attached to personal skill rolls. In this context, they are bases of knowledge that augment a character's ability to perform a specific function. Due to the training or education to acquire this knowledge, the bonuses from them are always active, but limited. They can only help a character's skill roll attempt when they directly and feasibly apply. This is due to the somewhat broad nature of skills in *Savage Worlds*; a single knowledge base should not apply to all situations. However, when it does, it should provide the character with a benefit.

Complementary skills give knowledge and common knowledge a purpose. During creation or advancement, the character may possess a certain knowledge base due to decisions they've made in their past. Because they possess this specific knowledge, it should have an in-game effect. Otherwise, it's just a wasted skill. By choosing these knowledge bases, the player is creating a unique character. So why not give that uniqueness some type of bonus?

From a mechanical aspect, complementary skills inherently provide bonuses to other skills. The complementary skill doesn't need to be rolled as it's an active bonus that always applies under specific conditions. This is because that specific knowledge base should provide the character with some type of advantage when performing the chosen task. When using the same skill, if the knowledge base doesn't apply, then the complementary skill bonus doesn't apply. When using different skills, if the knowledge base feasibly and directly applies, then the complementary skill bonus applies.

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As long as the character has a Knowledge skill with a focus that applies to the task being performed, the complementary skill bonus automatically applies. To determine if the focus applies, it must feasibly and directly correlate to the task being performed, not just the skill being rolled.

For example, Knowledge (Computers) applies to Investigation when searching through a computer for information. It doesn't apply to Investigation when searching through an archive of books. It also applies to Lockpicking when attempting to overcome a computer-based electronic security system.

USAGE

Complementary skills should only be used when a task is being performed by the person with the applicable knowledge base. It is a representation of that character's improved understanding of that task being performed due to the knowledge they've received during their lifetime.

Additionally, complementary skills should be limited to Knowledge and Common Knowledge focuses providing bonuses to non-Knowledge skills. They should not augment other Knowledge rolls except for Common Knowledge rolls. The ultimate goal of using complementary skill bonuses is to provide value to Knowledge, making it a valuable skill.

Because the list of knowledge focuses is so vast, the entire next chapter is dedicated to providing a list of these focuses along with how they can be applied using supporting and complementary skills.

Knowledge

Knowledge is power. When using complementary and supporting skills, Knowledge can definitely be a boon when applied correctly. Instead of just being taken as a way of better defining your character, Knowledge could provide bonuses to the tasks the character performs whenever their actions directly relate to the education or training they've received.

In its simplest form, the Knowledge skill requires a focus, or a knowledge base, that specifies what area the character has studied or trained in. When performing a specific action using that Knowledge base, the Knowledge skill is rolled as usual. When adding a little more depth to a character, these Knowledge bases can be used as supporting or complementary skills (a rolled or inherent bonus, respectively; see pages 31 and 41).

When using this added methodology to applying skills, it's imperative that the GM approve the application of the Knowledge, both the player and the GM understand the use of the Knowledge base, and the player can readily justify why it applies to their character in a supporting or complementary fashion.

Knowledge Bases

There can be an endless number of possible Knowledge bases and an unfathomable number of ways to apply those as supporting or complementary skills. Here is a list of some common ones and their use. Each entry provides a brief description along with a sample list of how to apply that knowledge from a support and complementary skill methodology. These are only examples and not the only feasible ways to apply these Knowledge bases.

Please remember: When connecting Knowledge bases to supporting or complementary roles, the explained purpose must feasibly relate to the action being performed. These are not blanket bonuses that should be tossed around liberally.

AEROLOGY

Aerology is an alternative term for atmospheric science. These disciplines of science include the understanding of climates and climate zones, weather conditions and patterns, and climate changes over time. This knowledge can be extended to include an understanding of other planet's atmosphere. More specific forms of aerology include aeronomy, climatology, and meteorology.

Supporting

Boating: Reading weather patterns while on the sea can be critical to reaching a destination unharmed. Should inclement weather appear in the distance, the character can warn the captain and point out which areas to avoid.

Piloting: Flying a plane through storm clouds can be quite dangerous. The character taps into his knowledge of weather patterns to inform the captain of dangers that need to be avoided.

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Complementary

Survival: A better understanding of an environment's climate and seasonal weather conditions can aid in locating just the right shelter.

Vigor: When battling Fatigue due to the environment, characters learned in atmospheric sciences have a natural advantage. They better understand the various climate zones they're in or will be in and can read the various weather patterns common to the area. These characters are always dressed for the occasion.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is the science of cultivating plants, animals, and fungi for food, medicine, natural fibers, and byproducts to aid in sustaining or enhancing life. This includes the farming of crops and domesticated animals and an understanding of soil, irrigation, and animal welfare. More specific forms of agriculture include agronomy, arboriculture, horticulture, and animal husbandry.

Supporting

Survival: Characters with a background in agriculture are naturally efficient in group survival. They may go as far as treating their allies like family and work diligently to locate foods that provide the most sustenance.

Tracking: When tracking down beasts of burden or typically domesticated farm animals, some characters may have been doing it most of their lives. Although they may not intrinsically understand what it means to track their quarry throughout the land, they know what signs to look for to steer the leader in the right direction.

Complementary

Repair: Farm equipment can be difficult to troubleshoot, but if the character uses them continuously, they definitely understand the ins and outs of them and know what to look, or listen, for when one breaks down.

Riding: Those who farm domesticated animals often do so from the backs of other domesticated animals, such as horses. Their ability to handle their preferred animal comes from their ability to drive their herd across the land.

Survival: A character well-versed in agriculture may be capable of improved care for plants and animals, providing more sustenance than possible otherwise. They may also be better at finding optimal soil for farming and grazing.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeology is the study of historic activity through the recovery and analysis of physical and environmental evidence left behind. This includes objects like artifacts and architecture and the understanding of unwritten history from historic and prehistoric societies. Their purpose is often to understand evolution or cultural history. Archaeology is an offshoot of antiquarianism and includes archaeoastronomy, bioarchaeology, ethnoarchaeology, and zooarchaeology.

Supporting

Notice: Archaeologists are naturals at searching through debris to uncover the secret gems that lie beneath. The character may have spent months in a remote

location digging for artifacts from an ancient civilization; searching for clues is an old habit.

Survival: When traversing lands where ancient cultures once lived, the character can recall information regarding that ancient culture and how they survived for a millennia. Was there an underground water source nearby? Or was there an ancient road, now covered by grass and weeds, which led through a forest filled with nutritional berries?

Complementary

Investigation: When looking through a library or electronic media to find information about an artifact, archaeologists have a natural advantage. Not only do they better understand the referenced language, they also have an easier time following the facts from one point to another to discern the true meaning of the artifact.

Lockpicking: Traps are a part of many cultures' past. Archaeologists may frequently encounter them or learn about others who've encountered them. When coming upon an archaic trap or one mimicking those centuries old, the character can mentally disassemble the trap and find a way to overcome it.

ASTRONOMY

Astronomy is the study of celestial objects and everything else residing within space. This includes physics, chemistry, and evolution, but it also includes their observable placement and movement. More than just an amateur with a telescope, astronomers have a deep knowledge of how objects in the universe work. Often synonymous with astrophysics, it also includes astrometry and astronavigation.

Supporting

Boating: Sometimes sailing is only efficiently done with the right navigational knowledge. Astronomers can circumvent the use of modern navigational equipment by understanding the placement and movements of celestial bodies. The character could easily discern directions, time, and possibly date (or relative date) by noting the location of those celestial bodies.

Survival: Astronomers often get involved in the making of calendars. By understanding the movement of celestial bodies including the planet the character resides on, they can better understand the date and season when modern equipment is not available. This information can be relayed to the lead character who may better understand the migrating patterns of certain herbivores during certain seasons.

Complementary

Piloting: When piloting a spacecraft, the astronomer has a definite advantage. The character fully understands the various objects within space, especially when traveling between planetary systems. The character also has a better understanding of stars and how far a safe location could be when drawing near one.

Tracking: When the quarry is traveling erratically, understanding their general direction can be done without the use of maps or compasses by knowing the location of celestial bodies. This can also be a factor when discerning time of day to understand the best time for the target to rest and when the tracking team needs to keep moving.

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BIOLOGY

Biology is the study of life and living organisms including how they interact with their environment, grow, evolve, and their taxonomy. Biology covers a wide range of subjects, but all living organisms conform to a single standard: they survive by consuming energy and creating internal stability. More specific forms of biology include physiology, ecology, and zoology.

Supporting

Tracking: Biologists understand habitats. When tracking a creature or a particularly alien being across the wilderness, knowing the habitat they come from and what they need to survive can provide vital information to the lead character.

Swimming: The biologist doesn't have to be a good swimmer, but they could alert another character to the dangers of the area they're about to explore. The biologist could go so far as to warn the lead character of what habitats to avoid, or tread lightly through, to avoid coming to the notice of dangerous underwater creatures.

Complementary

Intimidation: Intimidation can be more than just frightening looks and a strong voice; it can also be the threat of starvation. Biologists understand what a being needs to survive and thus know what to take away as a form of punishment or torture. Using this knowledge to threaten someone's life is very serious as the victim has to weigh their options considerably. This could mean the difference between running and surviving to fight another day or staying and risking the torment of having something taken away that is vital to survival.

Notice: Biologists naturally look toward the finer details when it comes to an organisms' surrounding environment. Creatures survive within an area for a reason, and the biologist knows what to look for when searching or studying that area.

BOTANY

Botany is a field of biology that focuses on plant life. While similar, plants have very different applications and what applies to one doesn't necessarily apply to the other. Types of botany include plant physiology, herbology (herbalism), and nutrition.

Supporting

Healing: In the right setting, herbs can be used as an alternative medicine. A supporting character can look for herbs or use those they regularly carry, create a type of healing medicine, and assist the healer in providing comfort to the injured character.

Survival: When survival involves finding the right shelter or allowing others to forage for food, the botanist can warn against possibly poisonous plants or berries. The character may not know where to look, but they can tell the lead character what to avoid.

Complementary

Survival: Botanists know the signs to look for to determine if a plant is safe, dangerous, or just lacks nutrition. When foraging, the character is able to locate the right source of food that keeps everyone healthier and possibly wards off disease.

Vigor: When battling plant-born poisons, or attempting to overcome them, it's imperative to know as much as possible about the plant the poison came from. Maybe certain plants counteract that poison or maybe they make it worse. Maybe the poison can be weakened by consuming a particular liquid or medicine immediately.

CARTOGRAPHY

Cartography is part science, part aesthetic, and part technique; all combined to form the study and practice of making maps. While seemingly simple, maps have been of intrinsic importance throughout history. They can be used to mark roads and pathways, political borders, bodies of water, and natural obstacles. When finding the quickest route from point A to B, hopefully a cartographer has already mapped the way, making the trip that much faster. Cartography often incorporates the use or knowledge of surveying, geography, and topography.

Supporting

Boating: When utilizing a map to traverse the water, no one knows how to read it as well as the cartographer. The character is skilled in understanding nomenclatures and symbols, providing the captain with the clearest path.

Survival: When survival is required for long trips on foot, the cartographer is the team's best navigator. The character can show the safest routes along with the easiest to traverse, making for the quickest route between locations.

Complementary

Knowledge (Battle): Because Knowledge (Battle) is the skill for all Mass Battles, it can feasibly be augmented by other Knowledge bases. By mapping the location of a battle before it occurs, the character has a huge advantage regarding troop placement and understanding the greatest vantage points on the battlefield.

Piloting: Cartography doesn't have to be limited to the ground; in a sci-fi setting, cartography could be cosmic – the mapping of a planetary system. By understanding the three-dimensional design of outer space and knowing where various celestial bodies lie on all three axes, the character knows where to go and how to get there.

Tracking: Cartographers and geographers know terrain. They know how to spot optimal paths through the wilderness and at what angles the elevation changes. The character can almost visualize the path his target would take to get through the wilderness safely.

