a game of being and doing

by David J Prokopetz

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This game is a work of fiction; any resemblance to real people living or dead is a figment of your overactive imagination.

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https://penguinking.games/rotate-bird/

Introduction

🔄🐦‍⬛ is a game of highly structured bullshitting. Like most other tabletop roleplaying games, you have traits that you invoke to roll dice and overcome challenges. However, which traits apply to which rolls isn't formally defined by the rules. In fact, what the traits are called isn't defined, either!

In lieu of a fixed list of named stats and advantages, each character's traits consist of a set of abstract symbols, and it's up to you to argue that your particular symbols mean you're the right person for the job. *Obviously* a symbol depicting a ship's anchor helps you convince a dragon not to eat your village. It only stands to reason.

> 🔄🐦‍⬛ is glossed in this document as *Rotate Bird*, and is tagged as such for text-to-speech purposes. “Officially”, however, the game's title is the two symbols, not their verbal intepretation, so feel free to come up with your own reading!

What You'll Need

🔄🐦‍⬛ is a game for 3–7 players, including a Gamemaster. To play in person, you'll need pencils, paper, and at least five six-sided dice.

Online play may be more challenging, owing to the game's heavy use of graphical icons. The default symbol tables used in this document make use of icons from the open-licensed Font Awesome Free library, which can be downloaded at the following address:

https://fontawesome.com/download

Using these symbols in online play can be difficult because most forum and chat software has limited support for icon fonts. To that end, the following alternatives are provided:

1. For use in virtual tabletop apps, an archive containing all of the icons used in this document, converted to PNG format.
2. For use in chat-based play, a set of cheat sheets identifying emoji approximations of each icon used in this document.

These resources are included in this game's download package, and can be obtained from the Penguin King Games website at the following address:

https://penguinking.games/rotate-bird/

Rolling Dice

There are two basic ways that you'll roll dice in 🔄🦅: to **choose a result from a table**, and to **make a test**.

When rolling on a table, look at the heading of the leftmost column. If it says “d6”, roll a single die, and look up the table row corresponding to the rolled result. If it says “d66”, roll the die twice, reading the first roll as the “tens” place and the second roll as the “ones” place, yielding a number in the range from 11 to 66. Alternatively, you can roll two dice at once if they're different colours or otherwise visually distinguishable; if you do, decide before rolling which die is the “tens” and which is the “ones”.

When making a test, you'll pick up a variable number of dice – potentially up to five, though usually it will be in the range from one to three – and roll them all at once. After rolling, pick any single die to be your result. Determining how many dice to roll and interpreting the result will be discussed under Playing the Game (p. 8).

Character Creation

Character creation in 🔄🐦 has two steps: figuring out what you are, and figuring out what you can do. These phases reflect the game's two core mechanics: BEING and DOING.

First, take a sheet of paper (or a one-page electronic document, if you're not the pencil-and-paper type) and divide it into three equal sections with the following headings: “Being”, “Doing” and “Having”. The first two will be filled in presently; the last is used during play.

> At several points throughout the character creation process, you'll be instructed to draw a copy of a symbol that you looked up from a table. Though this is encouraged to put your personal stamp on your character, it's not mandatory. You can also import the graphics from the icon library your game is using into your favourite word processing app, or – especially if you're playing via chat – just copy and paste the equivalent emoji from the cheat sheet. Both of these options are discussed under What You'll Need (p. 4).

BEING

To figure out what you are, select five random symbols from the BEING tables, re-rolling duplicates. These tables are used in many parts of this document, so they get their own section – refer to Appendix 1: BEING Symbols (p. 31). Take the five symbols that you rolled and draw them under the “Being” header on your character sheet.

Based on the symbols you got, briefly describe your character. Your BEING symbols need not be taken literally. They can be interpreted as physical traits, attitudes, skills, reputations, or even signature possessions. Don't define or name the individual symbols, though; you'll see why a bit later.

When coming up with your description, take care to keep your character's attributes within the realm of “basically human”. This doesn't mean you have to *be* human, but the scale you can act on based purely on your BEING traits is similar. A bird-person can fly, but they can't fly faster than sound, or in outer space. A robot doesn't need to eat, but does need to recharge its batteries. Let group consensus be the arbiter of what you can get away with.

In the next step, you'll break that rule.

Doing

Your Doing traits represent what you can do – or, more specifically, what you can do that's extraordinary. That rule from the Being step that you have to stick to the realm of human(ish) possibility goes out the window here.

To define your Doing traits, roll once on the table in Appendix 2: Doing Symbols (p. 35) and once on the tables in Appendix 1: Being Symbols (p. 31) to produce a pair of symbols: a Doing symbol followed by a Being symbol. Repeat this process twice more to obtain three pairs. It's okay if you get a Being symbol that you already rolled during the Being stage of character creation, but you should re-roll if – against all odds – you get the exact same pair of symbols twice during this step.

Draw the symbols under the "Doing" header on your character sheet, making sure to leave a space beside each pair. Each pair is a Doing trait.

A Doing traits represents something extraordinary that your character can do. What sort of extraordinary depends on your game's premise: a Doing trait might represent a psychic power, a martial arts technique, a cyborg implant, a Batman-style gadget, a magic spell, or a mundane skill taken to ridiculous heights. Every character in your group's game may share the same theme for their Doing traits, or – in a game with a more kitchen-sink setting – each character might have their own theme.

In any case, after you've drawn the symbols on your character sheet, give each of the three traits a name. If they represent magic spells, the trait's name is the title of the spell. If they represent cyborg implants, the trait's name might be the brand and model of the implant. Don't write down a longer description of the trait or otherwise pin down what it actually does, beyond what's implied by the name you gave it.

> You've probably noticed that Doing traits are the opposite of Being traits in this respect: where Being traits contribute to an overall description of your character, but are not individually named or defined, Doing traits get individual titles, but are not otherwise described!

Finishing Touches

Finally, give your character a name, as well as a title, handle, or *nom de guerre* that reflects the overall picture that's emerged from your Being and Doing traits. Don't be afraid to go a little over the top with your title; if in doubt, go with something that starts with "the".

Playing the Game

This section contains the basic rules for ♻🐦. Everything you need to know in order to pick up the dice and play is contained in these seven pages. Everything that's not related to answering the question “can I do the thing?” is discussed later, under Running the Game (p. 15).

