

PUNCH **EVIL** IN THE TENTACLES!

ACHTUNG! **Cthulhu**[®]



BASIC

RULES

MÖDIPHIUS[®]
ENTERTAINMENT

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Achtung! Cthulhu Basic Rules

Into the Secret War

Welcome to the Secret War! With these *Achtung! Cthulhu* 2d20 Basic Rules, you'll get your first glimpse into the hidden globe-spanning conflict between the forces of good and evil! Only you and your scrappy band of heroes can defeat the malignant forces of the occult, and the malevolent might of their Mythos masters!

Punch brain-sucking horrors in the tentacles! Ride strange machines at top speed through terror-filled tunnels! Peer deeply into musty tomes of eldritch knowledge never meant for the eyes of mere mortals! Wield powerful magic and potent psychic powers to fight uncanny threats!

Achtung! Cthulhu is a fast paced, pulp-influenced setting for Lovecraftian roleplaying set in and around the events of World War II, which allows players to discover the truth behind the malign influence of the Mythos as conflict engulfs the globe.

What is the 2d20 System?

Achtung! Cthulhu uses a unique version of Modiphius's 2d20 System to power its fast-paced, cinematic tabletop roleplaying in a world of epic gung-ho, two-fisted pulp adventure.

The 2d20 system also has some unique characteristics which aren't present in other roleplaying games. Rules for **Stress** let you know how much physical and mental punishment your character can take. Rules for **Momentum** allow your character to push home their advantage, diving into cover and coming up all guns blazing, or making a dramatic escape through a handy secret door. The gamemaster can use **Threat** to make a Nazi patrol materialise out of the ether, suddenly cutting off the hero's exit and sparking a further encounter (an event that is called a **Complication**).

All of these rules help set the scenes, add suspense, and shape the thrilling storylines that characters from the *Achtung! Cthulhu* universe experience during their daring escapades. The 2d20 System is also here to lend a helping hand to players taking their first steps on that road, as they create a unique hero or heroine to fight in

Join the brave men and women of Britain's Section M, the US's Majestic and the dauntless fighters of the Resistance, who put their lives on the line to fight the forces of oppression and cosmic horror.

Immerse yourself in a world of fast-paced pulp adventure, occult horror and incredible feats of derring-do. Explore ancient ruins and forbidden knowledge! Battle fanatical cults like sorcerous summoners the Black Sun, or the crazed warrior scientists of *Nachtwölfe*! Conquer Cthulhu's minions the deadly Deep Ones and bizarre alien threats like the malevolent Mi-Go!

Laugh in the face of reality-warping nightmares from beyond the stars! Grow in power, gain experience and develop new skills in a series of exciting globe-trotting adventures... until you're ready to face down the mind-shattering Master of R'lyeh - dread Cthulhu himself!

RULES SHAPE THE THRILLING

ACHTUNG! CTHULHU UNIVERSE!

the Secret War. **Focuses, personal truths, talents** and other values come together to flesh out each character's personality — while **skills** and **attributes** define their virtues, as well as their weaknesses. The 2d20 System does all of this in an easy-to-learn, quick-to-play manner and you'll find plenty of examples throughout to help you learn. Buckle up, pack your trustiest revolver and prepare for action, it's going to be a wild ride!

Challenge Dice Result

D6 RESULT	CHALLENGE DICE RESULT
1	1
2	2
3	0
4	0
5	1, plus Effect
6	1, plus Effect

Characters

Each player character or agent as they're known in *Achtung! Cthulhu* is defined by six attributes, which embody the agent's physical and mental abilities, and skills that define their expertise in certain fields.

Attributes

- ✘ **Agility** – A mixture of speed and balance, which is responsible for an agent's movement and speed.
- ✘ **Brawn** – An agent's physical endurance, health and physical conditioning.
- ✘ **Coordination** – An agent's fine motor skills, accuracy, and sense of time and rhythm.
- ✘ **Insight** – An agent's perception, instincts, and their ability to comprehend the world around them.
- ✘ **Reason** – An agent's ability to apply logic, intellect, and learned facts to a situation.
- ✘ **Will** – An agent's sense of self, their mental strength, and their sense of self-discipline.

Skills

- ✘ **Academia** – This covers an agent's academic leanings and is also useful when trying to study new information, and when trying to recall facts about a subject.
- ✘ **Athletics** – This rates an agent's physical conditioning, and their ability to exert force and move their body in a variety of ways.
- ✘ **Engineering** – This describes an agent's technical and mechanical expertise as well as their ability to operate complex or untested equipment.
- ✘ **Fighting** – This defines an agent's ability to use violence and to defend against it.
- ✘ **Medicine** – This designates an agent's ability to alleviate pain, illness, and suffering. It is used to treat both physical and mental injuries.
- ✘ **Observation** – This covers an agent's awareness and ability to discern information from their surroundings.

Before You Start...

Before you GM your first adventure, it's a good idea to read through it in advance and have an understanding of the basic rules of *Achtung! Cthulhu*.

To prepare for play you should also have the following materials:

Twenty-sided dice, also known as d20s. These are used for resolving skill tests. You will usually roll two twenty-sided dice, or 2d20, but as many as 5d20 can be rolled at once.

Challenge Dice are special six-sided dice and are primarily used for inflicting stress and determining how much protection your character receives from cover. Challenge Dice are denoted in the text by the ☠ symbol. Each die has four possible results – a score of 1, a score of 2, two scores of 0 and two faces with the 'x' Effect symbol.

Six-sided dice otherwise referred to as d6 can also be used instead of Challenge Dice, if so you'll need at least six between all the players. You can consult the Challenge Dice Results table for the equivalent Challenge Dice result.

Tokens to keep track of Momentum and Threat (covered later). You will need six tokens for Momentum and a dozen for Threat; you'll find them on the token sheet.

Paper, pens and pencils to make notes and draw maps.

Pre-generated characters You'll find six agent sheets in the starter set so you can play right away.



- ⊗ **Persuasion** – This rates an agent’s ability to influence others, through speech, body language, and other methods, and allows a character to spot when others are attempting to do the same.
- ⊗ **Resilience** – This describes an agent’s ability to resist, ignore, endure, and recover from a variety of challenges: from physical injury, to mental distress, to magical effects, and similar phenomena.
- ⊗ **Stealth** – This defines an agent’s ability to avoid notice and pass undetected and unhindered through hostile territory.
- ⊗ **Survival** – This designates an agent’s ability to survive in inhospitable conditions and environments.
- ⊗ **Tactics** – This covers an agent’s ability to perceive the overall situation and devise a plan appropriate to it, including military strategy and tactics, team dynamics and leadership in some contexts.
- ⊗ **Vehicles** – This skill rates the operation, care, and maintenance of vehicles of all kinds.

Focuses

- ⊗ Focuses allow an agent to demonstrate greater specialisation within a skill, and the kind of advanced training that comes from deeper study and practical experience. Focuses increase the chances of the agent critically succeeding on a skill test if a focus is applicable to the activity the agent is trying to achieve.