COMPUTERS

In present-day, computers aid in almost everything we do. Whether it's a high-powered computer that fills a cabinet and crunches data all day or a handheld device that allows us to track our daily work, it's run by some type of processing unit and software. The use here doesn't have to refer to a computer in the traditional sense, but rather can extend to all devices with some type of computing ability.

Supporting

Gambling: Security is tight and technology can be amazing, but don't put it past someone with deep computer knowledge, like a hacker, to find a way to "adjust the

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odds” of a slot machine before the lead character sits down to play. Hopefully they’re never caught as the penalty could be quite steep.

Piloting: Spacecraft, and possibly some aircraft, include large computer systems to perform the many functions they require. During certain situations, the character can manipulate the computer to reroute systematic functions, possibly increasing the likelihood of successfully traveling through space (such as rerouting power to the shields). He may not know how to fly the spacecraft, but he sure knows how to adjust the computer’s settings to overcome a looming system failure.

Complementary

Investigation: Naturally, those with a higher understanding of computers find navigating through them to find data that much easier. When searching through electronic media, the character can navigate networks with ease. They know just the right keywords to search on and the just the right locations where the data can be found.

Lockpicking: When attempting to bypass an electronic security system, primarily one that is connected to a larger network, the character is able to hack through defenses to disable the system. If he’s really skilled, he may even be able to reprogram the security system to appear normal while the heist is occurring.

Repair: When repairing computer-powered devices or even electronics with functions similar to that of a computer, the character can troubleshoot with ease. They have an understanding of basic, and possibly advanced, electronics or maybe an in-depth knowledge of software that provides the knowledge they need to make the repair.

CRIMINOLOGY

Criminology covers the societal and behavioral sides of criminal behavior. It takes a look at the causes and consequences of crime along with the regulations and reactions to it. It goes much further than catching criminals as it aims to better understand them in the hopes of preventing crime in the future. Besides understanding laws, criminologists also draw upon sociology, psychology, and psychiatry; all of which could be used to better understand criminal behavior.

Supporting

Intimidation: The character may not want to interrogate a suspect, but she has such a deep understanding of the subject that the interrogator can use that information to frighten the subject. By knowing what makes them ‘tick’ the right ‘buttons’ can be pushed to get the desired response.

Persuasion: Interrogation can be performed in a more sincere manner too. Maybe the interrogator has a personal desire to turn the subject from a criminal to an informant. Instead of pressuring the subject, she appeals to the subject’s wants and needs. The criminologist has an understanding of the subject’s past and environment that is shared with the interrogator to encourage the criminal into a life of virtue.

Complementary

Investigation: When researching criminal behavior, past and present, along with understanding a criminal's past, the character has a deep understanding of research already done and uses that to improve their search. This may involve finding the right book to reference or monitoring criminal trends through electronic outlets.

Streetwise: Characters learned in criminology probably have a list of associates to speak with regarding the subject of criminal behavior. Calling upon psychologists and sociologists may help pinpoint what led to the criminal behavior or discover patterns that weren't noticed before.

CRYPTOGRAPHY

Cryptography is the art of encrypting and decrypting information for the purpose of securing communication between parties. Nowadays, this is done quite often by computer software, but previously it was done through machines and ciphers understood by the cryptographer. In these regards, the cryptographer could be a computer programmer skilled at creating encryption/decryption algorithms or a messenger transporting encoded messages across the battlefield.

Complementary

Investigation: When hacking a computer system to locate or steal information, it may be necessary to overcome the network's encryption system or decipher the passwords needed to navigate safely. Limitations like this are of little consequence to the cryptographer.

Lockpicking: Electronic security systems, and maybe even intricate mechanical ones, may use encrypted information that, if decoded, could provide the complete architecture of the system. The character knows how to decipher that encryption and can learn how the system is constructed.

Supporting

Knowledge (Battle): If the characters are allowed to define their actions during the course of Mass Battle, the cryptographer could create a coding system for sending commands from one battalion to another. By encoding these messages, the commands are safe from prying eyes.

Repair: Some computer-controlled devices need their built-in security features overcome before they can be sabotaged. The cryptographer can aid in bypassing those security features due to their understanding of encryption algorithms.

ENGINEERING

At its roots, engineering is the use of the engineering design process to create something. That 'something' can vary widely depending on the era, technology, purpose, and available tools. Defining every possibility could take an entire book, although most apply in a similar way. When using Knowledge (Engineering), it's imperative to define the technology-base and purpose of that knowledge. If the task is outside the scope of those two definitions, the character's education or training simply don't apply. For example, Knowledge (Engineering-Communications) won't apply to repairing a tank on the battlefield, but it definitely applies to repairing the radio to call headquarters about an incoming strike.

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Supporting

Knowledge (Battle): In the field, the engineer can make last-minute changes to her design to make it more capable. Maybe she's able to make the artillery weapons more efficient or maybe she removes a bug that was causing an intermittent problem.

Survival: With the right engineering discipline, the character can assist in building shelters or improving those built by others. This may require an understanding of design, construction, planning, or materials. Any of these actions can aid in a group's survival.

Complementary

Crafting: If your setting uses a crafting skill or something equivalent to crafting, the character is fluent in designing projects and bringing them to fruition. She can not only read the required design documentation but probably also creates it. Example disciplines include Acoustical, Architectural, Ceramic, Genetic, Metallurgical, Software, Textile, and Thermal.

Repair: When making a repair to, or sabotaging, technology related to the engineering discipline, the character can maneuver through the machine with ease. She perfectly understands each system's function and knows how they interact with each other. Example disciplines include Aerospace, Automotive, Civil, Clockwork, Electronics, Industrial, Mechanical, Robotics, and Steam.

GEOLOGY

Geology is the study of solid earth, the rocks which comprise it, and how they move and change. This includes plate tectonics, mineral exploration, and the understanding of natural hazards. Other forms of science that incorporate geology are glaciology, hydrogeology, and volcanology. Activities relating to geology may include mining, drilling, spelunking, and rock climbing.

Supporting

Survival: Geologists understand how the earth changes and can help pinpoint optimal locations for building shelters. The character knows that if a shelter is built on point A, the ground will most likely shift and weaken the structure. If they build it on point B instead, the ground is solid and the structure will not move.

Tracking: When traversing underground structures, the character knows how to 'read' the rock formations to get his bearings. If the target is more likely to stay near water, the geologist knows where that water is most likely to be found.

Complementary

Climbing: By understanding rock formations, the character knows what vertical path to take to avoid slipping. They always find the best handholds and footholds and know what to avoid when setting an anchor.

Vigor: When altitude is a concern, the geologist is accustomed to the height. They've spent a good part of their life on the tops of mountains or cliffs and know how to regulate their breathing when the air gets thinner.

HISTORY

While many subjects involve some type of historical study, here history is used as an umbrella term for the study of historical events. History is always rich with information, and the many ways of applying that information could vary drastically. Is the character learning from mistakes made in the past or is he applying the same principles that previously created success? History disciplines include military, religious, social, cultural, and economic. Remember that each one can have varied applications when used as a complementary or supporting skill.

Supporting

Knowledge (Battle): Calling upon the military success of historic leaders can provide key tactics that still apply. The character can ask himself, “What did General x do during a similar confrontation, and did he win that confrontation?” This is another form of tactics, although it relates to understanding military history.

Survival: When survival becomes difficult, the character thinks back to a study performed on a culture that lived in the area centuries ago. What did they do to survive? Where did they find resources necessary to build shelter? Knowing about how that culture survived, or if they didn’t, can provide information to the lead character about where to look for food and shelter.

Complementary

Persuasion: When speaking publicly to a group in foreign lands, from a different culture, or exhibiting a different society, understanding their roots may make them more open to hearing an outsider’s opinion. The character uses their historical knowledge to speak directly to the group, not just at them, using the positive aspects of their ancestors to guide his words.

Streetwise: If a character wants to get the right information, he’ll need to ask the right questions. When doing so, it’s important to not offend those in unfamiliar lands due to their cultural or social beliefs. Understanding a culture’s history can offer suggestions on what not to say.

LANGUAGE

Language is a Knowledge base that is similar to Charisma or the Outsider Hindrance as it can always apply. If a character doesn’t know the language of those she’s speaking to, how can she possibly succeed on a Persuasion or Streetwise roll? (Or Investigation if she can’t read that language.) When playing in a setting or genre with multiple languages, it may become imperative to know who understands who and what they can read. It can also become quite tedious if there are too many languages to manage.

Language can thus be used as a complementary skill or supporting skill in two roles: direct and indirect. As a complementary skill, the chosen language, or lack thereof, is a direct modifier to the character’s Investigation, Persuasion, and Streetwise when interacting with people or media that use a language other than the character’s native language. As a supporting skill, due to acting as a translator, the chosen language is an indirect modifier to the lead character’s Investigation, Persuasion, and Streetwise. A lack of that language means it cannot be used as a supporting skill, and how a person reacts to the need for a translator is at the discretion of the GM.

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Only when considering Knowledge (Language) does the modifier apply to the character’s complementary skill roll and supporting skill roll. Additionally, Common Knowledge, in this regard, would relate to a character who is aware of that other language due to being near it (such as a neighbor or distant relative), but has never taken the time to actually learn or understand it. This is because vaguely understanding a language is not going to be enough to properly interact with, or translate, someone who speaks that language fluently.

For example, when the lead character is attempting to speak to an assembly of foreign dignitaries, he rolls Persuasion. As a supporting skill using common knowledge for a cooperative roll, the supporting character is translating for the foreign dignitaries, using her Knowledge (Language) as the supporting skill. The skill modifiers below apply to her supporting skill roll as a measure of her ability to properly translate. If she has Knowledge (Elven) d6 and is translating for her human friend, her roll suffers a (-2) penalty to determine if she succeeds or gains any Raises. By not being fluent in the language, her ability to translate properly suffers. Once her roll is resolved, she then applies the results as a cooperative roll to the lead character. At the GM’s discretion, a failure on this supporting skill roll could provide a penalty to the lead character’s roll.

Knowledge Die Type	Skill Modifier
Common Knowledge	-6
d4	-4
d6	-2
d8	0
d10	+1
d12+	+2
Bonus from Scholar Edge	+1

MEDICINE

Medicine is being used here as an umbrella term for dealing with the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases. While numerous specialties exist, much of a character’s base education in medicine stems from the same or similar material as all others. This doesn’t mean that every character with education in medicine can perform the same medical procedures; it just means they all have the same basic understanding of how their education applies across the field. From an in-game perspective, this means you shouldn’t have to differentiate too much between the various fields of medicine. Example disciplines include cardiology, hematology, immunology, and neurology and can extend into pharmaceutical and rehabilitation fields.

Supporting

Persuasion: When speaking to a group riddled with disease or filling a medical tent with injuries, comforting them by displaying prowess in medicine can rally the group to continue the fight.

Survival: Treating injuries is inevitable when Fatigue sets in. The character is able to treat minor wounds easily and effectively along with ensuring the larger group avoids certain activities that are potentially dangerous.

Complementary

Healing: From the basics of providing first aid to dealing with more serious injuries that can be handled in the field, the character's knowledge of medicine allows her to heal the target's pain. While truly serious wounds still require hospitalization, quick mending on the battlefield is possible to get the target back into combat.

Vigor: Treating the effects of diseases or avoiding them all together is what the character does best. Her education and training in medicine is designed for ridding the body of such ailments, providing her a leg-up when it happens to her.

NURSING

Nursing focuses on the overall care and health maintenance of individuals and families to attain a high quality of life. Nurses assist doctors and are often the first line of response for minor incidents and general care. They're capable of inoculating patients and finding a home in many different situations from general care at a clinic to ongoing care at a house.

Supporting

Healing: Besides being able to handle minor injuries, nurses can assist on major surgeries or the treatment of diseases. They are skilled in understanding doctors and know the ins and outs of a surgery or clinical room.

