Liminal SRD

1: Introduction

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A Roleplaying Game?

Liminal is a "traditional" roleplaying game, where a number of players take on the roles of Player Characters (PCs), and there is one distinguished player, the Game Master (GM). In the author's experience, from two and five players, along with the GM, works best.

Each player portrays their PC in the game, saying what they do and acting as their character. The Game Master is responsible for describing the world, and everyone in it except for the PCs. The GM sets up the problems the PCs solve and adjudicates rules and solutions. Characters portrayed by the GM rather than a player are called Non-Player Characters (NPCs).

The player characters together form a *crew*, with shared knowledge and assets, and common goals. Together, the crew take on adventures called *cases*. These cases further both the goals of the crew and the drives of its individual members.

A Note on Dice

Liminal uses ordinary six-sided dice. Throughout this book, we use the common notation of Xd6 to mean the result of rolling X six-sided dice and adding the results together to get a number.

For example, in a skill test, you roll 2d6 (two six-sided dice, with the results added together), add your Skill, and compare the result with a target number.

2: Character Creation

Concept and Drive

The first step in creating a PC is coming up with a concept. In the Liminal setting, examples of concepts are a reluctant werewolf, a faerie-blooded magician, or a former police officer investigating the strange. In general, suitable concepts depend on the game world.

A concept will probably suggest a drive. Your *drive* is what means you get involved with both the human world and the supernatural. It is the reason you might put yourself in danger, get caught up in helping people or otherwise taking on adventures in the setting, and solving mysteries.

Focus

Any character needs a focus: tough, determined, or magician.

- Determined: A determined character has great strength of will. As well as a bonus to Will, the character can learn traits which are labelled as Determination Talents as well as more general Traits.
- Magician: The character knows how to use magic. You *must* choose this focus if you have one or more magical styles as Traits. In non-magical settings, the Magician focus can be replaced by another focus which gives access to special powers unavailable to most people, such as Psychic or Technologist.
- Tough: A tough character is resilient to physical harm. As well as a bonus to Endurance, the character can learn Toughness Talents.

Note that NPCs do not have a focus. The GM may choose any appropriate Traits for NPCs. They also do not gain the bonuses to attributes from having a focus.

Skills

Skills represent a character's training and natural abilities. Most of what a character knows how to do is defined in terms of their skills. Each of a character's skills has a level- a numerical value representing how good a character is at that skill. A level 2 skill is already good enough to usually succeed at ordinary tasks, and the level of an ordinary professional. Higher levels in a skill represent greater expertise.

A character also has a *skill cap*, representing their highest possible level in a skill. For a starting character, their Skill Cap is 4 and they have 17 points to spend on skills. Each point buys one level in a skill.

Traits

Traits are specially trained or innate advantages which stand apart from Skills. They often give bonuses to skills. Supernatural abilities, if present in the game, including the ability to use different forms of magic, are traits. Some mundane talents, such as greater than normal strength, gracefulness, or intellectual ability, are traits. Your character concept may well immediately suggest certain traits.

Traits cost 1 point or 2 points. A starting character has 5 points to spend on Traits.

Limitations

In the Liminal setting, some supernatural beings have limitations. *Limitations* are restrictions on your supernatural abilities or issues coming from your supernatural nature. A character can have up to two limitations, and there is no need to take any limitations, though certain supernatural concepts strongly suggest specific limitations. Each limitation grants an extra point to spend on traits. Moving away from Liminal, limitations do not have to be supernatural. In a cyberpunk setting, an obligation to a megacorporation can be as hard to break as a supernatural geas.

Attributes

A character's *attributes* are as follows.

- *Endurance* measures a character's physical resilience, and how much physical harm they can suffer without critical injury.

  Your Endurance attribute is equal to 8 plus your *Athletics* skill. If you have the *tough* focus, add 4 to your Endurance attribute.

- *Will* measures a character's reserves of inner strength. A player character spends will to boost their dice rolls, and to power magic. Supernatural effects can also drain will.

  Your Will is 8 plus your *Conviction* Skill. If you have the *determined* focus, add 2 to your Will attribute.

- In combat, a character has a *damage* attribute, measuring how much harm they do. Damage depends mainly on the weapon used, though it is boosted by some Traits. Damage is measured as a dice, since it varies, plus a flat number. An armed attack varies from d6+1 to d6+4 damage. If you have several means of fighting (you probably won't use a gun for absolutely everything), note damage for each means of attack.

Damage depends on the weapon used. Some Traits give bonuses.

- Unarmed attacks do d6 damage.
- An attack with knife, small bludgeon, or improvised weapon, such as a chair leg, broken bottle, or police baton does d6+1 damage.
- An attack with a bow, machete, or big club does d6+2 damage.
- An attack with a sword or light firearm does d6+3 damage.
- An attack with a heavy firearm does d6+4 damage.

More serious weapons such as rocket launchers and grenades simply do enough damage to instantly kill a target.

Skills

A starting character has a S*kill Cap* of 4, and 17 points to spend on numerical values. No skill can be increased above the Skill Cap. If you have a skill with an associated value of 3 or higher, you can spend one point on a *speciality*. A speciality is an area of expertise within a skill, and grants a +2 bonus when using a skill in that area. Specialities do not add to attribute, or when defending against another skill.

The skills in the Liminal setting are as follows. Other settings will tweak this list.

Physical Skills	Mental Skills	Social Skills
Athletics	Art	Charm
Awareness	Business	Conviction
Melee	Education	Empathy
Shoot	Lore	High Society
Stealth	Medicine	Rhetoric
Survival	Science	Streetwise
Vehicles	Technology	Taunt

Physical Skills

Athletics
Your *Athletics* skill measures your agility, fitness, and ability in physical sports. It certainly includes the usual activities seen in athletics competitions such as running, jumping, and swimming, but also climbing and acts of pure physical strength and endurance. Those with athletic hobbies and physically active jobs need this skill. *Athletics* is also used for defence in ranged combat.

Specialities: Climb, Feats of Strength, Run, Swim

Awareness
The *Awareness* skill measures how alert you are, and how well you notice things. It is also used for initiative in combat, to determine who acts first. Some people are naturally alert. Those whose job involves being on the lookout for danger, or observation, such as police officers and journalists, need good *Awareness*.

Specialities: Danger Sense, Listen, Reactions, Search, Surveillance

Melee
Melee is the art of hand to hand combat, whether unarmed or using a weapon. The damage you do with Melee depends on the weapon you use. Your *Melee* skill level also determines how hard you are to hit in close combat. Some people take combat skills such as martial arts or fencing as a hobby. Others need to learn to fight for more practical reasons.

Specialities: Fencing, Knives, Improvised Weapons, Police Equipment, Unarmed Combat

Shoot

For ranged combat, you use the *Shoot* skill. Most commonly in the modern world, this means guns. Some shoot as a hobby, whether bows or guns. Those with military training, or armed response units in the police know how to shoot.

Specialities: Bow, Pistol, Rifle, Shotgun, Throwing

Stealth

Stealth is the key skill of the criminal, but conversely police officers with covert surveillance duties also need it. The *Stealth* skill means you know how to move subtly, without what you are doing being spotted. Sneaking around, acts of sleight of hand, and lockpicking, are part of this skill, as is concealing objects and breaking into buildings without such being too obvious.

Specialities: Appear Inconspicuous, Conceal, Lockpicking, Sleight of Hand, Sneak

Survival

You're comfortable with the natural world, and know how to get by in the wilderness. You can navigate, find food and shelter, and stay safe from dangers and wild animals. Those with "outdoors" jobs have a *Survival* skill.

