PROGRAM COSTS AND AVAILABILITY

Type	Cost (up to Rating 3, in ¥)	Cost (Up to Rating 6, in ¥)	Availability
Common Use	Rating x 50	Rating x 100	—
Hacking	Rating x 500	Rating x 1,000	12R
Agents/IC/Pilot	Pilot rating x 1,000	Pilot Rating x 2,500	Rating x 3
System	Rating x 200	Rating x 500	—
Firewall	Rating x 200	Rating x 500	—
Autosofts	Rating x 200	Rating x 500	Rating x 2

If a character wishes to duplicate a program that is copy-protected, he needs to break the protection. This requires an Extended Software + Logic Test with a threshold between 10 and 20 (gamemaster's discretion) and an interval of 1 hour.

If you wish for your agent to operate in the Matrix independently, you must load it on a particular node separate from your persona. The agent will continue to operate in the Matrix even if your persona goes offline. In this case, the agent doesn't count toward your persona's active program limits like running programs do, but it does count as a subscriber toward your subscription limit (see p. 212).

See *Issuing Commands,* p. 221, for details on sending orders to agents.

Payload

Agents can be loaded up with copies of your programs so that the agent may employ them on its own. If an agent is acting independently, any programs it's carrying must be active, and so may affect its Response (see p. 212). Any program run by an agent is limited by the Pilot rating.

INTRUSION COUNTERMEASURES

Though the term intrusion countermeasures (IC) is widely used to describe any of the defenses a node employs against intruders, it specifically refers to a specialized type of agent program that is used to defend a system. For all game purposes, IC programs are the equivalent to agents and function the same. IC programs typically are loaded with some of the following programs to employ against intruders: Analyze, Attack, Black Hammer, Blackout, and Track.

When an intruder alert is triggered, the node will launch an IC program and direct it to engage the intruder(s). Once launched, IC programs act independently of each other and the node. Each IC program has its own icon and Initiative (see *Cybercombat,* p. 230). IC programs use their own Pilot rating in place of Computer, Hacking, or Cybercombat skill.

More proactive IC programs may be loaded with additional utilities such as Exploit or Stealth, and may actively pursue intruders if they leave the node or even track the intruder back to his originating node and attack him there. IC programs are typically loaded with any necessary passcodes they may need to access any connected systems.

Note that nodes are careful not to run so many IC programs at once that it affects their performance (see *Response,* p. 212).

SOURCE CODE AND PIRACY

Most legally-purchased programs are sold with built-in copy protection, so that the program cannot easily be duplicated without an access code. Hackers have invented many ways of circumventing these methods, however, to the point where piracy is the rule rather than the exception.

VIRTUAL REALITY

For those who want the full Matrix experience, you can go a step beyond AR and fully immerse your senses in the virtual reality (VR) simsense of the Matrix. Your physical perceptions in VR are overridden by the Matrix's sensory information. Rather than experiencing the real world around your meat body, you only experiences the electronic simulation of the Matrix.

A simsense module is required to access full VR. The sim module is a commlink accessory that you access with a datajack or trode net. Simrigs (both worn and implanted) and cranial commlinks also contain sim modules. As a safety precaution, sim mods override your motor functions while you are fully immersed in VR, so that you don't blindly thrash around in the real world and potentially injure yourself or break things. This means that your physical body is limp while you're online, as if you were sleeping. If you concentrate, you can still perceive through your meat senses while in VR, but it's very distracting and you suffer a –6 Perception Test dice pool modifier.

VR is popular for several reasons. VR environments are fantastic for intense and realistic gaming experiences, and customizable simsense entertainment feeds are more popular than standard trid. VR is also more anonymous and thus is an excellent medium for conducting shady deals or simply socializing without having to overcome barriers raised by looks, metatype, social class, and so on. VR sex is almost as good as the real thing, and your partner(s) can look any way that pleases you. On a more platonic note, just moving through the Matrix's specially sculpted VR landscapes is an interesting way to pass the time—like living in a video game. To technomancers, VR is "home"—most feel more comfortable here than navigating the meat world, even with augmented reality. Most importantly for hackers, however, VR is fast—you move at digital speeds, which can be the extra edge you need while pulling a hack job.

VR users can access multiple nodes simultaneously, just like AR users (see *Accessing Multiple Nodes,* p. 218).

VR ACCESS MODE

Virtual reality is a drastically different experience than AR. Someone interfacing with augmented reality while he walks down the street operates at different speeds from someone tearing through VR landscapes with his mind alone. Most fully virtual users utilize a legal simsense interface, which is dubbed "cold sim" on the streets. Hackers who want that extra edge utilize an illegally-modified "hot sim" interface instead, risking their neural pathways for a little extra speed.