Skill Tests

Whenever an agent attempts to do something where the outcome is in doubt, or where failure would be interesting, the agent attempts a skill test.

ATTEMPTING A TEST

A test involves a single attribute and skill, plus a focus if one is applicable and is made by rolling two or more d20s.

1. **The gamemaster chooses which attribute and skill are appropriate for the test being attempted, sometimes in conjunction with or after a negotiation with a player.** They also consider if the agent has any applicable focuses. Add together the attribute and skill chosen, this is the **target number** for the test.

For example: If an agent is shooting at an enemy with a pistol, you would use **Coordination + Fighting** as the combination, and if they had a speciality in Handguns that would be a relevant focus. If an agent had a Coordination of 8 and Fighting of 3, their target number would be 11.

2. **The gamemaster then sets a difficulty for the test.** This is normally between 0 and 5; with 0 representing an easy task and 5 the most difficult. Most common tests have a difficulty of 1. The difficulty is the number of successes the player must roll on their d20s to successfully pass the test.

For example: Aiming at a static target might be difficulty 1, aiming at a moving enemy might be difficulty 2.

3. **The player rolls their dice pool.** The player takes two d20s, and may choose to purchase up to three additional d20s by spending Momentum, adding to Threat or using Fortune (*see Improving the Odds, p.8*). Once additional dice have been purchased—if any—the player rolls their dice pool.
4. **Each die that rolls equal to or less than the target number scores a single success.**

If there is an applicable focus, then each die that rolls equal to or less than the skill being used scores two successes.

Each die that rolls a natural 1 scores two successes.


Each die that rolls a 20 causes a complication (*see Complications, p.7*)

For example: If the agent from the previous example rolled 2d20 on the shooting test and scored 3 and 10, they would generate three successes. Two natural ones, plus an additional success because they rolled the same as their Fighting 3 and had a focus in Handguns.

5. **If the number of successes scored equals or exceeds the difficulty of the test, then you pass the test.** If the number of successes is less than the difficulty of the test, then the test fails. Any successes in excess of the difficulty of the test generate Momentum (*see Momentum, p.8*)

For example: Three successes mean the agent passed the difficulty 2 test of hitting a moving enemy and generated a point of Momentum.

The gamemaster describes the outcome of the test. If the test is passed, the player may spend Momentum to improve the result further. After this, the effects of any complications are applied.

For example: By spending that point of Momentum, the agent could increase the damage inflicted on the enemy by rolling an additional  as well as their normal weapon damage (*see Conflict Momentum Spends p.13*).

OPPOSED TESTS

At times, an agent may find themselves trying to beat an opponent who is opposing their efforts. These situations call for an opposed test. Here the agent attempts to perform an action, while the reactive character is trying to resist them. Both usually attempt a skill test with a base difficulty of 1. The outcome of the opposed test depends on each character’s results.

- ❌ **Active Agent Succeeds, Reactive Character Fails:** The active agent achieves their goal, and their test is successful.
- ❌ **Active Agent Fails, Reactive Character Succeeds:** The active agent fails to achieve their goal, and the reactive character's test is resolved. Some opposed tests have a specific additional outcome for the reactive character's test.
- ❌ **Both Fail:** The active agent fails to achieve their goal, but the reactive character gains no additional benefit.
- ❌ **Both Succeed:** Compare the total Momentum generated on each skill test. The one with the higher Momentum wins, and achieves their goal, but loses one Momentum for each Momentum their opponent scored. The loser then loses all the Momentum they generated, and they cannot spend any. In the case of a tie, the active agent/character wins, but loses all the Momentum they generated.

TRUTHS

A truth is a single word or short phrase, which describes a single significant fact or aspect about its subject. Truths define what is and what isn't possible, and whether skill tests are easier or harder to attempt. If a truth stops being important, or ceases to be true, it is no longer a truth.

In rules terms, if the truth applies, it usually does one of the following:

- ❌ The truth makes an action easier, reducing the difficulty of the skill test by 1.
- ❌ The truth makes something more difficult, increasing the difficulty of the skill test by 1.
- ❌ The truth makes an action possible, or impossible.
- ❌ If a truth should have a particularly intense effect the gamemaster can add a number after the name of the truth, increasing the modifier of the difficulty. For example, Smoke could be made more intense by calling it Smoke 2, making the difficulty to shoot through the smoke increase by 2, rather than 1.

But truths also allow a degree of flexibility and customisation within a game and work like a handy bridging function, because rules can't cover every single eventuality. For example, agent Jordan Ash has a character truth "Veteran of the Great War" and the GM will decide how this applies in their game. How will this truth affect Jordan in a specific situation? It might make him more experienced at combat, but also might mean he suffers from shell shock or PTSD. Truths often work best in dialogue between GM and agent, but the GM always has final say.

COMPLICATIONS

Sometimes unforeseen problems crop up or there are inescapable consequences for acting, these come in the form of complications; a truth that has a uniquely negative impact on the characters they affect. Complications make skill tests harder or sometimes even impossible after they are introduced. Complications can occur in a few different ways:

- ❌ **Rolling a 20:** When attempting a skill test, each d20 that rolls 20 causes a complication, which comes into effect once the test has been resolved.
- ❌ **Gamemaster Introduction:** The GM can introduce complications by spending Threat.
- ❌ **Success at Cost** (see below)

SUCCESS AT COST

Some skill tests can't really be failed outright; rather, it's uncertain whether the test can be completed without problems. In this situation, the gamemaster may allow you to **succeed at cost**. With this option, a failed roll still means you pass the skill test, but you also suffer one automatic complication in addition to any that occur because of the dice rolled. Although the failed test has produced a successful outcome, you cannot spend Momentum to improve the outcome of a skill test. Momentum can only be spent on the test if it was successful due to the dice roll.

TEST DIFFICULTY

Unless otherwise noted, most tests have a base difficulty of 1. Routine or straightforward tests might have a base difficulty of 0, while harder more challenging tests will have higher difficulties. After this the gamemaster considers if there are any additional factors in the current scene, or affecting the characters involved, that would affect the base difficulty of the test.

Difficulty Zero Tests

Some tests may be, or be reduced to, difficulty 0. Difficulty 0 tests do not require a dice roll: they are automatically successful with zero successes and no risk of complications. However, because no roll is made, they cannot generate Momentum—even bonus Momentum from talents, particularly advantageous situations, etc.—and the agent cannot spend any Momentum on the test's outcome either. At the gamemaster's discretion, a character can roll the dice on a test with a difficulty of 0 and can generate Momentum as normal (because zero successes are required, every success generates Momentum), but this comes with the normal risk of complications as well. This sort of difficulty 0 test can be useful if it's important how successful a character is, but there's no real chance of failure.

IMPROVING THE ODDS

Achtung! Cthulhu provides several ways for agents to improve their chances of success by buying additional d20s to roll on a test:

- ❌ **Assistance:** One or more characters can assist with the test. Each character attempting to assist rolls 1d20, using a target number of their own **attribute + skill** combination. Any successes they score are added to the test's successes, providing the main character attempting the test scores 1 success. Assisting characters never roll more than 1d20.
- ❌ **Momentum:** Momentum can be spent to buy up to 3 additional dice.

