

Your characters don't exist in a vacuum. In their daily struggle to survive the shadows of the sprawl, they will meet and interact with many others. Some will want to help the characters, while others may want to harm them. And some aren't even metahuman to begin with ...

This section deals with *non-player characters* (NPCs). It includes information on *contacts*, the people the characters know who can help them through the course of the game. Additionally, the section covers critters, non-metahuman beings, and spirits.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS (NPCS)

Non-player characters are people other than the *player characters* (PCs). These include everyone from Ares CEO Damien Knight to Renraku's elite Red Samurai to your character's life-long buddy to the squatter in the next alley over. The gamemaster assumes the role of all NPCs in all their encounters with the PCs.

In the majority of cases, interactions between PCs and NPCs will depend on the roleplaying of both the players and the gamemaster—that's the fun of playing *Shadowrun*, after all. There will be situations, however, where roleplaying alone can't resolve encounters. The following rules provide guidelines for gamemasters in resolving these cases.

GRUNTS

Player characters will inevitably end up dealing with groups of similar NPCs: go-gangers, security guards, radical political extremists, special forces squads, and so on. Rather than treating them as multiple individuals, gamemasters might find it easier to handle them collectively as a group. NPCs that can be grouped together this way are known as *grunts*.

Because they are very similar to one another, grunts have practically identical game statistics. Use one set of attributes and skills to represent each individual grunt in the group. You can also assume grunts are similarly equipped with the same weapons and equipment, though a few *specialists* may be carrying something extra (such as the one ganger who's packing a pistol, or the corporate hit squad member who's lugging the gyro-mounted MMG)—note these special cases. Specialist may also be loaded with a particular implant that the other grunts don't have. Specialists are useful for keeping the player characters off guard (else they assume all grunts are the same), but for book-keeping you should limit the specialists to one or two per group, with minimum differences between them and the others.

During combat, the gamemaster should make one single Initiative Test for the entire group of grunts (augmented spe-

cialists may make their own Initiative Tests, if the gamemaster so chooses). The result applies to all grunts, but injury modifiers may cause some grunts to act slower than their comrades.

Condition Monitors

To simplify matters for the gamemaster, grunts only possess one Condition Monitor that tracks both Physical and Stun damage. The number of boxes on the Condition Monitor is equal to 8 plus half of either Body or Willpower (whichever is higher), rounded up. As grunts take Physical and Stun Damage, record both on the Condition Monitor; when a grunt's Condition Monitor is filled, he is knocked out for the remainder of combat. Do not track overflow damage.

If it's necessary to determine whether a grunt is alive or dead at the end of combat (for interrogation, for example), make note of the type of attack that knocked out the grunt. If it was Stun damage, or net Physical damage less than the grunt's Body Attribute, he survives. If the final attack inflicted Physical damage greater than the grunt's Body, then he dies.

Professional Rating

Not all groups are created equal. Sometimes the characters will run into a cowardly pack of gangers who flee at the first sign of serious resistance. Other times, the characters will find themselves facing elite special forces who outclass them in every respect, hands down. A special group rating, known as the Professional rating, measures the group's level of class.

A group's Professional rating reflects the relative professionalism, discipline, and overall experience of a group. It also serves as a dice pool modifier for resisting Social Skill Tests made against the group.

The following list of ranges provides some guidelines for assigning Professional rating to a group:

Untrained (Professional Rating 0):

The grunts in this group are untrained and unfamiliar with combat situations. They tend to react clumsily, slowly, and without a plan. If more than a quarter of the group members are removed from the combat, the group will flee in panic. Examples: Street mobs, rent-a-cops.

Semi-trained (Professional Ratings 1–2): These grunts are semi-trained and have some combat experience. They will remain in a fight until the situation is obviously no longer going their way. They tend to act deliberately and with a plan but don't have the cool head of a true professional. If more than half the group members are knocked out of combat, the group will stop fighting and run. Examples: Street gangs, cops, security guards, insurgents.

Trained (Professional Ratings 3–4): Grunts in this group are trained in combat and generally know what they're doing. They aren't stupid and don't take foolish chances. If more than three-quarters of the group are disabled, the group



NPC AND CRITTER STATS

Abbreviation	Attribute
B	Body
A	Agility
R	Reaction
S	Strength
C	Charisma
I	Intuition
L	Logic
W	Willpower
EDG	Edge
ESS	Essence
M	Magic
INIT	Initiative
IP	Initiative Passes
CM	Condition Monitor
F	Force