

# System Technique Document

for

## ***Dread: The First Book of Pandemonium***

written by Rafael Chandler



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## Table of Contents

1. Concept.....	3	Regaining Fury.....	10
1.1. Mechanics.....	3	Example Stunts.....	10
Target Difficulty.....	3	2.9. Gear.....	10
Resistance.....	3	Cash.....	10
Damage.....	3	Improving Cash Flow.....	10
Multiples.....	3	Equipment.....	11
1.2. Being Cool.....	3	2.10. Advancement.....	11
1.3. Context.....	3	3. Magic.....	11
Origin.....	4	Spells.....	12
Occupation.....	4	3.1. Example Spells.....	12
Headquarters.....	4	Chela.....	12
Contacts.....	4	Dresden.....	12
Mentor.....	4	Hemophage.....	12
Personality.....	4	Nacreous.....	12
1.4. Working Together.....	4	4. Combat.....	13
2. Character Overview.....	4	Example of Combat.....	13
2.1. Attributes.....	5	4.1. Life.....	13
Examples.....	5	Recovery.....	13
Using Attributes.....	5	Retirement.....	14
Attributes vs. Skills.....	6	4.2. Armor.....	14
Opposed Attribute Checks.....	6	4.3. Range.....	14
2.2. Attribute Descriptions.....	6	4.4. Ammo.....	14
2.3. Disciplines.....	6	4.5. Vehicular Combat.....	14
Combat.....	6	Driving.....	14
Lore.....	6	Skilled Driving.....	14
Sorcery.....	7	Ramming.....	14
2.4. Skills.....	7	Swerve.....	15
Using Skills.....	8	Recover.....	15
2.5. Example Skills.....	8	Ramming Motorcycles.....	15
Charm.....	8	Body.....	15
Crime.....	8	4.6. Vehicle Stats.....	15
Driving.....	8	Other Vehicles.....	15
2.6. Drive.....	9	Blowing Shit Up.....	15
Using Drive.....	9	4.7. Falling Damage.....	15
2.7. Contacts.....	9	4.8. Penalties in Combat.....	15
Using Contacts.....	9	Example Penalties.....	15
2.8. Fury.....	9		

## 1. Concept

Dread: The First Book of Pandemonium is a tabletop role-playing game of modern horror-action. This STD contains all of the core rules included in the Player's Section of the book, including the information needed to create a new character. A few skills, spells, and examples have been furnished, but most of them have been cut to keep the page count down.

### 1.1. Mechanics

To resolve any conflict, roll a number of 12-sided dice equal to your skill or ability. Then, compare this score to the number you're trying to beat.

#### Target Difficulty

If you're trying to move or manipulate an object, or to control a situation in some way, you roll against a target difficulty. Target difficulty goes from 2 (easy) to 7 (average) to 12 (extremely difficult).

For example, if you're trying to open a locked door, and your Strength is 3, you roll 3 dice. The Director indicates that the lock is rusty, so the difficulty is 5 (below average). One of your dice shows a 9. That means that you were successful, and you bashed down the door.

#### Resistance

If you're taking action against another person or entity, then you're not going to roll against a Target Difficulty. You're going to roll against your opponent.

For example, if you're trying to punch a guy, and your Attack score is 4, you roll 4 dice. The guy's Defend score is 3, so the Director rolls 3 dice. Your highest number is a 10, and the other guy's highest number is a 7. That means that you hit.

In case of a tie, look at the next highest numbers.

#### Damage

Damage is the difference between the numbers in the event of a hit. In the aforementioned case, the guy rolled a 7 against your 10. That means that you inflict 3 points of damage against him. Of course, you

will also want to add the damage from your weapon. If you're using a lead pipe (which has a damage rating of 1), that means you hit for 4 points, not 3.

#### Multiples

Here's the tricky part: if you roll multiples of the same number, you add the number of multiples to the number itself. For example, if you roll three 6s, that means that you rolled a 9 (3+6). Now, if you also rolled an 11, you would want to ignore that 9.

But, in theory, you could roll some extremely high numbers this way. For example, if you roll four 12s, that means that you've rolled a 16.

## 1.2. Being Cool

Whenever you describe something in a cool way, you get an extra die. It doesn't matter if you're researching data at the library, investigating a crime scene, or throwing a bar stool at someone's head in a brawl. A good description gets you that extra die.

If everyone in the group is stunned by your eloquence, or by the sheer drama of it all, or if anyone gets goosebumps, you can roll two extra dice. But don't overdo this. It only happens once in a while. You can't roll two extra dice every time.

In other words, be cool.

## 1.3. Context

In the next chapters, we'll be discussing character creation, skill selection, and other concepts that affect your character, like Fury (points that you can use to achieve impossible stunts), Contacts (people that you know, whom you can turn to for help), and Drive (your character's motivation).

But before we do, there are a few things you need to start thinking about.

1. Where did you come from?
2. What did you do for a living?
3. What's your base of operations like?
4. Who do you know in town?
5. What's your Mentor like?
6. How do your teammates see you?

## Origin

Where did you come from? What happened to you to transform you from an ordinary person into someone with nothing left to lose? Where did you go wrong? What was it that changed everything for you? By answering this question, you should wind up with a single word that sums up your character's Drive, as explained in section 2.6.

## Occupation

What did you do for a living? Was your character a soldier, a schoolteacher, a cop, a criminal, a computer geek, a student, or a psychologist? By fleshing out your character's occupational background, you'll make it easier to choose your Skills, as described in section 2.4.

## Headquarters

What's your base of operations like? What kind of place is it? A dojo, an abandoned warehouse, a burned-out tenement? A mansion? The more time you and your fellow players spend describing your headquarters, the more fun it will be to hang out there and perform research.