- ❌ **Threat:** Agents may add to Threat to buy up to 3 additional dice.
- ❌ **Fortune:** Spending a single point of Fortune (p.9) allows an agent to take one of their d20s, and change it so that it shows a 1 instead of rolling it, giving them two successes automatically.
- ❌ **Talents:** Some talents can grant bonus d20s in specific circumstances but this will depend on context and they still count towards the number of bonus d20s that can be purchased.

For the gamemaster, buying bonus d20s for non-player characters has fewer options. The gamemaster may spend points of Threat to add dice to a non-player character's test. Non-player characters do not have Fortune.

Momentum

Each success above and beyond the difficulty of a test becomes one point of Momentum, which the character may use immediately, or save for later. Momentum is a valuable resource that allows agents to improve upon their successes or gain additional benefits. Momentum is a group resource.

The group Momentum pool cannot contain more than 6 Momentum at any time.

BONUS MOMENTUM


Some situations, items, and talents grant a character **bonus Momentum**. This is added to the amount of Momentum you generate from a successful skill test. Sometimes it is specified that bonus Momentum can only be used in a specific way, such as buying dice, or obtaining information.

Bonus Momentum cannot be saved to a Momentum pool: if it is not used when it is generated, it is lost forever.



Example Uses for Momentum

The most common ways to use Momentum are listed below.

- ❑ **Buy d20s:** The agent gains bonus d20s on their next skill test. The first die purchased costs 1 Momentum, the second 2, and the third 3.
- ❑ **Buy CDs:** You can purchase an additional  to increase stress for every point of Momentum spent up to a maximum of three.
- ❑ **Create Truth:** For 2 points of Momentum, create a truth for an agent or the target of an action which relates to the agent or the scene.
- ❑ **Obtain Information:** For each Momentum spent the agent can ask the gamemaster a single question about the situation, environment, or the characters present, which is not immediately obvious depending on the skill test attempted. The GM must answer truthfully, but can be as detailed or vague as they wish. This spend can be repeated.
- ❑ **Reduce Time:** Agents can spend Momentum to reduce the time it takes to complete a test. The reduction in time is down to the gamemaster, and agents can vary the amount of Momentum spent depending on how quickly they want to complete the test.

Threat

Just as agents generate and spend Momentum, the gamemaster generates their own currency called Threat. The GM spends Threat to alter scenes, empower non-player characters, and generally make things more challenging, perilous, or unpredictable for the agents. Players can also add to the Threat pool instead of spending Momentum.

The GM typically begins each adventure with two Threat for each player present at the start of the session. They gain Threat in the following ways:

- ❑ **Threatening Circumstances:** The environment or circumstances of a new scene may be perilous enough to warrant adding one or two Threat to the pool automatically. Some important NPCs may generate Threat simply by arriving in a scene, in response to changes in the situation, or by taking certain actions. This also includes activities that escalate the tensions of the scene, such as NPCs raising an alarm.
- ❑ **Non-Player Character Momentum:** NPCs with unspent Momentum from their skill tests cannot save it like player characters can: NPCs don't have a group Momentum pool. Instead, an NPC may add to Threat, adding one Threat for every Momentum they have remaining.
- ❑ **Complications:** When an agent suffers one or more complications on a skill test, they can choose to avoid them by adding two Threat to the Threat pool.
- ❑ **Momentum Spends:** Momentum spends can be paid for by the players by adding Threat to the pool instead of spending Momentum.

The gamemaster can spend Threat in a number of ways, here are some common examples:

- ❑ **Non-Player Character Momentum:** NPCs can spend Threat in all the ways that player characters use Momentum.
- ❑ **Non-Player Character Threat Spends:** When an agent's action would normally add points to Threat, an NPC performing that same action, or making that same choice, must spend an equivalent number of points of Threat.
- ❑ **Non-Player Character Complications:** If an NPC suffers a complication, the gamemaster may buy off that complication by spending two Threat.
- ❑ **Truth:** The gamemaster may change or create a truth by spending two Threat. This must come naturally from some part of the current situation.
- ❑ **Reinforcements:** The gamemaster may summon additional NPCs during a scene. Trooper NPCs cost one Threat each, while Lieutenant NPCs cost two and Nemesis-level NPCs three.
- ❑ **Environmental Effects and Narrative Changes:** The gamemaster may trigger or cause problems with the scene or environment by spending Threat.

Fortune

Fortune is what marks your agents out as favoured by destiny and can be used to pull off extraordinary actions, perform exciting stunts, make one-in-a-million shots or provide an edge during life-or-death situations.

Each agent begins each mission with three Fortune points, and they may not have more than five Fortune points at any time. Any excess points are immediately discarded. Each agent may only spend one Fortune point per non-combat scene and one point of Fortune per round in combat.

Here are some common ways players can benefit when spending Fortune:

- ❑ **Critical Success:** A Fortune point may be spent before a skill test to set a single d20 so that it automatically rolls a 1 (generating two successes automatically). This option must be selected before any dice are rolled on that skill test, and you must roll the remaining dice in the pool.
- ❑ **Reroll:** A Fortune point may be spent to reroll any number of dice in the agent's dice pool (d20s or Challenge Dice). This option may be selected after the dice have been rolled.
- ❑ **Additional Major Action:** In conflict agents immediately take an additional major action this turn, as soon

as the first one has been resolved. Outside of a conflict, they can perform another skill test or other significant action immediately, before anyone else has an opportunity to respond.

- ❑ **Avoid Defeat:** The agent may spend a Fortune point when they are defeated to return from defeat, either immediately, or at some point later in that scene.
- ❑ **Make It Happen:** The player introduces a new fact or detail about the current scene, which takes the form of a truth. It must relate to the agent creating it, though it may represent something happening in a flashback, or it may be assumed to have always been true but only now becomes relevant. This must be used before rolling the dice on a skill test, and it can only affect the skill test it has been created for.

Action and Conflict

Embracing its heroic, pulp-flavoured nature, action scenes in *Achtung! Cthulhu* are fast-paced and enthralling, requiring quick decision-making and decisive action on the part of its players.

ZONES AND DISTANCES

To visualise your place in an action scene, it's important to keep track of which zone agents are in. Zones are defined by the terrain around them and tracking an agent can simply be a matter of description — an enemy might be 'behind the control panel' or 'in the corridor'. This has the advantage of relying on natural language and intuitive concepts.

The gamemaster may also use a map or sketch to mark out the zones of a location, using markers to show your position in the scene.