Making Tests

Whenever your character does something that carries a risk of failure, or that might have conquences even if you pull it off, you have to make a test.

In order to make a test, identify at least one BEING symbol on your character sheet that's related to the task you're trying to accomplish or the risk you're trying to mitigate. The term “related” is deliberately vague here; it might be that the symbol implies a relevant skill, or it might merely suggest an affinity between your character and the situation at hand. If you can't identify at least one relevant BEING symbol, the test can't be attempted – you'll need to revise your approach.

Next, pick up one die for each related BEING symbol. You need to offer a brief justification for why each symbol is relevant, but this isn't expected to turn into a debate; the rules of ♻🐦 assume its players are adults who are prepared to approach the game and its mechanics in good faith. As a general rule, even a very implausible justification ought to be accepted as long as it's entertaining. Getting to roll zero dice most of the time is no fun at all!

Finally, roll the dice. After rolling, choose any one die to be your result, and look it up on the table below.

Test Results

d6	Result
1	Everything that can go wrong does; fail and suffer **major fallout**.
2	Sometimes it's better to fail. You do it, but suffer **major fallout**.
3	Whoops! You fail and suffer **minor fallout**.
4	You pull it off, but suffer **minor fallout** for your trouble.
5	You meant to do that. You fail, but suffer no fallout.
6	You make it look easy, succeeding without fallout.

Additionally, if the number you pick rolled doubles – even double 1s! – you gain an **edge**. Edges and fallout are discussed in later in this chapter (p. 10).

Cooperative Tests

There are two ways to cooperate with another character on a test: helping, and performing a setup.

Helping

You can **help** another character with a test if you have a BEING trait that applies to whatever the test is meant to accomplish. Describe how the trait contributes, then instead of making a test yourself, hand the die to the player whose character is leading the test.

You can contribute only one die to a test you're helping with. The leading character can contribute as many dice as they can get away with, as usual. Multiple characters can help on the same test if you can convince the GM that it's feasible, with each helper invoking a single BEING trait and contributing a single die.

The leading character chooses which die to use for the test's result. When a test that you helped with incurs fallout, you share in its consequences.

Performing a Setup

When you **set up** another character, you make your own test rather than contributing dice to theirs. Describe how you're setting them up, gather your dice, and roll; on any success, they receive an edge, usually representing a situational advantage. The edge's BEING symbol will usually match one of the BEING symbols you used on the test, though ultimately it's the GM's call.

When performing a setup, your test yields edge and incurs fallout in the usual fashion. It's totally possible to gain an edge on the same setup roll that granted one – or even to gain an edge of your own on a *failed* setup roll, if that's how the dice fall!

Tests and DOING Traits

DOING traits don't contribute dice to tests – not even if the BEING symbol that the trait contains might be relevant. A DOING trait is a narrative permission: it defines *what* you can do, not how well you do it. When you wield a DOING trait in a way that risks consequences or failure, you have to come up with dice based on your BEING traits, just like any other test.

In some situations, the GM may decide that your DOING trait means you don't need to make a test where other characters would. In other situations, the benefit of a DOING trait is getting the chance to make a test at all!

Edges and Fallout

Edges and fallout are two special outcomes that can occur from tests. These outcomes are completely separate from whether the test succeeds or fails; you can gain an edge on a failed test, or suffer fallout on a successful one. The particulars are discussed below.

Edges

An **edge** is a temporary advantage that you receive when you pick a result that rolled doubles on a test. You have to actually pick the number that rolled doubles in order to receive the edge – just having doubles showing on your roll isn't enough. You can also be granted an edge by another character's successful setup – see Cooperative Tests (p. 9) for more information.

An edge takes the form of a temporary BEING trait that you sketch into the "Having" section of your character sheet. The GM determines what symbol you get; they might pick one based on the situation, or roll for one and let the dice land where they may. The GM assigns the edge's symbol, but it's up to you, the player, to interpret it. An edge can be taken to represent a situational advantage, a tool or weapon that you found, or whatever else seems appropriate.

> Don't be afraid to offer suggestions regarding what another player's edge symbol might represent, especially if they seem stuck for ideas. They're under no obligation to take your suggestion, but this is the sort of game where impromptu brainstorming is rarely inappropriate.

Once you have an edge, it works like a regular BEING trait, and can be tapped for dice on tests. It can also be sacrificed to offset fallout like a regular BEING symbol – in fact, if you tap an edge for dice and the test incurs minor fallout, the edge is *automatically* sacrificed. (You can still voluntarily sacrifice it to offset fallout on tests where you didn't use it, if it makes sense to do so.) See UNBEING and UNDOING (p. 12) for more details.

How long an edge sticks around depends on its nature. A situational advantage goes away when the situation changes, while a tool or weapon is usually available until it breaks or you run out of ammo, both of which can be good justifications for sacrificing it to offset fallout. You can transfer an edge to another character if it's the sort of thing that can be given away.

Fallout

Fallout is edge's evil cousin. Whenever you incur fallout on a test, the GM will roll on a special table to determine what goes wrong. For minor fallout, the GM will roll one die, while major fallout rolls two dice and combines the results – and heaven help you if the GM rolls doubles.

The GM may prepare a special fallout table whose symbols represent the hazards of the current scenario. Otherwise, you can use the following generic table. Its symbols can apply to most situations.

Random Fallout

d6	Icon	Description
1		Broken heart
2		Explosion
3		Human figure falling
4		Skull and crossbones
5		Stopwatch
6		Triangular sign with exclamation point

By itself, fallout has no special rules-based effects. The GM simply interprets the rolled symbols to determine what complications or setbacks result from your test. A more complete discussion of fallout is found under Difficulty and Fallout (p. 16).

You can offset fallout by suffering voluntary “damage” to your traits. You can wait until after the GM has rolled for fallout symbols before deciding to do so, but you have to make the call *before* they describe the results. Refer to Unbeing and Undoing (p. 12) for more information.

Edge and Fallout on Cooperative Tests

When you help with a test, only the character leading the test can receive an edge, though they're free to immediately give it away to one of their helpers if they wish. Fallout, conversely, strikes every contributor in a cooperative test. However, only one contributing character needs to incur Unbeing or Undoing to offset the fallout for everyone involved.

When you make a test to set up another character, the edge and fallout from that test are your own.

Unbeing and Undoing

Unbeing and Undoing represent last-ditch defences against unwanted fallout. They're also the only form of rules-based “damage” your character can suffer; all sorts of awful things can happen do you narratively, but only Unbeing and Undoing can actually reduce your ability to act.