## Contacts

Who do you know in town? Back when you were on the police force, or the newspaper staff, or the school board, did you make any connections with significant people? Are you on a first-name basis with the mayor, or the police chief, or a bishop? By creating a preliminary list, you've simplified the process of creating your network of Contacts (described in section 2.7).

Of course, you don't want to go too far. Claiming that your character was buddies with a national leader or the head of a major religion is going too far -- just keep it reasonable.

## Mentor

What's your Mentor like? Spend some time talking to your fellow players about who's running your team. The Mentor isn't going to accompany you on cases, but he or she will give you leads, and will check in

on you from time to time.

## Personality

How do your teammates see you? Of course, you know how you see your character, but how do the other Disciples see him or her? Is your character a natural leader, or the silent sociopath, or the empathetic healer, or the jokester?

## 1.4. Working Together

As a team, you'll have to work together to design the world that you live in. It's obviously easy to set a campaign in your own neck of the woods, unless that's objectionable for some reason.

The big questions are things like: What sort of city/town do you live in? Are people kind to each other? Do children mind their parents? If a woman in an alley screams for help, will someone come running, or will people turn up their TV sets and pretend that nothing's happening?

This can help establish the city more concretely in your minds. From this point, it gets a little easier. Where's your base of operations? Uptown, near the yuppie bars and strip malls? Downtown, near the strip clubs and soup kitchens? Is there a gas station near your place? Library? Church? Mosque? Synagogue? Police station? Convenience store? Diner?

Who works in these places? Are there regulars? When you walk into the convenience store, is it always the same guy, reading the paper, smiling as you walk in? Who works at the library? Is it modern, or do they still use the card catalog?

## 2. Character Overview

To create a Disciple, you will need to fill out a character sheet, which you can find on the Dread web site ([www.dread-rpg.com](http://www.dread-rpg.com)). This is a quick overview of the content that you'll need to enter on your sheet:

- **Name:** Your Disciple has a name. Not the name that he or she was born with, but a handle, a code name.
- **Strength, Sense, and Soul:** These three attributes define your character.
- **Discipline:** Powers that are beyond the scope of ordinary humans. There are three

- Disciplines: Combat, Lore, and Exorcism.
- **Skills:** Each Disciple used to be something else: a journalist, a physician, a soldier.
- **Drive:** Drive is your character's primary motivation.
- **Contacts:** Your Contacts are people that you can turn to for help during the game. They also furnish you with leads or clues.
- **Fury:** You begin each session of Dread with 12 points of Fury, which you can use to perform stunts and impossible maneuvers.
- **Gear:** This includes any equipment that your character is carrying, including flashlights, identification, electronic equipment, and so on.
- **Weapons:** These include guns, swords, grenades, and anything else you want to use in a fight.
- **Magic:** This represents your character's magical power. This is equal to your Soul score.
- **Spells:** Each Disciple knows a few spells. The higher your Soul score, the more spells you know.
- **Combat:** This represents your character's fighting skill. This is equal to your Strength score, unless you have the Discipline of Combat.
- **Life:** This tells you how much damage your character has taken. Each Disciple begins with 12 points. If you lose a couple of points, you're bruised. If you lose more than that, you begin to suffer penalties.
- **Armor:** If you wear body armor, write down the armor rating in this field.

## 2.1. Attributes

There are three Attributes that you must determine. These Attributes help you define what your character is (as opposed to Skills, which are things that your character knows).

- Strength: Power, speed, and endurance
- Sense: Intellect, education, and wit
- Soul: Spiritual fortitude and will

These scores answer questions one might pose about your character. Is she smart? Is she strong? Is she confident? Is she fast? Is she tough?

To answer these questions, distribute 9 points between the first three scores. One score must be a 5 or higher. This means that the possible distributions are 1-

2-6, 1-3-5, and 2-2-5. The score with the 5 or 6 determines your Discipline, which is described in Section 2.3.

### Examples

Let's create a character named Scalpel. She used to be a medical examiner, and then she worked as a private investigator for a while. So, she's tough, but smart. We'll give her a 2 for Strength, a 5 for Sense, and a 2 for Soul. She's got average willpower (and magical skill), average strength, and a solid skill set.

The second Disciple is Texas. She used to work as a TV reporter in Dallas. She'll be the team's exorcist. So we'll give her a Strength of 1, a Sense of 2 (and we'll probably spend that on a Journalism skill), and a Soul of 6. Not much good in a fight, but the skill will help during investigations. The high Soul score means that she'll have several spells, including a few Exorcisms.

The last Disciple in this group is going to be Sergeant Warren. He's a big, tough soldier. Probably doesn't have much magical ability, more of a hands-on kind of guy. His skill is probably Military, with maybe a point of Intimidation or Mechanic for good measure. So, he'll be the combat expert, with a Strength of 6, a sense of 2, and a Soul of 1.

### Using Attributes

Any time a character is challenged personally, he or she must perform an Attribute Check. This is done by rolling a number of dice equal to the Attribute Score.

If the highest die matches or beats the Target Difficulty, the roll is successful. If the highest die is lower than the Target Difficulty, the roll is a failure.

The Target Difficulty will range from 2 (very easy) to 7 (average) to 12 (unlikely).

If the character's body is tested in some way, such as having to kick a door down or climb a wall, the character must make a Strength Check. Combat is based on the Strength score.

If the character's mind is tested in some way, such as having to recognize a disguised suspect in a crowd, or having to decipher a message written in a code, the character must make a Sense Check. A character with a high Sense score will have more points to assign to his Skill.

If the character's spirit is tested in some way,

such as having to withstand the hypnotic gaze of a demon, the character must make a Soul Check. Spell casting is resolved using the Soul score.

### Attributes vs. Skills

Skills reflect what the Disciple used to do for a living. Attributes, on the other hand, reflect the character's natural strengths and weaknesses.

