

Prototype: Personal Skills

At times, Mages may be called on to use their skills in non-combat situations, or in combat outside their APUs. This simple and optional personal skill system is designed to allow groups to have a mechanical method of resolving actions outside of mechanized combat.

As stated, this system is optional. A group may choose to use this system or not depending on their needs. Some campaigns have more use for this system than others — police campaigns may have these skills used for investigation outside their APUs, for instance, or a group of hacker-Mages might use the skills for gathering information and breaking into systems. It's also ideal if you want to have individual-level combat encounters. If your group is comfortable with freeform roleplay or doesn't want to be limited by these options, you may enjoy Lunar Reckoning 69 without this system.

The basic Personal Skill roll is a single d6 roll. A skill check is resolved by **rolling equal to or greater than a Target Number**, determined by the character's Competency in the skill and modified by favorable or unfavorable circumstances. **The objective is to succeed at a target number of related skill checks before accruing too many failures, which determines whether the encounter is successful or not.** The effects of overall success or failure at a skill encounter is determined by the GM.

Competency

Competency is a rating of a character's overall experience at a skill. There are five levels of competency: None, Basic, Advanced, Master, and Grand Master. Each Competency determines the base difficulty of succeeding at a skill roll, as determined in the following table:

Competency	Target Number
None	5 (but see below)
Basic	4
Advanced	3
Master	2
Grand Master	Special (see Specializations)

A character has a Competency of None in all skills. Generally, this represents a field they either have no real knowledge of, or only have the knowledge of an average person in. Any character could throw a punch or operate a computer, for instance, but this does not represent a significant level of skill. Even Basic Competency represents a level of skill beyond the average person's. **Because of this, the GM may decide that you cannot use a particular Skill in a particular situation without having at least Basic Competency.**

Basic, Advanced, and Master Competencies vary only by the Target Number, mechanically. Competency is bought with Competence Points. **Buying Basic Competency in a skill costs 1 CP, and it costs 1 CP to raise the skill to the next level of Competency.** Therefore, it costs 3 CP to advance a skill to Master Competency.

Grand Master Competency cannot be bought. It operates only with Specializations.

Specializations

Any character who has at least Basic Competency in a skill has a Specialization within that skill. A Specialization is a narrow area within the broader area of the skill. For instance, a character with Marksmanship may have Sniper Rifles as their specialization, or a character with Persuasion may have Intimidation.

When a character uses a skill in a circumstance where his Specialization applies, he is treated as having one more level of Competency than normal, making the skill easier. Basic becomes Advanced, and so on, **with Master skill advancing to the Grand Master level.** In all other circumstances, the skill has its normal Competency level.

For some Specializations, this bonus is a matter of equipment — a character with Sniper Rifle as their Marksmanship Specialization would need to make sure to have access to a sniper rifle. For others, it's a narrowly defined field; a character who has Forensics as their Investigation Specialization would obviously not get their Specialization bonus while interviewing a subject. Some Specializations are less clear — couldn't you Intimidate or Seduce anyone while using Persuasion? — but some Specializations simply don't apply (Seduction relies on the target being attracted to you) while others are not particularly useful (Intimidation likely wouldn't work on a hardened soldier). Unfavorable circumstances affect your use of Specializations, and the latter case should be considered unfavorable.

In some cases, a certain Specialization might be needed to use a skill at all in a certain situation. Anyone can use a computer, but it requires special training to break into a system — so someone without a Hacking specialization in Computer Use wouldn't be able to attempt it. In these cases, the bonus still applies, however.

