

Amethyst v 0.0.3

Core Mechanism

Use Obsidian by Salker0, adding the following rules.

Initiative

Players decide the order they want to take turns in at the start of the challenge. They can change that order at the start of each segment.

Primary Skills and their Attributes

Skill attributes help relate skills you choose for the challenge with specific consequences. They can up the ante, link successes with one to boosts on another, and so on.

First, pick the skills

Instead of the one or two skills recommended for basic Obsidian, instead choose 3-7 primary skills for the challenge. It is suggested you do this in your preparation work as DM, but if you like you can involve your players.

Second, tag them with attributes

Give each skill 0-4 attributes off the list. At the start of your challenge, tell players those skills that are not hidden, transitory, or triggered. At the start of each segment, tell players those skills that are transitory or triggered for the segment, unless they are hidden.

Finally, set DCs

Note down the base DC for the challenge, determined by the group level. Next you set DCs for each skill separately; either at the base DC, or up to 3 lower or 5 higher. Do not tell players the set DCs at the start of the challenge. Amethyst results in players being able to improve their chances: it's okay to stiffen DCs a little.

Counting successes

By default, all skills count successes toward the challenge tally, and then might have other effects depending on the attributes you set for them. The exception are influential skills. These never help the challenge tally, but always have other effects determined by other qualifiers you note down for them.

Skill Attribute List

Suggested set DCs can't take into account your group and what you want to emphasise for your challenge, so you'll want to adjust them. The reason they're included is as a guideline to the predicted value or impact of an attribute. For skills with multiple attributes, consider the single most important attribute and tune the DC from that one.

Beneficial: Base DC+1

When you make a successful check on this skill, an advantageous effect triggers if you get more total successes than failures this segment. The DM designs that effect.

Bribe: Base DC-3

A check on this skill costs gold pieces equal to the challenge base DC x100. If the challenge results in a victory, you recover the gold spent this way. If it results in a partial victory, you recover half the gold instead. Bribe is good to put on a skill that has the gamble attribute, or in some other way valuable to succeed on. It ups the ante!

Central: Base DC

Checks on this skill receive a +2 bonus.

Class: Base DC

You can only make a check on this skill if it's a class skill for you.

Collaborative: Base DC

A successful check on this skill gives a +2 bonus to the next check with <other skill name>. A failed check on this skill gives -2 penalty to the next check with <other skill name>.

Dangerous: Base DC-1

When you make a check on this skill, a disadvantageous effect triggers if you get more failures than successes on it this segment. The DM designs that effect.

Daring: Base DC

You can choose to make your check on this skill against the set DC+5. If you do and that check is successful, choose a player. You grant that player the ability to roll twice on their next check and take whichever roll pleases them, with a morale bonus equal to your ability modifier for this skill. As DM you can use daring in all sorts of ways, for example replace the standard benefit with

something of your own invention. ‘You swing across the chasm on a vine earning not only a success, but revealing your chutzpah to the dragonborn Queen!’

Drudgework: Base DC-2

A successful check on this skill lets you choose a player. That player has a bonus on their next check equal to your ability modifier for this skill.

Fatiguing: Base DC

A failed check on this skill costs you a healing surge.

Gamble: Base DC+2

A successful check on this skill scores two successes toward victory. A failed check erases one success from the challenge tally. Skills that are a gamble never have the influential attribute.

Helpful: Base DC+1

A successful check on this skill decreases the set DC of <other skill name> by 1 for the rest of the challenge. If you like, you can have this skill help multiple other skills.

Hidden: Base DC

This skill is not revealed to players, irrespective of its other attributes. A successful check on <other skill name> reveals it. Hidden skills should often have other attributes, making them more fun to find out. If you like, you can let multiple skills reveal this one.

Hindrance: Base DC-1

A failed check on this skill increases the set DC of <other skill name> by 1 for the rest of the challenge. If you like, you can have this skill hinder multiple other skills.

Influential: As other attributes

A successful check on this skill does not score toward the challenge tally, but has some other effect. Influential skills always have at least one other attribute. Because they don’t add to the success tally, Influential skills should be uncommon and need to have a significantly valuable effect, otherwise your players won’t want to skip the chance to score a success toward victory.

Insightful: Base DC

A successful check on this skill lets you ask your DM one question about the challenge. You can ask about the set DC or attributes of a skill you know or guess is a primary skill for the challenge, or for the name of a skill that is hidden, or something else. Your question can only concern the past and present, not the future.

Locked: Base DC

No checks can be made against this skill until it is unlocked. A successful check on <other skill name> unlocks it. Locked skills should often have other attributes, making them more valuable to unlock. If you like, you can let multiple skills unlock this one.

Once: Base DC

The first successful check on this skill in a segment counts toward victory, any further successful checks are ignored.

One-shot: Base DC

One player can make a check on this skill, once, over the entire challenge.

Required: Base DC

From 1-4 checks are required on this skill per segment. You choose how many before the challenge starts, but never more than the number of players. If the required number of checks are not made, the shortfall is deducted from the challenge tally. Required skills are great to associate with beneficial or dangerous effects, or with costs and sacrifices. Note that the checks need not succeed, to count as made.

Sacrifice: Base DC

A check on this skill costs one of your powers that is available for use. You choose that power. The chosen power becomes unavailable for use until the end of your next combat encounter. After that you can recover it normally. If the challenge results in a victory, you recover the power then instead. If this skill has the class attribute, then the power chosen must be from that class. An option for sacrifice is to give a power bonus on the check equal to half the level of the power sacrificed. If you do, set the base DC higher.

Trained: Base DC

You can only make a check on this skill if you have it trained.

Transitory: Base DC

You can only make a check on this skill in segment <number>.

Triggered: Base DC

You can only make a check on this skill in the segment following that in which the first successful check is made on <other skill name>.

Wounding: Base DC-1

A check on this skill costs you 5 hit points. You can't recover those hit points until the start of your next combat encounter. After that you can recover them normally. If the challenge results in a victory, you recover those hit points then instead.

Design Notes

Amethyst is primarily designed to extract the properties inherent in the examples in the DMG, and lay those out on an easy pick list; adding a few more that people have thought of since then. It presents you with a toolbox for designing a challenge.

Amethyst is also designed to let players up the stakes for a better chance at rewards.