Though there's a little overlap between skill checks and Sense checks, but the rule of thumb is: if you need to be educated to pull it off, you're talking about a skill check, not an attribute check; however, if it's something that you have to figure out, then it's a Sense check.

For instance, if you see stripes on someone's shoulder, you can't make a Sense check to figure out his rank. You need a Military skill, or some other applicable skill. If you want to hack into a computer system, again, that's not a Sense check; it requires a background in Computers, or something similar.

However, if you're trying to catch someone in a lie, or if you're trying to solve a logic problem, then it's not a question of your character's education: it's a question of intelligence, and in that case, you make the Sense check instead.

### Opposed Attribute Checks

There are times when you'll engage in a non-physical conflict with another character. In these situations, make an opposed attribute check, based on the kind of interaction. If it's intellectual, it's an opposed Sense check. If it's a test of wills, then make an opposed Soul check.

For example, you may try to catch another character in a lie. In this case, make a Sense check against the other character's Soul check.

If, on the other hand, you're trying to convince someone to do something, make a Soul check against the other character's Soul check.

## 2.2. Attribute Descriptions

The question is, what precisely do these Attributes entail? What's the difference between a Strength score of 3 and a Strength score of 5? One's higher, sure, but other than that, what do the scores tell you about your character? For answers, consult the Attribute Scores table:

### Attribute Scores

1	Below average
2-3	Average
4	Above average
5-6	Superhuman

A score of 5 or 6 indicates that the character is far superior to normal humans. This also means that your character has mastered a Discipline.

## 2.3. Disciplines

If a character has an Attribute score of 5 or 6, it indicates supremacy in a certain area: strength, intellect, or spirituality.

In such a case, the Disciple is also gifted with a specific skill that is tied to the high Attribute score. These Disciplines are Combat, Lore, and Exorcism.

### Combat

If a character has a Strength of 5 or 6, it means that he or she has the Discipline of Combat. Through this Discipline, the character has mastered armed and unarmed combat, and is a force to be reckoned with on the battlefield.

The character adds 1 point to the Attack and Defend scores, and can split dice between multiple opponents. For example, if the character has a Strength score of 5, then he has an Attack score of 6. With an Attack score of 6, then the character can attack 6 opponents with 1 die each, or 2 opponents with 3 dice each, or any combination adding up to 6 dice.

### Lore

If a character has a Sense score of 5 or 6, then he has access to the Discipline of Lore. This is recorded in the Discipline field on the character sheet, and then again in the Skill section of the character sheet as Occultist or Paranormal Expert or Demonbuster or whatever the hell you want. Starting out, the score is 1, but it can be raised through the expenditure of Fury. However, the maximum score for the skill is 3.

During gameplay, the Lore skill can help the Cabal to identify the demon. Each time the Disciples find a clue, or piece of physical evidence, or learn something about the movements of the demon that they're hunting, the character with the Discipline of Lore makes a mark. When three such pieces of data

have been accumulated, the player can return to headquarters and consult the notes that he or she has gathered, along with any occult manuscripts that the Cabal possesses, to conduct research and see if the demon sounds familiar.

The player checks by rolling three dice (one for each piece of the puzzle), and attempting to roll his Lore skill or lower. Starting out, the Lore skill is 1, so the player rolls 3 dice and hopes for a 1. If the attempt is unsuccessful, the player rolls 2 dice. If that doesn't work, the player rolls 1 die. If the player doesn't roll any ones, that means there just enough evidence, or that the search bore no fruit. The player can roll again if and when more data is gathered. The next time the players learn something about the demon, the Disciple can make another Lore check, this time rolling 4 dice, then 3, and so on.

If the player manages to roll a 1, that means that he has established at least one fact about the demon in question, including:

- Its name
- Its nature (Hunter, Defiler, or Stalker)
- Some information about its patterns or victims

This information is narrated by the Director, and will not include information about where to find the demon, or how to kill it. But knowing its nature and its patterns will help the Disciples to focus their energies and refine their search for it.

If the players face the same kind of demon twice, the information gathered through the use of the Lore skill will be different the next time. The specifics are, again, left to the Director's discretion.

Examples of data gathered through an investigation include (but are not limited to):

- Accounts of its appearance or behavior
- Physical evidence (teeth, scales, claws)
- Recordings (audio or visual)
- Crime scenes
- The victims' injuries (alive or dead)

Of course, as the Disciple's Lore skill goes up, it becomes easier to identify demons in the field. If the players keep good notes, it will also be easier to cross-reference their cases.

## Sorcery

Of the three types of demons, the Defilers are possibly the most loathsome, as they have the power to possess their demons and force them to do unholy things. A character with the Discipline of Sorcery has

the power to cast the Defiler out of a host body.

If a Disciple has a Soul score of 5 or 6, he or she gains the Discipline of Sorcery. This means that the player can choose Exorcisms, as well as other spells. Any combination is acceptable, so long as the player chooses a total number of spells equal to double his Soul score.

The player may elect not to choose any of the Exorcisms. However, without these spells, the only way to cast a demon out of a host body is to kill the host.

## 2.4. Skills

Double your Sense score. This is the total number of points that you may distribute among your skills. Choose from the list of skills and distribute the points as you see fit. For each item, list the skill on your character sheet, followed by the job title, and then the number.

*Example: Crime (Bank Robber) -- 3*

Each skill has a minimum score of 1 and a maximum score of 6. This score represents the number of dice that you roll when making a skill check.

