

F ● ree

U ● niversal

B ● eyond

A ● ll

R ● ecognition

**A Generic Hack for the FU
RPG**



FUBAR

A Generic Hack for the Free Universal RPG

What is FUBAR?

Free Universal Beyond All Recognition, or *FUBAR*, is a hack of the *Free Universal (FU)* system to add a little more structure and ‘crunch’ to the system. In some ways, the result sacrifices a portion of the elegance of *FU*’s streamlined system in exchange for greater guidance and detail, and is very much a reflection of my own preferences in role-playing systems and undoubtedly won’t be to everyone’s tastes. However, among the ideas found here, many ‘liberated’ from other RPG systems and bolted onto the *FU* chassis, hopefully there will be some of interest and value to others hacking *FU* for their own gaming groups.

The most significant changes include: adoption of the ‘Beat the Odds Redux’ variant resolution method originating with contributor light castle on the Fan Made FU RPG yahoo group, which blunts the huge impact of bonus and penalty dice in standard *FU*; the addition of Resolve, a pool of points which double as both FU points and plot immunity ‘hit points’; and Drives that affect the Resolve point economy.

Dice System

The base roll in Beat the Odds Redux is five dice, with the outcome determined by counting the number of even results and comparing to the table below:

No. of Even Results	Result	Outcome
0	No, and	You don't get what you want. Something else happens instead, along with something more.
1	No	You don't get what you want and something else happens instead.
2	No, but	You don't get what you want but there's a silver lining.
3	Yes, but	You get what you want but there's a catch.
4	Yes	You get what you want.
5	Yes, and	You get what you want and something more.

So in order to gain a 'Yes' result of some description you need to roll more even results than odd, 'beating the odds'.

When positive Conditions or Descriptors apply, add that many dice to the pool and choose the five *best* results. If negative Conditions or Descriptors apply, add that many dice and choose the five *worst* results.

For example, intelligence agent Harper confronts a suspected Soviet spy and is interrogating her to see if he can pressure her into letting something slip. At an appropriate point in the dialogue, the GM calls for a roll and Harper's player assembles his dice pool. Harper's player looks at his Descriptors, adding his 'Shrewd judge of character' Trademark for a total pool of 6D. The question at stake is 'Does Harper learn whether the woman is a Soviet spy?'

Harper's player rolls, getting a 1, 2, 3, 4, 4 and 6. Choosing the best five results, he discards the '3' leaving a total of four even dice for a 'Yes' result. Harper's player roleplays how he tricks the woman into revealing herself as a Soviet agent.

When both positive and negative Descriptors and Conditions apply they cancel one another and only the difference in dice is added to the pool. For example, with two positive Descriptors and one negative Condition applying to a roll, the negative Condition cancels one of the positive Descriptors leaving one die to be added to the pool. The player rolls six dice and chooses the five best results.

Conflicts usually result in simply an answer to a closed question: in the case of ‘Do I jump the chasm?’ a ‘Yes’ result means the chasm is jumped; a ‘No’ means it isn’t along with an implied nasty consequence. However, in some cases the outcome may be represented by adding either a new Condition or a Detail as makes sense from the context of the question being answered. Modifying ‘and’ and ‘but’ results create secondary Conditions or Details of equal or lesser magnitude to any bestowed by the central stakes of the conflict. From *FU* p.12:

- *Condition:* These are physical, mental or social effects that impact the way a character behaves or attempts actions. Conditions include things like ‘angry’, ‘confused’, ‘tired’ and ‘unconscious’.
- *Detail:* These are features of an environment or scene that might change as a result of an action. Details might include curtains catching fire, windows breaking, animals running off, or machinery stalling. Details are always closely tied to the scene and the action.

For example, Drayt is gambling in a tavern, with the stakes set at winning a few copper pennies, enough to cover room and board for the evening. Drayt wins, with a ‘Yes and’ result.

Drayt achieves the object of the conflict, represented by a new Condition ‘A few pennies’. Drayt’s player suggests that he also wins the loser’s prize horse, as his ‘and’ Detail. The GM disagrees, considering the reward of a horse far in excess of the conflict stakes of a few pennies. Instead he suggests a new Condition for Drayt, a reputation as a ‘Shrewd Gambler’. This Condition is temporary, unlikely to last beyond the next few days and limited to those who have heard about it from tavern patrons. Everyone agrees this is appropriate to the modest stakes of the conflict.

Bonus and Penalty Dice

Descriptors are the primary source of bonus or penalty dice. However, other factors may positively or negatively affect a roll:

- *Unfamiliarity:* If a player character does not have an appropriate Descriptor to apply and the action falls outside of the character’s Concept, a 1D penalty should be applied.
- *Applicability:* If two characters are opposed and one has a more appropriate and applicable Concept or Descriptor, for example ‘Chess Master’ versus

‘Cunning’ in a game of chess, a 1D bonus might be awarded to the character with the more specific and applicable talents.

- *Conditions*: These will regularly provide bonus or penalty dice.
- *Circumstance*: Circumstantial modifiers overlap pretty freely with Conditions. For example, a character might be formally inflicted with the ‘Surprised’ Condition in one situation, or attacked from ambush as a Detail in another. Either way, 1D penalty is applied to represent this. Common circumstantial modifiers are:
 - Superior or inferior tools (see ‘What about Gear?’)
 - Being outnumbered or outnumbering the opposition
 - Holding a superior or inferior position (e.g. high ground, cover)
 - Environmental factors (e.g. darkness)

The impact of bonus and penalty dice is significant in determining success or failure, albeit less markedly than in standard *FU*:

Number of Bonus Dice	Chance of success (‘Yes but’ or better)
None	50%
One	66%
Two	78%
Three	86%

Resolve

FU points are renamed Resolve points and represent both the story-changing, dice-affecting currency from *FU* and the player characters' plot immunity, their story 'hit points'. The pool needn't be named Resolve as different genres may inspire different, more thematic, term, such as Luck, Hope, Faith, Doom or Grit. Whatever it's called, when you hit 0 you're out of it and can be written out of the scenario at any moment.

Player characters begin with a Resolve pool of 5 points and over the course of a session this pool of points will ebb and flow. Resolve can never exceed this pool size cap and if it should it drop to 0 the character has lost their plot immunity and can be written out of the story by a subsequent conflict loss or other significant setback – essentially, they've lost their will to continue fighting on.

Resolve does not represent hit points in the traditional roleplaying sense, where they simulate physical health only. A character can be in perfect physical health, yet be at 0 Resolve and able to be written out of the game – killed, exiled, imprisoned, sent insane – in a moment. Equally, a character can be carrying grievous wounds and hampering Conditions, yet be at maximum Resolve.

An example of this is Bruce Willis' character in the *Die Hard* movies: constantly limping, bleeding and bruised, yet always somehow keeping on.

During play, Resolve can be lost or spent in the following ways:

- Losing a 'high stakes' conflict, whether one involving deadly physical force, sanity-threatening effects or dire social consequences.
- Re-rolling some or all dice in a roll just made.
- Suffering a significant setback or defeat to your character's Drive.
- Creating a convenient coincidence or useful fact about the world.
- Activating an extremely powerful supernatural power.

Conversely, Resolve is regained by:

- Making significant progress towards your character's Drive, or accomplishing it.
- Suffering a significant complication or limitation due to one of your character's Flaws.
- Acting in a genre typical or genre reinforcing way (optional).
- Describing a downtime scene in recovery or relaxation.