If the use of a Specialization would push a skill past Master Competency, the character is considered to have Grand Master Competency. In this case, the skill is treated in most respects as Master, but **during a skill encounter, the character automatically succeeds on their first check with that skill if the Specialization applies.** This benefit applies to only the first check, and **only one automatic success per character may be gained through this method no matter how many Specialization bonuses they may gain during a single encounter.**

Suggestions for Specializations are given in the skill list; more could potentially be added. Specializations should be specific enough that they don't always apply, but not so specific as to be limiting. For instance, a Marksmanship Specialization of 'military weapons' is far too broad, as virtually any weapon could be described as such. Conversely, however, it's probably unnecessary to have 'Ju-Jitsu' and 'Taekwondo' as different Close Combat Specializations — Martial Arts is enough.

Favorable and Unfavorable Circumstances

The field isn't always even when it comes to skill use. Sometimes, the odds are stacked against the player characters, and other times they have an edge. The characters might be stuck in a firefight with poor equipment, which would affect their Marksmanship rolls; or they may have an outline of enemy security protocols, giving them an edge on Computer Use rolls.

There is a simple rule to handle these situations: **whenever the PCs have a favorable circumstance, they add 1 to their 1d6 skill roll. Whenever the PCs have an unfavorable circumstance, they subtract 1 from their roll.** There should never be a need for more than that — at the point where you're considering it, the task is likely either trivial or impossible.

In some cases, the unfavorable circumstance might be directly related to their Specialization — someone using a sniper rifle in a tight corridor isn't going to have an easy time fighting, and someone trying to Intimidate a stoic war veteran isn't likely to succeed. **In these cases, not only do they take the -1 penalty, they also cannot use their Specialization bonus.** Unfavorable circumstances not directly related have no effect on Specialization bonuses, and favorable circumstances should never arise due to Specializations alone; the use of the Specialization is already its own kind of favorable circumstance.

This is an ideal opportunity to let actions performed in combat affect the outcome of a skill encounter. For instance, if the PCs attacked Neucom assets in their last mission, they'd have a harder time getting a security contract on the Megafloat. But if they instead coordinated their attack with Neucom to keep damage to the corporation's interests to a minimum, they might have an advantage in those same negotiations. Failed or successful skill checks during a skill encounter may also incur unfavorable or favorable circumstances.

Skill Use and Skill Encounters

In some cases, a skill check might be just that — a check for a skill. You simply roll once to determine success or failure. The GM is, however, advised not to rely on this heavily. It's annoying to the players to make them roll to know basic facts their character would be privy to, or to accomplish routine tasks. Skills should come into play more heavily during high-stress situations, which are known as skill encounters.

A skill encounter involves a situation which the player characters cannot solve with mechanized combat. The situation may or may not be immediately life-threatening, but time is usually of the essence — a high-tension contract negotiation, a race against time to find a killer, or a sudden firefight deep within a Megacity. Success or failure is not determined by a single roll, but by an overall string of skill checks.

A skill encounter requires at least four skill rolls, possibly more. **They must succeed on a target number of rolls (4 or more) before failing around half that number.** 6 successes before 3 failures is a good benchmark. The failure number shouldn't be a hard limit, but rather a guideline to determine what leeway you give the PCs for screwups. Reaching the success target number means they get what they were after, and failure, though usually not meaning death, makes things harder later on.

Successes and failures can lead to other things in the challenge, as well. A character using an intellectual skill might not help win the day immediately, but they still accrue a success and might help give the group some insight on how to handle the situation next. Similarly, failures may lead either to more unfavorable circumstances (A poorly timed explosive might block your escape route!) but might also lead to opportunities for success later (an injured ally means an opportunity to use Medicine to patch them up). Failures should be treated with a less hardline approach; some failures may be minor and have no effect on overall failure in the encounter, while others might botch the entire operation.

Players are encouraged to use as many different skills as they can, subject to the limits of the situation — one character's Academics skill and Political Science specialization aren't likely to be useful in a straight fire-fight, but it might help their allies gain some insight on the motivations of the terrorists in a hostage situation. The GM should be open, but also firm. You should refuse unrelated skills right out and apply circumstantial bonuses and penalties as needed.