In combat, movement and ranges are measured in four categories, and one state:

- ❑ The state of **Reach** is when an object or agent is within arm's length or melee weapon range. Reach isn't a specific range, but rather is a state that you can enter when you move. When you move into or within a zone, you can move into or out of reach of an object or character. Being within Reach of an enemy increases the difficulty of any skill test that isn't a melee or mental attack by 2.
- ❑ **Close range** is defined as the zone agents are in, or a distance of 0 zones.
- ❑ **Medium range** is defined as an adjacent zone, or a distance of 1 zone.
- ❑ **Long range** is defined as two zones away, or a distance of 2 zones.
- ❑ **Extreme range** is any zone beyond long range, or a distance of 3 or more zones.

ROUNDS AND TURNS

An action scene is a sequence divided into rounds and turns. During a round, each agent takes a single turn.

The gamemaster chooses a single agent to start the action scene. This is usually a player character unless there is a good reason for an NPC to start first.

Order of play goes back and forth between agents and the NPCs until everyone has had a turn. Once all characters on both sides have taken a turn, the whole process begins again for the next round.

ACTIONS IN COMBAT

Each turn, an agent can attempt a single **major action**, and a single **minor action**.

Take Your Best Shot

Each ranged weapon has an ideal range at which it is best used. For each additional range "band" from its ideal range, add an additional level of difficulty. **For example:** a weapon designed for Medium range works without penalty at Medium range, but adds + 1 to difficulty when attempting a shot at either Long or Close range. It adds + 2 when attempting a shot at **Extreme** range.

Rather than account for every single bullet fired, *Achtung! Cthulhu* uses a streamlined ammunition system and it's assumed agents don't run out of bullets during the course of the game. However, they do carry 3 Ammo by default. Ammo is a currency used to activate a weapon's Salvo attack, which adds extra effects like Area or Stun (p.14). This represents agents taking a very deliberate shot, or spraying a desperate burst of fire at their foes, concentrating extra hard to bring them down.

Minor Actions

Agents can take one minor action on their turn for free. They can spend 1 Momentum to take one additional minor action (once per turn), and each minor action can only be taken once per turn.

- ❌ **Aim:** Agents can re-roll 1d20 when they make an attack this turn.
- ❌ **Draw Item:** Agents can pick up an item within Reach, or draw an item they are carrying. If the item doesn't require a skill test to use, they can use it immediately for free.
- ❌ **Movement:** Agents may move to any point within Medium range, and can stand, or drop prone, as part of this movement. They can't take this minor action if they have taken the Rush action (see Major Actions) or if they are within reach of an enemy.
- ❌ **Prepare:** Agents take a moment to set up a major action. Some major actions, such as spellcasting, require this minor action before they can be taken.

Major Actions

Agents can also take one major action each turn. They can also spend 1 Fortune point to take a second major action, once per action scene.

- ❌ **Assist:** Agents can assist a character with a skill test during their turn. It may be that they assist them before their own turn, in which case your major action is taken up by doing so. Roll 1d20 using the agent's **attribute + skill** combination. Successes scored are added to the assisted agent, providing they score at least 1 success. Assisting agents never roll more than 1d20
- ❌ **Attack:** Agents can attack an enemy or object. See Making an Attack (p.12) for details.
- ❌ **Cast a Spell:** Spellcasters can cast a spell, but must have taken the Prepare minor action beforehand. The spell may require a skill test, as noted in the spell's effect description.
- ❌ **Catch Breath:** Agents take a moment to remove stress from their track, or remove a weapon effect they are suffering. This is a **Will + Resilience** test with a difficulty of 2. Success either removes stress equal to the agent's Resilience score (plus 1 stress per Momentum spent), or removes an ongoing effect, such as the Persistent weapon effect.
- ❌ **Command:** Agents can issue a command to another character under their control. That character performs a major action to resolve the command, taking any minor actions required to complete the order.
- ❌ **Create Truth:** Agents can alter the circumstances of the battle, give themselves an advantage or to hinder the enemy. This is a skill test with a difficulty of 2, using an **attribute + skill** appropriate to how they are altering the scene. If successful, the agent creates a new truth, changes an existing one, or removes a truth from the scene.
- ❌ **Pass:** Agents can choose not to attempt a major action.
- ❌ **Ready:** Agents can choose another major action to take as a reaction to something else. When the trigger event occurs, agents temporarily interrupt the current character's turn to resolve their readied major action, and then play proceeds as normal. If the triggering event does not occur before the next turn, the action is lost. Agents can still perform minor actions during their turn as normal.
- ❌ **Rush:** Agents sprint as fast as they can, making an **Agility + Athletics** test with a difficulty of 2, to move anywhere up to Long range. They can't take this action if they have already taken the Move minor action. Location truths may increase the difficulty of this skill test, and this skill test always allows success at cost.
- ❌ **Stabilise:** If an agent or NPC is dying, another agent can provide medical attention with a **Coordination + Medicine** test with a difficulty of 2. If they succeed, the dying character's condition is stabilised—they are no longer at immediate risk of dying, but they remain defeated.
- ❌ **Skill test:** Agents may make a single skill test, at the discretion of the GM.




Attacks, stress and Injuries

Commanding Non-Player Characters

Sometimes the agents will be given control of an allied non-player character. An NPC under the command of an agent, does not receive a turn in conflict; instead their actions are resolved as part of the actions of the agent commanding them.

- ✘ **Minor Actions:** A commanded NPC will perform minor actions as needed to keep up with the agents and to follow their orders. They do not spend Momentum to perform an extra minor action.
- ✘ **Major Actions:** Commanded NPCs cannot make skill tests as a major action, unless an agent uses the Command major action, or if the NPC performs the Assist major action. A number of commanded NPCs may perform a major action equal to the agent's Tactics skill.

An attack is any action made with the intention of harming another agent, NPC or creature, or inflicting stress upon an object. There are two forms of attack available to agents: **physical**, and **mental**. Physical attacks are either **melee** or **ranged**. Here's how a typical attack sequence plays out:



1. **Declare the Attack:** Agents choose a target that they can see, and a weapon to use. If they want to make a melee attack they must be within Reach of the target, if they want to make a ranged attack they must be able to see the target.
2. **Skill Test:** Agents attempt a skill test, determined by the type of attack. Each type of attack may have further adjustments to difficulty.
 - a. **Melee:** Agents attempt an **Agility + Fighting** test with a difficulty of 1, opposed by the target's own **Agility + Fighting** test, also difficulty 1.
 - b. **Ranged:** Agents attempt a **Coordination + Fighting** Test, with a base difficulty of 1, if they are within range.
 - c. **Mental:** Agents attempt a **Will + Academia** test with a difficulty of 1, opposed by the target's own **Will + Resilience** test, also difficulty 1.
3. **Inflict Stress:** If the skill test succeeds then the attack inflicts stress, as described below.
 - a. **Roll Challenge Dice:** Agents roll the number of  indicated by the weapon, and total the number of stress inflicted and any effects.
 - b. **Roll Cover and Armour:** If the target is wearing Armour or behind Cover this reduces the stress inflicted on them. Add Armour and Cover rating together and deduct this from the attacker's total.

- c. **Inflict Stress:** The target adds any remaining stress to their **stress track** and you check to see if they have sustained any injuries (see below).
- d. With a melee attack, if the target won the opposed test, they may choose to inflict stress to the agent instead, or move to any point within Close range.