Knowledge (Battle): Injuries on a battlefield are inevitable. The character's education and training in nursing allows her to treat the small injuries during war to get the soldiers back to the field, fighting for their cause. There may even be an entire tent for her to operate in.

Vigor: As with injuries, a nurse can help others battling diseases or viruses. They can also treat wounds due to harsh climates as well as Fatigue and Exhaustion.

Complementary

Healing: While probably not as learned as a doctor with medical education, nurses are capable of handling minor injuries and applying first aid. In addition to physical treatment, they may also be good at emotional treatment to ease the patient's mind and keep them from panicking.

OCEANOGRAPHY

Oceanography takes many scientific disciplines and moves them under the water. It incorporates biology, climatology, geography, geology, hydrology and more from the perspective of marine life. The areas of research are as diverse as those above water and the oceanographer often touches upon them all. Oceanography can be used to supplement other Knowledge bases when it concerns life near the water. For example, understanding coastal climates can be done from the aerology or oceanography point of view.

Supporting

Survival: If the group is establishing their camp near a coastline, the character can discern the best locations for marine life for sustenance. He may even be able to judge the water currents to know the best way to traverse the surrounding water when fishing or traveling to remote islands.

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Complementary

Boating: Oceanographers have an affinity with the water; naturally, they'll be doing so in some type of boat. The character's vast understanding of underwater geography and climatology and ocean currents allows them to steer or sail a boat with ease.

Swimming: Many oceanographers spend much of their time diving to perform their research. The character is able to swim quite gracefully and understands how to navigate underwater, even when little sunlight breaks through.

PSYCHOLOGY

As medicine is used to address afflictions of the body, psychology is used to address afflictions of the mind including emotion, cognition, personality, and social behavior. Psychology can also be used as a form of research to better understand natural decisions people make or how the mind, and subsequently body, respond to different stimuli. From an in-game perspective, the former use of psychology may be much more valuable than the latter.

Supporting

Investigation: When researching information about groups and individuals to better understand who they are or why they do what they do, a psychologist can provide valuable insight since understanding people is a major part of psychology. The character can assist the lead character in understanding that group's or individual's behavior, how the environment they're surrounded by may affect them mentally or emotionally, or if their upbringing may have had an adverse side-effect.

Complementary

Fear: Characters trained in psychology may have an improved way of discerning what's real, what's not, or what can be explained away through other means. She may be less susceptible to acquiring phobias and can control her mind to prevent it from panicking in dire situations.

Healing: When attempting to heal someone's mental stress, the psychologist knows what to look for and what to address. She not only speaks calmly to the patient to ease his mind, she also learns about the cause of the stress and how to get rid of, or learn to cope with, it.

Intimidation: Criminal psychology is one of many possible disciplines and the character uses that knowledge when interrogating a criminal. She better understands the criminal's behavior by better understanding his mental state. She can also use this information to categorize the criminal if his behavior is sociopathic.

Notice: Psychologists are often trained to read and understand body language. They can speak to, or watch, a subject and determine what visual cues are being displayed to understand if the subject is lying, becoming uncomfortable, etc.

RELIGION

Religion is similar to Language, although it may only be a consideration when discussing one's faith or religious beliefs or understanding. In some settings, especially ones where religions clash on a regular basis, it may become an obstacle if the other party is aware of the character's religious affiliation.

Knowledge (Religion) has two basic uses: confrontational and understanding. Confrontational uses are penalties applied to Persuasion and Streetwise when the characters' religious affiliations clash, causing them to distrust or dislike each other simply because of that affiliation. Confrontational uses can also be applied as bonuses to Intimidation and Taunt when provoking a response due to a target's religious affiliation. Confrontational uses are typically for complementary skills.

Understanding uses are bonuses applied to Persuasion, Streetwise, and Investigation simply to due and understanding of the religion or religious affiliation in question. This can be both complementary and supporting by the character doing the interaction or assisting a lead character performing the interaction.

Confrontational uses for Persuasion and Streetwise require the character and the target to have opposing religious affiliations and the awareness of those affiliations. Confrontational uses for Intimidation and Taunt only require the character to have knowledge of the target's religious affiliation and what might provoke a response. Understanding uses require the character to have knowledge of the target's religious affiliation, but the GM may allow an additional bonus if the target is aware that the character is also affiliated with that religion.

Use the standard complementary skill bonus chart and supporting skill cooperative roll bonuses, noting whether the modifier is applied as a bonus or a penalty.

TACTICS

Using Knowledge (Tactics) should be applied conservatively. Players can make many arguments as to why tactical knowledge should allow for bonuses during standard combat to Fighting, Shooting, and Throwing. In regards to the *Ultimate Characters Guide*, this knowledge base is presented as a set-up to combat and cannot be used during combat. It's a representation of the character's proper planning before some type of conflict occurs. This could include reading a battlefield before setting up an ambush, determining the most advantageous location for ranged attacks, or mentally disassembling an area to know where the best exit routes lie. These actions all require a character to make their rolls prior to combat, providing the group with an advantage before the conflict begins.

Complementary

Knowledge (Battle): As a set-up to the first round of a Mass Battle, the character mentally maps the battlefield and establishes where the optimal locations are for each battalion. He also understands how the enemy is entering the battlefield and if the natural terrain can be used against them.

Stealth: When establishing an ambush, the characters may need to roll Stealth to avoid detection. If the opposing party is trying to avoid a Surprise round, this bonus can instead be applied as a penalty to the opposition's Notice roll.

Educational Backgrounds

Building a Template provides characteristics that can be translated to create a background template that defines a character's race, culture, or society during character creation. To bring knowledge via education and training into that template, GMs could create educational backgrounds. These educational backgrounds provide Knowledge bases to the character at no skill point cost. This is akin to the character going through college or fulfilling an apprenticeship. The drawback to adding educational backgrounds is that the character's starting age should reflect the time they spent acquiring this background. Here is a simple method of doing this:

- 1. Determine the desired Knowledge base. Confirm with the GM that this Knowledge base is feasible within the setting.
- 2. Consult the Educational Background Table to determine the Education Level desired for that Knowledge base.
- 3. Determine if that Education Level has an associated Minor along with the Major.
- 4. If that Education Level has an associated Minor, choose that Minor. This Minor must also be feasible given the setting and the requirements to attain that Education Level.
- 5. Determine how many Years the character must spend to obtain that level of education. (Years can include classroom and training, not just classroom.)
- 6. Note on the character sheet the chosen Knowledge base and its applicable die type within the appropriate Major or Minor column.
- 7. Increase the character's age according to the number of years required to obtain that education level.

Some degrees do not need to be linked directly with education received on a previous degree. They can instead be indirectly linked, providing the basic perquisites to obtain that higher degree. This is demonstrated on the Educational Background table as a Major and Minor. The Major is the Knowledge base associated directly with that Education Level and the Minor is the prerequisite or minor studies Knowledge base for that Education Level.

When choosing an Education Level on the Educational Background Table, only choose the highest desired level. Don't progress from one level to another.

Educational Background Table

Education Level	Years	Major	Minor
Certificate	1	d4	-
Associates	2	d6	-
Bachelor's	4	d6	d4
Master's, direct	6	d8	d4
Master's, prerequisite	6	d6	d6
Doctorate	8	d10	d6
Internship	1	+1	-

Villain Creation

Ultimate Characters Guide isn't just about creating Player Characters; it's also about creating Non-player Characters in all their different forms. The Background Templates can be utilized for humanoid creatures or serve as a guide for creating non-humanoid creatures, but what about all those Special Abilities prevalent in many bestiary entries?

The *Savage Worlds Fantasy Companion* from Pinnacle Entertainment Group has a sidebar titled "Making Monsters" within its **Bestiary** chapter. **Villain Creation** expands on those basic premises by presenting a collection of Special Abilities that can be used to round out NPCs, create truly unique creatures, or use as a springboard for creating new Special Abilities. The next chapter, **Combat Balance**, goes into detail about how to use various Special Abilities to scale your encounters.

As before, this list is nowhere near exhaustive, although it's meant to be comprehensive enough to provide many options and ways to integrate the various abilities. Each one is fully described in a non-mechanical way to allow the GM to interpret how the ability will be used mechanically.

Acute Senses

Instead of simply adding the Alertness Edge to a creature, define their enhanced ability through some type of acute sense. The creature is so accustomed to using their acute sense that they can only sense the world around them with it. They can use that sense to detect when another being draws near, where they're going, or where they might have been. Not only could this be useful for Notice, it can be used to avoid being surprised, establishing an ambush, and Tracking the party.

When a group of PCs delves into the lair of someone with acute senses, it becomes that much more difficult to not only sneak up on the NPC, but traverse the lair without being lured into a trap, or many traps for that matter. When the NPC is aware of the incoming threat, he can activate security measures or puzzles, summon allies, or begin performing rituals. In modern and sci-fi campaigns, this added sense could come from security cameras hidden throughout the lair, not just enhanced abilities.

When adding acute senses, it's imperative to define which senses are acute. If it's sight, can the NPC pierce long distances to see the PCs drawing near (like modern binoculars)? If it's hearing, can the NPC hear the PCs' boots scraping on the dirt? If it's smell, can the NPC detect the PCs' scent as he's tracking them throughout the woods? As opposed to Alertness, acute senses are situational and thus only apply when that sense is being used.

Amphibious

Amphibians have adapted to a life on land near the water. They breathe air through lungs as adults after living underwater and breathing through gills when young. Although they may no longer have gills as adults, many amphibians can hold their breath underwater for a very long time. When encountered in the right environment, this can be very advantageous.

Amphibians can use their ability to retreat into the water as a ruse during combat or a way to establish a proper ambush before it. If the NPC can lure the PCs into the water, if they don't have the ability to breathe underwater through natural means or

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equipment, the tide of the battle can turn quite quickly. The PCs may struggle to catch their breath on a frequent basis, be sluggish while in the water, or just want to avoid the confrontation (allowing other traps to be sprung). While the PCs may be capable of holding their breath for dozens of seconds, the amphibian can for five minutes or more.

Another advantage the amphibious NPC has over the PCs is his ability to swim. He probably has webbing on his feet, hands, or both that provide the momentum he needs to glide through the water with ease. Instead of moving at half his pace, he moves at his full pace. This can allow him to easily retreat into cover, only to come out and make a surprise attack while the PCs are looking the other way. This can also be useful in hit-and-run tactics.

Bloodlust

Many creatures are driven by a desire to kill for sport or survival. They crave the taste of fresh meat and can do little to resist its lure. This could be especially true if the creature is facing extinction due to dwindling food supplies. As such, the sight of a kill that can feed him and possibly his family becomes an overwhelming temptation.

In this regard, bloodlust would be akin to Berserk, except that it happens when the NPC inflicts a Wound on a PC. Upon seeing the first draw of blood, the lure of fresh meat becomes overwhelming and the creature flies into a rage while attempting to feast. His survival response has kicked in and he simply cannot get a hold of himself. If the creature is intelligent, possibly allowing a Spirit roll to come out of this bloodlust is appropriate. However, if food is sparse, many creatures face death in the hope of surviving another day.

Bloodlust can be combined with other Special Abilities to draw out a group of Extras. When the first NPC inflicts a Wound, drawing blood from the victim, the scent travels throughout the immediate area, alerting others to the presence of fresh meat. More creatures of the same type appear, either by burrowing through the ground, leaping across vast distances, or swooping down from above, and become a formidable force against the PCs. The encounter starts simply, but quickly turns brutal as more Wounds are inflicted.

Burrowing

Burrowing is one of those interesting movement types that can be difficult to translate into rules. There are many burrowing creatures in this world, but few would be able to do so in the speed defined by the in-game mechanics. Instead of using it as a way of opening a hole in the ground and trying to get around an obstacle, it can be used to define the means in which the NPC travels from one place to another through a series of existing tunnels.

