

## § 4 Actions

Characters are constantly taking actions; every moment, every day. Most of those actions succeed without question to propel the story and adventure along. Some actions, however, are more heroic in nature and have a chance to fail. Heroic actions fall into one of three categories: skills, stunts, and strikes.

### 4.0.1 Heroic actions

Heroic actions are resolved by an ability check plus any applicable modifiers. Use the following table to help determine which ability governs a heroic action.

4.0.1 Actions types by ability	
Ability	Actions
Strength	Force or raw power
Dexterity	Accuracy, speed, or poise
Cunning	Knowledge, logic, or persuasion
Vitality	Endurance, heartiness, or stamina

Many actions feel like they fall into more than one category. The GM should determine which category best goes to the substance of the action. A simple test is to put the competing abilities to opposing extremes and consider who would best complete the action. For instance, if smithing a sword could fall under either Cunning or Strength, would a weak genius or a strong imbecile produce a better weapon? While Strength is important, Cunning is likely the best ability. If a tossup occurs, pick whichever ability the character is better at and move on. Try to be consistent; certainly ensuring you use the same ability for the remainder of the encounter and hopefully in subsequent situations throughout the campaign.

## 4.1 Affinities

Affinities are descriptive clusters such as the general sense of being athletic or persuasive. They describe a range of potential actions that the character is talented at and apply most often, although not exclusively, during skills. Characters select three

### Why affinities?

Affinities put control back in the hands of the players to describe how their character achieves heroic actions. This control also comes with a cost in an increased burden on the GM to ensure that players don't abuse that freedom. Some players are hyper creative and can instantly devise a dozen relations for every affinity to every action. This can be fun, but it becomes an abuse if it monopolizes time or leads a character to rely on a single really powerful affinity. Some potential fixes:

- Limit the number of tries before you decide no affinity applies.
- Each affinity may only be "related" once (or twice or whatever you decide is fun) per session.
- Cannot have back-to-back "related" applications (i.e. must be separated by a spot on or an unaffiliated ability check.

Ultimately, do whatever is the most fun for you and your group.

affinities at character creation from a list provided by their character class. Some classes grant additional affinities as a starting feat. Characters may also gain affinities from stock skills or feats as they advance in level.

Characters may often apply an affinity to an ability check. After the GM selects the governing ability, the player may describe how an affinity applies to the action. The GM will decide if the affinity is "spot on," "related," or if it doesn't work. If the affinity doesn't work, the player may attempt to use a different affinity and the process repeats. The idea is not to run through every affinity the player has, but for him or her to select the best affinity and attempt to incorporate it into the action. You may never apply more than one affinity to an action, so you are incented to go with the affinity that is most likely to be "spot on from the outset. It is not uncommon for an action to not have any affinities that are spot on or related.

### 4.1.1 Determining affinity applicability

	Heart of the task		Part of the task	
	SPOT ON (Athletics to climb a tree)		RELATED (Perception to ID best route up the tree)	
Heart of the affinity				
Part of the affinity	RELATED (Nature to ID an easy type of tree to climb)		DOES NOT WORK (or 'token') (Endurance to not get tired during climb)	

#### 4.1.1 Determining affinity applicability

An affinity is “spot on” if the heart of the affinity goes to the heart of the task. For instance, the Athletic affinity is “spot on” with regards to climbing a tree.

An affinity is “related” if some substantial part of the affinity goes to the heart of the task. For instance, the Nature savvy affinity used to identify a tree that will be easy to climb is related to climbing. This is because identifying trees is something a character with the Nature savvy affinity could do and having an easier tree to climb makes the task fundamentally simpler. An affinity is also “related” if the heart of the affinity goes to some substantial part of the task. For instance, the Perceptive affinity to identify the best route up a tree applies to climbing.

The two routes to achieving a related affinity definitely blur. Fortunately, the distinctions are mechanically irrelevant so we never have to identify the line. The important things are being able to recognize spot on (“the heart of the affinity goes to the heart of the task”), does not work, and when anything falls between. When in doubt, call it related and keep the action going.

If an affinity is spot on, add the full modifier to the ability check. If the affinity is only related, add half the modifier. Generically, an affinity provides a +5 (or +2 if related) modifier to the check. Many things (races, classes, feats, talents, situations, equipment) can increase this amount.

An affinity may also be “token” applicable. If a player makes a great argument for why an affinity is applicable but no affinity ought to apply (i.e. on a straight ability check), the GM can award token applicability. Token applicability provides a +1 modifier no matter the affinity modifier. Token applicability can also be used to move the game forward if a player appears to be planning on arguing for why every single affinity he or she has is applicable.

There are many scenarios where no affinity is applicable and a straight ability check is made. This shouldn't be a rare occurrence.

#### 4.1.2 Affinity descriptions

Affinity descriptions are brief descriptions of the types of actions that are spot on or related to the affinity. The descriptions are intended as a guide and are not an exhaustive or definitive list. When deciding if something applies, defer towards encouraging success and keep the action moving.