For example, Scalpel has a Sense score of 5, so we get to distribute 10 points among her skills. Since she was a medical examiner for a while, we'll go ahead and use that as a skill. Let's assign 6 points to that, since it was her primary area of expertise. Since she also worked as a private eye, we'll go with Private Investigator, and we'll put the remaining 4 points there. So, her skills look like this:

*Medicine (Medical Examiner) -- 6*

*Crime (Private Investigator) -- 4*

Note that the skill in question is either Medicine or Crime. That means that the job title is just a descriptor. For example, let's say that a character has a background in Empathy because she used to be a police negotiator. That means that she has the ability to relate to people, to calm them down or get them to see her point of view. She can talk her way out of tricky situations or defuse potential problems. But the player can't say, "The character knows how to defuse a bomb because she used to be a cop." That's not what her skill is about. She's an empath, and her skill is a result of her background.

## Using Skills

When there is a situation where you think that

your character's skill could come in handy, tell the director that you want to make a skill check. The Director will tell you the target difficulty, and you'll roll the appropriate number of dice. If at least one of your dice equals or beats the difficulty, you have succeeded.

Note that the roll is against a target difficulty, not against another character's roll.

For example, let's say that Scalpel comes across a murder scene. The blood is still fresh, but the body is not present. The player tells the Director that Scalpel is going to use her background as a medical examiner to check out the crime scene. The crime scene is fresh, and the blood is still wet, but there's no body, so the Director rules that figuring out what happened is going to be mildly challenging. The difficulty is 8, and the player rolls 6 dice (because Scalpel has 6 points allotted to Medicine).

She rolls 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, and 9. Since at least one of her dice matched the difficulty, she succeeds. The Director tells her that, judging from the blood spray on the walls, the victim was struck at least twice, and faint drag marks on the ground indicate that the body was moved into the next room.

Note that if the player had gone into detail, explaining how this case relates to her character's Drive, she would have garnered at least one extra die. Also, if the player had described something cool about her character's actions, then there would have been at least one extra die there as well.

## 2.5. Skill List

Complete list of skills: Charm, Computer Use, Crime, Driving, Empathy, Hunting, Intimidation, Journalism, Linguistics, Medicine, Military, Profession, Repair, Science.

### Skill Descriptions

For the following example skills, each description begins with a heading that sums up the point of the skill. In the first case, the heading is Charm, because the skill allows the character to get the confidence of total strangers quickly.

The description continues with a list of possible skills, such as Con Man, Grifter, Hustler, and Actor. The player can choose any of these, or create a new one, so long as it's clearly going to reflect on the focus of the skill -- in this case, the ability to charm or

persuade people. The description of the skill is followed by an explanation of its usage.

### Charm

*Jobs: Actor, Con Artist, Con Man, Grifter, Hustler, Player, Psychologist*

You've always had a knack for getting people to believe you. Whether it's because you're really charming, or attractive, or just a good actor, you've always been able to convince people that you're on the level, even if you've burned them before. When you need to borrow a car, ask a favor, or get someone to "loan" you a sizable chunk of change, things just seem to fall into place for you. You're also good at pretending to be people that you're not, which comes handy when you're trying to get into exclusive nightclubs or invitation-only society dinners.

**Gameplay:** When a character is trying to persuade someone, trick them, or pass himself off as someone else, this skill can be employed. Obtaining money from a total stranger, explaining an awkward situation to the police, and impersonating an official are all good examples.

### Crime

*Jobs: Bank Robber, Cop, Detective, Federal Agent, Private Investigator*

You know a thing or two about crime. Whether you're a beat cop who's seen it all, or an ex-con who's actually done it, you know how to crack a safe, hot wire a car, or bust into someone's house without making a sound. If it's not legal, you're you're the one they turn to.

**Gameplay:** When a character is trying to break into a house, pick a lock, or sneak past a security guard, this skill can be used.

### Driving

*Jobs: Cab Driver, Car Thief, Courier, Drag Racer, Race Car Driver, Truckner*

You've always been good with cars. You know how to shake a tail, take sharp curves, and drive fast without getting anybody killed. When it goes down, you're the getaway driver. Whether you raced cars professionally, had training, or were just born with a knack for driving fast and staying on the road, you're

the team's driver in a crisis situation.

**Gameplay:** When a character is trying to evade pursuers, ram another car, or swerve to avoid a collision, this skill can be employed.

## 2.6. Drive

Examining your character thus far, you must now bridge the gap between what your character used to be, and what he is now. Write down a brief description of your character's primary motivation, the thing that keeps him going. Then boil it down to a single word.

### Using Drive

During gameplay, if you can relate what you're doing to your character's Drive, you receive an extra die. You could add this die to your next roll during combat, or when using a Skill, or when making an Attribute check. This isn't something that can be done with every single fight, or with every use of your character's Skill. The use of Drive is something special, something that specifically connects your character's story to the events that are taking place in the game.

## 2.7. Contacts

You've got a number of Contacts, people that you've turned to for help in the past, or who have asked you for help. A Contact is someone that you met along the way, maybe in college, or at work, or on the street. Now that you're a Disciple, that person understands that you're doing something strange these days, and is willing to help you.

Your Contacts may get in touch with you if strange supernatural things happen. In fact, they may also pass your name along to other people in desperate situations, who will then get in touch with you.

The important thing to remember is that the contacts are the property of the players, not the director. The only person that can kill off a contact is the player. Speaking of which, if the player gets tired of a Contact, and wants to create a new one, the first Contact has to die. Talk it over with your Director to come up with a suitably gruesome demise that can be worked into the next scenario. You don't have to tell the other players, though.

### Using Contacts

During gameplay, you may decide to turn to your contacts for assistance. For example, your Cabal may want to sneak onto an army base, but you're wary of capture. If one of you had a skill in Military, or Crime, then it might be possible, but that's not the case. So, you call up one of your contacts, a lieutenant in the Army, and you ask him for help.

As long as you're not asking for an unreasonable advantage, there's no reason this can't work. If you were asking for access to guns or explosives or equipment, then the Director would be right in telling you that this is not possible. However, if all you're asking for is a little help getting through a situation, then the use of a contact is perfectly acceptable. However, if asking your contact for such a favor becomes a habit, the Director may rule that the contact becomes unavailable temporarily, or that the contact begins to demand favors from your team before helping you out.