Many burrowing creatures have the ability to squeeze into tunnels that are no larger than they are. The NPC may also have the ability to elongate their body to squeeze into tunnels that appear smaller than they are. The battlefield could then look like a series of pockmarks scattered about, leading to constant obstacles while walking and running.

The burrowing NPC can use his series of tunnels as an underground maze, popping up at unexpected locations. The PCs may be left dumfounded as they search about to find where the NPC went and where he will appear. If the NPC is particularly good, he can use the tunnels to always get away from the strongest PCs and attack the weakest ones. He can then drop back into his tunnel maze and appear after the PCs have

become frustrated once again. In a sort of comical hit-and-run method, a group of burrowing NPCs could seem like a single creature facing a group of PCs but are actually a dozen Extras causing massive confusion.

Camouflage

When viewing the Earth's natural flora and fauna, it's noticeable that some creatures survive due to their ability to camouflage themselves in their surroundings. This includes a creature's natural color pattern, an ability to change colors, and the ability to completely bury oneself within the surrounding environment. Each of these methods provides an advantage to the creature that can help them survive the hunter or catch the hunted.

Adding a camouflage type Special Ability can be more than just gaining a surprise round or attempting a Stealth maneuver. The NPC could have allies hiding in the bushes, traps waiting to be sprung, weapons within reach, or even flee an encounter. It could also have other benefits within certain conditions, such as black outfits against the night sky.

Camouflage can have its definite benefits within the creature's native environment. Outside of that environment, however, he may drastically stand out. This could work in the PCs favor if they draw the creature out into an area where he doesn't blend in. He could end up in stark contrast to his surroundings, which can provide bonuses to the PCs if lighting is poor. The camouflage ability then becomes a means used by the NPC to either lure or keep the PCs within his native environment.

Claws

Not all claws need to be defined as weapons; sometimes they have more practical uses. Creatures with claws may be very good at climbing and moving across slippery surfaces. Terrain becomes a large consideration as the NPC uses his claws to climb trees or cliffs to either get a better vantage point when the PCs are coming, or avoid their melee attacks in the hopes of pouncing on them from above. The claws aren't enough to be used as a weapon, but they definitely provide the additional grip needed for those vertical ascents.

Claws can also be used to provide stability on unstable or slippery surfaces. If the claws are like a bird's, they curve and can wrap around an object, even if it's moving. If they're sharp like a cat, they can provide grip on smooth, soft surfaces even if water is rushing across it. This principal can also be applied to moving across ice.

The NPC can use this ability to hold an advantage over the PCs while moving about his native terrain. If encountered in a thick forest, the NPC can leap from tree to tree to keep some distance between him and the PCs. If encountered on a frozen lake, he can run at ease while the PCs must tread lightly to avoid falling.

Complete Vision

Complete vision refers to 360° of sight. This isn't due to acute senses or the ability to detect presence, it's simply because the NPC has something that allows them to see in all directions. Sneaking up on the NPC becomes quite difficult, and so should ganging up on him. Even if the NPC is preoccupied with battling one PC, another cannot flank the NPC and join the battle unseen. If combined with preternatural senses or multiple limbs, the NPC may even be able to defend against the second PC.

Whether the NPC has eyes in the back of his head or wears glasses that wirelessly connect to cameras facing all corners of the battlefield, he has a slight advantage over

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the PCs when it comes to understanding the position of everyone involved. He can never be caught unaware or flanked and battlefield tactics may become that much more difficult. The question then becomes how is he able to respond? A Special Ability such as this could be combined with another to allow the NPC to respond to the positions of all PCs.

Darkvision

Creatures that evolve in complete darkness have the ability to somehow see in the dark. If this were not true, the creatures would never have survived, being unable to find food or make their way through their environment. While some creatures in these environments may be blind and instead rely on other senses to move about, the NPCs with this Special Ability have vision that is 100 times more sensitive than a human's. Additionally, they may have light producing glandular cells called photophores that provide just enough light for the creature to see. Or the creatures may be bioluminescent and produce light from their entire body.

Either method allows the NPC just enough light to see in complete darkness. With eyes being so sensitive, very little is required to move about. However, this sensitivity can have its drawbacks if the creature is unable to adjust his vision from being 100 times more sensitive. Creatures such as this would be blinded by bright lights and direct sunlight.

NPCs with darkvision would rarely leave the comforts of their dark abode. Instead, they would either lure the PCs into the darkness, simply find them stumbling upon it, finding a target hampered by the lack of light. The advantages are quite obvious, as long as the NPC doesn't give his position away through bioluminescence.

Demon

Breaking away from the Demon Monstrous Ability, this entry attempts to prod the GM into thinking more about his demonic creatures. It's quite easy to take a blank character stat, slap on the Demon Monstrous Ability, and make it look chaotic; it's another thing to make the demonic creature come to life by fleshing out additional details.

Often times in folklore, legend, and supernatural studies, demons are ethereal beings. (Sometimes even the clairvoyant cannot see them.) If this is the case, the demonic creature can be treated as a spirit in addition to a demon. Decide if the NPC can interact with the real world or if he can only influence it. Can he move simple objects while insubstantial? Can he become material and fully interact with the real world?

Demons are often only harmed by their weakness, which can vary depending on personal preferences and the setting being played. What about non-lethal damage to the demon? Can he be banished? Can he be overcome by a display of faith? Can he be exorcised? Can he be anchored to an object or room and then placated through by ignoring him?

Many fantasy settings create a place where all demons come from, but what about the NPC? Did he come from some demon realm or was he created due to extenuating circumstances in the real world? Is he truly a chaotic supernatural being or just a malevolent spirit that got trapped in the real world? If he's from another realm, how did he enter the real world in the first place?

If the demonic creature can be defeated, what happens to him upon his death? Does he simply vanish and go back to some realm of chaos? Does his body disappear into

nothingness? Does he turn back into an innocent spirit and float off into the sky? If the creature does return to his original realm, can he come back to the real world?

When looking at fantasy fiction, folklore, and legend, many demons look very cliché. They frequently have horns, animal-like legs, bare-chests, wings, red skin, or any number of demon tropes. Some fantasy settings give demons a much more chaotic and unnatural look. Simply seeing this form is enough to drive a character insane as the shape of the body just isn't right. Maybe the NPC has mutations that give it natural weapons. Maybe the body is twisted in a way that confuses the brain's ability to distinguish what it's seeing. Maybe the creature exists in multiple dimensions and shifts periodically, changing what the PCs see.

Instead of a single demon Special Ability, this may translate into multiple Special Abilities with Demon being a common thread tying the various NPCs together.

Detect Presence

Detect presence is the supernatural form of acute senses. Instead of being able to hear or see something, the creature is able to perceive something or someone that others cannot. This could be as simple as being able to detect the presence of ethereal beings or as sophisticated as knowing exactly when the opponent is going to cast a spell due to detecting changes in the weave directed at the opponent. How a creature reacts to this can vary greatly.

From an NPC perspective, it wouldn't be as beneficial to merely have the ability to detect other creature's unique abilities if they cannot act upon that knowledge. Instead, this Special Ability should be somehow applied to how the NPC is able to overcome, or at least make an attempt to thwart, something unique about the PCs. This would allow them to react to the presence of the PCs before combat begins.

If an NPC is able to detect the presence of magic users, before they wield any spells, he can throw up an Arcane Resistance spell to shield him from the magic user. If he's able to detect the presence of metal as it wafts invisibly from a PC's sword, he can grab a shield and prepare for battle. Maybe he can even go so far as lay a trap for the intruders.

Whatever the creature is able to detect, it should be something very specific and should only be usable under certain conditions (primarily outside of combat). Instead of needing a Notice roll, this could be an inherent supernatural ability that allows the NPC to better prepare. Or it can force the PCs to plan ahead better to gain an advantage over their target.

Divine

On the opposite side of the spectrum from demonic creatures are divine ones. While killing a god may not be proper in your setting, nor may it be feasible, beings that serve the pantheons could instead be the source of the PCs' ire. In settings that utilize some type of alignment, these creatures may be weak to attacks from chaotic characters and immune to attacks from pure characters.

Much like demons, divine beings are typically only harmed by their weakness. But what type of weaknesses do they have? An easy one would be magical so that they are only harmed by magic or magic-like abilities. If using alignment, they are only harmed by weapons imbued with evil or chaos. In a sci-fi setting, instead of alignment, negative energy or dark matter could be the weakness. What about other ways to defeat the divine being?

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It's perfectly acceptable to define a divine being as inherently good and that they cannot be defeated in combat. Instead, they can only be defeated through social interaction using diplomacy or a series of puzzling questions. Is the divine being simply an obstacle, or is he being used to test the characters' conviction? Maybe the divine being is a messenger from an angry god and needs to be persuaded not to level an entire village due to their insolence.

Divine beings don't have to be from heavenly pantheons either. The concept of divinity can translate easily into cosmic omnipotence. Instead of being from a divine plane or realm, the creature is a cosmic being created by the power of the universe. Not only could he affect the lives of the planet the PCs live on, he could affect the lives of everyone in the entire planetary system or even galaxy.

Dwelling

Creatures and humanoid beings live due to their ability to survive within the environment they reside. Through centuries of evolution, they have adapted to the terrain and climate and thrive off the available food source. When adventuring, characters often delve into or near the dwelling of an NPC for the sake of recovering riches, removing a threat, or solidifying diplomatic relations. Whatever the reason, the characters have entered the NPC's native lands.

NPCs within their native lands have a natural advantage over PCs who aren't properly adapted to that terrain, climate, or food source. This advantage can be used to scale combat, handing the PCs a disadvantage simply because they aren't prepared or adapted to that environment.

Examples of using an NPC's dwelling in their environment include forests, mountains, wetlands, tundra, caves, volcanoes, and deserts. Each one has a truly unique feature about it that native creatures are adapted to. For example, camels are adapted to the desert by being able to store water in their humps, function with little



daily consumption of food and water, and large, thick hooves that protect from the heat of the sand. Characters entering this environment could easily burn their feet, suffer from heat exhaustion, or be unable to find food for survival.

An NPC's dwelling itself is not a Special Ability. Special Abilities come from how it adapts to its native environment. Consider the lands native to the creature or being (native being the key word as their culture or species has survived there for centuries if not millennia) and decipher what unique abilities allow them to survive within that environment. Those unique abilities become Special Abilities and provide an advantage over PCs who are unable to adapt to that environment.

Elemental

Elemental can be a tricky Special Ability to pin down. Sometimes elemental beings are depicted as existing on a different plane and appear on the PC's plane in a substantial form. They derive their strength from the plane in which they actually exist and may even return there once defeated. Sometimes elemental beings are supernatural creatures born from a specific element. Those types of creatures derive strength from a single element within the same plane as the PCs (if planes even exist) and are most likely comprised of that element. Defeating them may require opposing that element to overcome some type of immunity. A third possibility may be akin to demons or the divine in which the elemental being lives in a different realm and travels to the PC's realm to confront them.

Regardless of how the elemental NPC came to be, the question is what abilities are provided to the being due to its elemental nature? This answer should relate back to what the NPC is comprised of. How does that element affect the NPC? The term elemental doesn't have to refer to one of the four basic elements; it could refer to any byproduct of those elements or something completely esoteric in nature (such as a steel elemental being). After choosing the desired element, decide what advantages that element provides to the NPC.

When choosing advantages, it may be imperative to define weaknesses too. For instance, a water elemental is immune to water, strong against fire, but very vulnerable to wind. By doing this, the elemental isn't unstoppable, but becomes something of a puzzle for the PCs to solve – How can this elemental being be stopped?

As with other abilities, being elemental itself is not a Special Ability; how that element affects the NPC is where the Special Abilities come from. Consider the composition of the element, what opposes it, what's weak against it, and what other benefits can be drawn from it (such as flying, burrowing, transmutation, etc.).