- Conceding a high stakes conflict.
- At the start of each session (2 Resolve points).

Regardless, at the end of a scenario (usually 2-3 sessions) and before the next begins Resolve is reset to its full level.

‘High stakes’ conflicts are explained in greater detail later, but represent conflicts where the character stands to lose something important: deadly combat, a critical debate, a high-stakes bet, a pivotal argument with a lover, or facing down a terrifying creature. If a character loses a high stakes conflict, i.e. gets any variation of a ‘No’ result, then they lose 1 point of Resolve.

Re-rolling allows you to spend a Resolve to pick up and re-roll any number of dice from a roll just made to try to improve the outcome.

Your character’s Drive and Flaws are important influences: as well as setbacks or progress towards a Drive deducting or restoring 1 Resolve respectively, if a Drive is achieved the character’s Resolve immediately restores to its maximum amount.

When a character’s Flaw plays a pivotal role in restricting their choices or introducing complications to their life, then 1 Resolve point is often regained. For example, the Flaw ‘Keen Sense of Vengeance’ might penalise attempts to convince an old enemy to join forces. The Flaw adds a penalty die to any appropriate roll, but no Resolve is regained as the impact is not pivotal. However, if the player decides that they flat out won’t parley with a former enemy, or even worse, try to sabotage negotiations, then this level of complication certainly warrants regaining a Resolve point.

In some circumstances you might find a Trademark looks like it should act as a Flaw in some circumstances, and vice versa. This is a good thing, since it means additional sources of Resolve-rewarding complications. An example might be an ‘Every Inch a Cop’ Trademark, mostly positive but occasionally complicating life for the character and acting as a Flaw – witnessing an unrelated crime while tailing another suspect, for instance. If the player decides her character just can’t walk on by, and intervenes to stop the crime in progress at the cost of losing the suspect (or worse, alerting the suspect to the tail), then the Trademark is acting as a Flaw and a Resolve point should be awarded for the complication.

Narrating facts and convenient coincidences can assist a character to overcome obstacles or sidestep them altogether, costing 1 Resolve per fact or coincidence described. These often create Details or Conditions to apply to the scene or GM characters. For example, 1 Resolve could be spent to narrate that the apemen

respect generosity above all other virtues, that recent riots have set the police station on fire, or that the abandoned tool shed contains a fuelled chainsaw.

In some genres supernatural powers may be accessible to characters, such as spells or super powers. Some rare, powerful uses of these abilities might require spending Resolve to activate, but ‘normal’ use of a power should not – reserve this kind of cost for summoning Great Cthulhu or its cousin.

Rewarding certain types of actions and decisions can be an effective way of incentivising genre-typical actions: splitting up in a horror scenario, acting heroically in a superhero scenario, betraying an ally in a gritty spy campaign, and so on. If the group is unclear on the genre tropes to be rewarded, it might be helpful to list a few examples before kicking off the first session.

Once per player character per session Resolve can be regained through a ‘downtime’ scene, representing rest, medical attention or relaxation, depending on the types of trauma that have caused Resolve loss. By spending a scene in rest, recovery or indulging a character’s interests or pleasures, 1 Resolve point is regained. There must be adequate opportunity for this relaxation, so this may not be a plausible option except at certain points in a scenario. Ideally, the relaxation scene should illuminate something interesting about the character, providing an insight into their personality and what makes them tick. These scenes might also provide opportunities to remove or reduce a character’s negative Conditions.

A character gains 1 Resolve as an incentive to concede during a high stakes conflict. This means that the character proposes or accepts a compromise outcome where they lose the conflict, but on more favourable or negotiated terms than if the conflict had run its course and the character was defeated outright. This Resolve gain is to encourage players to consider conceding conflicts and to offset the sting of losing. Low stakes conflicts can be conceded, but without the risk of Resolve loss on the line, no Resolve is gained for doing so.

Finally, at the beginning of each session 2 Resolve points are regained. The exception is when the last session ended on a cliff hanger, so as not to rob the opening scene of tension. In this case, the 2 points are regained at the first appropriate opportunity once the cliff hanger scene has been resolved.

Due to the need to spend Resolve to take advantage of some of its beneficial uses, coupled with a cap on Resolve so that characters cannot accumulate points endlessly, an interesting tension results. Players are faced with a balancing act between letting their character’s Resolve fall too low for safety, versus keeping it

high and safe, but losing out on the positive benefits of Resolve in the form of re-rolls and creating convenient facts about the world.

If a character's Resolve falls below 0 they are out of the game, either immediately or in the next scene as the player describes what final fate befalls their character.

A player character's final moments are the player's alone to describe and might be a direct consequence of what caused them to fall into negative Resolve, for example being stabbed then dying, or unrelated entirely: a Drive is stymied and Resolve falls into the negative, and in a subsequent scene the player describes their character retiring from their adventuring life an exhausted and broken individual.

There's a way out, however: if the player chooses, instead of being written out of the game their character can take a new, permanent Flaw reflecting the incident. In return their character stays in the game and their Resolve pool is immediately restored to its maximum amount.

Character Creation

Concept

The character's Concept defines who they are and what they can do in the broadest sense, and is the baseline indicator of competency before Descriptors are taken into account. If an action does not fall within a character's Concept, a 1D penalty is usually applied. Equally, a particularly apt Concept might add a 1D bonus.

These usually take the form of *Adjective Noun*, such as 'Shifty Bureaucrat' or 'Beaten Soldier', and include a basic ability in everything related to these terms. In the former example, this might encompass knowledge of whose palm to grease, understanding official documents, evasive doublespeak, political etiquette and so on.

Descriptors

Each character starts with 6 Descriptors. All Descriptors should be evocative in what they tell about the character and not too broad in application. These consist of:

- *3 Trademarks*: Positive and useful in nature, these Descriptors cover skills, physical, social or mental attributes, treasured or unusual possessions, weird abilities, and retainers or boon companions. In some situations they might be a drawback and act as a Flaw, but usually they are an asset. Examples are 'Fierce and wild', 'Born liar', 'Drive like a maniac', 'X-Ray Gun' and 'Built like a tank'.
- *1 Flaw*: Negative in nature, these Descriptors provide interesting complications for the character. Usually they are a drawback and source of Resolve points, but occasionally a Flaw might help in a conflict. Examples are 'Neurotic', 'Hook for a hand', 'Hunted by the law' or 'Sucker for a pretty face'.
- *2 Relationships*: One relationship should be positive and one should be negative; clearly indicate the object of the Relationship and its nature. Other player characters are ideal characters to hold a Relationship with. Relationships are likely to change more frequently than other Descriptors

due to the often fluid nature of interpersonal affairs. Examples are ‘Annie’s the one I love’, ‘Baron Zaren will pay!’ and ‘Ray’s got my back’.

Drives

Every player should choose two Drives representing their character’s current goals or ambitions, an Immediate Drive and a Long Term Drive, although for a one-shot scenario lasting only one or a few sessions, you might want to just use an Immediate Drive.

Drives break down into two broad types:

- *Ongoing Drives*, where Resolve is gained and lost over time, but there is no distinct point when you can call the Drive achieved or failed. For example, ‘Leave no man behind’ where Resolve is gained every time the player character actively intervenes to save or go back for a comrade in trouble, and lost when one of their close allies is abandoned or seriously hurt as a result of a lack of support from his or her comrades.
- *Finite Drives*, where there comes a definite point where the Drive either succeeds or fails, for example, ‘Find the Macron Device before it’s too late!’ Resolve points are not gained or lost on the way, but ultimately either the device is found or not before time is up and Resolve adjusted accordingly.