Unbeing

Unbeing offsets minor fallout. After seeing the result of the fallout roll, but before the GM describes what happens, you can voluntarily suffer a point of Unbeing to cancel the fallout. Mark a small X beside one of your Being traits; until it's recovered, you can't invoke that Being trait for dice on test. You can also sacrifice an edge for the same effect. Sacrificed edges are gone for good – cross them right off your character sheet. This is mandatory if you incur minor fallout on a test where you tapped an edge. If you tapped multiple edges on the same test, you can choose which one is sacrificed.

Undoing

Undoing offsets major fallout. Major fallout can't be offset with Unbeing, not even one die at a time. In order to offset major fallout, you need to suffer Undoing. This works in much the same way: after seeing the results of the fallout roll, but before the GM interprets them, you can mark off one of your Doing traits in lieu of suffering the fallout. Whatever you could do by virtue of that trait, now you can't – not until it recovers.

Recovery

Unbeing marks go away whenever you have a chance to rest and catch your breath for a few minutes. Undoing is more serious, and requires special measures to recover, depending on what your character's Doing traits represent: overnight rest, a few hours of access to a machine shop, etc. If all else fails, your Undoing marks are cleared at the end of the session.

Interpreting Your Traits

This far, this text has treated whether or not a given trait is relevant to what your character is trying to do as something that's fairly obvious. Most of the time, it *will* be obvious, but sometimes it won't be. The next couple of sections provide some advice on how you interpret your traits for best effect.

Being Traits

While it can be useful to think of your character's Being traits as discrete “skills&” that you have, that's only one way to look at them. Each symbol contributes to your character's overall gestalt, in ways that don't always boil down to “symbol X means I'm good at tasks Y and Z”. A Being trait *can* mean that, but it doesn't have to.

For example, the symbol 🐈 could mean that you're good with cats; that you're good at things that cats do; that you're good at things that cat-like traits – agility, cuteness, etc. – would logically help with; that you're in your element in situations that are conceptually related to cats; or even that you physically are a cat – though the last one might take some explaining if it hasn't been previously established.

Alternatively, you might take the first intepretaton more broadly, and call on it when dealing with animals of any sort, treating a cat as an example of a broader type. In general, the more broadly you interpret a symbol's conceptual territory, the more narrowly you should treat the situations where it applies; interpreting 🐈 to mean you're good at anything that generally animal-like traits would help with is probably too much.

Most of the time you shouldn't need to stretch. The rules assume that you'll be rolling around two dice for most tests, with three being exceptional, and four or more, downright rare. Between your own Being traits, help, and relevant edges, this shouldn't be a hard target to hit. If you're trying to max out your dice pool on every roll, you're probably trying too hard!

> Whether symbols can be deemed relevant based on puns or wordplay is something you should discuss with your group ahead of time. This text assumes the answer is “no” by default; experience has shown that accepting pun-based interpretations quickly results in a game of nothing *but* puns. That said, there will be some games where this is completely appropriate.

Doing Traits

Doing traits can initially seem much more locked down than Being traits. You already know both the trait's name and the overarching theme of your character's extraordinary abilities, which probably gives you a clear picture of what each trait does.

There's a trick, though: by default, Doing traits operate according to comic book logic. Superman's X-ray vision doesn't mean he emits particles of a particular wavelength and intensity from his eyes, with the effects of the vision derived from those parameters; it means he can do whatever a power called "X-ray vision" sounds like it *ought* to be able to do.

This is the reason why the character creation rules specifically instruct you not to write down anything about your Doing traits apart from their names. Your character's theme and the names of your traits set certain boundaries, but within those boundaries, your Doing traits do whatever you're prepared to claim with a straight face they do.

Just like with Being traits, the GM is there to provide some pushback if you're really stretching, but ideally this should rarely be necesssary; as noted earlier (p. 8), the rules of assume that everyone at the table is approaching the game in good faith, and that includes approaching *your own character concept* in good faith. When you're reaching, you'll know!

If you know you're pushing it, but want to give it a shot anyway, you can propose treating how you're trying to use your Doing trait as a special challenge (p. 18). This can help to firm up the trait's boundaries by creating a "possible but costly or dangerous" buffer between what works and what doesn't. The GM can propose a special challenge for the same reason (with the usual opportunity to change your mind if you decide it's not worth it).

> Since Doing traits represent concrete capabilities, some perfectly reasonable applications of them may raise questions like "wait, could you always do that?" and "why on Earth didn't you do that before?"
>
> You're free to offer answers to those questions, but you're not obligated to. This text's advice is not to get too hung up on consistency; fictional characters often reveal their talents when it would be most dramatic rather than when it would be most sensible – and as your character is, in fact, fictional, they should be granted the same latitude.

Running the Game

This section contains various supplementary rules for 🔄🐦, as well as extended discussions of many of the basic rules. It's not off limits to players, but in practice it's likely that only GMs will get around to reading it, so it's written from the GM's perspective.

The GM's Role

The GM's basic role in 🔄🐦 is much the same as in other tabletop games: you set the stage, take on the roles of non-player characters, and play the world as it reacts to what the player do. Tests are a player-facing rule, so you'll only ever pick up the dice to generate random results, but the GM still has an important role to play whenever the dice hit the table: 🔄🐦 is a game of tactical bullshitting, and as GM, you're the one being bullshitted.

More specifically, whenever a player makes a test, it's their job to convince you that a particular set of BEING traits is relevant to tha test. Similarly, whenever they want to take advantage of their character's cool powers, it's their job to convince you that their DOING traits can, in fact, do that.

This might sound like tense position to be in, but in practice you'll rarely need to play idea cop. The first one or two dice on a test can be basically free. Having nothing to roll is no fun for anyone – particularly since no dice for your players means no fallout rolls for you! It's only when a player wants to claim three or more dice that you'll need to start pushing back; the game's rules assume that rolling three dice is exceptional, and that rolling four or more is rare unless the players work to stack the odds in their favour.

In most situations, the best attitude to adopt is one of gentle skepticism: don't stonewall, but make your players work a little for that third die, and make them work harder for a fourth or fifth. It will usually be obvious when a player doesn't buy their own explanation, and making sure they know that *you* know that will usually be enough for them to change tack.