These favors may put the Disciples in an awkward situation, or may even require them to break the law. If the Director rules that the contact is going to ask a favor, the player gets first crack at coming up with the specifics. If the group agrees that the request is unreasonable and dangerous, then the Director will build an upcoming scenario around it. Examples include intimidating a mob enforcer, stealing a valuable piece of software, and robbing a bank to retrieve incriminating documents from a safe deposit box.

During gameplay, when you use a contact, the narration of the exchange is described by the player, unless the player prefers to role-play the conversation out with the director (or another player).

## 2.8. Fury

Fury is a measure of your Disciple's power, strength, and righteous anger over the general skullfuckery of life. At the beginning of each session,, each Disciple has 12 points of Fury, which can be used to perform various stunts, feats, and ass-kicking (delineated below).

Fury can also be used to further develop your character, resulting in new skills and spells.

## Regaining Fury

Over the course of a scenario, your character's Fury may ebb. However, you can get some of it back.

Each time you complete one of the secondary objectives in a case, you get three points of Fury. There are up to four secondary objectives in each case, so you can score up to twelve points of Fury during the course of a scenario. The maximum Fury score is 12, so kill 'em if you got 'em.

## Example Stunts

Fury can be used to kick ass in a variety of ways. These maneuvers are generally accompanied by vivid descriptions of impossible or ill-advised feats, such as diving head-first into the burning wreckage of an eighteen-wheeler carrying radioactive waste in order to ram a grenade into a demon's mouth.

### *Hardcore (1)*

If a player kills one point, he can recover two points of Life immediately, ignoring the pain and moving on. This can be done as many times as the player wishes, provided that the character has enough Fury.

### *Suicide Run (2)*

When the player kills two points, he or she can attempt the Suicide Run, a futile gesture that's pretty much guaranteed to fail. After the player describes an action that's completely out of the question, the player rolls two dice, then adds the values together. For example, if the player is fighting a demon, and executes the Suicide Run, and rolls a 10 and a 7, that means that the player rolled a 17. Against the director's high roll of 12, that means that the player hit for 5 points of damage (plus weapon bonus). No modifiers are permitted: the player only rolls two dice, period.

## 2.9. Gear

During the course of the game, you'll want to use various items, equipment, and weaponry. This costs money, and it's not like you have time to bag groceries or wait tables on the side when you're out demon hunting.

### Cash

Your character has a Cash score. This

represents your remaining savings, along with any money you pick up along the way. Once in a while, your Mentor will toss you a few bills to keep the electricity on, that kind of thing.

The Cash score represents the number of dice that you can roll when you want to buy something. Starting out, you have a Cash score of 1.

Different items have a value, like a Target Difficulty, that you must roll if you want to purchase that item. For example, a relatively cheap item like a pair of boots has a value of 1. So, if you want to buy a pair of boots, you roll your die and pray that the score is higher than 1.

So, okay, that one's a given. Anything with a value of 1 is there for the taking. You've always got enough cash to pick up something that cheap. As a rule of thumb, anything under fifty bucks is cheap enough that you don't have to worry too much about your finances.

However, something more substantial, like a good pistol, has a value of 7. So, if you want to buy a pistol, you have to roll a 7 or higher.

At the beginning of each session, each player can roll once to purchase any gear or equipment that the Cabal needs. After that, you're tapped out for the moment, and you can't make any other big-ticket purchases. Of course, you can still pick up anything with a value of 1, but other than that, you're strapped.

Example: The team's looking to pick up some cheap Kevlar vests, the concealed kind. The Director says that these items have a cost of 4. Since each character has a Cash score of 1, each member of the team rolls a single die at the beginning of the session. Of the three of them, one rolls a 10, one rolls a 2, and one rolls a 7. So, two of them were able to scrape together enough cash to pick up the vests. The third one gets a pat on the back and best wishes from everybody.

### Improving Cash Flow

Immediately after character creation, each Disciple can roll three times, instead of the usual single roll. However, the same rules apply: the player must declare what he or she is rolling for, prior to making the attempt. This can only be done once, after the character is created. After that, to roll three dice, you're going to need to kill off the character and create a new one.

It's also possible to temporarily improve the

cash flow of a character by other methods. For example, if the characters suddenly inherit a sizable amount of money, then their cash flow might be bumped up to 2, or even 3, at the Director's discretion.

The duration of this change in financial fortunes is also left to the Director. It might last for the next couple of game sessions, or it might last as long as a year. Note that the maximum Cash score for a Disciple is 3.

## Equipment

Most of the available items are pretty straightforward. There are a few things to be aware of:

### *Armor*

Armor is available. A vest will set you back maybe two hundred bucks, but it's worth it. Couple bills is a small price to pay for keeping your internal organs on the inside, where they belong.

Jackets look just like windbreakers, but are able to deflect small arms fire. Concealed armor goes under clothing; this is the bulletproof vest that is so often revealed when a TV cop takes one to the chest. Tactical and SWAT armor is worn by police officers in high-risk situations. It consists of multiple pieces of armor worn over clothing, and is quite conspicuous. So is ceramic plate, which is worn primarily by soldiers in war zones.

For a description of the way that armor works, read the combat section.

### *Illegal Weapons*

You and your Director need to agree on how to handle this. If you're playing a more realistic game, then the use of hand grenades in public places will probably have consequences. You may, however, be playing one of those what-the-hell campaigns where it's not a big deal. Discuss, decide.

### *Looting the Dead*

It's customary to loot the bodies of the dead when playing an RPG. Dread is no different. In fact, Disciples are encouraged to loot the living. See something you like? Then take it. Why not?