The third, perhaps best option is a bit of both: a finite Drive where there is definite ebb and flow along the way, for example ‘Everyone makes it to Nebraska safe and sound’. If everyone in the party makes it to Nebraska alive, then the Drive is fulfilled; if not it’s failed. If someone is seriously hurt during the journey, then Resolve is lost and conversely if the player character intervenes to prevent harm befalling one of their buddies, or saves their life, Resolve is gained.

- *Immediate Drives* can be finite, ongoing or a combination of both and generally run for 1 – 3 sessions. Whenever positive progress is made on the Drive, 1 Resolve is gained. Conversely, if the player character experiences a significant setback towards their Drive, then they lose 1 Resolve. If the Drive is achieved, the player character’s Resolve immediately restores to its full value and is replaced by a new Immediate Drive. If failed, 1 Resolve is lost and a new Drive must be chosen. A player can choose to abandon a Drive between sessions, losing no Resolve and choosing a new Immediate Drive.

- *Long-Term Drives* must be finite or a combination of ongoing and finite, i.e. they must have a definite point where they are either achieved or failed. Resolving a Long-Term Drive usually takes a while, typically the end of a campaign arc after 2-4 scenarios. Making progress or experiencing a setback gain or lose 1 Resolve exactly as with Immediate Drives, but if a Long-Term Drive is resolved for good or ill as well as Resolve refreshing or losing 1 Resolve, the character gains a new Descriptor: a Trademark if the resolution was positive, a Flaw if negative. A new Long-Term Drive is then chosen by the player. A Long-Term Drive can be abandoned between sessions, which costs 1 Resolve but no Flaw is inflicted.

The success and failure conditions of Drives should be explicit and spelt out for clarity. For example:

- ‘No more innocents are going to suffer’: gain a Resolve when you intervene to prevent an innocent from getting hurt, oppressed or killed. Conversely, lose 1 Resolve if an innocent suffers due to your inaction or inability to intervene (Ongoing).
- ‘He’ll die before I let him be King’: refresh all Resolve if the enemy dies by your hand or due to your indirect action; lose a Resolve and fail the Drive if your enemy is crowned King (Finite).
- ‘Prove myself worthy to become chief of the tribe’: gain 1 Resolve every time the character gains the respect of her peers by her actions, lose 1 Resolve every time the character embarrasses herself or loses face with her peers. The Drive is achieved if she becomes chief, failed if someone else fills the vacancy (both Ongoing and Finite).

Example Character

As an example character, let’s consider Police Constable Jerry Lyttle, with the Concept of ‘Cynical Copper’:

- *Trademarks: Spot a liar; Good in a scrap; Analyse evidence.*
- *Flaw: Gambling problem*
- *Relationships: Knowles (PC) can’t be trusted; Freddie Mason (NPC, London gangster) saved my life once.*

- *Immediate Drive: Pay off my gambling debts (gain Resolve when a payment is made on time; lose a Resolve when a deadline is missed; resolve when either the debt is paid off or your creditors lose patience.)*
- *Long-Term Drive: Uncover the corrupt cops (gain Resolve when a corrupt cop is exposed or significant progress is made towards uncovering the conspiracy; lose a Resolve if progress is blocked or a corrupt cop evades unmasking; resolve when either all the corruption is exposed or you're drummed out of the Force by your enemies.)*
- *Resolve: 5*

Magic and other Supernatural Abilities

Superhuman powers can be difficult to handle if not all player characters possess them. A game involving a group of superheroes is no problem since each character will get one or more signature powers and the GM need only concern him or herself with keeping each broadly within the same range of usefulness so that one character does not dominate the game.

However, where only one or two characters possess these supernatural powers this requires additional thought. The key is ensuring that all characters share roughly equal spotlight time and that the supernatural characters do not end up dominating play through their powers. For this reason, balancing a character's awesome power with an equally crippling flaw is not often a helpful approach as both the power and the flaw become opportunities for that character's story to overshadow those of the other player characters.

In a flexible system like *FU* supernatural powers can often be treated exactly like any other Descriptor: an ability like 'Hulk Strength' may not be any more effective in a conflict than a mundane Descriptor like 'Body Builder', since the dice represent your ability to leverage that ability to achieve a desired outcome. The fictional detail will vary – Hulk will smash walls to achieve his aims, while the body builder is restricted to breaking down doors – but the mechanical resolution need not.

Options to consider are:

- *Treating the Descriptor as any other:* In this case, the Descriptors should be specific, 'Raise the Dead' rather than 'Dark Necromantic Powers' for example. If the power is very broad in its application, consider penalising it when opposing more specific Descriptors. Using your 'Fire Magic'

Descriptor to create a jet of flame might be at a penalty die compared to 'Keen shot with a Bow'. 'Jet of Flame' on the other hand is suitably specific.

The potential downside is if you want a character with a broad range of powers you may end up using all of their Descriptors on powers rather than interesting personality traits. Less significant abilities, like the casting of cantrips, might fall under the character's Concept rather than a specific Descriptor.

- *Balancing broad supernatural Descriptors with great specific expertise:* Each player character gets one 'super' Descriptor, either a broadly-applicable Swiss army knife ability such as 'Dark Necromantic Powers' or a narrower ability that confers 2D instead of 1D when used, such as 'Finest Swordsman in the West' or 'Herculean Strength'.

As well as adding 2D, the fiction surrounding the ability can also be suitably larger in scope. 'Herculean Strength' can be used to lift a castle portcullis or smash a wall, 'Finest Swordsman' to duel with a group of foes at once without penalty and so on. This is ideal for larger than life genres and the 2D Descriptors can represent mastery of mundane abilities as equally as supernatural powers.

If 2D seems too powerful, another option may be appealing: when the 'mastery' Descriptor is used in a roll, distinguish it by rolling a different coloured die. This die can be re-rolled once anytime it's used in a roll, making the chances it will return an even result 75% instead of 50%.

- *Additional costs for supernatural Descriptors:* Perhaps a Resolve point is needed to cast mighty spells, or inconvenient fictional restrictions apply: long casting times, rare spell ingredients, human sacrifice, and so on.
- *Unpredictable number of uses:* For example, any 'No and' result when using the power also cancels the supernatural power for a period. If used excessively, e.g. more than once per scene, or using the ability more times than your Resolve pool cap in a session, the power stops working on any 'No' or 'No and' result. Restoration of the ability could occur after time, or after fulfilling some arcane ritual.
- *Magic points:* Every broad-based magic Descriptor has a limited number of uses represented by three poker chips or similar. Each non-trivial use of the magic ability or use of the Descriptor in a conflict costs one of these points. When gone, the character can either start to spend Resolve instead, or must

recharge their powers somehow: for example, prayers and offerings to a deity, ritual sacrifice, the passage of time, communing at a place of power. With advancement, rather than gaining a new Trademark a magic-using character can instead choose to increase their magic pool by two.

Ultimately it's about balancing the utility and scene stealing potential of a supernatural Descriptor against those of the other characters. It can be tricky to accommodate a mixed party of characters where you don't want to allow overly-broad Descriptors but equally do not want a supernatural character to be forced to spend all their Descriptors to define various aspects of their supernatural powers.