Finally, if you run into a situation where a player seems to be dead earnest about something that takes you completely by surprise, remember that their interpretation of their character is more important than yours is. You've got enough jobs to do without telling your players how to do theirs!

> If in doubt, a quick “okay, show of hands, who actually buys that?” can work wonders. A good GM knows when to delegate responsibility.

Difficulty and Fallout

🔄🐦 has no particular rules for making a dice roll more or less likely to succeed – that's not how “difficulty” is handled in this game. If a dice roll is likely to fail, it's because the acting player doesn't have many relevant BEING traits. On the flip side, a character with many relevant BEING traits is likely to achieve *some* degree of success nearly all of the time. This is intentional.

Rather, difficulty is expressed in two main ways:

- How much progress can be made toward a goal with a single test
- How harshly the GM interprets any fallout incurred by those tests

Progress and Disaster Tracks

By default, tests are a one-and-done affair: the player rolls the dice, and if they choose a successful result, their character does the thing. Progress and disaster tracks model situations where it's more complicated than that.

A **progress track** is a set of boxes, typically three to five, that represent progress toward a complex or challenging goal. Every time a player makes a successful test toward that goal, check off a box. A box is checked even if the successful test incurs minor or major fallout; you can make progress toward a goal while causing some unrelated catastrophe in the process!

In order to avoid having a progress track turn into an exercise in repetitive dice rolling, the exact same combination of BEING traits can't be used on multiple tests toward a given goal. The same individual BEING trait can be used multiple times as long as it's in a different combination each time. Players will have to mix up their approaches to reach the finish line.

A **disaster track** is the opposite of a progress track, marking boxes on failures rather than successes. A disaster track can be used to represent scenarios where no individual goal warrants detailed tracking, but the overall situation is precarious. As with progress tracks, a failure that incurs no fallout still marks a disaster track; any fallout incurred while a disaster track is in play should be interpreted as additional problems to get distracted by, not a worsening of the one the track represents.

> Progress and disaster tracks create a soft incentive for players to choose a high-fallout success over a low-fallout failure. If there's a disaster track with only one unmarked box left, that soft incentive can become a hard incentive.

Assessing Fallout

In most situations, fallout can be treated as self-scaling: problems introduced by minor fallout should be less bad than whatever the acting player was trying to deal with, while major fallout can be interpreted either as multiple minor problems, or – particularly in the case of rolling doubles on the fallout table – as a single new problem that's about equally bad.

Since fallout can be incurred on both successes and failures, care should be taken not to use fallout simply to reverse the effects of a success. A success with major fallout isn't "you tried to solve that problem and just made it worse"; it's "you solved that problem and created a new, different problem in the process". Fallout on a failure, conversely, can absolutely make the problem the player was trying to solve worse.

Individual fallout symbols have no specific rules-based effects attached, and are left to the GM's interpretation. is a collaborative game, so don't be afraid to ask the acting player what *they* think their test's fallout symbol means, or to open it up to the table for a quick brainstorm. Some examples of possible interpretations under various conditions are given below.

When the problem at hand is merely inconvenient...

: the player characters annoy an NPC whose help they require

: the chosen approach encounters unexpected delays

: an important object is dropped somewhere hard to reach

: something reacts to the player characters' actions with surprising vigor

When matters are pressing, but not (immediately) life-threatening...

: the acting player character is physically separated from the group

: an tool or asset breaks and can no longer be used

: a hostile NPC becomes aware of the situation and arrives to investigate

: an NPC gets the wrong idea about the player characters' intentions

In a life-or-death situation...

: a potentially deadly hazard is created or released

: a mishap creates extreme time pressure, with only moments to act

: an NPC ally or bystander is accidentally injured

: something important literally catches on fire

Special Challenges

Special challenges can be used to spice up tests when a player wants to try something really implausible, serving as a soft boundary between “sure, roll for it” and “absolutely not”. What qualifies as implausible will vary depending on your game's premise, and may also vary from character to character depending on each character's DOING traits.

Special challenges can also be used to establish a buffer zone between what's possible and what's off limits when calling on a DOING trait. Some applications of a particular DOING trait will clearly be a stretch, but not quite so much of a stretch that you want to rule them out entirely. Special challenges can provide that grey area; as a GM, calling for a special challenge signals that you're allow it, but it's on thin ice.

This document includes two basic types of special challenges: **epic** tests, and **perilous** tests. Future revisions will provide other varieties of special challenge rules.

If a player wants their character to try something absurdly out of their league – like punching out a god, or maybe just Godzilla – you can decide that the test is **epic**. The player should be informed of this fact before rolling, and given the opportunity to change their mind.

When making an epic test, the acting character suffers a point of UNBEING before rolling. The player chooses which BEING trait to mark off, as usual. The trait is marked off before gathering dice, which will affect which traits are available for the test. If another character is helping (p. 9), only the leading character can pay the cost.

In some cases, having a relevant DOING trait may reduce an epic test to a normal test for that character. In other cases, a relevant DOING trait will be required just to try it!

On the other hand, if a character is trying something that's not really implausible so much as very likely to go very badly wrong, you can decide that the test is **perilous**. As with epic tests, the player should be warned that this is the case.

When making a perilous test, any result that would ordinarily incur minor fallout – i.e., a result of 3 or 4 – is upgraded (downgraded?) to major fallout. Rolls that would already incur major fallout and rolls that incur no fallout at all are unaffected. There are only two ways a perilous test can go: perfectly or catastrophically.

Non-Player Characters

In situations where a detailed treatment of non-player characters is needed, they can be assigned BEING and DOING traits using the following guidelines:

Background/extra NPC : 1 BEING trait

Minor named NPC : 2 BEING traits

Major named NPC : 3 BEING traits, 1 DOING trait

"Boss" NPC : As a player character

Since the GM never makes tests, NPC traits are handled in a simpler fashion than player character traits: if an NPC is trying to get in the players' way, and that NPC has a BEING trait that's related to the manner of their opposition, getting past them requires a test. Otherwise, they can be ignored or pushed around with impunity.

NPCs and UNBEING

An NPC that's really determined to be a pain in the player characters' collective butt can force the issue by suffering UNBEING (p. 12). Any time a player rolls a success to overcome an opposing NPC, the GM can mark off one of that NPC's BEING traits to shrug off the success. The GM chooses which trait to mark off, not the rolling player.