## 2.10. Advancement

On the character sheet, you'll see the Advancement section at the bottom of the page. If you

need a character sheet, go to [www.dread-rpg.com](http://www.dread-rpg.com) and download a PDF version of it.

When you've completed a mission, you put an X in one of those circles. You fill in 13 circles, you can choose a new spell or a new skill. Or you can add a point to an existing skill. If you play every Saturday night for a year, then you'll probably rack up 4 new spells, or skills, or some combination thereof. If you're only playing once a month, you may want to adjust your rate of advancement. It's a question of what your group wants to do.

Through Cathexis, a deep form of concentration that most people are not able to attain, you can do the impossible: leap thirty feet straight up into the air, turn your hand into a spitting cobra, send your shadow to fight your battles for you, or transform your intestines into ravenous lampreys. You call it magic, you call it Cathexis, it's the same thing: manipulating the world in a way that is against the natural order.

Controlling yourself, and your environment. You have learned a few techniques, taught by your Mentor, that you use as weapons in your war against the demons. They are described below.

## 3. Magic

A few things to think about, though: You are not a normal person anymore. You can spit bile, read minds, and heal the injured. If people see you doing these things, they're going to realize that something is not right with you. Their reactions will vary, but no one is going to watch you jump over a house without noting that something very odd is happening.

Attracting attention to yourself is not always a good thing; there are others out there who would kill for power, and if they feel that you are privy to secrets that will grant them this power, they'll do whatever they have to do. So exercise caution and prudence.

It's also good to bear in mind that power is seductive. With magic, you can confuse people, control them, harm them. It can be useful. But remember that you are a Disciple, and your mission in life is to protect the innocent. You must learn to control the urge to throw magic at every single situation; you must also learn to abstain from manipulating people unless absolutely necessary.

## Spells

Each Disciple starts the game with a number of spells equal to his Soul score, and can cast a number of spells per day equal to twice his Soul score. Furthermore, a spell can be cast more than once per day. For example, a character with a Soul score of 3 will have 3 spells in his arsenal, but may choose to cast one of those spells 6 times in a single day. That's fine.

If the Disciple casts more than that number, she must make a Soul check against difficulty 11. Failure means that the character takes 2 points of damage. If the roll is successful, the player takes no damage, but must make that roll each time she attempts to cast a spell until the following day.

Casting a spell is just like taking an action in combat. A character cannot cast a spell, then take an action or attack an enemy. Even if the spell's duration is listed as Immediate, it still requires concentration and focus to cast, so it counts as an action.

If a spell includes a duration, count the round in which the spell was cast, unless the caster was the last person to go. If the caster was the last person to go, do not count the round in which the spell was cast.

Spell range is the same as weapon range, described in the Combat section. A range of 1 means that the target is within arm's reach. A range of 2 means that the target is in the room. A range of 3 indicates that the target is down the street.

## 3.1. Example Spells

### Chela

*Duration: 3 rounds (15 seconds)*

*Range: 1*

When this spell is cast, one of your hands becomes a massive claw, like that of a lobster. The claw is bright and silvery, and it is intangible. If it makes contact with a person, it will pass through them, but each time it does so, it drains a point of Strength. The effects are cumulative, however, and the spell lasts for three rounds, which means that a total of three points of Strength can be subtracted from an enemy in rapid succession. If the victim reaches 0, then he or she loses consciousness, and will not awaken for approximately 24 hours. Strength is regained at a rate of one point per day.

### Dresden

*Duration: 1 round (5 seconds)*

*Range: 2*

This spell causes the distilled horror of the Dresden firestorm to sweep through a radius of 30 feet around you. It will not affect you (or your allies), but for everyone else, it's 1945, and the streets of Dresden are burning. The victims are overcome by hallucinations: charred bodies, screaming children, smoke, and columns of raging flame surround them, and the only sound is the rumble of conflagration. Bombers roar overhead, and broken glass erupts from crushed buildings. The victims take 2 points of damage from the spell. Furthermore, they are unable to act for that round, and the following round, they will be the last to act. To cast this spell, make a Magic check against the victims' Soul checks.

### Hemophage

*Duration: 2 minutes*

*Range: 2*

Casting this spell creates dozens of foot long leeches, white and eyeless, that crawl over the victim's body, draining blood and strength. The victim loses consciousness briefly (2 minutes), and wakes up with no memory of what happened. To cast this spell, make a Magic check against your victim's Soul check.

### Nacreous

*Duration: 6 rounds (30 seconds)*

*Range: 1*

When this spell is cast, iridescent scales cover your body, and your skin becomes the color of mother-of-pearl. These scales are soft to the touch, but they absorb kinetic energy, dulling the impact of physical attacks. During combat, your Defend score goes up by 1, and if an enemy attacks you unsuccessfully, you automatically turn the force back on the attacker, inflicting a point of Injury. This spell is not effective against projectile weapons or magic.

## 4. Combat

Combat involves three rolls: Initiative, Attack, and Defense. For each round of combat (lasting about five seconds), a character rolls Initiative once, Attack

once, and Defense as many times as necessary.

- **Initiative:** You do this at the beginning of every combat round. Everyone rolls a single die, and whoever rolled highest goes first. After that, the group can choose whether to have the player with the next-highest roll go, then the one after that. Or, the group can elect to just proceed clockwise from the highest roller.
- **Attack:** When you punch, kick, shoot, or bash. You can do this once every round.
- **Defense:** When you block, dodge, or evade. You do this every time someone punches, kicks, shoots, or bashes.

To attack, roll a number of dice equal to your Combat score. Your Director will roll Defense for your opponent. Consider the highest die on each side. If your roll is higher, you inflict damage equal to the difference, plus any damage bonuses for the weapon that you're using. If the opponent's roll is higher, no damage is inflicted. In the event of a tie, look to the next highest dice on each side, then the next one after that. If one of the combatants runs out of dice, the attack was unsuccessful.