In some genres it might be appropriate to dispense with attempts at balance. For example, in a *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* scenario a supernaturally-powered Slayer supported by a bunch of ostensibly normal friends would be entirely genre-appropriate.

What about Gear?

Unless the item is special, such as an heirloom of special significance ('My father's gold watch') or unusual ('Experimental Projekt X Device'), gear is not handled as a Descriptor. Instead, if a character is in a situation where gear gives them an advantage or disadvantage compared to an opponent, e.g. taking a knife to a gunfight, then add a 1D bonus or penalty die to the player character's pool to reflect the advantage conferred in the situation. In many cases gear won't add a bonus, but makes the attempt even possible, or broadens the range of options open to the character – you can't shoot your enemy without a gun for example.

Gear can also influence whether a conflict is considered low or high stakes. A sword might escalate a physical scuffle from low to high stakes, whereas a suit of head-to-toe plate armour might reduce sword strikes to low stakes and render being punched totally ineffective. A royal letter of authority might allow a character to freely boss his social betters around, an action which would normally warrant a conflict, in some cases a high stakes conflict if social ostracism is a powerful force in your game's genre, and effectively elevating the character's status above that of his erstwhile superiors.

Arms and Armour

A common feature of role-playing games is the detailing of arms and armour, adding differentiation between different weapons and armour to add tactical spice to physical combat conflicts.

If a little more complication is desired to reflect this differentiation, consider the following option:

Every weapon is classified as one of three types, sidearm, battle arm or heavy arm:

- *Sidearms (rating 1)*: These are generally convenient to carry, and are often concealable. They are generally either intended as a backup weapon in any serious combat or are cheap and disposable. In some societies and company they may be considered acceptable to carry where other, larger weapons are outlawed. Examples include pistols, short bows, daggers, batons or one-handed clubs.
- *Battle arms (rating 2)*: These are the mainstay weapons of war. While not easily concealed, they are usually not overly bulky and the majority of melee weapons can be wielded one-handed. Examples include broadswords, maces, spears, crossbows, javelins, longbows, muskets, submachine guns, hunting rifles, assault rifles and shotguns.
- *Heavy arms (rating 3)*: These are over-size weapons capable of devastating damage and difficult to conceal and almost always requiring two hands to wield. Examples include two-handed axes, great swords, polearms, lances, swivel guns, elephant guns or support machine guns.

The weapons of combatants are compared when engaged in close combat and to any ranged combat where both sides are trying to attack one another – where one party is seeking cover or attempting to flee the shooter, then the weapon needs to be compared to the factors the dodging party has available: cover, range, speed, etc. Usually, ranged weapons are treated as applying no advantage here unless they have some ability to spray an area, such as a machine gun or flamethrower. The only useful close combat ‘weapon’ to assist in defending against missile fire in this situation is a shield.

Compare the ratings and apply the following to the character with the superior armament:

Rating advantage	Bonus
None	0
1 or 2	+1D
3	+2D

Complications

- *Circumstances:* The ratings for weapons assume an open environment with plenty of room, but there may be circumstances where the bonus is reversed, such as fighting in a cramped tunnel or grappling close up where a knife is more advantageous than a sword. In these instances, reverse the ratings of the weapons.
- *Range:* Reduce the rank of firearms and archaic missile weapons one step when the range of the conflict puts them at a disadvantage compared to their opponent's weaponry. For example, a shotgun and a hunting rifle are both battle arms normally, but at long ranges the shotgun would be treated as a sidearm and at close ranges, where the shotguns spread of pellets is an advantage, the hunting rifle is treated as a sidearm. This can also be used to represent situations where a character armed with a close combat weapon is charging down an opponent armed with a missile weapon, essentially at a range disadvantage versus the missile weapon. If the charging character is close enough that they could credibly reach their opponent to land a blow, treat the close combat weapon as one rank lower than usual.
- *Shields:* For medieval or fantasy settings shields will be common items of equipment. A shield raises the rank of a character's weaponry one step against opponents armed with low-velocity missiles such as bows, crossbows and thrown weapons. A shield also raises the melee rank of the character by one rank but only against opponents wielding weapons of equal rank – essentially acting as a tie-breaker.

For example, when carrying a sword and shield your rank is considered as a sword, i.e. a battle arm, against opponents wielding sidearms or heavy arms; however, against opponents also wielding battle arms, the character counts as wielding a heavy arm. Shields require a free hand so cannot be used in conjunction with some battle arms and most heavy arms.

- *Automatic Firearms:* As well as conceivably altering the fictional limitations on credible actions, for example, spraying a room to attack multiple targets, automatic weapons can unload their magazine to break ties against equally rated weapons using the same approach as shields, e.g. a battle arm is treated as a great arm in relation to other battle arms, but is unchanged against both sidearms and great arms. However, next exchange they will need to have more ammunition ready or switch to a different weapon.

- *Finer distinctions:* Sometimes you want to distinguish between a long dagger, a shortsword and a broadsword. Is the shortsword a sidearm or a battle arm? In these cases, handle them as you would a shield: a shortsword is a sidearm at advantage against a dagger, or alternatively, a battle arm at a disadvantage against a broadsword.

Armour

Armour is described as being light, medium or heavy:

- *Light:* Light weight, often cheap and sometimes concealable, this armour does not significantly restrict movement. Examples include a bullet-proof or stab-proof vest, or leather or padded jack armour.
- *Medium:* Cumbersome in some circumstances, such as sprinting or swimming, this armour is moderately expensive and likely in the hands of professional warriors only. Examples include flak jackets or chainmail and pot helmet combinations.
- *Heavy:* Weighty and sometimes clumsy, heavy armour is hot and exhausting to wear for long periods and is usually prohibitively expensive. Examples include door gunner's vests or plate and mail armour with greaves and full-face helmet.

Sometimes a partial set of armour is worn, for example a mail shirt only. In these instances, treat the armour as one level lower than usual.

Armour protects the character so that instead of taking a point of Resolve loss as a result of combat damage, an armoured character can spend a point of protection to 'soak' the damage using the armour. In addition to preventing the Resolve loss, negative Conditions inflicted on the armoured character can be redefined by that character's player to lessen their severity one tier of magnitude. For example, a 'Broken Arm' (Moderate magnitude) soaked by armour is redefined as 'Off Balance' or 'Bruised' (Minor magnitude).

The number of times a suit of armour can absorb Resolve is defined by the Protection rating in the table below, along with any Condition penalty due to the weight or bulk of the armour. Once used to soak Resolve damage, the rating of the armour drops a point and must be repaired by an armorer during a suitable downtime period to restore its protective benefits, or be replaced completely.

Armour Type	Protection	Activity Penalties
Light	1	Swimming
Medium	2	Swimming, Sneaking, Chasing
Heavy	3	Swimming (2D), Sneaking, Chasing, Leaping, Climbing, Perception

If armour seems to be too great a guarantee of safety from harm, an option is to allow a ‘Yes and’ combat result to be defined as armour piercing instead of adding the usual ‘and’ Condition – effectively the armour piercing aspect is a Detail with mechanical effect. Armour-piercing attacks require two points of soak to be spent in order to avoid taking Resolve damage, and are particularly appropriate when the blow is delivered by a weapon designed to penetrate armour such as high-velocity firearms and medieval maces or warhammers.