Specialities: Animal Handling, Find Food and Water, Navigation, Safe Routes, Tracking

Vehicles

If you have the *Vehicles* skill you can drive a car and ride a motorcycle. You can learn how to operate a variety of other vehicles, including boats, planes, and helicopters with relevant specialities. Alternatively, you could take the *Vehicle Wizard* Trait.

Specialities: Boats, Motorcycle, Off Road Driving, Pilot, Pursuit

Mental Skills

Art

You know about art, and how to create it. Creating *good* art is hard, and to be a properly skilled artist, you need to specialise. Performance is also a part of the art skill.

Specialities: Music, Painting, Performance, Photography, Writing

Business

People running small businesses and those involved in the corporate world know the *Business* skill. It's the skill of buying and selling, finance and making deals.

Specialities: Buying, Fae Bargains, Finance, Property, Selling

Education

Your *Education* skill is a combination of formal education, and your knowledge of the world's culture, politics, and history. It's to an extent how "well read" you are. The *Education* skill represents knowledge of the everyday world in much the same way that the *Lore* skill is knowledge of the supernatural

Specialities: Current Affairs, History, Law, Literature

Lore
The *Lore* skill measures your knowledge of the magical side of the world. It includes knowledge of both supernatural beings and magical spells, though without a relevant Trait, you can't usually actually cast magic. However, if you do have a magical Trait which enables you to use magic, most tests use the *Lore* skill.

Specialities: Ghosts, Magical Society, Magic Theory

Medicine
The *Medicine* skill is used to treat injuries and illnesses, including first aid and trauma care. Some knowledge of psychiatry also forms a part of the skill. At low levels of Medicine, you've received extensive training in first aid. At higher levels, you could be a nurse or doctor.

Specialities: Diseases, First Aid, Forensics, Poisons, Psychology

Science
At lower levels, the *Science* skill is all about a broad scientific education. With high levels of skill, and a relevant speciality, you're a trained scientist, probably with a relevant degree or two. Doctors have a background in science as well as the Medicine skill.

Specialities: Biology, Chemistry, Geology, Mathematics, Physics

Technology
You're good with technology, and have significant practical skills. Operation, maintainance, and repair of electronics and machinery are covered by the *Technology* skill, as are such things as computer security systems. Just by being in the everyday modern world, you have contact with and make use of technology.

Specialities: Computers, Electronics, Operate Heavy Machinery, Repairs, Sabotage

Social Skills

Charm
The *Charm* skill is a measure of your general amiability and ability to get on with people. It is generally the skill of making oneself likeable, though it can also be used to tempt and lie. To an extent the *Charm* skill is natural charisma, but you can also learn to be more charming.

Specialities: Deception, Flattery, Flirting, Respect, Temptation

Conviction
Your *Conviction* is your determination and willpower. Religious faith is another form of conviction. You can use conviction to resist attempts to daunt or tempt you. It also affects your *Will* attribute, and is a useful skill in some forms of magic, though magic requires a relevant Trait and not just this skill. *Conviction* also applies when resisting magic affecting the mind.

Specialities: Bravery, Confidence, Religious Faith, Resist Manipulation, Resist Mind Magic

Empathy

With the *Empathy* skill, you're sensitive to other people. You can tell what someone wants, and when they're uncomfortable in conversation or hiding something. Those with the *Empathy* skill include those who have jobs involving dealing with and helping people, and manipulative vampires.

Specialities: Assess Personality, Know Mood, See through Manipulation, Repressed Emotions, Sense Lies

High Society

People with this skill tend to be rich, influential, and privileged. If you have the *High Society* skill, you're either someone from such a background, or used to being around the rich and powerful. You fit in well on exclusive social occasions. Besides fitting in, you can the *High Society* skill to gain entry to exclusive events, to network, and apply social pressure to persuade someone to appear to accept a particular view, or pursue a course of action. *High Society* is also the skill of politics and gossip.

Specialities: Fashion, Fitting In, Gossip, Politics, Social Pressure

Rhetoric

Rhetoric is the skill of argument and speeches, convincing people of facts (whether they are actually true or not). Acts of rhetoric can use logic, or seek to sway the emotions. The most effective rhetoric does both. Lawyers, politicians, and to an extent teachers all make use of the rhetoric skill.

Specialities: Debate, Inspire, Logic, Oratory, Sincerity

Streetwise

You know the streets, and the good and bad neighbourhoods. You know how to find people who would rather stay hidden from the public eye, and how to stay out of the way of those who would do you harm. Some police officers have this skill, as of course do criminals with connections.

Specialities: Finding Contacts, Criminal Gangs, Information Gathering, Lying Low, Urban Survival

Taunt

The *Taunt* skill is the province of both bullies and jokers, those who know how to be annoying and occasionally amusing. With it, you know how to get under someone's skin, either angering or intimidating them. You can use this skill to goad someone into a fight, cause them to make mistakes, or frighten them.

Specialities: Insult, Interrogate, Jest, Provoke, Threaten

Traits

As well as skills, a character has *traits*. Traits cost either one or two points. A starting character has 5 points to spend on Traits. A character may also take one or two limitations, each of which grants one extra point for other Traits.

In order to learn a style of magic, the character must have taken the *magician* focus. Similarly, determination talents are exclusive to characters who have the *determined* focus, and toughness talents are only allowed to characters with the *tough* focus,

The styles of magic below come from Liminal; other games will have their own, or replace the Liminal styles entirely.

Exceptional Abilities	Styles of Magic
Always Prepared (1 point)	Divination (2 points)
Animal Sense (1 point)	Weathermonger (2 points)
Big Business (2 points)	
Bookworm (1 point)	
Brawny (1 point)	
Breaking and Entering (1 point)	
Countermagic (1 point)	
Forgettable (1 point)	**Determination Talents**
Frightening (2 points)	Fight On (1 point)
Graceful (2 points)	Inspirational (1 point)
Healer (1 point)	Jack of All Trades (1 point)
Investigator (2 points)	
Night Sight (1 point)	**Toughness Talents**
Presence (2 points)	Give and Take (1 point)
Quick Reflexes (2 points)	Prowess (1 point)
Rage (1 point)	Supernatural Strength (2 points)
Rapid Healing (2 points)	
Rich (1 point)	
Scavenger (1 point)	**Limitations**
Sharp Shooter (2 points)	Marked
Silver Tongue (1 point)	Oathbound
Sneaky (1 point)	Obliged
Vehicle Wizard (2 points)	Uncontrolled Anger
Words that Bind (1 point)	Vulnerability

Exceptional Abilities

Always Prepared (1 point)
If you need a mundane object for something- something not too expensive, legal, and relatively straightforward to get hold of- spend a point of Will and you have it with you. You foresaw the need for it. The GM can say "no" to having an object on the grounds it is too tough to get hold of, or too outlandish, but must then refund the point of Will spent.

Animal Sense (1 point)
You have an intuitive sense of dealing with animals, and can sense what they want, as well as being able to communicate in a basic fashion with all natural creatures. They tend to like you; you have a +2 bonus to all Survival tests when dealing with animals, and no animal will attack you if unprovoked, though it might attack your companions if desperate.

Big Business (2 points)
When making an important business deal, or in high stakes negotiations where life and death, or more, are on the line, you have a +2 bonus to the *Business* and *High Society* skills.