Often, once a skill encounter is completed, the success or failure might affect future combat missions. A successful raid against a terrorist group means fewer pilots to fight later on; conversely, failing to find the identity of a double agent Magus within your PMC might well mean that a trusted ally will betray you during the next mission!

Skills and Legend Dice

Legend Dice may be used with skill checks as well. In this case, **you may spend a Legend Die to reroll any one skill check. The skill may only be rerolled once;** if both rolls are failures, you are out of chances. (There is no limit to how many Legend Dice may be used in an overall encounter, however.)

Skill List and Granted Competency Points

The amount of Competency Points a character starts with depends on the campaign. In general, however, the number should be between 3 and 9, and usually a multiple of 3. 3 CP means that characters may be very competent at one thing or moderately competent at 3 things, while 9 CP means they can master 3 skills or have an extremely broad field of knowledge. The GM is encouraged to speak to his players to figure out what is right for the group.

In some campaigns, it may be appropriate to grant Basic Competency in a skill to all characters, and perhaps even to lock them in to particular Specializations. For instance, most Union soldiers would likely have Basic Competency in Athletics, Close Combat, and Marksmanship, while few police officers could get away without learning the basics of Investigation. In this case, limit CP to either 3 or 6.

The GM may also choose to limit how many skills a character can master. You could limit the number of skills that can be raised to Master or Advanced level, or even limit how many skills a character can buy. Again, this all depends on the style of campaign and how legendary you want your Mages to be.

ATHLETICS — A general category of physical prowess or sporting skill. Most Mages are assumed to be fit overall; this skill represents formal practice or training, and is often tied greatly to Specialization.

Sample Specializations — Acrobatics, Marching, Sneaking, Track and Field, Hockey, Football.

ACADEMICS — General knowledge, as well as specific training in several academic fields not covered by other skills. People trained in this skill have a high level of education; it has no bearing on a character's intelligence.

Sample Specializations — History, Philosophy, Economics, Law, Political Science.

CLOSE COMBAT — Fighting without firearms in close quarters situations.

Sample Specializations — Martial Arts, Knife, Bayonet, Stun Gun, Pistol Whip, Fencing/Swordfighting.

COMPUTER USE — The use of computers and other electronic devices beyond simple day-to-day tasks. Usually closely tied to a Specialization.

Sample Specializations — Programming, Hacking, System Repair/Construction, Administration, IWACS Operation.

ENGINEERING — Either the use of the applied sciences for engineering solutions, or the maintenance and care of large vehicles and projects.

Sample Specializations — Ship/Airborne Carrier, Aerospace, Mechanical, Civic, Combat.

INVESTIGATION — The gathering of information. In general, applies to either deep research on unknown subjects or police procedures and techniques.

Sample Specializations — Forensics, Interviewing, Deduction, Network Research, Autopsy, Archival Research.

MARKSMANSHIP — The use of firearms and other ranged weapons, as well as the general handling and care thereof.

Sample Specializations — Pistol, Assault Rifle, Submachine Gun, Sniper Rifle, Shotgun, Heavy Weapons.

MEDICINE — The overall field of medicine. Closely tied to Specialization, but all characters with this skill know at least basic first aid.

Sample Specializations — Battlefield Medicine, Pediatrics, Psychiatry, General Practice, Dentistry.

MECHANICS — The repair and day to day maintenance of vehicles and other mechanical devices. Generally used for smaller, simpler vehicles; more complicated vehicles, like an airborne carrier, fall under Engineering.

Sample Specializations — APU, Sportwalker, Automobile, Motorcycle.

PERSUASION — The ability to convince someone of your point of view, or otherwise get what you want out of another.

Sample Specializations — Diplomacy, Placation, Intimidation, Bluffing, Negotiation, Seduction.

SCIENCE — Specific training in the natural sciences. Other branches of science generally fall into Academics.

Sample Specializations — Physics, Chemistry, Astronomy, Biology, Materials Science.