Rather than use this armour system for minor supporting characters, consider armour as part of the assessment of the opposition’s general competency, e.g. Challenging, Strong, etc.

The principles above for arms and armour can be easily applied to non-combat conflicts if desired, for example a sheriff’s badge acting as social ‘armour’ or a wizard’s staff assisting with magical duels.

Unique Gear and Supporting Characters

If a player invests one of their character’s Trademark Descriptor in an item of gear or a supporting character, you may consider detailing them further, fleshing out each with the following features:

- Concept
- 2 Trademarks
- 1 Flaw
- 2 Resolve

As usual, the Concept defines the broad abilities of the gear or supporting character. If the gear or supporting character Concept includes expertise that the player character does not hold, then when that gear or supporting character is

aiding the character in a conflict they will prevent the character from receiving penalty dice due to the action falling outside of their Concept.

If you invest a second Trademark in the gear or supporting character, add 1 Resolve to the item of gear or supporting character and choose to either add one new Trademark, or two new Trademarks and an additional Flaw.

In some circumstances, the GM might have a character deprived of their gear or supporting character by in game events, but this normally constitutes a complication worthy of regaining a Resolve point. If the deprivation is permanent, for example the gear is destroyed, then the character is also returned the number of Descriptors invested to be reassigned. A couple of examples:

Jan Stanislaus

- Concept: Surly bodyguard
- Trademarks: Mean as a snake; Stronger than he looks
- Flaw: Hair trigger temper
- Resolve: 2

The *Hairy Dwarf*

- Concept: Smuggler's Sloop
- Trademarks: False-bottomed hold; Hidden deck guns
- Flaw: Known to the King's Authorities
- Resolve: 2

The GM might decide that the player characters share a common patron, resource or piece of equipment, in which case the players can create a separate 'character' to represent this without spending any of their personal Trademarks. In this instance no one player character owns the gear or supporting character, but instead it is created and held collectively. Since no Descriptors were invested in it by the characters, if deprived of the gear or supporting character no Resolve points are regained for the loss.

Drive and Relationship Descriptors are normally dropped from retainers and equipment, but the other Descriptors and details match those of a player character.

An example is a starship used by the party, an important enough feature of the scenario to warrant being detailed as a character of its own:

The Caliburn

- Concept: Pursuit-Class Starship
- Trademarks: Speed when it's needed; False transponder; Well-stocked crew armoury; Takes a beating
- Flaws: Outmoded tactical programs; Poorly maintained
- Resolve: 5

The Caliburn is an outdated military starship of a type frequently picked up for cheap by low-rent security firms or space pirates. Poor maintenance and aging programming mean it's no match for a modern military vessel, or in many cases a civilian ship straight out of production, but it will hold its own against anything else. The false transponder identifies the starship as an innocuous merchant tender, highly illegal due to its popularity among pirates (incidentally, an example of a situation where a Trademark might become a complicating Flaw).

This could be applied to other aspects of a scenario or campaign, with Descriptors to represent nation states, secret societies, a military squad or the structure, traps and rewards of a hidden temple.

Advancement

New Descriptors are a significant milestone, so should be awarded sparingly. Use the following as a guide:

- *New Trademark*: Upon successful resolution of a character's Long-Term Drive and at the end of a campaign arc (usually 2-3 scenarios).
- *New Flaw*: Upon unsuccessful resolution of a character's Long-Term Drive.
- *New Relationship*: At the end of a scenario. Player's choice whether the relationship is predominantly positive or negative.

At the player's option, instead of adding a new Trademark a player could choose to remove a Flaw, or conversely rather than add a Flaw, remove a Trademark instead.

Players may also abandon a Drive or rename an existing Descriptor at the end of each session, although Flaws must remain Flaws, Trademarks remain Trademarks and so on. Relationships are usually particularly fluid and subject to being changed and rewritten.

You can also emulate a level-based approach to reflect a zero-to-hero genre: each time a new level is achieved representing a major milestone in a character's career increase their Resolve pool cap by 1 and use the optional scale rules to give advanced characters a free positive bump in their conflict results when opposing lesser foes and challenges.

This represents a major step change in character ability – think of it as graduating from the 'Basic' red box set to 'Expert' in *Dungeons & Dragons* rather than merely advancing from level 1 to 2.

At the end of a scenario a character's Resolve re-sets to the cap level before the next scenario begins.

Conflicts

Conflicts fall into two broad categories: low stakes and high stakes. The defining difference is whether the character risks losing Resolve as a result of losing the conflict.

Most conflicts will be low stakes, stepping stones towards the pivotal conflicts in a scenario. Conflicts usually default to being low stakes unless one of the following is involved:

- A credible threat is actively trying to destroy its target in some respect, whether physically, mentally or socially. This includes an attack with a deadly weapon, mental trauma, reputational or financial ruin.
- The conflict is pivotal to furthering a character's Drive, or resolving it altogether.

Conditions and Details created by low stakes conflicts tend to be of lesser magnitude, transitory in nature and limited in the scope of actions they affect. By contrast, Conditions and Details arising from high stakes conflicts tend to be more significant and persist longer.

For example, a fist fight might be considered low stakes – although it is violent, it might not be expected to carry long-term consequences or push a player character towards being written out of the game. This is especially true if the intent of the attackers is not to inflict permanent harm, for instance roughing up a character as a not-so-subtle warning to leave town. A Condition associated with such a conflict might be a 'Bloody Nose' – inconvenient, but not life-threatening. On the other hand, a sword duel might be high stakes, with Resolve at risk and longer-lasting Conditions such as 'Slashed Tendon' on the cards.

This will always be genre-dependent: in a very gritty game, fist fights might carry the risk of serious injuries while a larger-than-life genre might treat sword duels as mere inconveniences unless the heroes face a worthy foe.

Note that even if negative Conditions are inflicted, Resolve points are only lost on 'No but', 'No', 'No and' results – a 'Yes but' might result in a smashed rib Condition, but the player character does not lose any Resolve points.

Determining Opposition Strength

Opposition can either take the form of GM characters or as a static obstacle to be overcome, such as a treacherous bog. In some cases, opposition might be a hybrid of the two, for instance a group of GM characters that is best treated as an obstacle, like an angry mob to be swayed.

Determining opposition strength for a conflict can be done two ways: by creating either a ‘mini’ character or a fully-detailed character representing the opposition; or by applying a shorthand difficulty rating for the opposition.

Creating a mini-character or fully-detailed character is a straightforward process, applying the character creation method for the GM character or even static obstacle – a mighty mountain to be climbed gets its own Trademarks like ‘Steep Slopes’, ‘Prone to Avalanches’ and Flaws like ‘Hidden Valley Shortcut’ which might be discovered and exploited for advantage.

This is a good approach to take when the opposition is intended to be recurring or the focus of a climactic encounter, and allows you to put some thought into the opposition and how it’s characterised prior to the game.

However, this can be a taxing approach when determining opposition on the fly, in which case you may be better served by assigning a simple difficulty rating. This is particularly the case when the conflict is unexpected or against opposition not central to the scenario. For this approach, use the guide table below:

Opposition Strength	Modifier
Weak	+1 D
Average	+0 D
Challenging	-1 D
Strong	-2 D
Overwhelming	-3 D

So when facing weak opposition – whether in the form of a static opposition, such as an easily-scalable wall with numerous handholds, or in the form of amateurs in the field of conflict, such as members of an untrained, angry mob – the player character gets a bonus die to their pool.