Bookworm (1 point)
When it comes to library or internet research, you excel. You have a +2 bonus to library or internet investigation within the fields of the *Education*, *Lore*, and *Science* skills.

Brawny (1 point)
You're exceptionally strong. You have a +2 bonus to *Athletics* for feats of strength, and to Damage.

You cannot take both the *Brawny* and *Supernatural Strength* Traits; supernatural strength supersedes brawny.

Breaking and Entering (1 point)
You have a +2 bonus to your *Stealth* and *Technology* skills for the purposes of breaking in or breaching technological security systems.

Countermagic (1 point)
You know defensive spells which protect you and others against magical attacks. You can use your *Lore* Skill as a defence against magic, and can make a *Lore* skill test to disperse a magical effect. In both cases, this will usually be an opposed roll.

Forgettable (2 points)
Those who don't know you well simply don't remember what you look or sound like; you fade from the memory of those you casually interact with after a week or so. You're even unclear in photographs, tape recordings, or CCTV footage.

Frightening (2 points)
You have a +2 bonus to Taunt tests made to intimidate or scare people. Further, standing up to you after a successful test requires the victim spends two points of Will, as well as the usual effects for not doing as suggested after a social test.

Graceful (2 points)
You move with perfect grace and precision. You have a +2 bonus to Art involving activities such as dancing, to Athletics feats involving balance, and a +1 bonus to all Melee Combat tests.

Healer (1 point)

You can heal twice the usual amount of damage with a successful Medicine check on other characters or yourself.

Investigator (2 points)

You have a +2 bonus to Empathy tests to tell when someone is lying or hiding something, to Awareness tests to find hidden objects or evidence, and to Streetwise tests to find contacts and witnesses.

Night Sight (1 point)

You can see in the dark almost as well as you can daylight, though you can't make out colours or fine details. For that reason, intelligent creatures with night sight still light their dwellings, though the light is dim by ordinary standards- and they don't need the light for most tasks, with the exception of activities such as reading and drawing.

Presence (2 points)

You have an almost supernatural physical presence. This could be due to physical beauty, your voice, or a subtle supernatural aura. You have a +2 bonus to your *Charm* and *Rhetoric* Skills for the purposes of making an impression or swaying the emotions. After a successful Skill test, you can spend a point of Will for a subtle magical effect, such as causing a crowd to fall into instant silence, or to persuade someone to temporarily accept an obvious falsehood.

Quick Reflexes (2 points)

You have exceptionally quick reflexes, with a speed at the edge of being supernaturally quick. You have +2 to your *Awareness* skill for initiative, +1 to your defence in combat, whether hand to hand or ranged combat. Further, you can spend 2 points of Will to take an extra action when it is your turn within a combat round.

Rage (1 point)

At the cost of a point of Will, you can enter a rage. In a rage, you can only attack at close range or move to attack, and have a +2 bonus to Melee Combat and damage. You fight until no other opponents remain, though you can also spend a point of Will to emerge from a rage.

Rapid Healing (2 points)

You rapidly heal from any injury, recovering d6 points of Endurance in the scene after an injury, and every hour thereafter. This rapid healing even applies when you have negative Endurance. You even eventually come back from the dead unless decapitated or incinerated. You are resistant to poisons, and all but immune to disease.

However, Rapid Healing has a downside. Any character with rapid healing has a *flaw* - one source of injury from which they cannot regenerate damage. You will not come back from the dead when killed through your flaw.

Rich (1 point)

You're well-off. You perhaps own several houses, and can make ordinary purchases of things worth thousands of pounds without any issue. Travel, accommodation, and even luxurious living expenses are a routine part of your outlay. Some problems can be solved simply by throwing money at them.

Scavenger (1 point)
You don't need money to survive; you, and a small group of people with you can always find food and enough to eat, whether in a city, or in the wilderness. In a settlement, you can always get hold of inexpensive useful items you need with a simple look around and perhaps asking some people.

Sharp Shooter (2 points)
You're a highly accurate shot. You have a +2 bonus to your *Shooting* Skill, and to damage with a ranged weapon.

Silver Tongue (1 point)
You lie naturally, and with great imagination and fluency. You have a +2 bonus to the Charm ability when it comes to getting away with lies and deception. Further, there is a magical component to this Trait; when you face magical abilities which can tell truth from lies, they no longer work on you if you spend a point of Will.

Sneaky (1 point)
You have a +2 bonus to Stealth for the purposes of hiding or moving without attracting attention, including for example tailing someone. You also have a +2 bonus to Awareness for skill tests to notice danger.

Vehicle Wizard (2 points)
You have a +2 bonus to all Vehicles tests made to drive a vehicle, and can drive or pilot anything, however unusual, without a speciality being required; you have an intuitive, maybe magical, sense for such things. No Vehicle specialities are required if you have this Trait.

Words that Bind (1 point)
You have a +2 bonus to Rhetoric when trying to manoeuvre someone into making a promise. Should they break that promise, they lose d6 Will.

Determination Talents

Fight On (1 point)
Once per battle, you can spend Will to reduce the damage you take from an attack. Each point of Will you spend reduces the Endurance loss by one point.

Inspirational (1 point)
Your presence is an inspiration to other members of your Crew. You can donate up to two points of Will to help another Crew member with a skill test, giving the usual bonuses.

Jack of All Trades (1 point)
You can spend a point of Will to gain a skill you do not normally have at level one. You retain this skill for the duration of the scene.

Toughness Talents

Give and Take (1 point)
In battle, immediately after you wound an opponent, or when they wound you, you may choose to suffer damage to hurt them. You lose 2 points of Endurance; they lose d6 points of Endurance. This is in addition to the damage you suffer or inflict.

Prowess (1 point)
Your physical powers impress others. You have a +2 bonus to your first use of the *Charm* or *Taunt* skill on someone who has seen you triumph in battle or another physical challenge.

Supernatural Strength (2 points)
You're exceptionally strong. For one point, you have a +4 bonus to *Athletics* for feats of strength, and to your Damage attribute for melee attacks. Further, you can spend one point of Will to perform a feat of supernatural strength, such as lifting up one end of a car or punching through a brick wall.

You cannot take both the *Brawny* and *Supernatural Strength* Traits; supernatural strength supersedes brawny.

Styles of Magic
The magic section has specific rules on magic, including further traits to specialise in magical styles. In this SRD, we give just two examples.

Divination (2 points)
You're a diviner. You can use the *Lore* skill to cast auguries.

Weathermonger (2 points)
You know the magical art of changing the weather.

Limitations

Marked
Some beings have signs- a Mark- which give them away as a supernatural being. Such signs include the vampire's lack of reflection (or ability to show up on recording equipment), and the hidden animal features of some changelings. Some magicians, and those who have spent too much time in Fae realms, lack shadows. The Mark is an indicator of what manner of supernatural being a character is, and even mundanes will know something is up when they see the Mark, though not what it signifies.

Oathbound
The character finds it hard to tell a direct lie, though they may lie by omission. A direct lie costs the character d6 Will. Breaking an oath causes the same loss of Will, but the loss is permanent until the character makes amends to the one they made the oath to, and their amends are accepted.

Obliged
If you're obliged, you're under a debt or oath which carries supernatural power. You have given your service to a powerful being or organisation, and resisting a command costs d6 Will. Attempting to harm them also costs d6 Will.

Uncontrolled Anger
A character with this limitation has more than just a bad temper -- it is an effort not to fly into a disproportionate rage when hurt, insulted, or challenged. Keeping calm and not enacting an over the top response which escalates a problem costs d6 Will.