Ethereal

Ethereal creatures can be a real pain if none of the PCs wield magic. They often have no weaknesses, but sometimes have weapons that can do damage. Instead of defining all ethereal creatures as insubstantial, define them as invisible: they cannot be seen, but to interact with the PCs, they need to materialize. Instead of being a simple apparition, the NPC is able to change from material to insubstantial as an action, allowing him to move about as desired, but not interact with the PCs (he also can't be hurt during that time). This means the PCs aren't completely hampered and can instead use combat tactics to defeat the NPC.

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Flight

Flight can be incredibly powerful in the right setting or against the right group of PCs. In modern action or science fiction games, flight means very little as characters always have long-range weapons capable of defeating flying creatures. In fantasy, medieval, dark ages, or even black powder settings, flight can be used as a tool against the PCs.

When encountering an NPC that can fly, the characters are all forced to go from Fighting to Shooting (maybe Throwing if the NPC doesn't move too far). Although the target number may be lower than the NPC's Parry, not all of the PCs may be capable of attacking at a distance if they specialize in melee, not ranged combat. It's possible to all-but remove some PCs from combat if they are not capable of, or really bad at, ranged combat. Instead of facing four or five formidable PCs, the NPC only has to face two, with two or four that can't do much outside of supporting.

To add another layer to the NPCs ability to fly, they could incorporate hit and run tactics by swooping. If there are multiple NPCs engaged in combat, they could spend many rounds harassing the PCs with swooping attacks between rounds of ranged attacks. Now the PCs are forced to find a way to attack at range and defend themselves during melee. Although the PCs can make attacks while the NPC is swooping to the ground, they may have to duck into cover to avoid the ranged attacks that follow.

Hive or Pack Mentality

Hive or pack mentality is the idea that a single creature is weak alone, but formidable when in a group. This could be represented as situational bonuses or unique abilities while the creature is accompanied by others of its species. If first encountered as a group, the NPCs are strong, but become weak as their numbers dwindle. If first encountered alone, the NPC is weak, but his strength is bolstered as the rest of his clan arrives.

Animals and insects often hunt or work in groups. Each individual has a specific function to perform and the job is more successful when everyone's doing their job correctly. For instance, two creatures could distract the prey while the third lunges for the throat. In this regard, the tactics are being performed by the NPCs to pinpoint one or two PCs instead of attempting to overcome the entire group.

This mentality can be represented by creatures with low stats, that may even runaway when encountered alone, that are increased through Special Abilities as more of its kind joins the pack. Maybe their willpower increases, providing them with the Level Headed Edge. Maybe they use team tactics which increases their measly Fighting d4 to d4+2. The focus for these Special Abilities is that as the pack strengthens, their ability to fight does too.

Hover

Not quite flight, but definitely better than walking, hovering allows the NPC to ignore most changes in the terrain. This advantage can be crucial in rocky environments or areas where the ground tends toward the extremes (e.g. volcanoes and glaciers). Hovering can also be used where the terrain completely changes, such as land to water, allowing the NPC to move about as he pleases and force the PCs to engage him in other ways. Hovering creatures rarely rise more than a foot above the ground, but any horizontal or rolling terrain can provide the base necessary for the hover to function properly.

Immunity

Immunity Special Abilities should be used wisely. Particularly malevolent GMs can use immunities to such a huge advantage that even the weakest NPC becomes impossible to defeat; that makes for bad storytelling. Instead of going to extremes, immunity can be used like a puzzle, in conjunction with a weakness, or to provide the NPC with a single advantage over the PCs (such as Special Abilities related to the NPC's dwelling).

A myriad of immunities could be created, but really only the right ones should be chosen. If the NPC is encountered in his native environment, he should have some type of immunity to that environment if there needs to be one (such as methane gas, sulfuric water, acid rain, or sweltering heat). If the PCs come into contact with that environment without protection, they could become Fatigued or sluggish. The penalty to the PCs shouldn't be drastic, but it can be used to aid in scaling the combat. This could also force the PCs to better prepare for the combat or use combat tactics.

If used in conjunction with a weakness, the NPC becomes a bit of a puzzle. Attacks A, B, and C did not harm, but attack D definitely caused the NPC pain. Once that weakness is deciphered, the PCs can then exploit it. Even if the NPC is easily overcome once that weakness is discovered, there's still the thrill of finding that weakness during the early rounds of combat that make the encounter memorable. Many supernatural beings use an immunity/weakness combination and if the PCs do their research beforehand, they may be able to reduce the effort needed to defeat the NPC. The memorable parts of the encounter then become the research required to determine those immunities and weaknesses.

Lycanthropic

Breaking away from the standard werewolf that turns its victims into werewolves, lycanthropic here is being used as a term for beings with shapeshifting abilities. They could even have the ability to assume multiple forms such as animal, humanoid beast, full human, and steps in-between. However, in this regard, the being is able to control their ability to shapeshift; they aren't held to the cliché forced change on a full moon.

The ability to shapeshift can be incredibly powerful, especially if the NPC can assume multiple forms, not just two. Each form the NPC takes on should have some unique ability that gives the NPC a reason to assume that form. As a beast, the NPC may be quite fast and able to leap great distances. As a human, the NPC can blend into society with ease. As a humanoid beast, the NPC has enhanced strength, making it a devastating force. Because the NPC controls their ability to shapeshift, they decide when and why it happens.

When creating some type of lycanthropic creature, make connections between the various forms the creature can assume and the Special Abilities associated with that form. If the creature can turn into a cheetah, provide it with great speed and maneuverability. If it can turn into a bear, provide it with great strength, size, and appetite supported by long claws. If it can turn into an alligator, make it amphibious and give its bite a bonus to grappling maneuvers. As long as each form the creature assumes has a purpose, it can be used to a greater potential once encountered.

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Malleable or Transmutable

For some reason, the NPC can alter the shape of its body. Transmutable creatures can alter their body temporarily, but the shape is retained until the body is altered again. Malleable creatures can quickly alter their body shape to move through or avoid objects, but the original shape reforms once the act is completed. Either method can provide an advantage over the PCs.

When encountering an NPC like this, the number of possible exits available to him increases. The NPC can squeeze through holes in the wall to reach another room, move easily through ventilation, and possibly fall down a drain. If placed within a sci-fi setting, a PC that misses on a Shooting roll could instead hit a wall, creating a hole large enough for the NPC to escape through.

Another possible advantage these NPCs can have is their ability to alter part of their body to avoid a melee attack. Like a swarm of insects, the NPC is only affected by area-effect weapons; everything else passes through as the NPC alters his body to avoid the attack.

The NPC's ability to alter their body could also provide them with the ability to mimic the physical body of another being. Given enough time, the NPC could look like a replica of a humanoid, but without the same voice and speech pattern. They could then pass through areas mostly unnoticed as they look like someone who's supposed to be there.

Mind Control

Mind control is another Special Ability that should be approached cautiously. It can be a lot of fun to control a PC, making him attack his allies, but it can also be quite detrimental to the PCs' ability to survive the combat. A better possible solution would be to allow the NPC to control the minds of other NPCs, using them as puppets against the PCs.

Mind control is more than just the *puppet* spell, although it can be represented as the *puppet* spell during combat. It's an all-but permanent control of another being's mental abilities, forcing them to do what the mind controller wishes them to do. In this regard, it can be performed on multiple beings, probably those with a low Smarts or Spirit, and doesn't require any Power Point upkeep. The NPC is essentially enslaving others to do his bidding, but without the need for torture and probably not with the memory of anything out of the ordinary occurring. When the mind control is released, the target remembers nothing and simply goes about the rest of their day with nothing more than a gaping hole in their memory.

If a mind controller is powerful enough, he could even control an entire army of mind slaves. His army could consist of captains, also under his control, giving orders simply in a very military fashion. Additionally, with a mental link to the enslaved beings, the mind controller may even be able to see, or experience, what the mind slave sees. It is as if the mind slave is an extension of his capabilities, possibly being used as a vessel for channeling his mind controlling powers.

Non-Lethal

Not all combat needs to result in death, especially if the NPC is looking to capture the PCs and interrogate them. Other than the martial arts and the basic fist fight, non-lethal damage can come from a number of sources that can quickly overwhelm the PCs. Electroshock weapons utilize non-lethal damage, but so can club weapons and rubber bullets. Damage can then either be assessed as normal, but deemed non-lethal, or following the Fatigue to Incapacitated route (this really depends on the weapon used). Once the PCs have become Incapacitated, they can be tied-up and sent to the dungeon for torture or to an interview room for interrogation.

Non-Organic

Non-organic refers to the NPC's composition; they are grown or built, not birthed. This can include the standard Construct Special Ability, but can also lead to other Special Abilities, much like demon and divine do.

A non-organic creature is more than just a robot; they have some type of artificial or programmed intelligence that provides them with the ability to make decisions and defend themselves if necessary. If they have artificial intelligence, they could perform virtually any human-like function. If they have programmed intelligence, or a combination of artificial and programmed, they have limitations on what they can do, but are free to function as necessary within those limitations. This intelligence can then be translated to unique Special Abilities that correspond to why the non-organic species existed in the first place.

Much like demonic and divine NPCs, this can be a series of questions that lead to deciphering new Special Abilities. Possibly the best question to ask is what purpose does the NPC serve? Are they designed for mining? How about military infiltration? How about a household servant? Once the NPC's purpose is defined, what feasible limitations and advantages should exist with that given purpose? Does the mining NPC have a hard shell to prevent damage from falling rocks? Is the military infiltration NPC only programmed to utilize heavy weapons that prevent it from walking and firing? Maybe the servant can only subdue targets, not kill them, using non-lethal damage.

Non-organic NPCs should also have a well-defined purpose to link it to why the encounter is occurring. Are the PCs stumbling upon a mining shaft? Did they get in the middle of guerilla warfare? Are they attempting to infiltrate the servant's master's home? Most non-organic NPCs wouldn't be found simply wandering around; most of them have a purpose as to why they exist.

In transhuman settings, however, artificial intelligent NPCs may have complete freedom and function without direction. This type of setting would not use the non-organic Special Abilities and would instead stick to Constructs. Non-organic Special Abilities should be used for artificial intelligence without freedom and only function with direction.

Poison or Acid

Even weak creatures can be made deadly with poisonous or acidic attacks. Poisonous attacks are ones that affect the character, causing Fatigue or additional Wound. Acidic attacks are ones that affect the character's gear, reducing effectiveness in regards to causing damage or providing armor. Either one can drastically alter the PCs' combat tactics, possibly removing them from their combat strength (such as moving from melee to ranged combat).

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Poisonous and acidic attacks can also be used as an escape method. If the NPC finds they are losing the battle, one quick strike that exceeds the PC's Parry inflicts no damage but transfers the poison or acid to the intended target. This may cause the PC's weapon to break or the PC to stop in his tracks due to incredible pain shooting through their body. The NPC makes a quick getaway while the PC is distracted, living to see another day.

If encountering a horde of creatures, poison and acid attacks could result in a total party kill; and no one wants that. This can be altered by defining when the poison or acid transfers to the target. For example, maybe it only happens when the NPC hits with a Raise or maybe it's a one shot effect that requires several minutes before it can be used again. Either way, the PCs can avoid being killed, but they are still forced to think tactically instead of heedlessly running into combat.

Stable

Not all creatures walk on two humanoid legs; many that don't have means of stabilizing the movement of their body. Whether this added form of stability comes from having four legs and two arms or large claws that allow grip, the NPC not only ignores unstable platforms, he's able to brace himself against bold maneuvers (such as charging).

What provides an NPC with this added stability could create additional benefits. If he's like a centaur, maybe he can run and attack with no penalty or use his body to great effect when charging, providing him a bonus to damage. If claws are providing the extra grip, maybe he can hang upside down from a thick tree branch by his feet while still making ranged attacks with accuracy. In a sci-fi setting, he could have magnetic boots that prevent him from slipping.