Injuries

The agent or NPC will suffer an injury if one or more of the following conditions occur:

- ✘ If the character suffers 5 or more stress from a single attack or hazard after reduction for resistance.
- ✘ The character's stress track is filled.
- ✘ The character already had a full stress track and takes further stress.
- ✘ If two or more of these conditions occur at the same time, characters may suffer multiple injuries.

Each injury agents suffer increases the complication range of skill tests by 1 until treated. Once an agent has suffered three injuries, in any combination, they are **defeated** and can no longer act in the scene. If an agent is defeated and has more physical injuries than mental ones, they are also dying. At the end of each of a dying agent's turns, roll 1 , plus one additional  for each successive turn they have been dying. If the agent rolls two or more effects, they die from their injuries.

HEALING UP

Agents are hardy individuals and unless defeated, will usually recover all stress at the beginning of a new scene, provided there is sufficient time to rest from the previous scene.

At the end of each scene, each agent can be treated with a single **Reason + Medicine** test made at a difficulty of the treater's choosing. If they pass, they can heal $X \times$ worth of stress where $X =$ difficulty of the test.

Complication Range

Some skill tests might not be more difficult but riskier or more uncertain than normal. With this in mind, the gamemaster might increase the complication range of a test, making it more likely that complications will be generated. A skill test normally has a complication range of 1, meaning that you suffer a complication for each d20 that rolls a 20. Increasing the complication range by 1 means that complications occur on a result of 19 or 20. The complication range can be increased by up to four.

Fatigue

Some events and environmental effects will affect a character's ability to act.

When an agent suffers **Fatigue**, it reduces their maximum stress by 1 for each point of Fatigue suffered. If an agent's maximum stress is reduced to 0, any further Fatigue means the character falls unconscious – this is the same as being defeated. If the agent suffers any more Fatigue while unconscious, they die.

An agent can remove Fatigue with a **Brawn** + **Resilience** test, or a **Will** + **Resilience** test with a difficulty of 1. Success removes one point of Fatigue, plus one more for every point of Momentum spent.



Conflict Momentum Spends

In addition to the previously mentioned Momentum spends the following are available in combat:

OPTION	COST	EFFECT
Bonus Challenge Dice	1	Increase the stress inflicted by a successful attack. Each Momentum spent adds +1 ⚔ to the Challenge Dice pool, before the rest are rolled.
Confidence	1	The agent gains +1 ⚔ Morale (to a maximum of 4 ⚔) until the start of their next turn.
Disarm	2 or 3	If within Reach, one weapon held by the target is knocked away and falls to the ground. This costs 2 Momentum if the target is holding the weapon in one hand, or 3 Momentum if the weapon is held in two hands.
Knockdown	2	The target is knocked prone.
Minor action	1	The agent may attempt one additional minor action during their turn.
Secondary Target	2	An additional target within Reach of the primary target is also affected by the attack, suffering the full effects of the attack.

Resistance, Armour, Cover & Morale

Resistance provides protection from incoming attacks and can come in a variety of forms.

⊗ Against physical attacks, a character gets resistance from their Armour rating and any Cover they are behind. Armour is normally something the character wears like *Nachtwölfe's* advanced body armour. Cover normally comes from terrain or obstacles and can have a rating such as Cover 2, which gives two points of resistance. Add together an agent's Armour + any Cover they are behind and deduct that from any incoming stress. For example: Jordan Ash has Armour 3 and is hiding behind a vehicle which provides Cover 1, when he's shot by a Black Sun Trooper inflicting 5 stress. This incoming damage is reduced by 3 for his Armour and 1 by the vehicle's Cover, meaning he loses 1 stress from the attack.

⊗ Against mental attacks, a character applies resistance from Courage and Morale. Courage represents a character's confidence and discipline, while Morale is the certainty that comes from being inspired or encouraged by others.

"Incoming! Take cover!"

Hit the Dirt!

War is a hazardous business and sometimes the best way to dodge incoming fire is to hit the dirt and go prone. When you use a major action to go prone:


- ⊗ The difficulty of incoming ranged attacks is increased by 1 unless the attacker is within Reach
- ⊗ The difficulty of melee and ranged attacks against you is reduced by 1 if an attacker is within Reach
- ⊗ You cannot take the Rush action until you stand up again.

WEAPON EFFECTS

When agents roll effects on Challenge Dice, or a 5 or 6 on conventional dice (*See Challenge Dice Result Table, p.4*), they generate a weapon effect, which comes into play and deals additional stress. All effects of that weapon apply even if only one effect is rolled. These are usually noted in a weapon's stress statistic. Some weapon effects are listed with an X, which is replaced by a number depending on the weapon, and apply to every effect symbol that is rolled in the dice pool.

- ❌ **Area:** The attack or hazard hits one additional target within Close range of the initial target for every effect rolled. Secondary targets suffer the attack's full effects.
- ❌ **Backlash X:** The attack is damaging to its source as well as its target. Each effect inflicts X stress to the attacker. This may be physical or mental stress, at the GM's discretion.
- ❌ **Drain:** The attack or hazard is especially debilitating. The character hit suffers one Fatigue for each effect rolled.
- ❌ **Intense:** The attack has an especially potent effect. If one or more effects are rolled, and the attack inflicts

one or more injuries, the attack inflicts one additional injury.

- ❌ **Persistent X:** The attack or hazard has a lingering effect. If one or more effects are rolled, the target suffers X  stress (of the same type as the initial attack or hazard) at the start of the affected character's turn, for rounds equal to the number of effects rolled.
- ❌ **Piercing X:** The attack or hazard is especially good at overcoming Armour or Cover resistance. When working out stress, ignore X resistance for each effect rolled.
- ❌ **Snare:** The attack or hazard can entangle and bind the target. The target cannot take any actions of a type determined by the type of attack or hazard (physical actions for physical attacks, etc.) other than to try and break free. It requires a skill test with a difficulty equal to the number of effects rolled to break free.
- ❌ **Stun:** The attack or hazard leaves the target momentarily unable to act. If a number of effects are rolled that equal or exceeds the target's Resilience skill, the target may not take any actions in their next turn.
- ❌ **Vicious:** The attack or hazard is especially potent. Add +1 to the total stress inflicted for each effect rolled.

Magic

Both Axis and Allies have also developed their own distinct approaches to the learning and wielding of magic. Magic has been divided into two separate and distinct disciplines:

The first is "battlefield magic", shorter-term enchantments, spells, curses, hexes, charms and blessings, which are primarily used to aid forces involved in combat.

The second is ritualistic magic; more complicated and intricate, but conversely immensely more potent and powerful. It is this kind of magic used to communicate with strange forces and darker beings, or effect permanent and lasting change in the mortal plane.

LEARNING MAGIC

A character can learn magic in three ways. Alex Kelly, one of the pre-gens, is a traditional spellcaster of Celtic magic. The Black Sun, who are the main magical enemies, follow the tradition of Nyarlathotep, a malevolent Mythos deity. Both use Battlefield magic and you can assume that they have all prepared their spells in advance during a mission.