If a character has the *Rage* Trait, in a situation where uncontrolled anger comes into play, entering the rage does not cost a Will point, but emerging from it costs 2 Will points.

<u>Vulnerability</u>
Some creatures are vulnerable to a particular substance, for example silver, fire, or bronze.

When you suffer from an attack including the source of your vulnerability, you suffer an extra two points of damage. Further, such a vulnerability is a source of dread when it is present. Facing up to it, even approaching it, costs you 2 Will points.

Money and Equipment
A character has any equipment they might reasonably have for their concept. A rich character might be able to have unreasonable things. The game system does not keep careful track of gear, though items that are rare, expensive, or mystical can be important.

3: Crews

The Crew
The player characters, regardless of their individual backgrounds, belong to a crew who works together and who share a goal and place in the world. A crew is greater than just the sum of its parts. It has assets which benefit all of its members. To those with nowhere else to go, the crew is family.

Crews take on *cases*- individual mysteries and missions, advancing their own goals and perhaps those of others.

Crew Generation

Crew Concept and Goal
Crew generation takes place after character generation, and provides a reason for diverse characters to work together. Every player takes part. The GM has the task of leading the players through Crew creation, and can make suggestions to individual players who need help.

The first step in Crew generation is to come up as a group with a concept, with everyone looking at the PCs present. What do they share, and what means they work together? Some possibilities include:

- An investigation business. The Crew pool their talents to solve mysteries for clients. These mysteries begin in the ordinary world, but clearly (to the Crew) involve the supernatural. Missing persons cases the police cannot handle come up surprisingly often.
- A group sharing the same powerful enemy, who have banded together for mutual protection.

As part of the concept, the group of players and GM should think about where the crew is based. Even if they wander and have no permanent home, where the crew begins is important.

The next step is to come up with a crew *goal*, something the crew are working towards. The crew concept may well suggest a goal. A goal can either be a finite task or an ongoing labour. Examples include:

- The final defeat of a powerful enemy.
- Protecting ordinary people from supernatural predators.

> **Goals and Drives**
> There is some potential overlap between a crew's goal and the drives of individual members of the crew. One thing to be avoided is a player character's drive being completely at odds with the goal of the crew; the two should be compatible. After all, if a player character's drive is completely at odds, why would they even be a part of the crew?

Taking on Cases
A crew gets involved in a broad range of *cases*, helping people, solving mysteries and problems. So that this is not forced, a crew needs a reason to take on cases and engage with the world.

For example, a crew with a powerful enemy needs a reason not to just "turtle" and hide from trouble, but rather to go out, help people, and take on risks.

Sometimes the crew goal and concept will already provide sufficient reason for a Crew to get involved in cases. If not, they may need an extra push, and *perhaps* a tweak to goals and concepts. Here are some suggestions.

- Sponsor: The Crew has a sponsor. From time to time they get in touch to give the Crew jobs they must tackle.

  The final case in a series may well involve finding out more about a mysterious sponsor. Perhaps the sponsor is not as altruistic as they seem. If the players want a sponsor to be more useful, they may wish to take the *Patron* asset for the crew.

- It's a Job: The crew advertise discreetly. Those who run into strange trouble, or learn about something curious they want experts to investigate, will get in touch. And it's paid work.

- Basic Altruism: Many cases have a component of altruism, and many PCs will help people as part of their Drive. The crew seeks out and gets involved in cases to help people. It's that simple.

Crew Assets
The next step is to go around the table, with each player coming up with an *asset*. Assets provide the crew with useful resources. The following are some possible assets. With the GM's agreement, a player can invent another asset with a similar scope, though those below are quite open-ended.

Base of Operations
The crew has a stable base. If they choose, everyone who is part of the crew may live there with a reasonable level of safety and stability. The player who chooses this asset should say where the base is, and what it's like in general terms.

Connections
The crew has extensive connections in a particular domain, and crew members can make a Streetwise test to find a connection in a large city, or any other place it seems plausible to the GM. Possible domains for connections include business contacts, criminals, and government officials.

The crew can choose this asset more than once for connections to multiple groups.

Hangers On
Your crew has a number of mundane associates. They are not your employees or servants, but will generally listen to you and can carry out small favours, though they will not engage in combat unless cornered. The player who chooses this asset should say who the hangers on are and their relationship to the crew. If a new player joins the crew, or a player retires a character to choose a new one, the new character could come from these associates.

Hideout
Your crew has a hideout or bolt hole which nobody else knows about. The player choosing this asset should describe it and where it is. If the crew already has a *Base of Operations*, a player can choose this asset to turn it into a secret base. Otherwise, the *Hideout* is reasonably comfortable and safe for a few days at a time, but shouldn't be overused.

Informants
You have a variety of people who pass you information, including gossip concerning events related to cases, and warnings of when the crew is in danger. Your informants come from many different walks of life.

<u>Laboratory</u>
The crew has access to scientific facilities, where any members of the crew can perform scientific analysis and data gathering according to their skills. If the crew has a *Base of Operations*, the facilities could be part of the base.

<u>Occult Library</u>
The Crew has access to an occult library. With a *Lore* skill test, a Crew member can seek specific information on the supernatural rather than being forced to find a source of information.

If the Crew has a *Base of Operations*, the library could be part of the base.

<u>Patron</u>
The Crew has a patron who gives them jobs and feeds them information. They may even help on a case if contacted, though patrons also have their own agenda. The player who chooses the patron asset should describe who the patron is.

<u>Support</u>
The Crew has money, perhaps from a bequest of from a cover as a legitimate business. The support gives the PCs enough money to live on without them needing to take on any other work.

<u>Training Opportunity</u>
The player who chooses this asset picks one of their character's skills. They have trained the other members of the crew in its use; everyone increases that skill by one level, up to a maximum equal to one less than the training character's skill.

<u>Workshop</u>
The crew has an engineering workshop. They can repair damaged equipment and even make things. For example, if a crew has a workshop, and learns a particular vampire is vulnerable to ultra-violet light at a certain frequency, it is a simple matter to create a gadget that will produce such light. The same goes for hand weapons made of a specific metal, or shotgun shells filled with a special material.

Hooks
The final step in crew creation is for each player to come up with a *hook*. A hook is something going on in the crew's neighbourhood which attracts their attention, and suggests their involvement in a case. The player should not go deeply into what a hook involves, just what is apparent on the surface.

4: Game Rules

Skill Tests

The Core Mechanic
When your character faces an uncertain situation which tests their abilities, in game terms this is a *skill test*. Any particular skill test has a *Challenge Level*.

- When you make a skill test against a non-player character or another Player Character, they can oppose it with a relevant skill. The Challenge Level is then their skill level plus 8. We call this an *opposed test* in the rules. Note that only one side rolls dice, even in combat. This side is a player character, unless the opposed test is between player characters – in this case, just pick one player to roll the dice.
- When a skill test is against a situation rather than a character, the GM sets the Challenge Level. Much of the time, the Challenge Level will be 8; a skilled character will probably succeed.

To resolve a skill test, roll 2d6 and add your skill level along with any bonuses from Traits. If the result equals or exceeds the Challenge Level, the task is successful. If the result falls below the target number, you have failed (but see *Using Will*, below).

Critical Success
If your roll in a skill test succeeds by 5 or more, you have scored a *critical success*. You can choose one of the following special effects to go along with the success, though the interpretation of your choice is up to the GM.

