DIESEL EMPIRES

v28.3.0 | By Jefferson Lee | UpTooLateGames.com

Creating Characters

Before the game starts, the **GM** will pass around a set of sheets that contain all of the *species*, *Paths*, and *Traits* for the game (which can be found at **UpTooLateGames.com**).

- **Pick your character's species**, which gives your character a set of *attributes*.
- **Pick *one Path* for your character.** Paths describe the character's course through their life and gives them a set of *Backgrounds* and *Traits* to select.
- **Pick *one Background* from their Path** and <u>underline</u> your choice.
- **Each Background has** *four* (**4**) *Traits*, which **have an associated *suit* and *keywords*. *All* the Traits of the character's *starting* Background** begin with a rank of *one* (**1**). You also gain the *extra assets* of the Background.

You have an additional *three* (**3**) **points to spend:**

- *One* (**1**) **point will increase a *Trait* score by** *one* (**1**).
- *One* (**1**) **point** will give a character **a** *new* **Background**, but they *do not* gain any of the **Background's Traits**. Traits can be bought for *one* (**1**) **point per rank**. You *do gain* the extra assets of the Background.
- **You can** *only* **pick *Backgrounds* and *Traits* from your character's chosen Path**, and you **cannot gain** *new* **Paths**.

Playing the Game

The Deck

The game requires a *standard Poker deck* with *both Jokers*.

Everyone *except* for the GM gets *five* cards at the start of the game. **The GM never carries a hand** and **players can never have** *more* **than** *five* **cards in their hand**.

- *Pip* cards are the cards numbered *2 through 10*, while the **Royal cards** are the **Queen**, **King**, and **Jack** cards.
- **The** *base value of the cards* is *zero* (**0**) for *Pip cards*, *one* (**1**) for *Royal cards*, *two* (**2**) for *Aces*, and *three* (**3**) for *Jokers*.

Whenever the deck runs out of cards, *reshuffle* the discard pile and create a *new* deck.

Checks

The GM can call for a *Check* anytime the outcome of a character's action could have a *significant* impact on the story, or if *failing* an action would result in *meaningful* consequences.

1. The Opposing Draw
If the task has *extra* complications (the task is *complex* or *taxing*, or if the character is *unprepared* or *injured*), **the GM draws** *one* (**1**) *Opposing* card from the deck for *each* condition. These Opposing cards are kept *hidden*, but the **player should know how** *many* Opposing cards they are facing.

2. The Character Draw
If the character has a *Trait* that is relevant to the Check, the player **draws and reveals** *one* (**1**) *card* from the deck for *each* rank in the Trait, so *two* (**2**) cards are drawn for a rank *two* (**2**) Trait. **Every**

card in the character's draw that *matches* the suit of the Trait gets *plus one* (+1) **to its base value**, so *matching Pip* cards would be worth *one* (1), *Royal* cards would be worth *two* (2), and *Aces* would be worth *three* (3).

If the character does *not* have a relevant *Trait*, but they at least have a **relevant** *Background*, the player **draws one (1) card** from the deck, which is played at **base value**.

If the character does *not* **have any relevant** *Traits or Backgrounds* the Check is *limited*. The player still **draws one (1) card** from the deck, but **the** *total* **value for** *all* **the cards of the character's draw is limited to** *one* **(1)** *or less*, *even* if the draw includes a *Joker* or several *Royals*.

The player can **add** *any number* **of cards from their hand to their character's draw**.

The player can *also discard* **cards from their hand** and **draw one (1)** *additional* **card for** *each* **discard**.

A player can **play** or *discard* **as long as they still have cards in their hand**, but these cards can only be restored if the character *rests*.

3. Narrate the Outcome

The outcome is determined by taking the **total value of the character's draw** and *subtracting* **the total** *value* **of the Opposing draw. Opposing cards** *do not* **get to use a Trait's suit bonus**.

The *final* **total determines the** *success* **level of the outcome, but the GM is** *not* **required to reveal the** **final total**.

Total	Outcome	
3+	Superb	The character *succeeds*, and they gain an *immediate* **advantage**.
2	Ideal	The character *succeeds*, and accomplishes *exactly* what they wanted.
1	Messy	The character *barely succeeds*, so the results might be **limited**, or **new complications** might appear.
0	Failure	The character *fails*, which might expose them to **new threats** or **harm**.
-1	Dismal	The character *fails*, and the situation *immediately* becomes *more* dangerous.

The GM narrates the outcome, and *all* **of the cards used for the Check are** *discarded*. The GM **can put Opposing cards** *under* **the discard pile**.

Recovering Cards

Characters that *do not* **have** *critical trauma* **can** *rest* **to recover cards**, but the *quality* of the rest **limits the** *hand size* **that can be recovered**.

Rest		Hand Size
Quick	Pausing long enough to *focus*. This can be done even while the character is in **immediate danger** (like during a *fight*).	*One* (1) **card**
Half	Feeling safe enough to stop and eat a simple meal (or the equivalent).	*Three* (3) **cards**
Full	Enough sanctuary to *sleep* for **an hour**.	*Five* (5) **cards**

If a character has *two* (2) cards in their player's hand, a *Quick* rest is *would not* be helpful, since it can only return a hand back to *one* (1) card, but if the character takes a *Half* rest, they can recover *one* (1) card to restore them back to a hand size of *three* (3) cards.

Other methods, like *magic* or *medical stimulants*, can *also* be used to recover cards with *varying* effectiveness, but they tend to have *side-effects*.

