



PRIME RUNNER CREATION AND ADVANCEMENT TABLE

Prime Runner Level	BP Creation	Advancement
Inferior	80-90 percent of average PC total	80 percent of average Karma award
Equal	90-110 percent of average PC total	100 percent of average Karma award
Superior	110-150 percent of average PC total	125 percent of average Karma award
Superhuman	150-250 percent of average PC total	200 percent of average Karma award



Prime runners are signature characters that appear over the course of an adventure. If an adventure could be thought of as an action movie, a prime runner is the equivalent of the evil mastermind, the mastermind's chief henchman, or the femme fatale. Most prime runners oppose the characters as chief antagonists, but some may be neutral, helping or harming the PCs according to their own personal agenda.

Creating a Prime Runner

A prime runner is a unique individual, as unique as the player characters. As such, they should be built using the Build Point System (see *Building a Shadowrunner*, p. 72). The total number of Build Points used to build a prime runner depends on the character's strength relative to the player characters: Inferior, Equal, Superior, or Superhuman. Depending on the strength level, the BP total used to build the prime runner will be a certain percentage of the average BP total of all characters (see the Prime Runner Creation and Advancement Table).

Inferior: These prime runners are less powerful than the PCs. Inferior PCs may be overmatched by PCs in a stand-up fight, but they often have influential contacts or powerful friends who can make the PCs' lives miserable.

Equal: Prime runners who are the Equal of the PCs are their peers. Many of them will be shadowrunners like the PCs, but some may be company men, government agents, or syndicate enforcers.

Superior: A Superior prime runner can outmatch any PC on a one-to-one basis, but the PCs working together as a team should be able to overcome him. Superior prime runners are not bound by any special constraints on skills or gear that apply to starting characters.

Superhuman: Some prime runners are so powerful that they can take on the entire PC group single-handedly and win. Like Superior prime runners, they are not bound by the constraints that apply to starting player characters. In general, player characters should encounter Superhuman prime runners very rarely; such characters are usually masterminds manipulating events behind the scenes.

Prime Runner Advancement

Many prime runners are tied to the adventure in which they appear and do not return after the adventure is over. Particularly memorable prime runners, however, may be too good to throw away and may reappear again to aid, challenge, or obstruct the PCs several adventures later. Since

the PCs should be accumulating Karma and advancing their attributes, skills, and resources, so will recurring prime runners—this lets them continue to remain a challenge to the player characters.

If the gamemaster decides that she wants to retain a prime runner to appear in a later adventure, she should keep track of the average individual Karma award for each adventure that took place since the prime runner appeared (including the one featuring the prime runner). Depending on the prime runner's strength, multiply the average Karma award by a percentage (see the Prime Runner Creation and Advancement Table). The result is the number of Karma points available for improving and advancing the prime runner. Gamemasters spend these Karma points the same way that players do for character advancement (see p. 264).

The Hand of God

A prime runner is one of the key features of a campaign, one thing that makes an adventure memorable, so a gamemaster might find it frustrating if the player characters gun him down prematurely. (Especially if it's a prime runner the gamemaster intends to use over and over again.)

In general, if you as the gamemaster aren't ready for a prime runner to die yet, you should exploit any opportunity to cast doubt on the certainty of doom. For example, if the prime runner is about to die from an explosion, the explosion should collapse the ceiling and prevent the characters from actually seeing the prime runner meet his fate. Likewise, if a prime runner is shot with a killing attack, he falls into a canyon or hole that the PCs can't get into. As the old movie trope goes, if the heroes can't find the body, then the villain isn't necessarily dead.

Sometimes, however, a prime runner may get caught in a situation where he can't help dying in the open. In this case the gamemaster can invoke the Hand of God to bail out the prime runner. To use the Hand of God, the gamemaster permanently burns all remaining Edge for the prime runner. The prime runner may appear to be dead, but in reality he is clinging to life by the barest of threads. As soon as the players' attention shifts away to other things, the prime runner will recover enough to claw his way out. Nevertheless, the situation will have left some sort of permanent mark, like a scar that never fully heals, loss in one or more attributes, or even a negative quality. (Points generated from a negative quality or attribute loss may be used to recover some of the Edge burned.)