- A companion of yours succeeds in a related skill test without having to roll. This is a good choice when the group of PCs are all dealing with the same hazard.
- You gain extra information from the skill test. Often this will be because you were gathering information anyway, but you could also find something out incidentally by observing something while performing your main task.
- You accomplish what your were doing much more quickly than expected. Just *how* much more quickly depends on the situation and the GM.
- You look really *cool* doing the task, and impress an NPC bystander or ally.
- You infuriate and distract an NPC who doesn't like you.
- You do the task subtly, and without attracting attention.

The suggested list of effects for a critical success is different in combat and when doing magic.

The Effect of Failure
When you fail at a skill test, the GM will choose one of four things to happen. Sometimes failure simply stops you in a possible course of action, but sometimes it leads to extra problems, either minor or major.

- The failure leads to immediate trouble (for example, when gathering information you run into a group of toughs), but you can try again when the trouble is fixed.
- You succeed in the task, but take d6 points of damage. This is often the consequence of dealing with physical hazards. You subtract damage from your endurance.
- You succeed, but the task takes much longer than expected, or attracts undue attention.
- You simply fail. Nothing bad happens, but the task is beyond you at the present time. You can't try again until the situation is easier for you, or your skills improve.

> **Rolling Double One**
> If you roll double one on a skill test, and do not spend Will to raise the result (see below), you gain an additional complication from the failure, but you get to tick an experience box on your character sheet.

Assistance

If you help someone else in a task, you also roll a relevant skill test at a challenge level of 8. If you succeed, the person you are helping has a +2 bonus to their test. If you achieve a critical success, your help gives a +4 bonus.

A task can only benefit from one assistant using these rules. When lots of people are working on a task, see the *Group Tests* rules, below.

Keeping Track of Time

Scenes

The game consists of a series of *scenes*. A scene could be a part of a fight, a party, an investigation, or a debate. The GM should end scenes when they are resolved, and there is no further drama or tension in the scene, and overall scenes should flow organically from one to the other, as decided by the actions of the players and events coming from the GM.

Some game effects, in particular magic, last for a scene. This means the duration of such an effect is something fluid, but usually at most a few hours; less than an hour is typical. There is generally no need to keep precise track of how long a scene lasts. The duration of a magical effect need not, by the nature of magic, be completely consistent.

Game Sessions and Cases

A *game session* is the time when the players and GM sit down together and play a game. It typically lasts from two to four hours. The amount of time which passes in the fictional world of the characters varies immensely. It might be hours, days, or even weeks if downtime features.

A *case* is a self-contained plot, taking one or several game sessions. At the end of a case any immediate problems and mysteries are resolved, though there are often long term effects. Your game might feature a single self-contained case, or it might be a series of cases linked by a story arc.

Downtime

Downtime is the period between game stories, or sometimes within a story if there is a natural break. Downtime lasts for weeks or even months. During downtime, a character heals all damage and recovers any Will spent. They can also continue with their everyday life, if they have one.

Using Will

Boosting Your Results

You can spend Will to improve upon your roll in a test, either to turn a narrowly failed roll into a success, or a success into a critical success. If you wish to improve your result after you have rolled the dice, simply spend a number of points of Will to add that many points to your dice roll..

Using Magic

Some Traits and forms of magic require an expenditure of Will to activate. Some magical effects drain Will.

NPCs and Will

Non-player characters have Will scores and Drives. However, the GM cannot spend the Will scores of NPCs to improve rolls or affect yours, though they can spend Will for magical powers and Traits, and to shake off social consequences.

Regaining Will

Once per game session, you can engage your Drive to regain d6 Will. This does not take you above your usual maximum, but if the roll would take you above its usual maximum, or you are already at your maximum and gain no other benefit, tick an experience box on your character sheet.

You can also regain Will by taking a break between work and adventures; for each day of rest and relaxation away from investigating cases you regain d6 Will.

Using Skill Tests

Social Challenges

A social challenge is a test to make another character, whether an NPC or PC, do something or believe something. It works as any other opposed skill test, but the consequences of the result are a little bit different.

If a social challenge against an NPC succeeds, the GM has the choice of either having the result convince the NPC, or giving the NPC a -1 penalty to all actions which contradict the result of the skill test. An NPC who loses in further social challenges has an increased penalty, with the penalty increasing by a further -1 each time they are defeated. An NPC can shake off a penalty at the expense of spending d6 points of Will. Or they could give in. This is up to the GM, and what they think is plausible or dramatic; the penalties are for resistance.

When it comes to a skill test against a PC, they face the same choice: a penalty to their actions, loss of d6 Will to shake off a penalty, or going along with what is suggested.

In the event of a critical success, the usual rules for extra effects apply. Alternatively, if a PC is really pushing it, an NPC who stands up suffers a -2 penalty to actions going against the course of action.

You can even push a character using social skills within a battle (for example, to retreat or surrender), and the usual rules apply, but a penalty only lasts for a single round. Outside of combat, it is up to the GM how long a penalty lasts; usually it ceases at the end of a scene or when the character who inflicted the penalties is no longer present.

Group Tests

For some challenges, every player character present makes a contribution, and success or failure is as an entire group. For such challenges, go round the table, and ask each player which skill they are using – there will potentially be some negotiation as to whether that skill is appropriate and reflects the actions the PC is taking. They then make a test with that skill, at the usual challenge level if the skill is appropriate, or +2 to the challenge level if it makes sense but is not ideal.

To pass a group test, the group needs a number of successes equal to the number of players taking part.

- Any player who rolls a successful skill test adds one success to the total.
- Any player who rolls a critical success adds two successes to the total.

It is up to the players who goes first and last in a group test. For example, there are arguments for putting the most skilled character both first (to get a success or critical success out of the way), or last (to generate a critical success if other characters have failed, to make up the number).

Damage and Healing

Physical Damage

When you take physical damage, you subtract it from your Endurance. Being struck in combat is an example of damage, as is falling, going through a fire, or being poisoned. Damage is rated as one or two dice, perhaps with a flat number as a bonus. If you suffer damage, subtract it from your Endurance.

There are two levels of damage outside combat:

- *Minor damage* is painful and dangerous, but will not kill a healthy or uninjured character. It does d6 points of damage.
- *Major damage* has the potential to kill or critically injure someone. It does 2d6 points of damage.

You nearly always have a skill test to defend yourself against suffering damage, whether major or minor. Conversely, a failed skill test in a dangerous situation might do unexpected minor damage if you fail, and it's appropriate to the situation.

> **Non-Lethal Damage**
> Some damage, such as that from unarmed combat, can be deemed non-lethal. Non-lethal damage does not reduce a character below 0 Endurance, and a character does not need immediate first aid not to suffer more injury.

Death and Serious Injury

Any damage which leave your Endurance score as a positive number is superficial, and easily healed (see below). When your Endurance falls below 0, you're critically injured and in big trouble. If you don't receive immediate first aid, you suffer another d6 points of Endurance damage. If your Endurance falls below -10, either because of suffering damage or the results of lack of first aid, you die.

When your Endurance is below zero, you can't easily act, though you may be conscious and able to speak. Any action requires you to spend a point of Will.

> **Damage and NPCs**
> The full damage rules are probably too involved to use for Non-Player Characters. Assume any NPC who is reduced to below zero Endurance is dying, and will die unless a healer succeeds in a *Medicine* skill test to help.

