

A magician's link to magic may be personified by a spirit-figure or totem, called a mentor spirit, which exemplifies her beliefs. Mentor spirits provide certain advantages and disadvantages (see *Mentor Spirits*, p. 192).

SKILLS

Characters possess knowledge and techniques known as **skills**, which have ratings that are used to carry out tests. Skills define what a character knows and can do. They range from **Active Skills** such as Unarmed Combat to certain sets of **Knowledge Skills** such as Biology. The chapter on *Skills*, p. 105, has a complete listing.

All skills have a predetermined linked attribute—the attribute that applies when the skill is used. The rating of the attribute plus the rating of the skill combined make up the dice pool for skill tests.

Skill Ratings

Skills are rated on a scale of 1 to 6, similar to attributes. A rating of 3 represents professional competency in a particular skill.

Beginning characters can only start the game with either a single skill at a rating of 6 (and all others 4 or less) or only two skills with a rating of 5 (and all the rest 4 or less).

The maximum natural rating available for a skill is 6, or 7 with the Aptitude quality (p. 77). Adept powers, implants or magic may provide bonus dice to a skill, creating a *modified* skill rating, but this does not change the base skill rating. The maximum modified rating allowed is 1.5 times the natural rating (making 9 the maximum achievable, or 10 with the Aptitude quality).

Specializations

A **specialization** represents a focused field of training or education in one aspect of a **base skill**. For example, a character with Pistols skill can specialize in Semi-Automatics, improving her ability when firing any semi-automatic pistol. A specialization grants the character 2 extra dice on tests using that skill when the particular specialty applies (see *Specializations*, p. 109). This is noted on the character sheet by adding “(+2)” after the skill rating. Only one specialization can be taken per skill.

Skill Groups

Skill groups are sets of related skills that can be purchased and upgraded at the same time for a reduced cost per skill. The individual skills inside a group function identically to skills purchased separately (see *Skill Groups*, p. 106). Starting characters cannot have a skill group higher than Rating 4.

QUALITIES

Beyond skills and attributes, characters have **qualities**—both positive and negative—that affect them in specific game terms. Qualities range from Magician (which provides a character access to magic in the Sixth World) to Bad Luck (which turns her own Edge against her). Positive qualities must be purchased during character creation, whereas negative qualities provide more points to be used during character generation. A complete list of qualities and their effects can be found, starting on p. 77.

Characters may not purchase more than 35 BP worth of Positive qualities or take more than 35 BP worth of Negative qualities.

GEAR

Gear is stuff the character owns. Gear includes a runner's trusted sidearm, her nightclub clothes and corporate drone disguise, her micro-transceiver tuned to the team's encrypted frequency, her battered Eurocar that she bought hot from the local gangbangers for use as a getaway vehicle, her ancient Celtic wristband made of orichalcum that serves as a spell focus, and the commlink that wirelessly connects her to the augmented Matrix. The list of available gear appears in the *Gear* chapter, p. 298. Beginning characters purchase gear with a pool of resources available only during character creation. Once the game starts, anything a character wants to buy, she'll have to buy with money she *earns*. Welcome to real life, *omae*.

As with attributes and skills, let your character's background suggest appropriate gear when allocating resources. Characters should not be able to pull money and gear out of thin air—they should only possess items they can plausibly pay for and obtain, based on their backgrounds. Resources spent during character generation, however, do not necessarily reflect actual nuyen spent—if a character has something that would normally be out of her price range, it could be justified as a gift from a mysterious benefactor, something implanted against her will (perhaps with some sort of tracking device attached ...), or something she earned “in trade” for services rendered.

Commlinks

One piece of gear that almost every character in Shadowrun has is a commlink (see p. 210). Commlinks are what everyone uses to get online, and thanks to the wireless Matrix, characters are usually online all of the time (see *The Wireless World*, p. 205). Commlinks are also the interface characters use to experience the augmented reality of the Matrix (see p. 209). There are drawback to having commlinks (and other wireless devices), however—see *What Every Shadowrunner Needs to Know About Hacking*, p. 224.

Gear Ratings

Some gear has ratings, beginning at 1 and increasing with the capability and sophistication of the item. In addition to cost, gear usually has an **Availability**, which determines how readily and quickly the item can be obtained.

Weapons have a **Damage Value** that tells the player how much damage they do. The code consists of a number and a letter. The number indicates the base number of damage boxes the weapon inflicts. The letter indicates whether the weapon inflicts Physical (P) or Stun (S) damage. Some weapons also have an AP rating, which stands for armor penetration. The AP modifies the value of any armor used to resist the attack. See *Damage Codes*, p. 152, for further explanation of how these codes are used.

BODY MODIFICATIONS

In basic *Shadowrun*, characters may choose to have cyberware (technological devices) and bioware (modified organs) implanted into their body.