When determining how difficult to make opposition, consider the following:

Weak opposition is useful for giving the player characters an opportunity to look good, and spotlight how competent they are against lesser foes or obstacles. This is a useful level to assign to undisciplined or untrained mobs, or easily-navigable obstacles that just might get lucky and inconvenience the player characters. However, in a lot of cases you might decide that weak opposition doesn't serve the story well and is better handled by allowing the players to narrate a victory over the opposition without picking up the dice.

Standard opposition represents a competent foe, one that will challenge a player character who has not specialised in that type of conflict, but which will be easily overcome by an experienced professional in the field – town militia might fall into this category, a real problem for characters without a Concept or Descriptor that encompasses physical fighting, but less so for the professional warriors in the group. This kind of opposition is competent in the chosen field of conflict, but nothing more; think of the opposition as equivalent to a player character whose Concept covers the sphere of conflict, but has no applicable Descriptors.

Challenging opposition is a cut above the average, equivalent to a player character with a relevant Concept and single supporting Trademark Descriptor. Rather than town militia we're talking professional soldiers, people who know their way around a fight.

Strong opposition will provide a serious challenge for any player character not specialised in this field of conflict, and things will get dicey even for those who are. Ideally, player characters should be stacking the circumstantial advantages before taking on opposition at this level, attacking from ambush, building up a caseload of condemning evidence, etc. – anything to bring in additional dice on your side.

Overwhelming opposition will be difficult for anyone, and expect Resolve points to be spent on re-rolls if player characters are to hope to win with any certainty. Ganging up or some serious planning are called for.

Remember that a source of opposition will be of varying strength depending on the field of conflict – if an ogre is a Strong opponent in a toe to toe scrap, it may be better to try to bamboozle or bluff him instead, where he'll be a Standard or even Weak opponent.

The fictional circumstances should be applied as well – the Queen's personal bodyguard might be Strong opponents normally, but ambushed in their barracks without armour or arms might render them merely Challenging or even Standard opponents. Similarly, ganging up and outnumbering an ogre might be a valid tactic

improve the player characters' odds, but might have no advantage when surrounding a dragon.

Another consideration when determining opposition is whether to use the optional scale rules when either the skill of player characters or their opposition outclasses the other altogether.

If the player characters are part of an ongoing campaign you may find that their abilities increase so that presenting a challenge to them requires sterner opposition than described above, meaning opposition needs to gradually increase over time to continue to present a credible obstacle. Bear in mind that once all Descriptors and Conditions are taken into account, they will succeed in a conflict with no bonus dice 50% of the time, with one bonus die 65% of the time, with two bonus dice 78% of the time and with three bonus dice 86% of the time.

The reverse is also true: three penalty dice is going to be an extremely difficult conflict to win, with any win likely to be a marginal 'Yes but' result. Unless the player character can bring otherwise-unused Conditions or Details into play, only expenditure of Resolve for re-rolls is going to give them any real chance of pulling through to victory. If the conflict is spread over multiple rolls, as described below, then the difficulty is even more pronounced.

Conflict Length

Generally, conflicts are resolved on the outcome of a single roll. However, in some cases more climactic conflicts might be resolved over a series of related rolls.

To create a more durable opponent or challenging static obstacle such as a treacherous mountain to traverse, assign them with their own pool of Resolve points. Until these points fall into the negative, while they may have suffered a setback, the opponent or obstacle remains active in the scenario.

GM characters or static obstacles only lose Resolve during high stakes conflicts. If the conflict is low stakes, it probably does not warrant drawing out the resolution over multiple rolls – if this is desirable, break the conflict up into a series of distinct procedural steps, where each contributing success represents progress towards overall victory.

Standard GM characters and mundane obstacles are considered to have 0 Resolve, defeated on any 'Yes', 'Yes and' or 'Yes but' conflict result. A villain's lieutenants might have 2 Resolve and recurring major villains 5 Resolve, just like a player

character. Really robust opposition intended to present a challenge to a party of player characters, for example a dragon, might have as much as 8.

Usually, each roll will only ever inflict a single point of Resolve loss. However, with the GM's agreement, a character might engage in an aggressive, high-risk approach in order to inflict greater injury on an opponent or obstacle. If the player describes an appropriately-risky approach then if they are successful in the conflict roll 2 Resolve is inflicted on the target; conversely, if the character is unsuccessful, he or she loses 2 Resolve.

The GM might also rule that a player's 'Yes and' result inflicts 2 Resolve on opponents or obstacles instead of a single point and a Condition or Detail. This is more for convenience than anything else, and is entirely a matter of taste rather than a hard rule.

The GM does not have the option to apply this to a player character, however – a single attack cannot inflict more than 1 Resolve on a player character *unless* the player has chosen a risky approach to the conflict and failed.

For example, Drayt has intruded upon the Temple of the Sun, a fiendishly-trapped treasure house considered a high stakes conflict. Rather than resolve his exploration of the temple in a single roll, a significant challenge is warranted. The GM gives the temple a Resolve pool of 2 to represent its secrets and traps.

Drayt enters the eerily quiet tomb, casting his torch before him and searching the floor and walls for pressure panels. He gains a 'Yes' result, removing one of the temple's Resolve points as he bypasses the Temple's poison dart trap.

Wanting to get to the heart of the Temple quickly, Drayt's player argues that rather than circumventing each trap one by one, a bold charge through the final section and dodge or outrun the remaining traps would get him to the Temple's inner sanctum more directly.

The GM agrees: in exchange for risking the loss of 2 Resolve if he fails, if Drayt succeeds he will reduce the Temple's Resolve points to -1 and defeat the Temple's hazards. Drayt's player accepts and rolls, gaining a 'Yes but' result.

The 2 Resolve inflicted is enough to defeat the temple, Drayt running full pelt past flying blow darts, dodging deadfalls and leaping pit traps. He skids to safety in the Temple's inner sanctum, panting for breath. With a sigh of relief he is about to relax but (and remember there was a 'but'), hears in the distance an ominous thud as a huge boulder drops to block the Temple's main entrance. Getting out again may not be so easy...

Conceding Conflicts

Not all conflicts need to be fought to the bitter end. If a character is on the losing side of a conflict and the outcome looks grim, either the player or GM can propose that the character concedes the conflict, losing but on more favourable terms negotiated by the conceding party.

If a character concedes a conflict and it is a high stakes one, i.e. Resolve is at stake, then they receive 1 Resolve in exchange for accepting the conflict concession.

For example, Brutus and Cicely are duelling, a high stakes conflict. The conflict has been running for a few rolls already, and Brutus is down a point of Resolve and is nursing a 'Deep Gash to the Arm'. Cicely is a challenge at the best of times, and Brutus has no great desire to fight the duel out to the death on the off-chance he can turn things around for a victory.

Instead, Brutus' player suggests that Brutus flings down his sword and runs. He is clearly losing the conflict, but on his own terms rather than at the mercy of a victorious Cicely, who might very well slit Brutus' throat if he wins. The GM agrees to the concession, Brutus runs away to fight another day and gains a point of Resolve into the bargain as a consolation for his less-than-heroic departure.