Running out of Will

A character cannot go below zero Will. A character who has zero Will obviously cannot spend Will, whether on improving skill rolls or magic. They cannot suffer Will damage from magic, but some magical effects take place when Will is reduced to zero; the character has no buffer to protect them from such effects.

Obviously, with no Will, a character cannot soak damage or throw off penalties for resisting social challenges.

Healing

Applying first aid after a character has suffered damage requires a *Medicine* skill test at challenge level 8. Add +2 to the challenge level if the character has no safe place to work, or lacks basic medical supplies. A successful skill test has the following effects.

- A character who has 0 Endurance or below is stabilised. They can be safely moved, and will not suffer further damage from existing injuries.
- Any character recovers d6 Endurance.

A character still at zero Endurance or below after first aid requires hospital treatment, and a week of recovery to heal to a state where they have 1 Endurance. Field surgery can also treat a seriously injured character; such treatment takes an hour, and requires a Medicine test at challenge level 10, or higher without adequate facilities.

Someone injured will naturally recover in a period of downtime, provided they have had hospital treatment if they require it.

Combat

Initiative

At the start of a battle, PCs and any NPC allies roll a special skill test for *initiative.* This is an *Awareness* test opposing the enemy with the highest *Awareness* Skill.

The Combat Round

Combat is divided into rounds of a few seconds each. Each round, everyone can do each of the following:

- Shout out quick commands, taunts, and so on.
- Draw a weapon, nock an arrow, or load a gun if you have one about your person, and don't already have it in your hand.
- Move up to 30 paces.
- Take a single action.

If you succeeded in your initiative test, you act each round before your opponents. If you failed, you act after them.

An action is often an attack, as described below, but there are other possibilities, including:

- A social skill test to convince an enemy to surrender, or to put them off-balance if they don't.
- Rapid movement to close range or escape, moving 60 paces instead of 30. If you are already engaged in combat, whether close combat or the target of enemy fire, you need to make an *Athletics* skill test to manage this.
- Retrieving a weapon after you have been disarmed. This does not usually need a skill test, but you can make an *Athletics* test at Challenge Level 12 to grab your weapon quickly enough to be able to take a second action that round.

Movement and Weapon Ranges
When it comes to movement in combat, range can be abstracted.

- Close: An opponent who is close to you is in range for hand to hand combat.
- Near: A near opponent is within 30 paces. You can close the distance to a near opponent in a single round (or they to you) as well as taking another action. In near range, thrown weapons are effective.
- Moderate: An opponent in moderate range is up to 60 paces away. You can close to an opponent to moderate range in a single round if don't take any action, or if you and your opponent both want to close. Moderate range is the distance for most ranged attacks, including bows and pistols.
- Far: An opponent who is far away is within sight, but up to 120 paces away. At this range, only weapons capable of accurate longer distance fire, such as rifles, are useful.

Attacks and Damage
There are two types of attack.

- Hand to hand attack: This uses your *Melee* Skill. It is an opposed roll against your opponent's *Melee* or *Athletics* (use whichever is higher).
- Ranged attack: This uses your *Shoot* skill. It is an opposed roll against your opponent's *Athletics*.

If you succeed in the skill test to make an attack, you do damage equal to your damage attribute. Subtract damage from your opponent's Endurance.

Critical Success
If you achieve a critical success on an attack roll, you can choose one of the following special effects.

- You do an extra d6 damage.
- In each round after this one, you act first in the combat, as if you won the initiative roll.
- You make yourself the next target of an enemy you name. This can be useful to protect a comrade.
- You disarm an opponent. A disarmed opponent must either draw a back-up weapon or spend a round retrieving their weapon unless they make a difficulty 12 Athletics test.

A GM can also choose special effects from the above list for NPCs who score a critical success.

Going Defensive and Escaping Combat

If you choose not to attack or take any other action, and simply choose to defend yourself, make an *Athletics* skill test. On a successful roll, all damage against you is halved (round down) until your next action. On a critical success, choose one of the following:

- You've found perfect cover. No enemy can attack you this round.
- You retreat safely from the battlefield.
- You allow an ally to retreat safely from the battlefield.

Situational Modifiers

If both sides in a combat suffer from the same advantage or disadvantage, there is no need to modify any dice rolls; the modifiers cancel out. But you can apply a situational modifier if one character has an unusual advantage or disadvantage. Advantages or disadvantages carry a +2 bonus or -2 penalty. The following are examples.

- Cover: If you have cover against ranged attacks, you have a +2 bonus to defence.
- Aiming for one of a group: Trying to hit one particular person in a group of people close together has a -2 penalty.
- Attacking someone you can't see, perhaps because it is dark or they are magically invisible, carries a -2 penalty, if the attack is allowed at all.
- If you attack someone by surprise, you have a +2 bonus. The attack also takes place outside the usual combat sequence, before initiative. This applies to snipers and those who sneak into close combat.
- If you seek to fire a ranged weapon while in hand to hand range of an enemy, you have a -2 penalty. If the weapon is larger than a pistol, you can't fire at all.
- Attacking in close combat when you have superior weaponry (for example, a knife against an unarmed opponent) or position (for example, when you have the high ground), you have a +2 bonus.

Mobs

A mob is a group of people unskilled in combat, but dangerous due to their numbers. If the Player Characters face a mob, divide it into groups of roughly equal size, with one group per Player Character facing them.

Mobs follow the following special rules.

- A group which is part of a mob makes a single attack, at a skill level of 1 per 2 members, rounded up, to a maximum skill level of 3 for a mob with 5 or more people.
- A mob does just d6 damage, or d6+1 damge if they have weapons. People with more dangerous weapons are individual combatants, following the usual rules, and not part of a mob.
- Each member of a mob has an Endurance score of 3. If you do more than 3 damage against someone in a mob, the excess damage "bleeds over" to another mob member. It is quite possible for a skilled and heavily armed character to consistently take out multiple members of a mob at once.

Dead or Knocked Out?
Most mob members who are victims of lethal violence are probably dead. If a healer character wants to save mob members after an outbreak of violence, make a *Medicine* test. The amount the result is above 8 is the number of people the healer is able to save. Multiple healers can save more people, but there is only the opportunity for one test per character.

This rule also works for other situations where a healer is trying to save as many people as possible in an incident with a large number of victims.

Advancement and Concluding Cases

Character Advancement
Player Characters improve over time, learning from their experiences. A PC has five *experience boxes* and three *advancement boxes* on their character sheet. At the end of a game session, tick an experience box when:

- Your character learns something new about the supernatural world.
- You have advanced your Crew's goal.
- Your Crew has concluded its current case successfully.
- You learn something new and important about your Crew or one of its members.

Tick an experience box immediately when:
- You roll two 1s and fail a skill roll, and choose not to spend Will to improve the result.
- You engage a Drive and generate more Will than you can use. You can only do this once per game session.

When all five experience boxes are full, erase the ticks and tick an advancement box. You can raise a single skill of your choice by one, up to a maximum equal to your Skill Cap.

When all three advancement boxes are full, erase the ticks. You can then do *one* of the following:
- Increase your Skill Cap by one.
- Take a new one point Trait.
- "Bank" a point for a two point Trait later on.
- Give your Crew a new asset.

New Traits should suit a character's supernatural nature and experiences. You should check with the GM first if there is any doubt. As GM, you are encouraged to say "yes" rather than "no", as long as a player has a rationale or a new Trait fits the story, but you are within your rights to veto something that does not fit.