- **Acrobatic.** Acrobatic encompasses graceful and precise movement, balance, and flexibility. Acrobatic is also useful in rapid reactions or timing.
- **Athletic.** Athletic encompasses powerful, raw forms of movement like climbing, jumping, and swimming. Although movement is a key part of the athletic affinity, it is not restricted to actions where you leave your square (i.e. athletic would be spot on for wrestling). Athletic presumes some level of finesse and is not intended to describe mere brute action.
- **Deceptive.** Deceptive deals with all manner of making the false seem true. A simple lie, an elaborate disguise, or forging documents are all examples of deceptions. Deceptive is distinct from Persuasive in that success is predicated on the target's belief that what you are telling them is true.
- **Cave savvy.** Cave savvy refers to a range of knowledge and skills related to subterranean exploration, identification, and survival. While occasionally helpful in physical tasks, cave savvy generally applies more strongly to mental or knowledge based subterranean actions.
- **Enduring.** Enduring includes prolonged physical exertion, enduring harsh conditions, or pushing yourself beyond typical physical limits. Enduring involves exertion that could not be completed in a powerful burst, but rather takes continuous effort.
- **Mystical.** Mystical entails knowledge, familiarity, and ability in magic-related lore and powers. It is useful in using, identifying, or interacting with magic or arcane objects.
- **Studious.** Studious refers to a wide range of esoteric knowledge and facts about lands, leaders, laws, legends, and the like. Studious involves blending this knowledge into useful information to help instruct the task at hand.
- **Insightful.** Insightful entails identifying and deciphering subtle actions to better understand the motivations and intentions of others. Insightful is distinct from Perceptive in that it involves recognizing the significance of things and understanding why they are significant.

- **Nature savvy.** Nature savvy refers to a range of knowledge and skills related to outdoor exploration, identification, and survival. While occasionally helpful in physical tasks, nature savvy generally applies more strongly to mental or knowledge based outdoor actions.
- **Perceptive.** Perceptive involves hidden objects, spotting something in the distance, or hearing a floorboard creak. Perceptive is distinct from Insight in that it revolves around noticing that something is strange whether or not why it is strange is immediately apparent.
- **Persuasive.** Persuasive deals with influencing others through your words and actions. A rousing speech that rallies spirits, a reasoned debate that convinces the judge you weren't the murderer, or a well placed glare that makes the brigands turn tail and run are all uses of persuasion. Persuasive does not necessarily deal with the truth, but success hangs on your ability to present yourself.
- **Spiritual.** Spiritual entails knowledge, familiarity, and ability in divine-related lore and powers. It is useful in using, identifying, or interacting with divine or religious objects.
- **Tricksy.** Tricksy involves acts of dexterity and legerdemain from disabling a delicate trap, picking a pocket, or opening a lock. Tricksy also includes a natural understanding of how to complete and best achieve those manual acts.
- **Stealthy.** Stealthy entails a concentrated set of routine actions done masterfully. Stealthy covers moving silently, disappearing into the terrain even with limited cover, and continuing to be unseen as you approach victims.

- **Streetwise.** Streetwise refers to a range of knowledge and skills related to urban exploration, identification, and survival. While occasionally helpful in physical tasks, streetwise generally applies more strongly to mental or knowledge based urban actions.

#### 4.1.3 Creating new affinities

The affinities listed in this chapter cover a wide range of actions, but are not exhaustive. Some campaigns may benefit from creating new affinities or some character builds might be better realized by introducing something new. The ease of adding new affinities without diminishing the overall pool of actions is one of the strengths of the affinity system. You will want to be careful, however, that you do not add an affinity that is too broad so as to be "spot on" more frequently than other affinities nor so specific that it doesn't apply often enough. You should spend a few minutes thinking about how you envision the affinity playing and why it is necessary.

Adding new affinities also raises issues with which classes receive access to them on their class list. If the affinity is added to enhance the campaign, consider adding it to all lists. If it is added for a single character background, consider adding it to no lists and making it available through some other mechanism (like stocks or talents).

Affinities can be a useful tool to introduce backgrounds. Generic affinities like sailor help flesh out character backgrounds and have a range of actions that can be spot on or related. Reading a map, navigating by stars, climbing ropes, balancing on a shifting surface, battling scurvy, or tying ropes are all actions that could arise in a myriad of situations and adventures. Background or professional affinities should be considered available to all classes

#### Deceptive vs. Persuasive

The distinction between Deceptive and Persuasive can often blur because both can potentially involve mistruths. A useful distinction is to consider what motivates the target to act? If the target acts because of the truth or because of you, it was probably Persuasive. If the target acts because of some third party, it was Deceptive.

For instance, imagine a character trying to convince a guard to let him into the castle. If he does it by presenting a forged invitation, the guard was motivated to act by his belief that entry was ordered by the king; the character was Deceptive. On the other hand, if the character has a real invitation but the guard was initially reluctant to believe it was real, the guard was motivated to act by the truth which the character *persuaded* him to believe.