When you want your character to be part of the action and accomplish something beyond breathing, talking or standing, you use skills. Skills represent the abilities and understanding that a character has acquired. In *Shadowrun*, skills are general techniques and knowledge bases rather than narrow, limited actions. This approach allows players to customize their characters so that even two characters with the same background or occupation may have skills that vary in style and application. Keeping things general also limits the number of statistics and specifics that players need to keep in mind. To define specific areas of focus or increased knowledge for their characters, players may use specializations (see *Specializations,* p. 109).

BASE SKILLS

Base skills are the fundamental skills in *Shadowrun.* Whereas attributes represent an individual's inherent capacities, skills are abilities an individual learns over time. Each skill represents the training and methods a character has picked up that enable him to use her natural attributes in a certain way. To reflect this connection, each skill is linked to an attribute. A list of skills and their linked attributes appears in the Skills and Linked Attributes Table, p. 111.

Skills are grouped into three broad categories: Active, Knowledge and Language skills. Characters begin the game with a set of skills chosen by the player (see *Creating a Shadowrunner,* p. 70). During game play, characters can improve or specialize in skills, or learn new ones as they experience new things. See *Improving Skills and Skill Groups,* p. 264.

ACTIVE SKILLS

Active skills are the skills characters use to take action, affect something or somehow make an impact. These skills are the ones that usually matter the most to shadowrunners—firing a gun, negotiating a new contract, driving a hovercraft and so on. For a complete description of base Active skills and specializations, see pp. 110–126.

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS

Knowledge Skills represent what a character knows about certain subjects. Beginning Knowledge skills are based on a character's Logic and Intuition attributes and can be further modified with Build Points. Knowledge skills are useful for fleshing out a character by defining her background or areas of interest, and are used in the game most often to represent legwork, show character development, or allow characters to come up with information they might not otherwise have a chance to gain. They can range from fields of knowledge important in the game universe—such as Corporate Finance, Political History, Cyberware Research or Magic—to more esoteric, bizarre or mundane interests such as Sim-Starlets, Seattle Troll Thrash Metal Bands or Elven Wines.

Knowledge skills fall into four categories: Academic, Interests, Professional, and Street. For a complete description of base Knowledge skills, see *Knowledge Skills,* p. 127.

LANGUAGE SKILLS

Language skills represent languages a character knows and her ability to speak, read and write them. More information on Language skills appears in *Language Skills,* p. 129.

USING SKILLS

As an adventure unfolds, players are going to want to use their characters' skills and attributes to get things done: to con their way past a guard, fix a broken detonator before the trolls find their hiding place, orunderstand what the corp suit is saying to them in Japanese. The gamemaster, meanwhile, will want to know things like whether the player characters saw that all-important clue or whether they inadvertently kicked it under the trash.

For many of these situations, gamemasters must rely on their own judgment to decide which skills are needed, determine the situation modifiers, and interpret what it all means. The following guidelines and rules will help resolve some more common situations.

SKILL GROUPS

Skill groups are a collection of three or four related skills acquired and increased at the same time for fewer Build or Karma Points. Any time a character uses a skill that he purchased through a skill group, the skill group rating is used instead. Skill groups are identical in function in all ways to individual skills purchased singularly, and a character with a skill group containing a skill at rating 3 is just as good as another character with that skill alone rated at 3. You cannot use specializations with skill groups.

Skill groups have their own special rules for improvement, as they are cheaper to increase than the same individual skills improved separately. For more detailed information, see *Improving Skills and Skill Groups,* p. 264.

> Ashley decides to create a stealthy character and purchases the Stealth skill group at Rating 4 at character creation. After a month of play, she notices that she really only uses Infiltration and so makes the decision to raise it by one point without raising the rest of the Group. This means she no longer has the Stealth skill group, but instead has Disguise 4, Infiltration 5, Palming 4, and Shadowing 4. Ashley can regain her Group by raising the other three skills to 5, at which point she will have Stealth skill group 5, but will have paid more for it than if she had just raised the skill group initially.

SKILL RATINGS

Skill ratings are the numerical values assigned to skills or skill groups, either at character creation or when the skill is learned during game play. They represent how good a character is at a task when using that particular skill. Skill ratings are written as the name of the skill or group, followed by the rating. For example, Infiltration 3 means the character has the Infiltration Skill at a rating of 3. The skill rating is added to the linked attribute to determine the number of dice rolled when that skill is used. For example, if the character with Infiltration 3 also had an Intuition 4 she would roll 7 dice when making an Infiltration Test.

Characters are considered to have a Skill Rating of 0 in any skill for which they have not purchased a higher rank. Skill ratings cannot be purchased at a rating higher than 6 (or 7 with the Aptitude Quality, p. 77).