The form the stability takes could provide both defensive and offensive benefits besides ignoring unsteady platforms. When creating NPCs using this Special Ability, first create the physical appearance of the NPC to determine what benefits that added stability provides offensively and defensively. Although combat maneuvers may not be a regular part of combat, it can become a usable tactic on the NPC's part if it provides some type of advantage over the PCs.

Tremorsense

Tremorsense is a unique sense related to the ability to feel something moving due to the vibrations in the ground. This Special Ability may be most often attributed to burrowing creatures, but it can also be used by those who are blind (which many burrowing creatures may also be).

Tremorsense can force the PCs to be cautious of their movement during combat due to the NPC's ability to detect them because of their movement. How far this sense reaches should be far enough so that the NPC isn't hampered, but not so much that the movement of everyone nearby is felt. When the PCs use combat movement tactically, such as not moving at all, the NPC may be unable to see where the PCs are. Maybe not completely blind, the NPC still incurs a major penalty to his attacks due to not knowing exactly where the PCs are located. On the other hand, if they neglect to use combat movement tactically, the NPC knows where they all at all times, even if they're behind walls or using stealth while moving through the darkness.

Undead

Breaking away from the standard Undead Monstrous Ability, this entry attempts to get the GM to think deeper about undead creatures. When thinking about undead beings, there are three basic categories: animated, resurrected, and sired.

Animated undead are those who've been dead for so long that there's little left of them besides bones and strips of clothing. They become walking skeletons, animated by some unseen power or through magical abilities. Defeating them requires the PCs to crush their bone structure, thus severing the power that is animating them. Piercing and slashing weapons may have little effect on them while clubbing and smashing weapons have great effect. However, if they are nothing more than bones, how are they controlled? Do they crumple to the ground when the animating power is severed? Do they continuously reassemble if the animating power is not severed? If a Wound is akin to a bone breaking, does it cause disfigurement of the animated figure, forcing it to move slowly and awkwardly?

Resurrected undead are those who haven't been dead nearly as long and still have a fair amount of flesh left along with the clothes they were buried in. Their limbs are still attached as they were during life, but hacking one off produces little blood (the heart has stopped long ago) and the creature continues to move as if nothing happens. Of course, there should be some kind of drawback for losing a limb, depending on which limb was lost. Since the resurrected undead still have brains, does the power that resurrected them simply give them a command that they act out? Are they free to make their own decisions, possibly turning on their master? Do the personality traits of their former life reappear, turning them into fierce warriors or loathsome psychopaths? How do Wounds manifest on the resurrected creature and do they penalize it in any way?

Sired undead are those who are alive and in control of their mind, like vampires. They are possibly the masters of the former undead types, capable of creating new sired undead, or just victims of some type of unlife. Are they near-immortal? Do they need to eat and breathe? What do they do from day to day if they never age?

After answering any number of questions regarding the undead being, translate the answers into immunities and weaknesses. This immunity/weakness design forces the PCs to be smart about combat and not just rush into it, or research the NPC beforehand. For example, skeletons in a sci-fi setting could be immune to bullets as they have no effect on the overall bone structure. However, they are particularly weak to explosive rounds that shatter the bones so badly they can't be reassembled properly.

Wall Walking

Wall walking can be more than just another movement type when it comes to creating encounters. NPCs with this ability would certainly use it for more than just getting around the PCs during combat; he could use it during the minutes leading up to the combat. Being able to scale walls opens up one's environment to new possibilities such as traps mounted in the ceiling, ambushes from atop a short cliff, pushing large debris down into an entrance to block escape routes, access to weapons stored near the ceiling, and exits that lead directly out of dangerous places.

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To be truly effective, an NPC with wall walking should be taken out of confined spaces and placed inside areas with plenty of vertical movement that the PCs cannot utilize. In this regard, the NPC is using the terrain to his advantage, forcing the PCs to engage in combat in different ways such as moving to ranged combat or finding ways to cut-off the NPCs escape routes.

See **Jungle Trickery** on page 79 for examples of using these Special Abilities to create a formidable NPC.

Weakness

Weaknesses can come in two forms: a method of overcoming an NPC's immunity, or something that acts as a hindrance to the NPC. The former is used in conjunction with immunity Special Abilities to give the PCs a method of Wounding the NPC. The latter can be used to represent the NPC's native environment and give the PCs tactical methods of overcoming the NPC in and out of combat. The latter can also be used to represent something that opposes other conditions the NPC exhibits (such as hot and cold) and can also be tactically used against the NPC.

An example of the hindrance form of weakness is seen with elemental creatures. A creature birthed from fire could sustain extra damage when encountering cold or water. An example of the immunity/weakness form is a creature that is immune to physical damage and can only be Wounded by magical damage.

When considering which form to use, consider the setting and the PCs' access to the weakness. If they have no way of overcoming an immunity by accessing the weakness, then the party will certainly die as the NPC becomes unstoppable.

When choosing an appropriate weakness, don't be limited to common methods of damage (such as certain elements) or defaulting to only magic. There are many things possible on a planet that one can be weak to such as poison, disease, hot, cold, pollution, viruses, fear, wood, metal, dust, rocks, allergens, or lack of water. There are also supernatural options like faith, holy symbols, holy water, consecrated land, runes, prayer, corruption, or ancient languages.

Villain Combat Balance

The PCs have made it through numerous trials and tribulations and are bearing down on the big, bad villain. During that time they have accumulated lots of experience points and are more than capable of taking down the average villain with little to no effort. The dilemma becomes how to make that villain formidable enough to stand against the PCs, creating a memorable encounter without resulting in a total party kill. GMs can only adjust a villain's Toughness so much before they become unbeatable, forcing the campaign to screech to a halt. Although hordes of Extras could be utilized, the villain would then have the spotlight removed and the encounter would feel meaningless.

The *Savage Worlds Fantasy Companion* from Pinnacle Entertainment Group has a sidebar titled "Villains" within its **Bestiary** chapter. **Villain Combat Balance** expands on those basic principles by presenting different ways to scale encounters outside of increasing the villain's Toughness or giving him a horde of Extras to command. Special Abilities presented in **Villain Creation** and traits presented in **Building a Template** can be translated into the different presented means of scaling an encounter, giving them further purpose and value.

Although clearly not the only options available, this chapter should spark many ideas to create memorable encounters that result in PC triumph, keeping the momentum of the campaign and the story moving toward its final destination.

ALLIES

Not all villains are alone; many of them have hordes of servants or slaves and some travel in packs with other like-minded individuals. When considering a villain's allies, these Wild Card NPC obstacles can be just as important during the lead-up to the villain as is the fight with the villain. They can also be used with the NPC as a bodyguard (although this should be limited to one or two so that they don't overshadow the strength of the villain).

Villains call on their allies just like a PC calls on her contacts: to help get a job done. The villain can either give orders through a chain of command or call on favors from some existing debt so that the allies act as obstacles or diversions while the PCs are nearing the villain.

As a diversion, allies, and possibly an ally's entourage or horde of Extras, can be used as encounters before reaching the big villain to either delay the PCs reaching that villain or forcing them to change their strategy on how they approach the villain. If the villain is plotting something big and needs one more week to complete it, the allies serve as that diversion, giving the villain the extra time he needs. If he's attempting to pack up his laboratory and escape, the allies can keep the PCs occupied long enough for that to happen.

As an obstacle, allies can serve to weaken the PCs during their approach to the villain. While time will need to be a consideration (due to healing), the allies don't have to kill the PCs, just Wound them. Entering combat with a villain with a Wound or level of Fatigue presents an immediate drawback to the PCs. This can be used to scale the final encounter, allowing the villain a fighting chance instead of being immediately overwhelmed by the PCs.

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From a mechanical aspect, that Wound or level of Fatigue presents a (-1) penalty to attack rolls. If the PCs have an average of d8 for their preferred attack method, this penalty reduces their ability to hit by 12.5% and their Pace by 1. While this may not seem like much, it can provide the villain with an added chance of avoiding each attack. It also means that PCs are only three Wounds away from being Incapacitated instead of four. Additionally, if the villain has a high enough Parry, this may even force a PC into ranged combat as they stand a better chance of hitting the reduced target number.

When constructing allies as a diversion, they can be virtually anything that keeps the PCs busy while the villain does what he needs to do. If serving as an obstacle leading up to the final encounter, they should be strong enough to last several rounds with the PCs, but not strong enough to kill them without some truly lucky dice rolls. Their job is to weaken the PCs so that the villain has an advantage once the final encounter begins. If serving as bodyguards to the villain, they should be much weaker than the villain, but capable of keeping at least one PC busy while the others deal with the villain. In this regard, the bodyguard reduces the number of PCs that combat the villain at a given time; until he's Incapacitated of course.

ENVIRONMENT

When confronting a villain in his native environment, a number of factors can be added to scale the encounter; this is especially true if the villain is beast-like. Environmental disadvantages can come in the form of hazardous terrain that causes Fatigue. The villain ignores these disadvantages due to being native to the environment (or immune to their effects), but they can have a particularly detrimental effect on the PCs.

When considering the environment of a conflict, hazardous terrain shouldn't be everywhere. Instead, it comes in the form of spotty locations throughout the battlefield that the PCs must avoid completely. Either that location cannot be traversed or it's so dangerous to be near that it causes Fatigue (such as a volcano's heat vent). Although this reduces the amount of space available to the PCs, it can truly provide additional benefits to the villain should he stand on or near that hazardous terrain (because he's immune to it). This is particularly effective if the hazardous terrain has some type of aura associated with it that reduces the PCs' ability to attack or see the villain.

For example, the villain's native environment is a volcano. Dotted throughout the volcano's surface are heat vents and sulfur pools (while sulfur may be good for your skin, it's extremely hot on the volcano). The villain can stand adjacent to those openings where the heat is so extreme that it forces a Vigor roll to avoid gaining a level of Fatigue. If the PC wishes to engage in melee, she must be able to overcome that extreme heat or suffer the consequences. This could force her into ranged combat instead. Another option is for the villain to stand where that opening is between him and the PCs, forcing them to travel well around it, possibly wasting an entire round doing so.

For another example, the villain's native environment is tundra. Dotted throughout the tundra are large patches of ice, frigid water, slippery moss, frozen soil, and thorny shrubs. The climate is enough to force a Vigor test. Proper gear to overcome the climate can cause sluggishness due to its weight and lack of mobility. Moving about the tundra adds another layer of difficulty as the villain is able to run around with

ease while the PCs cannot run on the terrain without additional equipment and may even consider the land as an unstable platform. This reduction in movement prevents the PCs from charging and possibly allows the villain to keep a safe distance, once again forcing the PCs into ranged combat.

For a final example, the villain's native environment is a jungle. Scattered throughout the jungle are vines, wetlands, dense vegetation, poisonous plants, large snakes, and disease-bearing insects. In tropical areas, sweltering humidity may force Vigor rolls to avoid Fatigue, but the possibility of being poisoned, bitten, or constricted can be enough to make the PCs pause. The villain can swing throughout the jungle at ease on strong vines or climb up and across the dense trees with seemingly little effort while the PCs are stuck forcing their way through the thick vegetation at a snail's pace. In this situation, they may be forced into a single position while the villain uses hit and run attacks to drop onto the PCs and flee back up a tree.

FEAR

Fear is a fairly common trait to add to monsters; but the concept of using fear in an encounter can stretch much further than just being a Monstrous Ability. There are plenty of creatures and villains that can instill fear or dread into the hearts of the PCs, possibly going so far as to break their willpower, but being thrown into certain situations or surroundings can be just as terrifying.

First, fear can come from the scene of a given situation. For instance, walking into a room filled with dead bodies can throw a character into panic mode. The idea that the villain is capable of this type of death can force a Spirit roll as often as encountering the actual villain does. Mutilated corpses, torture, horrifically beaten individuals, and pestilence are examples of scenes that can overwhelm a PC's vision due to the trauma it represents.