Traditional

The character has spent much of their life studying an occult tradition which is passed down through the generations, and takes many years of study to master. Access to this knowledge is scarce outside of family

or tribal traditions, but the rewards are considerable. Traditions commonly have an abundance of taboos and guidelines that shape their use, intended to shield their users from the worst side effects of wielding magic.

Researcher




The character has studied forbidden tomes, occult lore and fragments of precious knowledge to piece together their understanding of the paranormal. This is dangerous, as research-driven occultists are typically self-taught or part of clandestine societies, limiting their knowledge base and making them greedy for more knowledge rather than cautious and reverent. Researchers can learn any spell, but are often lead to the Mythos, which is dangerous in its own right.

Dabbler

A character might stumble upon a useful fragment of occult knowledge, perhaps an eldritch tome composed by some maddened scribe, which grants them knowledge of a spell. Coming from such a dubious source, such learnt spells are flawed and extremely dangerous, and the character may find it difficult to expand their knowledge of the occult further.

POWER

All spellcasters have a Power rating, and this is a crucial element of unleashing spells, performing rituals and turning words and actions into meaningful effects.

A traditional or research-based spellcaster has a starting Power of 2  and a dabbler has a power of 1 , but may push themselves to increase their base Power to 3 , at the cost of adding 1 to Threat for every effect rolled.

All battlefield spells are bound spells meaning they are stored in the sorcerer's mantle, a token, fetish, icon or wand, which holds the spell's power until it is ready to be unleashed. Spells may be held in a **mantle** for as long as the caster remains conscious, after which they dissipate naturally and must be restored again.

To cast a battlefield spell spellcasters must first prepare their mantle, choosing which spells they wish to hold ready. A spellcaster may have a number of spells in their mantle equal to their Power. Preparing these spells requires a difficulty 0 skill test, which takes a number of minutes equal to the difficulty of each spell added together. The attribute and skill used varies – traditional spellcasters use **Insight** + **Survival**, research spellcasters use **Reason** + **Academia**, and dabblers use **Will** + **Resilience**. Once prepared, a spellcaster's mantle contains the chosen spells until they sleep or are otherwise rendered unconscious.

CASTING A BATTLEFIELD MAGIC SPELL

During an action scene, a spellcaster may attempt to cast a spell in their mantle. This requires the use of the Prepare minor action and then a major action to cast. Spellcasting can only be attempted once per turn.

The skill used by the spell is determined by the spell's description, as is the difficulty of the skill test to cast the spell. The attribute used for this skill test depends on the type of spellcaster the character is: traditional spellcasters use **Insight**, research spellcasters use **Reason**, and dabblers use **Will**.

All battlefield spells have a cost, which is paid when casting, which takes the form of a number of dice of mental stress inflicted on the character. A character's Courage and Morale provide resistance against this stress as normal. This cost is applied after resolving the skill test to cast the spell, and it applies whether the spell was successfully cast or not.

Battlefield Magic Complications

As might be expected, complications can be troublesome for a spellcaster. Due to the power they wield, even the slightest break in concentration, the tiniest error, or the most trivial of mishaps can cause a spell to spiral out of control.



As normal with any skill test, any roll of a 20 is a complication when casting a spell. However, due to the difficult and delicate nature of spellcasting, the complication range of a skill test to cast a spell is increased by the spell's difficulty, so a spell with a difficulty of 2 suffers a complication on a 19 or 20, not just a 20.

Further, the effects of a complication when spellcasting can often be more severe and more unpredictable. Magic is a powerful force and when it goes wrong the effects can range from the unexpected, to the hilarious to the downright deadly. A miscast attack spell might accidentally hit the wrong enemy target, or strike an explosive material. A miscast healing spell might heal all enemies as well as allies, or even bring defeated enemies back from the dead. Gamemasters should apply their creativity, ingenuity and sense of fun to devise some truly spectacular and devious effects when a spell is miscast. However, if the spell is successfully cast, the spell's effects will still occur – even complications when spellcasting cannot turn success into failure, it can only produce additional effects.



MOMENTUM SPENDS IN MAGIC

Skilled practitioners of magic can often wield their spells with deftness and precision, turning their skill and knowledge into greater effects. Some spells have specific ways that they can use Momentum generated when casting, but there are also a number of common uses for Momentum listed here.

- ✘ For each Momentum spent, gain +1  Morale resistance against the spell's cost.
- ✘ For each Momentum spent, add +1  to the stress the spell inflicts.
- ✘ For 2 Momentum, double the duration of any spell which lasts for a number of rounds.

RESISTING MAGIC AND MAGICAL DUELS

Although magic is a potent and dangerous force, it is not all-powerful and in some cases, spells may be resisted. Sometimes a spellcaster will have to overcome the innate willpower, resistance and ego of a subject to have a spell take effect.

Some spells may allow their target to resist the effects. This turns the skill test to cast the spell into an opposed test and the attribute and skill combination the resisting character uses will be mentioned in the spell's description. The resisting character's test uses the spell's difficulty.

In addition, spellcasters learn techniques to ward themselves against the supernatural, and the practicalities of war have made those techniques more necessary than ever for countering and undoing hostile magic.

Spellcasters of all types gain the following reaction:

- ✘ **Counterspell:** This does not count towards the bound spells in your mantle. Once per round, you may use this when an enemy you can see attempts to cast a spell. You roll your Power; for each effect rolled, the difficulty of the enemy's spell increases by +1. A spellcaster who uses this reaction may not attempt to cast a spell in their following turn.

This ability is a core element of sorcerous duels – both participants know that they cannot easily cast spells while the other can counterspell, but using a counterspell prevents the caster from using spells of their own, creating a tension between the two spellcasters as each waits for an opening.



Roleplaying in the *Achtung! Cthulhu* universe

Achtung! Cthulhu offers a wealth of exploration and combat, but also some fine opportunities for roleplaying as both GM and player. A world of pulp-influenced action, adventure and intrigue with extensive background lore throws up some fascinating opportunities for roleplay. Player characters and their interactions with NPCs, villains, and each other form a vital and narrative-deepening part of the game – but this is often neglected. So, how do you make the most of *Achtung! Cthulhu*'s roleplaying features?

AS EASY AS ABC

For player characters, there are three fundamental components of their agent, Archetype, Background and Characteristic (ABC), which offer powerful but flexible options for creating and roleplaying. **Archetype** is like the character class in other systems, it's the fundamental identity of the agent and their main role within the group. These are: Boffin, Commander, Con Artist, Grease Monkey, Infiltrator, Investigator, Occultist and Soldier.

Backgrounds offer further refinement and are usually the jobs and careers which agents have pursued. These range from Academic to Athlete, Criminal to Entertainer, Journalist to Physician and Police to Spiritual Leader and a full list can be found in the *Player's Guide*.