The marked trait is no longer available to the NPC, which will affect their ability to engage in further opposition – if their only relevant trait is marked off, they effectively don't have one! An NPC whose final BEING trait becomes marked is removed from play.

When dealing with NPCs that have traits, this rule replaces any general rules regarding the need for multiple successes to achieve an objective – see Difficulty and Fallout (p. 16) for more details.

> At first glance, it might seem like larger groups of player characters have an advantage when dealing with NPCs, since they can each make individual tests to quickly whittle away that NPC's traits.
>
> While this is true to an extent, a bunch of separate tests will almost certainly generate more fallout and more serious fallout than ganging up using the helping rules (p. 9), so in practice the problem tends to be self-correcting.

Mobs and Giant Monsters

An NPC that represents a large mob of characters, a giant monster, or some other large-scale threat can be assigned multiple copies of the same BEING trait. This doesn't affect individual tests against them, but each copy of the trait can be marked off separately, obliging the player characters to rack up more successes in order to deal with them.

In general, a single NPC should rarely have more than five BEING traits, including any duplicates.

Abstract and Inanimate NPCs

Inanmate or abstract elements of a given encounter – ranging from objects and geographic features to narrative tropes – can be modelled as NPCs using these rules. This is appropriate when you want to encourage the players to engage with the obstacle in question as something with agency that's actively out to get them; more impersonal threats are usually better handled using progress or disaster tracks (p. 16).

> The GM doing a voice for an inanimate object modelled as an NPC isn't obligatory, but is strongly encouraged.

NPCs as Special Challenges

An NPC can be designated a special challenge (p. 18), applying the relevant challenge rules to tests against that NPC. Depending on the NPC, this may apply to only some tests against them; for example, a big dumb monster might be an epic challenge in a physical fight, but not if the player characters try to trick or fast-talk it instead.

> Tests where the opposing NPC has a relevant DOING trait and the acting player character doesn't are one situation where an NPC may be treated as a special challenge. If you're following this guideline, make a note beside each NPC DOING trait of the challenge rule it invokes when not countered by a player character DOING trait. (e.g., perilous, etc.)

Random NPCs

NPCs' traits can be randomly generated in the same way as a player character's traits, by rolling on the tables in the relevant appendices. If random scenarios (p. 23) are in play, there are special rules regaring an NPC's first BEING trait – refer to that section for details.

Rewards and Advancement

In addition to gaining edges from successful setups (p. 9) and rolling doubles on a test (p. 8), the GM can award an edge to a player character at any time if the situation warrants it. Common situations where this might happen include finding a cache of supplies, lifting equipment from a defeated NPC, or filling out a progress track (p. 16) aimed at securing some sort of advantage.

DOING Traits as Edges

Sometimes, a regular edge may not be sufficient to represent the advantage that's been gained. Successfully carjacking a giant robot, for example, probably warrants more than a temporary BEING trait! In these cases, the GM can elect to grant a temporary DOING trait instead.

A DOING trait gained as an edge has the same anatomy as a regular DOING trait (i.e., a single DOING symbol paired with a single BEING symbol), and it's drawn in the “Having” section of the receiving player's character sheet, like any other edge. As along as it's present, the character has an extra DOING trait for all rules purposes.

As always, the GM only chooses the symbols, with the receiving player being responsible for interpreting what they represent. Owing to how such edges are gained, the circumstances of the edge's acquisition are likely to suggest an obvious interpretation; nonetheless, the option of calling for a group brainstorm remains on the table.

Edges of this type can't be sacrificed to offset minor fallout, but can be sacrified to offset major fallout. Like a regular edge, sacrificing it to offset fallout is mandatory if fallout of the appropriate type (i.e., major in this case) is incurred on a test where the trait was brought into play. Player characters in 🔄🦅 tend to be hard on their gear.

Advancement

Conventional “levelling up” is hard to apply to for two reasons. First, traits don't have ratings, so there are no numbers to make bigger. Second, the peculiarities of the game's dice-rolling mechanics mean that players are obliged to remember what all of their traits are at all times, and a starting character is already very close to the limit of what's practical. Adding more traits wouldn't make characters more powerful in practice, since players would start forgetting about their lesser-used traits.

Of course, mechanical advancement isn't strictly necessary, particularly in a short or one-shot game. For longer games where character concepts are likey to develop over time, a lateral approach is recommended – that is, advancement based on adjusting existing traits rather than adding new ones. This can be accomplished using the following guidelines:

At the end of each session, each player character receives a **minor advance**. This can be used to swap out a single symbol on their character sheet for a new symbol of their choice from the game's regular tables. The replaced symbol can be a BEING trait, or part of a DOING trait; the replacement symbol must be of the same type as the one that was replaced. (i.e., a BEING symbol must be replaced with another BEING symbol, and a DOING symbol must be replaced with another DOING symbol.)

Every third session, each character instead receives a **major advance**. A major advance can take one of two forms:

- As a minor advance, except the new symbol need *not* be drawn from the game's regular tables. The player can find the symbol elsewhere, or draw one themselves. In either case, the new symbol should observe the guidelines for symbols of its type, as set forth in the relevant Appendix. In a chat-based game, it's also the player's responsibility to identify a suitable chat-friendly approximation for the new symbol.
- A third symbol can be added to one of the character's DOING traits. Thereafter, the DOING trait consists of either two DOING symbols and a BEING symbol, or two BEING symbols and a DOING symbol. It's still one trait, but it should be renamed to reflect its expanded remit.

The second option can't be used to increase a DOING trait to more than three symbols; it can, however, be applied to the same trait a second time in order to discard an extra BEING symbol and replace it with an extra DOING symbol, or vice versa.