Second, fear can come from the resulting stench of a given situation. For instance, a villain may survive by feeding off recently dead bodies. The smell from the decay of those bodies assaults the nostrils and makes the PCs vomit uncontrollably. This is akin to a Fear test and could even inflict a level of Fatigue if the nausea doesn't subside. This could also be true when entering a medical tent filled with plague victims. Many diseases cause the body to emit a horrific odor because something inside is dying or decaying.

Third, fear can come from the anticipation of a given situation. If one can hear a nearby slaughter, how would he or she react? During war, hearing the staccato of a submachine gun is enough to force the PC to the ground. If he keeps himself together, he moves on by crawling. If not, he panics and tries to run away. By knowing he's walking into a deadly situation, does the PC remain stoic or does the anticipation force him to flee before the encounter begins?

Finally, fear can come from the foreshadowing of a given situation. Dreams can be a powerful tool, and when nightmares turn into *déjà vu*, the PC remembers the results of his nightmare and has to force himself to overcome the foreshadowed events. Did he witness his body being torn apart by tendrils extending from nowhere? Or maybe he watched as his allies were killed by the villain while he stood by doing nothing. Panic can set in, forcing the PC to question his actions and those of his allies.

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In these examples, fear can be a standard Fear Test, a Test of Wills, or forced Fatigue due to sickness. Either way, a penalty to all rolls is detrimental to the PCs and those who fail badly enough experience other drawbacks. A party of five with two panicked PCs may find that they are now a party of three combating a villain until the other two are able to pull themselves together.

MOVEMENT

Movement can be an important factor in combat when ranged weapons aren't nearly as prevalent or as effective. Even though someone has a higher initiative than the villain, if they can't move into melee or move around the villain's cover, then they lose the opportunity to strike first. If the villain is much faster than the PCs, even with a lower initiative he may have the opportunity to strike first simply due to his superior ability to move about the battlefield.

Hit and run tactics rely on a character's ability to move about the battlefield better than their target. The villain gets the opportunity to strike first, but once engaged in melee, the PCs get their opportunity. If the villain can throw up a distraction or the movement is simply a means of getting out of cover, he may be able to get back into cover or move away from the PC on the next round. If the villain is lucky enough to get a higher initiative than the PCs, then he really gets the opportunity to get away from the PCs and back to a safe location.

While these hit and run tactics may not always be ideal, the concept of movement can also apply to how uninhibited the villain is during his movement. If the villain can hover above the ground, he ignores many types of terrain obstacles and can even pass over things like water, lava, and bushes. These are obstacles the PCs have to walk around or jump over, reducing their ability to reach the villain in a single movement.

Villains with animal-like features may instead possess the ability to leap great distances. If the battlefield is pockmarked with craters, crevasses, or rocks, the villain can simply leap over the obstacle and reach the other side without having to take the long way. The PCs may be completely unable to jump that far and are either forced to find a way around it or go through it (if that's even possible). Their movement can quickly be eaten up by trying to avoid the obstacle; possibly to the point that they don't have enough movement to get through it and simply cannot stop in the middle.

By flexing his superior movement abilities, the villain is able to regularly escape to a safer area or distance, either allowing him to recoup from his injuries or simply avoid the dangers of being outnumbered five to one. If only one or two PCs are able to attack the villain each round, then a party of five becomes nothing more than two active members with three in reserve.

PROWESS

What is the villain particularly skilled at? Even if a villain has a low damage rating, if he can hit one or more PCs every combat round, then no rounds are wasted and he's continually weakening the party. If he hits with a Raise, even better as now he gets that added power to his damage.

The important factor in prowess is that the villain is so skilled at using his preferred attack method that he simply can't miss whenever he attacks. Even if he's only causing a Shaken status with every attack, he's forcing the PCs to recover from being Shaken, possibly by spending a Benny, and can possibly Wound them if they don't

recover. From the villain's standpoint, it becomes a battle of attrition, even if he could easily be killed by the combined attacks from two PCs. If those PCs are unlucky enough to be Wounded, the villain lives that much longer and the encounter becomes that much more memorable.

Combat prowess can come in the form of melee, ranged, or magical attacks. However, it doesn't have to be limited to physical injuries and can be just as effective in Tests of Will and certain powers that inhibit the PCs from making further attacks, like *blind* or *confusion*.

Prowess can also be directly linked to the environment in which the encounter occurs. If, for some reason, the PCs travel to the depths of a sea to encounter the villain, being particularly good at Swimming gives the villain an advantage. If the encounter is in the woods, Climbing may provide the villain with what he needs to stay alive. If the encounter results in a chase scene, Boating, Driving, or Piloting can become extremely critical skills.

In these situations, prowess is linked to the villain's ability to gain some type of advantage over the PCs. Again, this advantage may not be capable of inflicting more damage, but his offensive and defensive maneuvers are such that he always overcomes the PCs' ability to do the same. Depending on the situation, this could lead to further complications, such as during a chase scene. The lead-up to the final combat then becomes the memorable part of the encounter, as once the villain is caught, he's dealt with swiftly.

RANGE

There are two factors of range to address: melee range and weapon range. Melee range is the distance a character can cover in one move, ending that move engaged in combat. Weapon range is a weapon's usable horizontal and vertical distance as noted in the weapon's stats. Although both can be used for scaling combat, weapon range will have a much different effect in fantasy settings compared to sci-fi ones due to weapon capabilities.

Melee range starts from the first round of combat and looks at how quickly a character can engage in combat with his opposition. Things like terrain, Pace, and running factor into this melee range, but the basic principal is that the character can engage in melee combat quickly without spending a round (or more) moving to catch-up with the villain. If at any time, the character cannot get into melee range, then he's forced into weapon range. If he's mechanically built for melee, this could provide the villain with an advantage.

Villains with superb movement or cover can use range to their advantage. By forcing melee characters into ranged combat, he's weakening the overall ability of the characters to hit him if they don't possess an adequate ranged attack skill or ability. If a group of five characters consists of three melee fighters and two ranged fighters, he's effectively reduced the group's strength by removing 60% of its preferred combat style.

For example, if these three fighters have Fighting d10 and the villain has a Parry of 6, they have a 50% chance of hitting him. If they have melee Edges or Trademark Weapon, that chance increases even more. All three fighters have Shooting or

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Throwing d4 with no supporting Edges and their Trademark Weapon no longer applies. They now have a 25% chance of hitting the villain, hopefully with a weapon that can overcome his Toughness. By denying the characters' melee range, combat becomes a bit easier for the villain, allowing him to live that much longer.

Weapon range is a bit easier to overcome as long as the weapons being wielded can reach across the vastness of the battlefield. In modern and sci-fi settings, there are many weapons that reach well past the battlefield, thus making weapon range a moot point. In fantasy or black powder settings, not all weapons can reach across the battlefield, making for an interesting game of tactics.

For example, if the villain and his bodyguards have weapons with a maximum range of 80 while the characters' weapons have a maximum range of 60, they have to spend the first couple rounds closing in on their targets before their weapons have any effect. If there is plenty of cover around, the characters may find themselves ducking behind objects repeatedly while making their way across the battlefield. If there is no cover, the characters may find themselves caught in the open, being pelted by round after round of missile fire from the opposition.

This can effectively weaken the characters once they move into weapon range. Even if the opposition's weapons only cause a Shaken status with the occasional Wound, the characters have suffered that much damage before they can finally retaliate. The penalty to their ranged attack can now make a big difference, providing the villain with yet another way of prolonging his life. Even if it's only for a few extra rounds of combat.

TERRAIN

Unless every encounter the GM creates takes place in an open battlefield, there's going to be terrain. In this regard, terrain refers to all battlefield obstacles including: hills, trees, shrubs, furniture, houses, cars, streetlights, and everything else that isn't a character or flat ground. A wise villain will plot a battlefield before an encounter, knowing that combat is imminent, learning where the best places are to use as cover, set traps, spring ambushes, or gain an advantageous position.

First, terrain can be used as cover as long as it's large or strong enough to provide some type of cover. If the terrain is large, it can aid in obscuring or completely blocking line of sight. Besides just a penalty to ranged attacks, the GM could claim that the cover is so large that a Notice roll is required for the first round of combat just to locate the villain. If the terrain is strong, it can be used as a barrier, essentially adding to the villain's Toughness. Unless the character can make a Called Shot, the ranged attack hits the cover and the villain remains unharmed.

Second, terrain can be used to hide traps. When the battlefield is the veritable stomping grounds of the villain, he's bound to have security measures in place to keep his home safe. For fantasy this could be pit or spike traps while for modern this could be electric fences and buried tripwires. Either way, once the characters move into that location, possibly just around the corner from that large piece of terrain, the trap is sprung and the character suffers the consequences.

Third, terrain can be used for ambushes. Gaining the Drop on a group of characters can quickly turn the tide of battle, temporarily at least, to the side of the villain. By being able to strike first, he could weaken them just enough with a round of Shaken results that the characters must now spend their first turn overcoming.

Finally, terrain can be used to gain the high or low ground, depending on which one proves to be advantageous to the villain. The high ground may allow the villain to stand between the characters and the sun, forcing them to shield their eyes when aiming at the villain. The low ground may be covered in shadows, obscuring the villain just enough to make it difficult to spot him. Another advantage to high or low ground could be the slope of a hill between the characters and the villain, forcing them to move cautiously (i.e. no running).

Of course, when it comes to terrain, the characters can use it to their advantage too. This could create an excellent balance to combat, making it that much more memorable as both the villain and the characters are forced to fight tactically due to the number of obstacles between them.

TRAPS AND PUZZLES

Traps and puzzles will be addressed together since overcoming or avoiding them both require wits. Outside of the one-shot trap that only injures the first character to come upon it, traps and puzzles can be used as a lead-up to the encounter with the villain to either weaken or delay the characters or make the events surrounding the final encounter that much more memorable. It can do this by forcing the players to think about their character's skills, the availability of objects around them, the usefulness of their gear, and maybe the knowledge their character has built-up over time.

The traps and puzzles being referred to here are those that are established well ahead of time and are permanent fixtures until the characters find a way to completely overcome them. These are not one-time use attacks that only hit the lead character as they actually affect everyone that comes across them. Only the villain and his bodyguards know how to get around them, or maybe they activate the trap or puzzle as the PCs enter their lair.



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There are many different ways to establish traps as a hindrance during the lead-up to the final encounter. They can be simple in nature or quite complex. They could require the use of skills, single rolls, or Dramatic Tasks, to overcome, or a strategic use of objects available nearby. This could be as simple as an open pit filled with cobras to an extravagant clockwork system that fires poisonous darts whenever someone enters a tunnel. There are truly only two requirements for a trap: a method of setting the trap and a method of overcoming it (either by disabling or avoiding it). The villain needs a way of setting the trap and the characters are tasked with finding a way to overcome it.

Typically, the biggest difference between a trap and a puzzle is that a trap does damage while a puzzle is meant to frustrate or deter. Many traps have puzzle-like elements, but a simple puzzle shouldn't cause injury. Instead, a puzzle could: delay the characters, send them down the wrong path, turn them back toward where they came, or cause mental stress. But, as with a trap, a puzzle needs a method of setting and overcoming it. However, puzzles may not have a means of disabling. One simply needs to figure out the puzzle to continue on. In this regard, the puzzle may always be on and the villain simply knows how to overcome it quickly. If the villain's lair is like a maze, a wrong solution on the puzzle may send the characters down an unwanted path, possibly leading straight into an ambush.

VISIBILITY

Obscured targets are harder to hit. However, if the villain can see through what's obscuring the characters' vision, then he now has an advantage, mechanically and tactically. There are multiple things that can obscure the characters vision including: extreme light, large shadows, smoke, fog, fire, falling water, tall grass, and thick foliage. Of course, the villain has to have a way of overcoming that which obscures him, otherwise the disadvantage falls on both sides.