### Example of Combat

Scalpel is attacked by two cultists. She rolls initiative, and gets a 6. The cultists roll 2 and 8. One will go before her, and one will go afterwards.

The first cultist swings his meat cleaver. Since he has a combat score of 2, the Director rolls two dice. Scalpel has a combat score of 3, so her player rolls three dice. The Director rolls 10-8. Scalpel gets 11-7-1. Scalpel's highest die is higher than the opponent's, so she is successfully able to defend herself against the attack.

Since it's now her turn, she attacks with her signature weapon, the scalpel. She rolls three dice, and gets a 10-6-5. The Director rolls 10-2. Since the high rolls are tied, we look to the next highest dice. A 6 for Scalpel, and a 2 for the cultist. That means that Scalpel hits, and inflicts 4 points of damage (6 minus 2). In addition, the scalpel has a damage rating of 1, so the total damage inflicted on the cultist is 5.

The second cultist attacks now, and the Director rolls 11-2. Scalpel gets 9-9-3. Because you add multiples to their number of instances, Scalpel effectively rolled an 11 (a roll of 9, on 2 dice, means 9

plus 2). Therefore, the high scores are tied. So we look at the next highest dice, and we have 2 for the cultist and 3 for Scalpel. Again, she is able to block the attack.

Initiative is re-rolled, and Scalpel goes first this time. The player decides to kill a point of Fury for an extra die, and then launches into an elaborate description of how she ducks under the cleaver, spins the cultist around, and puts him in the path of the second cultist's weapon. The description is cool, and she gets to roll an extra die as a result. Along the way, the player also describes how furious Scalpel is that these cultists have been sacrificing children to the demon that they worship. Her character's fury drives her to want to take them out of the picture permanently. Consequently, Scalpel's player will be rolling 6 dice in the ensuing attack, versus the cultist's 2.

## 4.1. Life

Each character begins a case with 12 points of Life. As the scenario progresses, the characters will take damage, which is subtracted from the Life score. When the score reaches 4, the Disciple is badly injured, and suffers a penalty of one to all die rolls (meaning that the player rolls one die less than usual). However, the player can always roll at least one die when attempting an action, regardless of penalties.

### Recovery

After the Disciples close out a case, the team returns to headquarters to recover from any injuries sustained. When the next case begins, all of the Disciples are completely recovered. Life and Fury scores are returned to 12.

### Retirement

If your Disciple ever reaches 0 Life, then it's time to Retire. This means that your character is going to die. However, death is not immediate. Instead, your Disciple gets 12 Life and 24 Fury. Immediately. You get to close out your last case. Do what you have to take down your target, and then everybody has to shut the fuck up while you narrate a glorious death for your character. You can die quietly, in the snow, or you can die fighting. Go all out. Then roll up a new one.

## 4.2. Armor

Here's how armor works. You get a score that's between 1 and 12. 1 is weak, 12 is high. You get in a fight, you get hit. You take some damage.

If you want the armor to absorb some of that damage, you roll a number of dice equal to that score. If any of those dice are equal to or less than your score, then that's how much damage gets absorbed by the armor. Then, you reduce the armor's score by however much damage you took.

So you got great armor with a score of 10. You get in a fight, you take 4 points of damage. What you do is, you roll 10 dice, and you look to see how many are equal to or less than 10. They all are. So, that 4 points of damage is now coming off your armor, instead of your Life score. But, this means that your armor goes from 10 to 6. Next time you take damage, you can roll 6 dice, and see how many are equal to or less than 6.

## 4.3. Range

If your target is within range, roll dice as normal. If your target is out of range by a factor of 1, you're penalized by two dice. If it's more than a factor of 1, then the attack isn't possible.

<b>Target location</b>	<b>Range</b>
<i>Standing close to you</i>	1
<i>Across the room</i>	2
<i>Down the street</i>	3

For example, if you have a sword, with a range of 1, then you can attack someone standing nearby. If your opponent is on the other side of the room, and you want to attack with the sword, your attack suffers a penalty of two dice. So, if your attack score is 5, then you only roll 3 dice.

If you want to attack someone who's down the street, and you're using a sword, then you need to spend this round running towards that person. You can attack next round.

## 4.4. Ammo

Can you run out of ammo while playing Dread? Hell yes. Do you have to keep track of bullets and shells and magazines? Hell no.

Each weapon is good for a specific number of firefights. After that, you're out of ammo. A revolver is

only going to last you a single gunfight, but a shotgun'll get you through a couple. The cost of ammunition is equal to the cost of the weapon, so bullets for a pistol would have a cost of 4.

The table below indicates how many firefights a weapon is good for before you need to reload.

<b>Weapon</b>	<b>Firefights</b>
<i>Revolver</i>	1
<i>Shotgun</i>	2
<i>Submachine gun</i>	3

## 4.5. Vehicular Combat

Buckle up and get ready to plow through the guardrail. It's time to figure out how to run people off the road.

### Example Vehicles

<b>Car</b>	<b>Truck</b>
Body 20	Body 30
Swerve 2	Swerve 1
Recover 1	Recover 2
Ram 2	Ram 3

### Driving

When driving a vehicle, roll the vehicle's applicable attribute whenever you need to check against a situation. If you're in a truck and you need to swerve, roll one die. If you're in a car and you need to recover, roll two dice.

### Skilled Driving

If you have the driving skill, then add your skill score to the applicable modifier. So if you have a Race Car Driver skill with a score of 3, and you're swerving in a truck, roll 4 dice (3+1). If you're trying to recover in a car, roll 5 dice (3+2).

### Ramming

If you ram another vehicle, roll the appropriate number of dice versus your opponent's swerve check. If you are successful, you inflict damage to the other vehicle's body.