Concluding Drives and Goals
Sometimes over the course of a game session, a Player Character may actually have reached a conclusion with their drive, or the Crew may have fulfilled its goal. Both character and Crew may choose to retire or carry on.

- A player whose character who has concluded their drive might wish to retire their character. In this case, the Crew gains a new asset. The player of the character to be retired decides what it is. They then generate a new character to join the Crew.
- If a player does not wish to retire their character, that is fine. Instead, they can tick two experience boxes and come up with a new drive which keeps them in play.

- When a Crew fulfils its goal, that may well be a logical point to end a series of cases. After all, the overall story arc of the Crew is resolved!
- If the group decides to carry on, the Crew needs a new goal. There should be plenty of possibilities suggested by the story so far. Further, to mark such an occasion, every member of the Crew ticks two experience boxes.

New Hooks

Finally, at the end of the case the group should consider any loose ends remaining or further opportunities for investigation. Such a loose end or opportunity becomes another hook, for the GM to exploit for further cases.

5: Magic

Divination
There have been many means of divination in different cultures through history - astrology, card readings, inspecting the entrails of slaughtered animals, gazing at or breathing in smoke from special substances, prophetic dreams, and observing the movements of birds to name but a few. If you have the *Divination* Trait, you have mastered one of these methods of divination.

In terms of game mechanics, all forms of divination work the same way. You need time to prepare a divination- usually at least an hour. After the preparation, state what you seek to find out about, spend two or more points of Will, and make a Lore test.

Divinations grant information about a person, place or object, and only involve the observable present- not the past, and certainly not the future, whatever stories tell you. Distance is no object. You cannot divine secret thoughts and plans, unless the plans are already in motion and so can be observed. Any information coming from a divination is at the GM's discretion, though a successful roll should at least give information related to what you ask for.

The GM can also pass you information without you asking, perhaps through brief visions or omens. This is entirely at their discretion.

Challenge Levels and Will costs vary according to what you seek.

- **Will 2, Challenge Level 8:** Such a divination will learn only general information, and the object of the divination cannot be too obscure; what you seek must be known by more than 13 people. There is a reason secret cabals have a maximum size when it comes to their inner circles.
- **Will 4, Challenge Level 10:** At this level, you can use a divination to learn general information which is secret or obscure, being known by 13 or fewer people. You can also learn specific information which is known by more than 13 people.
- **Will 6, Challenge Level 12:** At this level, your divination can unearth information which is both obscure and specific.

During character generation or advancement, you can buy traits to do more with divinations.

Foresight (1 point)
Unlike most diviners, you sometimes have visions of the future. The visions and omens the GM might give you can involve the future. Further, you can spend d6 Will and use your usual divination method to get a glimpse of a dark event in your probable immediate future, or that of your current location. Of course, knowing it, you may be able to avoid or prevent it. Maybe.

Object Reading (1 point)
You can see into the past of an object you hold, or by extension, a place where you currently stand. Challenge levels and will costs are otherwise the same as for other divinations when it comes to learning information about the past.

Scrying (2 points)
You can do more than answer questions with your divination- you can use divination to see and hear a person, place, or object at a distance. The usual challenge levels apply, and scrying in this way still takes an hour.

Weathermonger
Among the oldest and least subtle forms of natural magic is control over weather and the elements. A character with the *Weathermonger* Trait can ensure sunshine or rain, and more dramatically can conjure up blizzards in summer and violent storms. You can also summon up fogs and calm the wind.

Mechanically, the art of the weathermonger uses the *Lore* Skill. A standard change of weather is a task at Challenge Level 8 and costs two points of Will. It affects everything within a mile or so of the character, takes an hour or so to materialise, and lasts for d6 hours. A failed attempt to change the weather either causes undesirable weather, or inflicts d6 damage to the magician.

Some weathermonger tasks are harder. Add +2 to the Challenge Level and +2 to the Will cost for each of the following conditions.

- The new weather comes quickly, within ten minutes or so rather than an hour.
- The weather is extreme or violent.
- The weather is unseasonal. Summer snowstorms and winter heatwaves fall into this category.

A weathermonger must be outdoors to exercise their power; there is no "weather" inside a building to affect. Some weathermongers can do more; a weathermonger can spend Trait points during character generation or advancement to do the following.

Call the Lightning (1 point)
When outdoors, when it is clouded, you can spend one Will to make a physical ranged attack using your *Lore* Skill, calling lightning down from the sky. The attack inflicts 2d6 physical damage.

Command the Four Winds (1 point)
In your vicinity, the winds are at your immediate command. You can conjure up breezes and briefs gusts of wind with a simple gesture. The winds surround and protect you; even without deliberately using your magic, you have a +2 bonus to your *Athletics* Skill for defence against ranged attacks.

You can also spend a point of Will to quickly create a barrier of wind impenetrable to ranged attacks or flight.

Fast Working (1 point)
Your standard time to change the weather is ten minutes rather than an hour. For +2 to your Challenge Level and the cost of an extra point of Will, you can make a weather change take effect in less than a minute, or in combat, two combat rounds.

One with the Elements (1 point)
You're immune to the worst effects of weather. The heat of a desert or the cold of an arctic winter don't affect you unduly. In a rainstorm, you stay almost dry. In a blizzard, you can move normally, and don't even leave footprints. You can see through dense fog as if it wasn't there. This Trait is in effect at all times and does not cost Will.

The Power of the Land (2 points)
Normally, your powers of weather control are local, and affect the weather around you within a mile or so. If you have this Trait, you can dramatically increase your range. For an extra two points of Will, you affect everything within 10 miles, for an extra four points within 100 miles, and for an extra six points, you affect all weather within the British Isles or other similarly sized area.

6: Being a Game Master

Skill Tests

Setting Challenge Levels
For most static challenges, the Challenge Level is 8. Skilled PCs will succeed much more often than not, even without spending Will, which is exactly as it should be. The Player Characters are competent individuals.

Some challenges, however, are tougher. For a tougher challenge, start the Challenge Level at 8 for an ordinary use of a Skill, but add +2 to the Challenge Level for each complicating factor.

Example
Climbing down the wall of a house: Challenge Level 8
Climbing down the wall of a house at night with no light: Challenge Level 10
Climbing down the wall of a house at night with no light, in a blizzard: Challenge Level 12

Failure and Consequences
The Challenge Level is one tool the GM has when it comes to setting challenges for PCs. The use of different consequences for failure is another tool. The players also have some control, in terms of choosing to spend Will, but that's their decision and not the GM's.

There are two real principles at play here- one is that failure should not be a simple block on what the characters are doing (sometimes called "fail forward") and the other is that the roll of a skill test means something in the game and surrounding fiction. A failure cannot be negated by immediately rolling another skill test. Equally, it should be noted, a success should not be negated by the GM immediately calling for another skill test (sometimes called "let it ride") unless the situation changes.

The four choices for a GM when it comes to a failed skill test are:

<u>The test fails and leads to trouble</u>
The trouble is something which the player or players must immediately deal with, but after the trouble is dealt with, they can try again. This is often a good choice for a failed test, as it leads to something interesting (the trouble) but does not block the players (they can try again). You can use it in a wide variety of situations.

For example: Research could lead to attention from someone inappropriately curious or hostile, exploration could lead to a completely different problem to deal with before it resumes, and a failed social check could provoke hostility, or again, inappropriate curiosity, which needs to be calmed down.