Managing Powerful Threats

There are a number of ways of bolstering the threat posed by an opponent or obstacle. For example, a dragon could be made into a formidable foe in the following ways:

- Its armour and natural weaponry are potent, making all but the most powerful player character attacks ineffective and the dragon's attacks rendering mundane armour ineffective. This is context dependent, and relies upon assessing the credibility of the actions against the fictional portrayal of the dragon. If the dragon is merely horse sized, then swords and the like may be effective. However, if it is the size of a building, then maybe only siege weapons are capable of doing any Resolve damage.
- It may have a considerable number of helpful Descriptors applicable to the conflict, or be considered a Strong (2 penalty dice) or Overwhelming (3 penalty dice) opponent.

- It may employ the optional scale rules discussed later, making success in conflicts against the dragon less likely and its successes more devastating.
- It may have a large Resolve pool, perhaps as high as 8.

If all four above are used, you have an extremely potent foe. Instead, it is recommended you use some, but not all, to create difficult challenges for the player characters. If you have decided that normal hand weapons won't have a significant effect on the opponent or obstacle, then you probably do not need a large Resolve pool, as the two techniques model a similar fictional effect. Similarly, if you are using the scale rules, then the dragon should not have Trademark dice reflecting its size as an advantage, or you are double counting the advantage.

Player Character v. Player Character Conflicts

Whether a conflict is between a player character and a GM character or another player character, the system remains the same, with one player rolling dice and the opposing player adding bonus or penalty dice depending on their character's Descriptors, current Conditions and so on.

While statistically it makes no difference who rolls, it usually makes intuitive sense for the initiating or aggressive party to roll. Both players can spend Resolve to re-roll some or all dice in their favour, however.

Assisting

In some situations a character may seek to assist another character to achieve a goal. This can generally be handled one of two ways:

- Where the task allows more than one individual to directly assist in the activity, such as trying to push open a heavy door, each character involved can add any relevant Descriptor to the pool before it is rolled.
- Where the conflict is aided by complementary but separate actions to set up another character for success, for example providing cover fire or creating a distraction to help an ally sneak past defences. In these instances, the set up conflict is resolved ahead of the main conflict and positive results will create Conditions or Details which can be used to aid the main actor.

Scale

In most cases scale is easily handled by applying contextual restrictions on the seriousness of Conditions inflicted and when assessing whether Resolve is credibly at risk. Before a character undertakes an action, the credibility of that action needs to be assessed so that the outcome does not break suspension of disbelief for the other players. For example, before allowing a player character to attempt to beat up a dragon with his fists, everyone needs to be comfortable that this is a credible possible outcome. If not, the description needs to be modified or a new approach taken to allow the player character to achieve their goal.

However, in some settings, particularly the more fantastic ones, issues of scale come up more frequently and the contextual credibility approach may be unsatisfactory. In superhero genres for example, or ones involving demi-gods tangling with normal people, a more robust approach may be warranted.

In this case, each time someone tries to achieve a conflict success against an opponent or obstacle deemed of greater scale, for each level of difference in scales the greater party can bump the result a step in their favour.

For example, Kaled and Vernox are facing an ogre, a large and formidable foe, and considered one level higher in scale compared to the two heroes.

Kaled moves in to attack, achieving a 'Yes but' result. However, since the ogre is a scale level greater, this result is bumped a step in the monster's favour, to 'No but'.

This can mean that in conflicts involving outmatched opponents the lesser party may have no chance of success. Such are the risks of tackling challenges outside your weight class.

Conditions

Some Conditions are more significant than others, lingering longer and introducing greater influence on the game’s fiction and the types of actions characters can perform credibly. To reflect this, Conditions (and when it makes sense, Details) are categorized into three ‘tiers’.

Minor Conditions are transitory and circumstantial in nature, disappearing by the end of the scene or sooner, such as ‘Off Balance’, ‘High Ground’ or ‘Dazzled’.

Moderate Conditions are temporary but significant inconveniences or bonuses, with occasional limitations on character action – if a character is carrying a ‘Broken Arm’, climbing a rope might be considered impossible, at least without some kind of clever thinking or assistance.

Major Conditions persist longer and will affect a wide range of actions. For example, a ‘Punctured Lung’ or gaining ‘a King’s Ransom’ in jewels.

Beyond Major Conditions are permanent effects, character Descriptors rather than temporary Conditions, and most often gained as a result of character advancement or dropping below 0 Resolve points and choosing a new Flaw instead of being written out of the game.

The table below gives some examples of negative Conditions of different tiers:

Severity	Physical	Mental	Social	Resources
Minor	Off Balance, Bloodied	Angered, Stunned	Speechless, Dazzled	Broke
Moderate	Broken Arm, Concussion	Hysterics, Recurring Nightmares	Humiliated, Seduced	Bad Debts, Impounded
Major	Internal Bleeding, Unconscious	Breakdown, Temporary Catatonia	Shunned, Laughing Stock	Evicted, Credit Cancelled
Permanent	Amputated Limb, Sickly	Committed, Serious Phobia	Outlawed, Reputation Ruined	Debt You Can’t Pay Off, Bankrupt

Equally, Conditions can be positive and the examples above can be used to gauge the narrative benefit implied by the Condition – winning a low-stakes card game might net a Minor ‘Beer Money’ Condition while a higher-stakes game might result in a Major ‘Overflowing Riches!’ Condition, allowing much greater leeway when describing fictional positioning. As a general rule, the greater the risks stood to be lost, the greater the gains that are on offer to the victor.

Establishing Magnitude

When a Condition is placed upon a character, the magnitude of the consequence needs to be established. This will often be guided by the source of the Condition or fictional means by which it was received: if caused by a dragon a Major Condition is likely, whereas a Condition resulting from an attempted stabbing by a pixie might inflict a Minor Condition; a social humiliation in front of a crowd of peers is going to be a higher magnitude Condition than a private dressing down (usually).

The underlying magnitude of Conditions also needs to be informed by the genre being explored. Being knocked unconscious will be a routine event in a pulp genre, but a serious injury in a gritty setting, and the benchmarks above should be adjusted to suit your genre and the desired tone of your game.

Conflicts aided by tools will often add a bonus die to the character’s pool rather than affect magnitude, although they might escalate a conflict from low to high stakes – or in the case of protective tools, like armour, reduce it to low stakes.

If the circumstances of the game’s fiction do not indicate a logical magnitude, the severity of negative Conditions can be gauged by how Resolve was affected:

Resolve Effect	Condition
None, a low stakes conflict.	Minor
Resolve lost (high stakes) and remaining Resolve pool > 1.	Moderate
Resolve lost and Resolve pool reduced to < 2.	Major

So if no Resolve is at stake, i.e. it is not a high stakes conflict, associated Conditions tend to be of Minor magnitude. If Resolve is at stake, and if the loss of the conflict reduces the character close towards being written out, then the Conditions inflicted tend to be Major.

In the case of positive Conditions, knowing which magnitude to apply is more of a judgment call, but generally the greater the risk for failure, the greater the reward for success.

As a rule of thumb, Conditions resulting from a ‘but’ result are often a little lower in severity or import than arising those from ‘and’ results. For example, in a fist fight, a ‘Yes but’ result might involve your opponent getting an ‘Off Balance’ Condition while a ‘Yes and’ result gives them a ‘Bleeding Nose’. Both are broadly Minor magnitude Conditions, but one is a little more lasting and feels more significant than the other.

Once you have established the magnitude of Conditions, you need to consider two principal impacts on the game: any implied changes to what a character can now credibly attempt; and how lasting the Condition is.