Characteristics mark agents out as interesting or unusual in some way and they're a bit of a wildcard, ranging from Bookworm to Dilettante, Dreamwalker to Street Kid, and The Lucky One to Young at Heart. These often describe how and why agents were drawn into the Secret War itself.

While these three facets offer distinct mechanical advantages, it's often the interaction between them which makes great for roleplaying. An agent who is a Soldier would be a fairly standard almost mundane character, but if you add in a backstory as both Bookworm and a Street Kid it starts to spark the imagination a little more. How did a street urchin get an interest in reading? What transported them off the streets and prompted them to join the army? Are these two facts linked? You should encourage your players to explore further, having them create a short paragraph for every stage of their backstory before combining them into a whole biography.

The final parts of character creation are name, physical appearance and personal belongings, and these too can add roleplaying spice. If your agent has a high attribute, say in Brawn, they're likely to be physically imposing, what does that mean for their personality? Do they embrace that fact or shy away from it? Further things to consider might be how do they dress, talk, move? Do they have any quirks and habits? How do they express this kind of personality in a pulp universe?

It's when players begin to ask (and answer) these kinds of questions that they can often unlock the key to a character, helping them understand and inhabit that agent at the table.

Talents too can form part of the equation, for example, what part of an agent's story earned them a talent as a Smuggler, granted them a Canine Companion, or made them Numb to the Horrors? These are all excellent ways of making your character truly unique – and your own.

When you combine all these elements together you can add real depth, authenticity and plenty of roleplaying material for each agent. Great characters make for great roleplaying and *Achtung! Cthulhu* gives you plenty of tools to create them. Now, imagine a table full of such rounded and well-defined agents interacting during a mission and the possibilities are intriguing, enhancing the richness and flavour of any gaming session and allowing you to really leave your mark on an adventure.

TRUTHS

Truths are another part of *Achtung! Cthulhu*'s rules ecosystem that can sometimes be a little underappreciated. Every agent starts with at least four basic truths about their character derived from their Archetype, Background, Language and Nationality, but that's only a beginning. You can encourage players to come up with more as part of their biography, expanding their ABCs or perhaps even basing some truths on their nationality or the languages they've chosen.

The other thing to remember is that truths aren't static and will change and evolve over time. Experience with the Mythos can certainly induce physical and mental scars and these are detailed in both the *Player's Guide* and the sample table on p.21, but truths can also come from experiences undergone during a gaming session.

Perhaps an agent was seriously wounded in a battle against a Tiger tank? That might mean they develop a phobia about enemy armour or just tanks in general. How does that translate into a roleplaying opportunity? Well, while that agent can face even the most monstrous mythos horrors easily, the sight of armour turns their knees to jelly.

Remember that truths can be positive too, if an agent vanquishes enough Black Sun Troopers, they might earn the truth Bane of the Black Sun, which could cause Trooper level NPCs to suffer a mental attack when they arrive in a scene. Truths earned through these experiences can really enhance identification with and investment in an agent.



COLLABORATION AND CONFLICT

Great drama is often built on conflict and great role-playing can be too. **Achtung! Cthulhu** is designed more as a collaborative RPG. It's the story of brave heroes facing powerful enemies and quipping as they defy the unspeakable terrors of the mythos and to succeed, they'll need the complimentary talents of a diverse set of heroes. When agents pool their talents to overcome what seem like insurmountable odds in an audacious, innovative pulp manner is often where the game is at its best.

That said, a little tension and conflict within a group can add richness and colour to an adventure if you want to explore them. Roleplaying relationships can often be at their most interesting when they're put under strain. Even great allies like Britain and the US sometimes have conflicting goals, aims and methods. ABCs and nationalities can also be a possible cause of creative tension within a group, for example military versus civilians, academics versus engineers, regular army versus resistance forces.

Perhaps you don't want a full civil war at the table, but considering, investigating and exploring these subtle differences and tensions can stretch players' roleplaying skills adding extra levels of interaction and satisfaction.

NOT YOU AGAIN!

Nothing unites a group as much as facing a common enemy and **Achtung! Cthulhu** has a cast of nefarious antagonists to challenge even the most resourceful. Sorcerous villains the Black Sun and their weird-science rivals *Nachtwölfe* make great human adversaries, and there's a cast of strange cultists, evil magicians and even Snake-worshipping secret

societies to draw on. If you like your foes even more exotic, Cthulhu's minions the Deep Ones, the strange alien Mi-Go and even the Serpent Folk provide plenty of challenge and there's a host of mythos races, entities and demi-gods like perpetual meddler Nyarlathotep to populate your games.

Nothing tickles the roleplaying palette like a recurring big bad though and a cast of Nemeses like the four Black Sun priors, the chaotic Sweet Liesel Bohm, or Oskar Richter head of the Wolf Guard can be deployed as a perpetual thorn in your agents' side. Most are too powerful to confront directly at the start of your agents' careers, so your players will probably only face these nemeses' lieutenants and minions initially.

But over a longer campaign building up skills and experience to confront and defeat one of these signature villains not only gives agents a common enemy, but a shared goal in uniting to defeat them. Few roleplaying thrills can compare with taking down a big bad who has plagued your lives for multiple gaming sessions. If you prefer more of a slow build up, another alternative is to have a lowly recurring trooper-level NPC, who survives, grows and advances alongside your agents, giving them a more scalable foe who can match them at every stage of their career.

FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES

Just as recurring nemeses add more roleplaying opportunities, guest stars and allies can too. With some carefully targeted help from named heroes like Alec Towton, Professor Richard Deadman, or Ariane Dubois, or elite units like Gopal's Ghurkhas, Foley's Furies or the Flaming Salamanders, agents can survive even the most daunting encounter to earn friends in high places.

Although it's wise to be sparing with some heavy duty cavalry turning up to bail your agents out, all these guest stars have their own backstories, aims and objectives which can align and intersect with your players' own, leading to further roleplaying opportunities. To a lesser extent, **Contacts**, acquaintances made during character generation can play a similar role, so you might consider having your players name and describe them. The eccentric Daphne Masters, Professor of Applied Engineering at Merton College, Oxford, brims with more potential than simply stating "An Engineering contact" on an agent's character sheet.

LEAN INTO THE PULP

Although *Achtung! Cthulhu* is a game based in cosmic horror, its tone and mechanics are not as bleak or deadly as other gaming systems. Agents face daunting situations, unimaginable horrors, dangerous villains on a daily basis, but they can and do make a difference to the world. The odds may be long, the chance of success slim, but that's all part of the fun and exactly the territory where pulp heroes tend to shine.

So wholeheartedly embrace this world of heroic pulp adventure with gusto, relish the amusing tropes, exaggerated larger-than-life characters and tittering villains. Comedy is a sometimes forgotten part of the experience but pulp has a subversive humour all of its own which, played right, can have an entire table dissolve in gales of laughter without destroying the atmosphere.

So dive into the fast-paced, cinematic two-fisted action with its epic plot twists and turns, embrace the cliches, race around in dramatic car chases, make that once-in-a-lifetime shot, defy villainy with a gun in your hand and a quip upon your lips, and above all, punch evil in the tentacles!