There are two potential down-sides with this option. One is that it throws up another obstacle, which slows down the game. This is not a bad thing necessarily, and might even be useful or irrelevant, but it is something to be aware of if you have pacing concerns. The other thing is that it requires the GM to think of something quickly, and often nothing immediately comes to mind. Nothing coming to mind no disgrace; simply choose another consequence for failure.

Trouble does not have to be immediate physical danger. For example, an attempt to research lore might fail, with the GM mentioning that the character has still found a tantalising mention of an

obscure book in a library with restricted access in a different city. In this way, the trouble presents another opportunity, which a player may choose to pursue or ignore.

<u>The test still succeeeds, but in the process the PC takes d6 damage</u>
This is often a good choice for a physical obstacle, such as a difficult climb or journey. It gets things over with quickly, applies a cost for failure, and avoids any issues due to repeated attempts or complications. It also doesn't require the GM to improvise anything extra. The obvious downside is that it only really applies to physical obstacles. "You get what you want in the meeting, but it is so long and tedious that you take d6 damage" feels rather silly.

It's also not a great option to overuse; it can feel like a grind. If healing is readily available before facing other challenges, it can also feel like a bit of a cop-out, with no real penalty as a result of failure. But it's a solid choice if the GM does not want to improvise a new complication, either due to not easily thinking of one in the current situation, or because of time pressure.

<u>You succeed, but the task takes much longer than expected, or attracts undue attention</u>
This option is in some ways similar to the first option, but does not require another test when the obstacle has been dealt with. It's a good option to use when a Player Characters are bound to succeed, but there is a reason to be subtle or time pressure. If there is no such restriction, there is no need to roll at all.

It has similar strengths and weaknesses to the first option for failure, but is more specialised in application.

<u>You simply fail</u>
Not only does a PC fail, but they can't try again unless matters somehow improve for them.

Simply failing is sometimes fine. Sometimes a player is seeking to gain an advantage in a future challenge, which is behaviour you should encourage. But in this case punishing failure in a roll to gain advantage with a complication or damage seems unduly harsh, and potentially uninteresting. The roll to gain advantage adds to the situation, but is not the main event.

Another time simply failing can be appropriate is at the finale of the case. There is a problem the Player Characters want to deal with, they plan, they get there, they find out a situation they need to stop- and they fail. Dealing with the failure is interesting for future cases. Failure isn't always bad for the game. As noted, the players have resources in the form of Will to improve failed dice rolls, but if they've spent their Will whether through bad planning or bad luck, final failure might be a logical consequence.

There are two times to strictly avoid this choice. One is when failure is immediately fatal. Investigators might die, but should not die as the result of a single bad dice roll. The other is when a skill test is something a character makes to get further in a case, such as overcoming an obstacle on the only clear way to progress, or not finding necessary information.

This issue is mitigated by good design of cases, with room for improvisation of alternative routes to a conclusion, but on a failure on a roll which feels vital to progress, throwing trouble in the direction of the PCs while the obstacle can still be overcome, or having failure still indicating an alternative, albeit inconvenient, route to find out more, is appropriate.

Investigations and Skill Tests
When a PC uses a knowledge or investigation based Skill during a case, the GM should think what they could find out using a relevant Skill and how long it is likely to take. The GM should also *ask*

the player what sort of thing they are looking for- is it for example plans for a location, the supernatural history of a group, a possible weakness of a monster, or something else?

Don't forget that one option for a critical success on a skill test is extra information. Such may be particularly appropriate here. The main ways of finding information are:

Recall of Relevant Facts
Recall of relevant facts: A PC won't get much by trying to think of something they know on the spot, but it doesn't take much time. The GM will give a character a single piece of information on a topic, which won't necessarily be what they're looking for, but will be somewhat relevant.

Although there is less benefit when it comes to an attempt at recalling information than some methods, there is usually no consequence for failure.

Asking Around
Asking around is not about recalling facts, but about finding evidence and information directly relevant to a case. Social Skills are the relevant ones here. No hard and fast rules apply here, but if information is available, a good course of action is to also give it on a failure, but have the character asking around attract unwelcome attention in the process of asking questions, or otherwise provoke hostility.

Internet Research
Internet research into the supernatural is much harder than it looks, and requires at least a few hours and a test at least at challenge level 10. The GM is within their rights to make the difficulty higher. The actual *real* supernatural doesn't really feature on the internet.

One pursuing internet research will find more information than simple recall of facts; typically d6 somewhat relevant pieces of information on a successful test. As with recall of information, the player cannot specify precisely what they seek.

Library Research
A character in a library can pursue more directed research, for example a creature's specific weakness, or its powers. Books on supernatural matters are unclear, and information tends to be scattered across several volumes. There are exceptions, but they are in private hands, under lock and key.

A critical success in a library can mean the character has found a volume containing a fair amount of useful information, learning what they wanted to find out and much more- anything the GM has on the situation which they do not specifically need to keep secret.

To make failure interesting, it can mean the character has found a lead- a reference to something incredibly useful in another library which is very difficult to gain access to.

7: NPCs

NPC Traits
Some new Traits are suitable for NPCs and supernatural monsters. These Traits are not as a general rule recommended for PCs and have no points cost. Some will be useless for PCs, and others will pull them a greater than usual distance from the human world.

That said, if a player has a suitable concept and really wants one of these Traits, they cost 2 points each, with the GM's permission.

Appear Human
A being with the *Appear Human* Trait has a form of shapeshifting from their natural monstrous or alien form to a human form. Any manifestation of supernatural powers ends the appearance of humanity while it lasts, but otherwise, they can maintain human appearance indefinitely.

Without further Traits, the being cannot shapeshift to take on different human forms, but rather appears as the same person whenever they take human form.

Bad Luck
The scene after meeting a creature with this Trait, all skill rolls are penalised. For any skill test in the scene, roll three six-sided dice rather than two, but pick the lowest two dice for the total. This trait is unsuitable for player characters; it would affect the rest of the Crew!

Immaterial
An immaterial being cannot be affected by ordinary physical attacks, though a Blessed Weapon or magic will still work, as will weapons addressing specific vulnerabilities. An immaterial being in turn can only affect the physical world with special powers or Traits.

This trait is usually the province of ghosts. A player character ghost is not necessarily off limits, with the group's permission, and should have this Trait.

Invisibility
Invisible beings can only be seen by a character with The Sight or a similar suitable power.

Monstrous Toughness
A creature with this Trait has an extra 8 Endurance. A truly exceptional being might have this Trait twice, for an extra 16 Endurance. Even more than most Traits in this section, Monstrous Toughness is not recommended for player characters.

Poltergeist
This Trait only makes sense for a being with the *Immaterial* Trait. With it, an immaterial being can spend a point of Will to affect the world normally for a single skill roll. This can include physical attacks.

Spirit Dominance
A spirit with this Trait can command any ghost in its presence to enter its service, following its commands. A ghost has no chance to resist the call, though other spirits who also have this Trait are unaffected by the power. This Trait is not appropriate for player characters.

Supernatural Bargain

A being with this Trait can trade anything between two parties, even metaphysical concepts, years of life, bad dreams, illnesses, memories, and so on. Both parties involved in the trade must agree to the terms. The being can also take part in the trade themselves, and use items they have previously gained from earlier trades of this nature.

Terror

Terror is a direct magical attack a spirit or immaterial being makes using the *Taunt* Skill. It is opposed by a victim's Conviction. A successful attack does d6 damage to Will. If a victim is reduced to zero Will, the ghost can possess them for a scene, using their body as it sees fit unless forced out through magic.