Restricting/Enhancing Possible Actions

One of the roles of Conditions is to inform the fictional options available to characters during the game. An unconscious character cannot carry on a conversation, a broke character cannot buy a new car, and a character with a newly-minted reputation as a sex symbol can turn the heads of those who would have previously ignored him or her.

The principle is that although higher tier Conditions still affect dice rolls by +/- 1D, exactly as their lower-tier counterparts, the range of activities that this applies to is greater, and the fictional constraints or freedoms implied broader.

Removing Conditions

Removing Conditions depends on the magnitude of the Condition, with general guidelines given below:

Tier	Negative Conditions	Positive Conditions
Minor	The Condition is transitory and will disappear by the end of the scene, if not before.	The Condition is transitory and will disappear by the end of the scene, if not before.
Moderate	The Condition will not usually worsen without treatment and will remedy itself over time. Specialist	The Condition is short-lived, lasting for a few days or less, and will disappear much sooner if it is abused,

attention will hasten the recovery, but even without it a full recovery can be expected in a few days or less.

used heavily, or contradicted by the character's subsequent actions.

Major

The Condition must be treated or will worsen, but there is usually not required immediately. Trained or specialist attention is often required and a full recovery can take anything from several days to weeks.

The Condition is passing, lasting for several days through to a few weeks, somewhat shorter if it is abused, used heavily, or contradicted by the character's subsequent actions.

As a Condition ages, its magnitude shrinks by a tier. A 'Broken Arm' (Moderate) becomes a 'Battered Arm' (Minor) and a reputation as 'Hero of Hanging Rock' (Major) becomes 'Decorated Veteran' (Moderate), then 'Served his Country' (Minor) before finally disappearing. The way to avoid this and make a Condition permanent is to buy it as a new Descriptor.

Track this where it's interesting and makes sense, ignore where the added book-keeping adds little to the game's fun.

Appendix

‘Buckets of Dice’ Alternative Dice System

As an alternative to both the standard *FU* beat the odds system and the beat the odds redux system used above, a d10 dice pool system can also be used. The primary advantage of this is a further reduction in the impact of bonus and penalty dice so that a more graduated set of bonuses and penalties is possible. The main disadvantage with the system is the loss of player-only rolls as for this system to work the player rolls and then compares their result to the GM’s dice pool result.

Players roll 3d10 against an opposing ‘resistance’ pool of 3d10. Each positive Condition, Descriptor, etc. adds 1d10 to the acting player’s dice pool and each negative one adds 1d10 to the opposing player or GM’s pool. As usual, the acting player frames a question to set the stakes for a conflict.

For example, intelligence agent Harper confronts a suspected Soviet spy and is interrogating her to see if he can pressure her into letting something slip. At an appropriate point in the dialogue, the GM calls for a roll and both sides assemble dice pools. Harper’s player looks at his Descriptors, adding his ‘Shrewd judge of character’ trademark for a total pool of 4D. The GM’s pool is unmodified in this instance, and remains at 3D. The question at stake is ‘Does Harper learn whether the woman is a Soviet spy?’

Both roll their dice, Harper getting a 9, 7, 6 and 5 and the GM rolling 9, 5 and 2.

Once the dice are rolled, the highest results of the two pools are compared. Each die showing a result higher than the highest result in the other pool is counted as a success. In the event of a tie, the two highest dice are discarded and the next highest compared. If these next dice are a tie, then they are also discarded, and so on until the tie is broken. There is a chance of a tie all the way through, which means neither a Yes or No result, but an impasse where neither party’s goal is achieved.

If the player’s pool is the higher, the result is as follows:

- 1 die higher ‘Yes but’

- 2 dice higher ‘Yes’
- 3 dice higher ‘Yes and’
- Optionally, for each additional die higher add an additional ‘and’

If the GM’s pool is higher:

- 1 die higher ‘No but’
- 2 dice higher ‘No’
- 3 dice higher ‘No and’
- Optionally, for each additional die higher add an additional ‘and’

Returning to the example, Harper wins the conflict with 2 successes. The 9s rolled by both parties are ignored since if the highest results tie both dice are discarded. The GM’s next highest result is a 5 and Harper has two results better than this, a 7 and a 6, giving 2 successes or a ‘Yes’ result. Harper tricks the woman into revealing herself as a Soviet agent.

Multiple Participants

When multiple participants are involved in the same conflict but each is seeking a different outcome, the overall winner is responsible for narrating the results. However, this player must take into account all other outcomes generated by other characters’ actions during the conflict.

For example, two adventurers Kaled and Vernox, are grappling with a seriously dangerous ogre in a high stakes conflict. Kaled asks ‘Do I keep it from escaping?’ while Vernox asks ‘Do I steal the mysterious potion from its belt?’ As neither Kaled nor Vernox are describing deadly attacks, the ogre is not at risk of losing Resolve, but both Kaled and Vernox are due to the ogre’s violent nature.

The pools are assembled, and the dice rolled. Kaled fails in respect of the creature, getting a ‘No but’ result and Vernox succeeds with a ‘Yes and’. Vernox narrates that his character nips in and plucks the potion (the ‘Yes’) from the ogre’s belt and Kaled’s efforts distract it (the ‘and’) from noticing the theft. However, the ogre swats at Kaled’s attempts to contain it (the ‘No’), knocking him to the ground and smashing through the door. The ogre escapes, albeit suffering a broken hand (the ‘but’) in the process.

Since it’s a high stakes conflict, Kaled loses 1 Resolve from being swatted.

If the characters are aligned in support of the same outcome, e.g. both are trying to prevent the ogre's escape, then both characters roll separately as above but will normally gain an extra die each to represent their numerical advantage. However, the outcome of either a 'Yes' or 'No' result will always be the same for both characters, since the question asked is the same.

For example, Kaled and Vernox are both asking 'Do I keep the ogre from escaping?' They both add 1d10 to their pools, since they are both working in concert, and roll. Kaled gets 'Yes but' and Vernox gets 'Yes'. Vernox narrates, since he achieved the best result: Kaled and Vernox surround the creature, Kaled getting between the ogre and the door. Snorting in rage, it lashes out at Kaled and while distracted Vernox manages to trip the ogre. It hurtles forward, Kaled leaping atop it and pinning it to the floor (the 'Yes' outcome) but getting a dazing smack to the head from the creature's flailing fist (the 'but' for Kaled).

In this instance, no one loses any Resolve, but Kaled suffers from a 'Seeing Stars' Condition due to the ogre's flailing fist.

If Kaled had succeeded and Vernox failed, then the better result would remain as the final outcome ('Yes but') in respect of the ogre, with Kaled's narration describing the creature prevented from escaping by Kaled, but after having brushed aside the unsuccessful attempt to hold it back by Vernox, inflicting 1 Resolve damage to the hapless adventurer.

All other rules from *FUBAR* remain the same when using this alternative dice system.

Written and adapted by Adrian Price.

This work is based on FU: The Freeform/Universal RPG (found at <http://nathanrussell.net/fu>), by Nathan Russell, and licensed for our use under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).

The Beat the Odds Redux dice system can be found on the Fan Made FU Yahoo Group and originates with group member Light Castle.

The optional scale rules are the idea of h131v from the Fan Made FU Yahoo Group.

The text also owes a big debt to other RPGs, particularly *FATE*, *HeroQuest*, *Hot War* and *Dead of Night*.

The Powered By FU logo is (c) Nathan Russell and is used with permission.