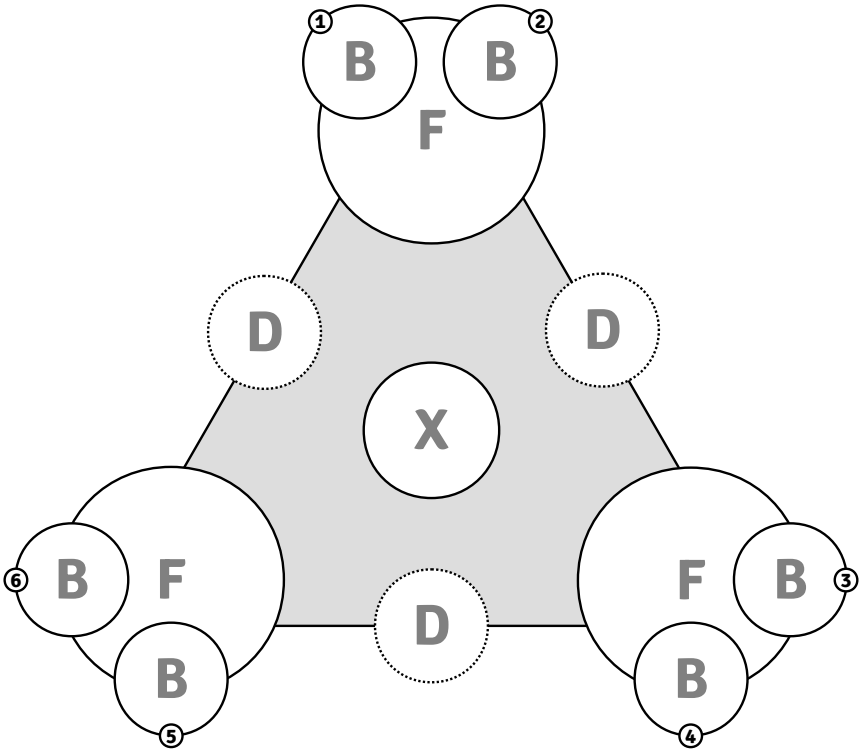
Random Scenarios

Though 🔄🐦 can be played with a pre-made scenarios, or by relying on the GM's improvisational skills, some groups may prefer a more participatory approach to scenario creation. Using this tool is time consuming, so it's recommended for games that are intended to run longer than a one-shot.

> If it suits your game's premise, this process can be treated as an in-character research or mission briefing session, with each player presenting their ideas as their character's findings or reports.

Before you begin, you'll need a copy of the Random Scenario Worksheet. You can sketch the following diagram on paper (don't include the letters – they're just there to help make it clear which circles this document is referring to, and aren't part of the worksheet), or download a copy from the Penguin King Games website at the following address:

https://penguinking.games/rotate-bird/



Random Scenario Worksheet

Choosing Factors

The first step in random scenario creation is to choose a set of **Factors** that form the scenario's framework. There are seven Factors, as follows:

Icon	Description
	Book with skull and crossbones on cover
	Cloud with lightning bolt
	Dragon in profile
	Frowning face
	Ring (jewelry)
	Signpost with signs pointing left and right
	Tower with crenelated roof

Unlike most symbols in , suggested interpretations are provided for each Factor. This is both to give players a starting point, and to aid in devising Factor icons with alternative visual themes, should one be inclined.

: challenge to orthodoxy, dangerous magic or technology, secrets

: escalating conflict, hazardous environment, looming disaster

: big monster, powerful person or institution, singular threat

: hostile or threatened community, person in danger, social unrest

: contested resource, position of authority, valuable object

: long journey, maze (metaphorical or otherwise), moral dilemma

: fortified location, government or bureaucracy, organised threat

A scenario's framework consists of exactly three of the seven Factors. You can use the following table to make this selection – each row corresponds to a unique combination of Factors. After rolling, place one of the Factor symbols in each of the three largle circles on the Random Scenario Worksheet (the ones marked “F” in the diagram). You can place them in any order you like; as you'll see shortly, the order doesn't affect anything.

Random Factors

d66	1st Factor	2nd Factor	3rd Factor
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
21			
22			
23			
24			
25			
26			
31			
32			
33			
34			
35			
36			
41			
42			
43			
44			
45			
46			
51			
52			
53			
54			
55			
56			
61			
62			
63			
64			
65			
66		Re-roll	

Filling in the Details

Once the scenario's Factors have been chosen, players take turns making **one** of the following choices, starting with the GM. Apart from the GM going first, you can contribute in any order you like, but nobody should make a second contribution until every group member has made at least one.

- If a Factor has an attached empty circle (the ones marked “B” in the diagram), roll once on the BEING tables in Appendix 1: BEING Symbols (p. 31), and draw the resulting symbol on the worksheet. You can decide which circle to draw the symbol in after seeing what you rolled, as long as it's an empty circle attached to a Factor. After adding the symbol, write down one fact about the Factor that relates to the symbol you just added.
- If there's an empty circle connecting two Factors (the ones marked “D” in the diagram) *and* both Factors have at least one attached BEING symbol, roll once on the DOING table in Appendix 2: DOING Symbols (p. 35), and draw the resulting symbol on the worksheet. As above, you can wait until after you've seen the result of your roll before choosing a circle of the appropriate type. After adding the symbol, write down one fact about the relationship between the two connected Factors that relates to the symbol you just added.
- If a filled circle connecting two factors currently has only one associated fact, write down a second fact about the relatonship between the two connected Factors that relates to the symbol in that circle. This fact should adopt the opposite perspective of the first fact; i.e., if the first fact talks about how Factor A relates to Factor B, the new fact should talk about how factor B relates to Factor A. This choice does not involve making a roll.

Facts should be kept brief at this stage – no more than 8–10 words apiece. The particulars will be fleshed out during play. Opening facts up to a group brainstorm is both allowed or encouraged, though the player taking the current turn has final say in the event of disagreement.

When you're finished, every circle marked “B” or “D” in the diagram should be filled in, and you should have twelve facts written down: two about each Factor, and two about the relationship between each pair of Factors.

Inciting Incident

Finally, roll once on the Fallout table (p. 11), and draw the resulting symbol in the central circle on the worksheet (the one marked “X” in the diagram). This represents the crisis, opportunity, or inciting incident that motivates the player characters to stick their noses into the scenario's business. As a group, brainstorm what that incident might be.

For Solo Prep

The random scenario creation tools can also be used solo, either to aid the GM in scenario preparation, or as a standalone minigame. These guidelines can be used largely as written – apart from the fact that a single person is taking every turn, of course!

When running through the process by yourself, you won't have the benefit of a group brainstorm to help reconcile any strange contradictions that arise from filling in a Factor's second BEING slot after its relationships with adjacent Factors have already been defined, so it's recommended that you fill in all of the BEING slots before tackling any of the DOING slots.

> If you're into self-imposed creative challenges, you can try filling in the BEING slots in the order they appear, starting with the slot numbered “1” and working your way around, rather than choosing where to place each symbol after rolling.