**Swerve**

When another driver wants to ram you, make a swerve check. If you're successful, you were able to avoid being hit.

**Recover**

You make a Recover Roll after your vehicle has been rammed. If you fail, you're run off the road.

**Ramming Motorcycles**

If a Motorcycle sustains or inflicts 3 or more points of damage at any time, the driver must immediately make a recover check against target difficulty 12 or fly off the bike immediately. If unsuccessful, the damage sustained by the driver is equal to the difference between the roll and the target difficulty.

Example: Hazmat's on his chopper, and he gets rammed by a truck. The truck driver rolls a 10, and Hazmat rolls a 7, so the bike takes 3 points of damage. Jimmy now needs to make a recover check against difficulty 12. He fails, rolling 8-3-1. So, he's flung off the bike, and takes 4 points of damage (12 minus 8).

**Body**

To destroy a vehicle, attack it, and the defender makes a swerve check to avoid being hit.

When a vehicle's body reaches 0, it explodes, and all occupants must make a strength check against difficulty 12, or suffer damage equal to the difference between their high roll and the difficulty. Anyone standing near an exploding vehicle must make the strength check against difficulty 9 or suffer damage.

**Blowing Shit Up**

To blow up a vehicle with a single bullet, you must roll against target difficulty 13. This will require you to roll a pair of 11s, or three 10s, or some other multiple. Obviously, this is a gamble. If successful, the vehicle is destroyed, and damage to those in or near the vehicle is calculated as normal.

**4.6. Falling Damage**

During gameplay, it's quite possible that a Disciple may fall, which could result in Injury. To determine if Injury is sustained during a fall, make a Strength check against the following target difficulties:

If you succeed, you sustain no Injury. If you fail, you sustain Injury equal to the difference between your roll and the difficulty.

**4.7. Penalties in Combat**

During combat, the Disciples may be impeded by their environment, or by the situation that they're in.

It's important that your group discuss whether such impediments should result in any in-game penalties to attribute checks or combat rolls. If so, consider the guidelines listed below:

If the character is fighting in darkness, or while drugged, or with one hand tied behind his back, subtract one to three dice from the roll, depending on the seriousness of the impediment.

Bear in mind that the minimum roll for any action is always one die.

**Example Penalties**

If the character is fighting at night, in the woods, with no flashlight, when the moon and stars are obscured by cloud cover, then he loses a die while rolling.

If the fight is in a mine shaft, in near-total darkness, the penalty is two dice.

If the character is actually blind, because of a blindfold or because his eyes got stabbed out or something, then the penalty is three dice.

**5. Hostiles**

Here are a few enemies that you can use to run a few rounds of combat. While the humans listed below are fairly indicative of the opponents that a player might encounter when playing Dread, the demons are just quick-and-dirty examples.

**5.1. Demons**

During an investigation, Disciples are likely to

encounter at least one demon. Each demon has a unique appearance and pattern of behavior.

A demon's stats are similar to those of a Disciple, except for a resource called Wrath. Wrath can be used to hurl objects at people. By killing Wrath, the demon can attack with a number of dice equal to the amount of Wrath killed (5 points equals 5 dice). This can be done in addition to an ordinary attack.

Note that the following demons do not appear in the pages of Dread. They're meant as examples, nothing more.

### 5.1.1. Druthua

*Strength 2, Sense 8, Soul 5*

*Life 18, Wrath 21*

The Druthua lurks below the city, feeding on its dregs. The homeless person, the alcoholic, the addict -- all of these fall prey to the creature. It wraps its victim in its writhing tentacles and slowly crushes the life from the struggling body.

It then absorbs the victim's memories, and begins to summon those whom the victim knew. Other people who knew the deceased will see him standing on a corner, beckoning. If they follow, they will eventually reach the lair of the demon. Deep in the sewers, or in some other remote place, the demon will lurk, waiting to snare another unwary trespasser in its coils.

The Druthua feeds on those who will not be missed. However, if threatened, it will kill anyone, regardless of social status.

If attacked, the creature will first unleash parasites made from the corpses of its other victims. Hairless creatures with stumpy white limbs, they will swarm over the aggressors while the demon attacks.

### 5.1.2. Uakast

*Strength 7, Sense 6, Soul 2*

*Life 24, Wrath 15*

The Uakast feeds on the dead and dying. On a battlefield, near a murder site, in a morgue, the demon lurches about in search of fresh meat.

Dense and easily confused, the demon will attack when bewildered, and is quite powerful. However, music will distract it to the point that it will remain absolutely still while listening. During this time, it is vulnerable to sneak attacks, even from directly in front of it.

The demon strikes with its massive claws and bites with its over sized fangs. Though it typically prefers the meat of those who are near death, it is also fond of that which was only recently born, and regards newborns as a delicacy.

## 5.2. Humans

These are some of the adversaries that players might encounter while working on a case. Weapon stats are presented as follows: range/damage/ammo.

### 5.2.1. Thug

Strength 4, Sense 1, Soul 1

Life 5, Armor 1

Skills: Crime (gang member) 2

Weapons: Pistol (1/2/2)

### 5.2.2. Gunman

Strength 3, Sense 1, Soul 1

Life 5, Armor 1

Skills: Crime (bank robber) 2

Weapons: Shotgun (2/1/2)

## 6. Pregon

Here's a sample character. Betty's Discipline is Combat, meaning that she knows a few spells, and knows a few skills, but she's most valuable in a brawl.

### 6.1. Betty

Discipline: Combat

Drive: Revenge

Strength: 5

Sense: 2

Soul: 2

Combat: 6

Skills: Driving (Car Thief) 2, Crime (Grifter) 2

Spells: Chela, Dresden, Hemophage, Nacreous

Weapons: Revolver (range 2, damage 1, ammo 1)

Contacts: Jose Delgado (Police Officer), Zafirah Hassan (DMV Clerk)