For example, a villain amongst an area filled with smoke may know the characters are approaching by foot. He could be prone with a large rifle aimed right where the characters are coming. As soon as he sees them, one shot goes off. The characters have no idea where the shot came from since the smoke is completely blocking their vision. If they were to go prone, they'd see the villain, and hopefully they have weapons that allow for a ranged attack. If the villain decides to stand or move to another area, the characters would have to search until they can understand the layout of the battlefield.

As another example, a villain is sitting in a stand amongst the treetops of a dense jungle. His rifle is resting between two branches that form a v-shape, giving him a clear shot at the characters as they enter a clearing. The shot rings out and the characters now have to search for the villain and find a way to hit him while he's obscured by the dense jungle.

Special equipment could help the characters overcome their obscured vision, but until they truly understand the layout of the battlefield, everything becomes something of a shield to the villain. The GM may opt for a Notice roll to accompany each attack just to spot the villain's location, regardless of what cover he may be behind.

Threatening Combinations

The list above provides a number of ways to scale combat so that a villain doesn't need high Toughness to survive. His survival is instead based on his ability to use what he has available to him to great effect, forcing the characters to overcome his tactics with tactics of their own. Once they do that, the combat may shift quickly in the characters' favor, and the encounter goes down as a memorable one while the GM didn't have to turn to Toughness to allow the villain to survive.

On their own, many of these methods can provide a small amount of scaling to combat. At low character ranks, this may have a more dramatic effect. At higher character ranks, or if they prepare for the worst through the use of technology, the effect may be much less and the characters defeat the villain with hardly any work involved. Instead of employing a single method on its own, combine them so that the villain maintains his advantage, forcing the players to think strategically.

The number of possible combinations is immense and how those combinations are flavored becomes almost infinite. Because this list could go on and on, here is an example of how these methods can be combined to make that villain encounter more interesting and difficult for the characters.

JUNGLE TRICKERY – AN EXAMPLE IN STORY

The characters have traveled thousands of miles to track the villain, Jeremy Retgard, down to his jungle lair. Up until this point, they've dealt with numerous henchmen, political red tape, annoying treasure hunters, and torrential downpours. But an opportunity has now opened for the characters to strike. Now however, they're entering the villain's domain, and Retgard knows this land like the back of his hand.

The jungle is dense, extremely dense, and moving through it is a daunting task. Movement is slow and the lead character, Bishop, finds himself continually hacking through brush and vines with his sickle to clear a path. But up ahead, he spots a small clearing; a very peculiar clearing. It is as if the clearing has been created by hand, possibly allowing someone to live in or near it. Bishop shouts out to the rest of the team that he can see a clearing ahead. It's not much farther, and they should be able to drop in on the villain, bringing him down swiftly.

The party consists of five characters with Bishop leading the way. The rearmost character, Chelsea, decides to stop and climb a tree to get a better look at what's ahead. As she passes just above ten feet, a shot flies through the jungle and goes through her arm. She falls off the tree and hits the ground hard. A revelation passes through them all: they're being watched. There is only one problem, the jungle is so dense that it obscures their vision; they can only see the path ahead, behind, and the small amount of area around them.

While one of the characters, Duke, tends to his fallen friend, the other three, Bishop, Maddock, and Chet, move slowly through the dense jungle. Their movement is extremely slow until they reach the edge of the clearing. Once they do, another shot rings out, but passes by Bishop's ear. He hits the dirt and Maddock and Chet behind him start readying their guns. Each one uses a scope or binoculars, but they just can't see where the shots are coming from.

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Another shot rings out; this one passes through Maddock's gun scope, crippling all hopes of finding the gunman from that distance. The team must move quickly, and decides to use the thick trees as cover. As they move to a new position, another shot rings out, but hits the opposite side of a tree. They can guess now that their cover keeps them safe from the gunman, but they'll have to move around the tree to get a clear shot.

Only seconds go by and the team hears movement among the branches, peeking around to see them moving violently. They all come to a single conclusion: the gunman is in the trees and moving about them with ease. Another shot rings out, this one from a different direction, hitting Chet in the leg. With Chelsea patched up, Duke runs over to Chet to tend to his leg while Chelsea rejoins the group.

Bishop indicates the general direction the gunman is located. With no more bullets being fired, he assumes their current position has effectively placed the trees between them and the gunman. Maddock switches out his rifle for a submachine gun and prepares to spray the area ahead. He steps out from the tree and launches a volley of fire toward the direction of the opposing gunfire. The team hears a yelp and sounds like someone falling through the trees. A soft 'thunk' is heard and the gunman can now be seen on the ground. Maddock's volley worked.

Retgard brushes himself off and notes the probably distance between him and the group. There is no shortage of space but the thickness of the jungle means pursuit will be slow. He sets off toward a path created months ago to get away from the group.

Bishop sees the gunman stand up and peer across the jungle clearing. The small clearing is still filled with debris, although the trees along the edges are set farther apart. He begins moving toward the gunman as he scurries off. Bishop moves to quicken his pace, but stumbles across a hidden razor wire that cuts into his leg. He yells for the others to move quickly, but cautiously, and avoid the razorwire. Chet, now patched up, joins Maddock and Chelsea as they pursue the gunman. Movement is slow though, partially due to the injuries and partially due to the difficulties of moving through the jungle. Duke stays behind to take care of Bishop's leg.

Chet, Maddock, and Chelsea get about fifty feet away when a pair of natives jumps down from a tree stand. Chet and Maddock yell for Chelsea to keep moving as they square off against the natives. Chelsea continues through the jungle and after the gunman.

Retgard nods in pleasure as he hears his guards keeping the group busy. He chances a glance over his shoulder and notices only one hunter is left. His ego begins to take hold and he quickly finds a place to hide.

Chelsea locates the gunman's path and is able to pick-up speed. She looks for additional clearings and slows down once the gunman is completely out of her sight. No additional clearings are to be found anywhere, so Chelsea searches, using her gun to move the adjacent vegetation. A lithe form leaps from the jungle and, before she can react, knocks her to the ground. Her assault rifle goes clattering across the path, but the gunman doesn't seem to care. He pulls out a knife and a sickle and moves to strike Chelsea in the leg.

Chelsea is a quick and formidable in hand-to-hand combat. She easily dodges the gunman's attack and pulls a knife from her tactical vest. Instead of getting close to the sickle, she whips her blade across the path and into the gunman's arm. The gunman drops his knife, but manages to pull her free. His left arm is all-but useless, but he wields the sickle in his right hand. With only the sickle left, he moves to strike at Chelsea and tears one of the pockets on her vest.

Chelsea can't completely dodge the attack, but the vest is able to catch the blow. The gunman now realizes she's wearing armor and so his next attack is aimed at her arm. She easily steps out of the way and dives to grab the two knives on the ground. She's able to reach them, but now she's on her back with the villain looming over her.

Retgard makes a swipe at her leg, avoiding the obvious armor she wears on her body. The sickle breaks her skin and the woman begins bleeding. However, his arm is beginning to pulse as the previous knife wound had gone almost clear through it. Before he can think further about his arm, a knife is hurled through the air toward his chest. He attempts to dodge the projectile, but to little avail. The knife ends up in his right arm, and he drops the sickle to the ground.

Chelsea watches the gunman's weapon drop as her second knife hits his right arm. Instead of wasting her opportunity by standing up, she sweeps her leg and trips the gunman, sending him onto his back. The gunman's head hits a rock and he appears unconscious. Chelsea stands up and kicks the man in the side to ensure he's no longer moving. Blood seeps out from the side of his head, but his chest continues to move up and down as a sign that he's still alive. She turns the gunman over and places a knee in his back, waiting for the others to arrive.

Bloodied and battered, but still standing, the other four members of the team catch up to Chelsea and see the gunman on the ground. Bishop identifies him as Jeremy Retgard, the man they're looking for. He brings Retgard's arms behind his back and handcuffs his wrists together. Headquarters was hoping to interrogate him and the team has successfully taken the man alive.

Mechanical Translation

This example could definitely make for a memorable encounter with the final villain. How was it designed for the game table? For starters, Jeremy Retgard is physically weak. He was completely unable to take Chelsea on one-on-one in hand-to-hand combat. Getting Chelsea into hand-to-hand combat was much more difficult. Mechanically, he has a low Fighting skill and is only equipped with a knife and a sickle.

Retgard is best as a ranged assassin. He has prowess in Climbing, Notice, and Shooting. He is a trained marksman, and has a sniper rifle with a scope. Each time he shot his rifle, he was aiming and making a called shot to systematically weaken his targets. Because the group was entering his homeland, he also had several other advantages: terrain, environment, range, visibility, traps, and allies.

Retgard used the terrain to great effect by luring the group into a small clearing where his other advantages came into play. He had superior positioning within the trees as he could easily see down on the group, but they struggled to see him. He sat within a tree stand and was able to aim his rifle between the branches. However, the tree obscured anyone from seeing him, making it all-but impossible to know where he was hiding.

Retgard used his knowledge of the jungle and the terrain to his advantage by keeping to the trees at first and then traveling on a known path once he was knocked out of the tree. He was able to lure the group into a permanent trap, that was easy to overcome, and into the hands of his waiting guards, who were also easy to overcome. By doing all this, the only character he had to contend with in the end was Chelsea, who easily defeated him with her high Throwing and Fighting skill.

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The native environment also played a major part in this encounter. The sweltering heat of the jungle meant the characters were only dressed with tactical vests, leaving their arms and legs vulnerable. Retgard capitalized on this with his superior marksman abilities. He doesn't wear any armor and prefers to use his speed and agility to his advantage.

When looking at this villain encounter from a stat block standpoint, Retgard's Toughness is no higher than the PCs, but he used his advantages to great effect and avoided the PCs' strength (engaging him in melee) as best as he could.

The PCs resorted to tactics instead of rushing in head on. Duke served as a support person to address injuries immediately, Bishop was able to find the trap so that the others could avoid it, Maddock sent a volley of bullets into the trees to force Retgard to the ground, Maddock and Chet took care of the guards to allow Chelsea to chase Retgard, and Chelsea used her wits to trip Retgard, forcing him to the ground where she could overcome him.

Of course, dice rolls could change every single outcome above, but the general premise is that Toughness was not a factor as the encounter was balanced by using what the villain had available to him to great effect.

Role-playing games have two major components: characters and the storyline those characters interact with. In the 'world' of **Savage Worlds**, the storyline is typically defined by the campaign setting or plot point campaign run by the GM. Characters, however, are typically defined by the creativity of the player in the form of a character concept and background. The player then uses the *Savage Worlds* core rulebook, *Companion* books, and setting guides to translate that character concept and background into in-game mechanics. Pretty simple... but what do you do when you can't quite translate that character concept and background into the proper in-game mechanics?

Ultimate Characters Guide was designed to address that issue, and go quite a bit further. Why stop at player characters when a GM may have the same issue? Thus, *Ultimate Characters Guide* addresses PCs and NPCs (beasts, creatures, villains, humanoids, aliens, etc.) through a series of new options, new ideas, and new implementations of the same *Savage Worlds* mechanics. There's no need to create all new mechanics, just find a different way to use the current ones to great effect.

Ultimate Characters Guide includes:

- Creating racial/background templates using a collection of physical, mental, and environmental aspects for all types of characters.
- New universal Hindrances and Edges to add to the core rulebook, usable within any setting.
- Two new types of skill uses: Supporting Skills and Complementary Skills. These new skill uses increase the possibilities for Group Rolls and the use of Knowledge bases.
- A collection of Knowledge bases to choose from and how they can be applied to games using Supporting Skills and Complementary Skills.
- A collection of Monstrous Abilities and how they translate to in-game use.
- Ways to make encounters interesting and memorable through combat balance that doesn't require increasing Toughness.

Get more out of your characters and encounters with the *Ultimate Characters Guide* for *Savage Worlds*!