Trauma

When a character suffers trauma, the GM decides how many *Hits* they receive based on the severity of the trauma (*usually* between *one* to *three*). **Trauma can be both *physical and mental***: a drug-induced psychotic break can be as traumatic as a hammer to the face.

Trauma Levels

There are *two* trauma levels: *severe* at *three* (**3**) **Hits** and *critical* at *six* (**6**) **Hits**. **Each trauma level counts as *separate* complications in a Check**, which means a *critically* wounded character will face *at least two* (2) Opposing cards during a Check. The character *dies at ten* (**10**) **Hits**.

If a character is in *critical* condition and **they fail *any* Check**, the character succumbs to the *shock* or *pain* and is **incapacitated**, and is either *unconscious* or *incoherent*.

Recovery

Each **Hit requires a *separate* Check to recover**, either through *natural healing*, or applying *medical aid*. **Heal a number of Hits equal to the final Check score**. A *dismal* failure means the character *suffers one* (**1**) **Hit**. If the character is *incapacitated*, they can be revived if **any* Hits are healed**.

Magic Foundations

Magic requires *two* things: a *channel* and a *body* to *contain* the channel. The channel is what actually shapes the *effect*, but it is up to the body to keep an effect stable enough to *do* something.

There are two methods of channeling:

- **Evocation is channeling with the *caster* acting as the body.** This poses *extreme* risks for the spell caster, as it means that *failed* attempts at channeling will affect the caster's own body, mind, or *soul*. **It is also *very difficult***, because the caster has to split their focus between an *intricate* channeling rite, and *suppressing the fear of being ripped asunder*.
- **Psychic evocation** is the same as regular Evocation, but without a *spoken* component. **Chanting and speaking make evocation *significantly* easier**, but any rite can be performed *psychically* at **increased difficulty**.
- **Ritual channeling uses a *prepared* body**, like a *ritual circle* or *prepared sacrifice*. It is the *oldest* form of spell casting and it is *easier*, but requires a lot more **preparation**. It is also **safer** for the caster, though **run-away effects** from powerful rites can still be *fatal* and extremely *destructive*. *Psychic rituals* are possible, but the practice is uncommon.

In practice, *field* mages rely on a *combination* of the two methods, pairing *evocation* channeling with *lesser ritual bodies* to *mitigate* side-effects. **Professional mages** tend to rely exclusively on *rituals* using **permanent ritual bodies**, like *resonance granite* in hospitals or a mecharcanist's *Tilly Box*.

Magic Checks

Magic Checks use the same rules as *normal* Checks, though magic is considerably more *unpredictable* and *dangerous* than conventional actions.

Weapons And Armor

Weapons

A weapon's *strength* determines the *base* number of Hits it inflicts. On a *successful* attack, **add the final Check score to the weapon strength**. If a character *suffers* damage from a weapon, **add the *Opposing card total* to the weapon strength**.

Weapons with a "+" ***reduce*** the target's Armor Rating by *one* (**1**), so a "2+" weapon will only inflict *two* (2) Hits, but will reduce *rating two* (2) armor to *one* (1).

Weapon	Strength (ST)
Fists. Still the most popular fallback.	0
Combat Knife. The classic.	1
Long Sword. The mainstay weapon of the Silohain.	2
Spear. Also widely used by the Silohain.	2+
Longbow. Aside from magic, this is the main ranged weapon of the Silohain.	2+
.38 Pistol. Most civilian pistols.	2+
.45 ACP Pistol. Heavier firepower, but sometimes harder to manage. Very popular in civilian markets.	3
.223 Combat Rifle. The kind of rifles favored by many modern militaries due to the weight and acceptable stopping power.	4+
.308 Combat Rifle. These heavier rifles are favored by a shrinking number of militaries due to their weight.	5
.338 Arden Sniper/Hunting Rifle. Used in both civilian and military arenas.	6+

Armor

Subtract the *Rating* of any armor protection from **the strength of any weapon** that hits the character, so a rating *two* (2) armor reduces a weapon's strength by *two* (2). **Armor is not perfect** and the **GM** can change the effectiveness of Armor depending on the attack. Steel armor is great for stopping blades, but it is *useless* against a *flamethrower*.

Armor	Rating (AR)
Ballistic Leather. Synthetically strengthened leather that a lot of survivalists wear.	1
Plate Armor. Steel chest armor that some kingdoms still field.	2
Elven Plate. Magically enhanced steel armor which is as light as aluminum.	4
Class IIa Kevlar. The kind of protection commonly given to watch members in major cities.	2
Class IIa KevFlex. Magically strengthened Kevlar, which makes it light enough to be woven into plain clothes. Worn by special watch members.	2
Combat Armor. Stiff laminate cloth with a steel plate backing. This is what is used by most militaries due to its low cost.	3
KevFlex Infantry Armor. Light and flexible KevFlex with ceramic inserts, which is rarely fielded by any military beyond Bonethorne Port and the Huxlon Republic.	4
KevFlex Combat Armor. Heavy KevFlex with ceramic inserts, which is rarely fielded even by Bonethorne Port and the Huxlon Republic due to its weight and cost.	5

Feedback

Thanks for picking up this game and taking a look! If you played in one of my playtests then a *very extra* special thank you! *Diesel Empire* is in very early development, and I would absolutely love your feedback, especially if you decide to take this home and play it with your friends as the GM! Please send any comments to **jlee@uptoolategames.com**.