

Armed with your imagination and a basic understanding of what you want to do and play in *Shadowrun*, it's time to create a character. Characters are just numbers on a piece of paper until you give them life. It therefore makes sense to think about what kind of character you would like to play before the game begins.

Start simply: Do you like orks? Do hackers sound interesting? Do you think magical characters rock? Perhaps you want to play a compulsive liar who can easily pull the wool over people's eyes? Maybe the specifics don't matter, as long as you get to wield the most kick-ass weapon in the game.

Once you have a basic idea of what you want to play, you can either use a pregenerated sample character or create your own from scratch. Using a sample character may be the best choice if you are new to *Shadowrun* and wish to start playing right away. Creating your own character takes more time, but gives the satisfaction of developing your own character exactly the way you want.

SAMPLE CHARACTERS

The included sample characters are given on p. 89. These write-ups give basic descriptions and backgrounds for a few of the types of people living and working in the shadows. These characters embody stereotypical assumptions about the world of *Shadowrun*, but they are certainly not the only character types you can play. They are designed to give insight into what various types of shadowrunners are like.

The sample characters were built following the standard character creation process outlined here. They include the character's attributes, skills, and gear (including cyberware and spells, if any), as well as suggestions for playing them. Each was built to the standard 400 Build Point total. The sample characters let you begin playing *Shadowrun* right away.

BUILDING A SHADOWRUNNER

Creating your own character means building one from scratch using the Build Point System. Under this system, players have a pre-set pool of Build Points (BP) that they use to improve their attributes, learn skills, gain special qualities, and acquire resources. You can use the sample characters to generate ideas, and then use the Build Point System to flesh out that concept into a playable character.

It's best to have some concrete ideas in mind when you begin character generation. Unlike other game systems, the Build Point System isn't random; you fully direct your character's abilities, advantages, and disadvantages, from start to finish. Some players find that in order to take full advantage of this system's possibilities, they prefer to flesh out some of their character's history, background and personality beforehand.

You can also leave all those options open, developing the character's background and personality as you work your way through the creation process. In this situation, you may only know the basics initially—for example, you'd like to play a mage this time. Creating a character this way requires some flexibility, and you should be prepared to make on-the-spot decisions and stick to them. Such a process can also lead to interesting and varied characters, perhaps featuring some unanticipated combinations.

BUILD POINTS (BP)

The Build Point System works by allocating a character a set number of Build Points (BP). Build Points can be used to learn skills, increase attributes, acquire gear, learn spells, and so on. Each new or improved ability costs BP, thus limiting how powerful a character can be. So it's important to choose your advantages wisely, or you may end up overspending your BP!

Characters for a typical *Shadowrun* campaign should be built with **400 BP** total. This gives plenty of room for flexibility, but it's also limited enough to provide adequate challenge to players. Gamemasters can adjust the value up or down to suit their tastes. For example, if a group is interested in a low-level street campaign, the GM may only allow 300 BP to build starting characters. On the other hand, if the group likes high-powered, elite-operative campaigns, they may need 500 BP for starting characters.

Players may purchase abilities in any order they choose, but we strongly suggest that you start by first selecting your character's metatype, and then by purchasing attributes. This will lay the general foundation for the character and could significantly affect capabilities in other areas (namely skills and magic).

Brian, Michelle, and Dan are eager to join in the new Shadowrun game that Steve is planning to run. Before the game gets started, Steve tells the three to create the characters they wish to play.

Dan is a relative newcomer to Shadowrun, so he opts to use one of the sample characters. Glancing at the portfolio of characters on pages 89 to 104, Dan selects the Street Samurai.

While Dan is a novice to the game, Brian and Michelle are veteran Shadowrun players and have opted to use the Build Point System. Steve informs the two that they each have 400 BP for creating their characters. They start by thinking about the characters they want to play. Michelle likes magicians, so she decides to play a street witch. Brian, on the other hand, wants to play a weapons specialist, a literal hired gun who's an expert at all types of firearms.

CHOOSE YOUR METATYPE

The Metatype category refers to your character's "race" (human, elf, dwarf, ork, or troll). Each metatype carries bonuses and restrictions; some have unique special abilities. A character's metatype sets his or her attribute limits, so it's strongly recommended that you perform this step first.

The Metatype Attribute Table lists the available metatypes characters may play, the associated BP cost for each, the starting and maximum attribute ratings for each metatype, and that metatype's special abilities. Attributes are listed with the starting value first and the maximum value following after a slash (/). Additionally, the maximum augmented attribute is listed in parentheses following the maximum attribute value. Human characters are the norm in *Shadowrun*, so there is no BP cost for being a human. All other metatypes have a BP cost.