With Other Random Elements

If you have a Random Scenario Worksheet filled out, randomly generated NPCs and other elements work a little differently. For the *first* BEING trait for each randomly generated entity, rather than rolling in Appendix 1, roll a single die and refer to the numbers printed around the outside of the Random Scenario Worksheet. This will determine which Factor the entity is linked to, as well as providing its initial BEING trait. Any subsequent BEING traits should be rolled in the usual fashion.

Reskinning

Though the mechanics of are reasonably agnostic with respect to tone and milieu, the symbol tables are not. By design, they have a strong bias toward producing characters who are weird nerds with goofy comic book super powers, and – in conjunction with the Random Scenario rules (p. 23) – somewhat surreal adventures with a contemporary or near-future setting.

Adapting the game for other purposes will usually require alternative symbol tables. Though this definitely isn't a small job, the tables in this document are intended to support large groups of up to a dozen players – you can probably get away with fewer, depending on your group size. For a small group consisting of a GM and up to three players, the minimal set of symbols is as follows:

- 36 BEING symbols (i.e., one full d66 table)
- 12 DOING symbols; this can be presented as a d66 table that triples up on entries (i.e., 11–13, 14–16, 21–23, etc.)
- 6 Fallout symbols

BEING and DOING symbols have additional guidelines which appear in their respective appendices. If you're using random scenario creation in your game, you may also wish to create an alternative set of Factor symbols for visual consistency, using the suggested interpretations for the default set as a guide.

When brewing up your own symbol tables, remember that a. the rules frequently ask players to draw copies of their symbols, and b. it's likely that most players won't be artists of any description. Whatever symbols you come up with, it's a good idea to keep them simple and iconic so that they're easy to draw. If you're intending to support chat-based play, you should also think about whether your intended symbols can reasonably be approximated using emojis or Unicode symbols, as discussed under What You'll Need (p. 4).

Variant Rules

Small tweaks to the rules presented in the Playing the Game section (p. 8) can be used to fine-tune for specific genres. Three examples are presented below; more will follow in future revisions of this document.

External DOING Traits

In some genres, a character's DOING traits might represent something external to the character. For example, in a game about giant robot pilots, each player character's DOING traits could represent systems or features of their respective giant robots. Players would only have access to their characters' DOING traits when piloting their robots.

When DOING traits represent an external entity, marking off all of its DOING traits due to UNDOING (p. 12) results in loss of access to that entity until at least one DOING trait is restored. To continue the above example, when all of a giant robot pilot's DOING traits are marked off, their giant robot breaks down or blows up, and can't be used again until it's repaired.

Limited UNBEING Recovery

In games where offsetting fallout ought to be a bigger deal, a limit can be imposed on recovering BEING traits marked off due to UNBEING (p. 12).

Under this variant, each player character receives a store of RENEWING points; five is a good number if opportunities to restore them are likely to be frequent, while ten is is better if they'll need to last the whole session. RENEWING points can be spent one-for-one to recover marked BEING traits whenever the character has a chance to catch their breath.

Any circumstance that would permit the recovery of UNDOING also restores RENEWING to its initial value. As noted above, the rarity of such opportunities should be considered when deciding on the initial number of RENEWING points to grant.

Combined DOING Actions

The rules of 🔄🐦 include basic support for combined actions, in the form of helping (p. 9). In some genres, it might be appropriate for characters to be able to combine DOING traits as well as BEING traits; for example, a magical girl game where player characters make frequent use of combo attacks, or a two-player space opera saga where one player takes on the role of a starship pilot and the other player takes on the role of the starship.

This works like an extended version of helping. One character take the lead and makes the test, while the other lends support (and one of their BEING traits) to the roll. In addition, the action benefits from a "virtual" DOING trait made up of a combination of one trait from each participant.

To define a combined DOING trait, each partner chooses one of their existing DOING traits. The combined trait consists of one trait's DOING symbol paired with the other trait's BEING symbol. The first time a a particular combo is used, give it a name according to your game's theme, and write it down on in the DOING section of your character sheet in the following format:

[my DOING trait] / [partner's DOING trait] : [combined DOING trait]

This trait can only be used during tests that both of the relevant characters are participating in, and only if both contributing traits are able to be used. (i.e., not marked off due to UNDOING or otherwise unavailable.) It doesn't matter which character leads the test and which character helps.

Most of the time, each character should be limited to a single combo with each other character in order to prevent the character sheets from getting out of hand. However, this isn't a rule; in some games it will be appropriate for each pair of characters to have multiple combos. The only limit is that you can't have multiple combos that draw on the exact same pair of traits.

By default, combined DOING actions are limited to two characters acting in concert. If you want to allow three-character combos, refer to the Advancement section (p. 22) for guidelines on how to handle DOING traits composed of more than two symbols. If you want to allow four or more characters to combine their DOING traits, you're on your own!

> If you want to limit combined DOING actions to special occasions, you can decide that using a combo is always an epic challenge (p. 18). As usual, only the leading character can pay the cost, though partners can trade off in order to distribute the cost of multiple uses.

Appendix 1: BEING Symbols

BEING symbols represent the concrete attributes of person, object, situation. You'll first see them during Character Creation (p. 6) when determining your character's BEING traits, while the GM will use them as prompts for the challenges you encounter.

Creating Your Own BEING Symbols

When creating your own BEING symbols, there are a few recommended guidelines to stick to:

1. BEING symbols should be representational. They can represent something ephemeral – e.g., an event or a short-lived phenomenon – but it should always be something you can point to.
2. BEING symbols should avoid depicting a complete human figure, particularly a human figure performing a specific volunary action. Such symbols lend themselves to narrow interpretations and can encroach on the territory of DOING symbols. BEING symbols that depict parts of a human figure, like a hand or an eye, are okay.
3. In most cases, you should avoid BEING symbols that depict weapons. This is especially true when playing with groups who are experienced with more traditional tabletop RPGs; BEING symbols that depict weapons tend to invoke prior assumptions about what they're good for that can discourage the lateral thinking that makes 🔄🐦 tick.

> Note that the last point doesn't mean that violence itself is discouraged in 🔄🐦 – quite the contrary, in fact. It's just more interesting when you have to figure out how a symbol of a carrot means you're better at hitting people!