TLDR: Don't take things too seriously!

FINAL THOUGHTS AND THE RULE OF COOL

The rule of cool is especially pertinent for *Achtung! Cthulhu*, ie. if your players come up with something cool, innovative or amusing, try to say yes and accommodate their epic flights of fancy. Accidentally discharging a superweapon that destroys the Bismark in 1939, stumbling through a portal to the Dreamlands that gives them a backdoor into an Elder God's brain, discovering an unusual method of time travel that allows them to travel back and change the course of history? Sure, why not? *Achtung! Cthulhu* can accommodate all these alt histories, counterfactuals and weird science scenarios with ease.

A final thought, the best gaming advice remains the simplest and most enduring: have fun and make sure

everyone at the table (including you, the GM) is enjoying themselves. Give everyone a turn in the spotlight, let every agent have a chance to shine, let agents grow organically out of the circumstances of the game and give them cues and opportunity to express their agents' character and identity.

When you end a game session dangling an awesome cliffhanger which was enabled by great roleplaying, that surely is one of the greatest XP rewards of all.

CONTENT WARNING AND TABLE SAFETY

Naturally, for a game which has a background in World War II and cosmic horror there are a few scenes that could prove distressing to some players, so please make everyone aware of the nature of the game in advance. It never hurts to check, because you want everyone to be comfortable at the table. So please use your own judgement and discretion. Consent and safety in RPGs are important for both players and GMs. Not all trauma is obvious and using the following tools reduces the risk of confrontation and potential discomfort.

Session 0

This is where the GM and players can discuss their characters and the game, and perhaps flesh out their biographies. It is also a forum to highlight potential problems and discuss players' appetite for tackling horrific and/or contentious material. Although *Achtung! Cthulhu!*



emphasises fun but perilous rip-roaring adventure, it does contain horrific and potentially problematic elements and scenes. You are advised to read through in advance and discuss these and other potential areas of concern with your gaming group.

This also gives the GM and the group a chance to discuss other preferences for the campaign including historical roles, boundaries, the possible use of safety tools and how to handle other potentially contentious issues like historical racism, violence, sexism, and their appetite for cosmic horror elements. It also allows the GM and players to discuss any subject requiring the use of Veils and Lines.

Veils and Lines

Veils are when action happens “off-camera” – like older movies where potentially graphic, disturbing, or horrific content too controversial (in any sense) could not be shown. Veils should be discussed with the GM early on – violence and torture, sexual content, racism, phobias, trauma of any kind, and other triggers can be assigned as Veils or Lines in Session 0. It also permits the GM and players to avoid situations that could trigger potential discomfort– whether it’s a graphic description or simply a situation. The group can avoid such matters by “drawing a veil” over the scene (or a “fade to black”, for darker sessions).

Lines are subjects one or more of the players (or GM) definitely do not want in their game. Essentially “drawing a line” through a subject. This means the topic is completely off-limits in game sessions. Some GMs create questionnaires for Veils and Lines before Session 0. This highlights potential concerns without identifying an individual specifically.

X-card

One of the best-known safety tools is the “X-card”. It’s simply a card with a X on it – either an index card or sheet of paper marked with X. If a player is becoming uncomfortable about the direction the story is taking – from either other players or the GM – they can tap the card or hold it up (or even just cross their arms). At which point the game pauses and everyone stops for a moment, breaking character if need be. The person raising the card can say they are uncomfortable with the subject at hand or ask to pause the game for a moment. They don’t need to say why. They can ask to move the story forward, ask for the scene to be taken “off-screen”, move the discussion out of character, or say they are uncomfortable with the group’s actions or situation.

TABLES AND CHARTS

If you find yourself or your players need a little extra help in defining their agents’ personality or you want to introduce some more dynamism into interactions, why not make a Pulp Personality chart? This gives agents (or NPCs) further hooks and quirks to help refine their roleplaying.

Following that is The Cost of War table, a sample of the injuries and scars tables from the *Player’s Guide* which add further physical and mental traits to an agent which reflect the toll taken when battling the forces of the occult and the mythos. These relate to the history of their character and can be incorporated into their biography. With the agreement of the GM, players can invoke injuries and scars in game which negatively affect their character to gain a Fortune point.



Dulp Personality Table

ROLL	TRAIT	HOOK
1	Audacious	You're bold, brave and daring, always living life on the edge.
2	Abrasive	You're prickly, touchy and quick to anger.
3	Bitter	Life has soured you. You've lost too much, too often.
4	Cautious	Every decision is risky, better to err on the side of caution.
5	Detached	You wear your indifference like armour and you won't allow anything to affect you.
6	Dishonest	Only fools play by the rules, it's everyone for themselves.
7	Fearless	You're dauntless and even the most otherworldly horrors don't frighten you.
8	Flirtatious	Seduction is your art form.
9	Friendly	You get on with everyone, even the most difficult of people, or you try to.
10	Generous	You're open handed and willing to share everything you have.
11	Lazy	Why bother? Let other people take the strain.
12	Mysterious	You're an enigma, and you don't let anyone get too close.
13	Passive	Life happens and you just let it wash over you.
14	Polite	Good manners cost nothing and enhance your interactions with others.
15	Plucky	No matter what the odds you know you can defy them!
16	Restless	Nothing ever fully satisfies you and you find it hard to be totally content.
17	Secretive	You conceal all but the surface detail, hiding your true personality underneath.
18	Suspicious	You don't trust anyone. The only person you can rely on is yourself.
19	Reckless	You throw yourself into life with abandon, heedless of any consequences.
20	World Weary	You're cynical and worn down by life's travails.

The Cost of War - Physical and Mental Injuries

ROLL	SCAR	RESULT
1	Amputee	You have lost a limb during the course of the conflict.
2	Bad Back	Your mobility is restricted.
3	Bad Leg	Your movement is affected.
4	Chemicals	Toxic emissions have reduced your stamina and endurance.
5	Chronic Pain	You live in constant pain and discomfort.
6	Drug dependency	You have developed an addiction to pharmaceuticals.
7	Distinctive Scarring	Your features are marked by noticeable wounds.
8	Head Wound	Head trauma has altered how you think and behave.
9	Lingering Shrapnel	Fragments remain in your body causing unpredictable pain.
10	Lost an Eye	Your vision has been impaired
11	Amnesia	You suffer episodic memory loss.
12	Believes you are someone else	Periodically you believe you are a completely different person.
13	Compulsive rituals	You need to carry out a particular action repeatedly or you become anxious.
14	Epilepsy	You suffer fits and sometimes lose control of your body.
15	Fainting	You are prone to unexpected bouts of unconsciousness.
16	Insomnia	You suffer from an inability to rest properly.
17	Mania	You are overtaken by bouts of excitement and euphoria.
18	Narcolepsy	You suddenly fall asleep at inopportune moments.
19	Paranoia	You sometimes believe others are conspiring against you.
20	Phobia	You develop an irrational fear of something.

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