Random BEING Symbols

To obtain a random BEING symbol, roll on the following table:

d6	Instructions
1–2	Roll on Table A
3–4	Roll on Table B
5–6	Roll on Table C

Random Being Symbols, Table A

d66	Icon	Description
11		Anchor
12		Apple
13		Bag with dollar sign
14		Beer mug
15		Bell
16		Bird
21		Bomb
22		Bone
23		Book
24		Broom
25		Bug
26		Candy cane
31		Carrot
32		Cat
33		Chemical flask
34		Chess knight
35		Chicken drumstick
36		Cinema film
41		Cloud
42		Coffee mug
43		Compass
44		Cowboy hat
45		Crown
46		Dog
51		Door
52		Earth (planet)
53		Egg
54		Evergreen tree
55		Eye
56		Faceted gemstone
61		Feather
62		Fish
63		Flag
64		Flame
65		Fork and knife
66		Gear

Random Being Symbols, Table B

d66	Icon	Description
11		Giftwrapped box
12		Glass of liquid
13		Guitar
14		Gust of wind
15		Hallowe'en ghost
16		Hammer
21		Handcuffs
22		Hardhat
23		Headphones
24		Heart
25		Hourglass
26		House
31		Human brain
32		Human hand
33		Human skull
34		Human tooth
35		Ice cream with cone
36		Key
41		Knight's shield
42		Leaf
43		Lemon
44		Lightbulb
45		Lightning bolt
46		Liquid droplet
51		Magnet
52		Magnifying glass
53		Mitten
54		Money
55		Moon
56		Musical notes
61		Padlock
62		Paintbrush
63		Pair of scissors
64		Pair of six-sided dice
65		Paperclip
66		Paper plane

Random Being Symbols, Table C

d66	Icon	Description
11		Parchment scroll
12		Paw print
13		Pencil
14		Pepper (vegetable)
15		Puzzle piece
16		Radiation symbol
21		Reading glasses
22		Ruler (measuring instrument)
23		Scales (measuring instrument)
24		Screwdriver
25		Shoe prints
26		Shrimp
31		Slice of bread
32		Slice of pizza
33		Snowflake
34		Soccer ball
35		Socks
36		Spider
41		Spoon
42		Star
43		Suitcase
44		Sun
45		Syringe
46		Telephone handset
51		Theatre masks
52		Thermometer
53		Tornado
54		Trash can
55		Trophy
56		T-shirt
61		Umbrella
62		Waves on water
63		Wedge of cheese
64		Weight (heavy object)
65		Wine bottle
66		Wrench

Appendix 2: DOING Symbols

DOING symbols are the active counterpart to BEING symbols. Where a BEING symbol is passively open to interpretation, a DOING symbol suggests a particular focus, perspective, or *motion toward*. You'll first encounter them during Character Creation (p. 6) when determining the DOING traits that define your character's special abilities; other applications are mostly the province of the GM.

Creating Your Own DOING Symbols

The most important thing to keep in mind when defining your own DOING symbols is that they should generally be non-representational. They can refer to a specific action, but shouldn't directly depict it.

The reasons for this are twofold: first, a concrete depiction of a particular action narrows the symbol's interpretive breadth, and can make it difficult to reason about how it applies to some of the odder BEING symbols.

Second, a symbol that's too directly representational can create ambiguity about whether it's a DOING symbol or a BEING symbol; does the symbol represent the depicted action, or does it represent the thing performing it?

Beyond that, what makes for a good DOING symbol depends on your game's premise. The default set of DOING symbols presented in this document lend themselves best to a free-wheeling, somewhat comedy-oriented game; other premises may call for other approaches. For example, in a game about wizards where each of your character's DOING trait represents a magic spell, DOING symbols might be the sigils for particular schools of magic.

Random DOING Symbols

To obtain a random DOING symbol, roll on the following table:

Random DOING Symbols

d66	Icon	Description
11	⃠	Circle with a diagonal slash through it
12	💬	Cartoon word balloon
13	✓	Check mark
14	⌖	Crosshairs
15	÷	Division sign
16	↓	Downward-pointing arrow
21	=	Equals sign
22	!	Exclamation point
23	•••	Ellipsis (three dots in a horizontal row)
24	▶▶	Fast-forward symbol
25	✥	Four arrows pointing inward toward a central dot
26	⤢	Four outward-pointing arrows originating from a common point
31	📈	Line chart displaying a rising trend
32	∞	Infinity symbol
33	≠	Not equal sign
34	⏸	Pause symbol
35	⁒	Percent sign
36	🥧	Pie chart
41	▶	Play symbol
42	±	Plus/minus sign
43	?	Question mark
44	♻	Recycle symbol
45	◀◀	Rewind symbol
46	♂	Sign of Mars
51	♀	Sign of Venus
52	⁂	Six squares stacked into a pyramid
53	√x	Square root sign
54	⎍	Square wave
55	⚠	Three circular nodes connected in a triangular pattern
56	⧉	Three flat rectangles layered on top of each other
61	♟	Three geomatric shapes, a triangle, a circle and a square
62	↻	Two curved arrows forming a clockwise circle
63	⤮	Two horizontal arrows crossing each other in the middle
64	⇄	Two stacked arrows, the top pointing right, and the bottom, left
65	⧉	Two squares stacked on top of each other, diagonally offset
66	↑	Upward-pointing arrow

Appendix 3: Supplementary Tables

This appendix contains a variety of miscellaneous tables – well, just one, in the current revision! – that can be used as supplementary creative prompts. Each one is intended to be used in conjunction with a particular kind of roll for random symbols found elsewhere in this document.

Random DOING Trait Themes

This table can be used to obtain a theme for a character's DOING traits. Depending on the kind of game you're playing, a single theme might be applied to all characters' DOING traits, or each character might have their own theme. In a particularly free-wheeling game, each of a character's DOING traits might have a different theme! These results can be used for randomly generated NPCs as well as player characters.

d66	Theme
11–12	alternate form or shapeshifting
13–14	cartoon physics
15–16	cybernetic implants, transhuman upgrades, or robot systems
21–22	deviant science or forbidden lore
23–24	divine gifts
25–26	drugs, potions, or other temporary “buffs”
31–32	features of a vehicle (motorcycle, robot suit, etc.)
33–34	magic spells
35–36	martial arts techniques
41–42	meta-narrative (i.e., fourth wall breaking) tricks
43–44	mutations or super powers
45–46	natural abilities of alien or otherwise non-human physiology
51–52	pet monster or monsters
53–54	psychic disciplines
55–56	reputations or resources
61–62	special training
63–64	symbiotic life-form, possessing ghost, or other “passenger”
65–66	weapons, gadgets, or magic items