

# PROGRESS CLOCKS

## PROGRESS CLOCKS

Use a progress clock to track the effort made against a complex obstacle.

*Sneaking into the Bluecoat watch tower? Make a clock to track the alert level of the patrolling guards. When the PCs suffer consequences from partial successes or missed rolls, fill segments on the clock until the alarm is raised.*

Generally, the more complex the problem, the more segments in the progress clock.

A complex obstacle is a 4-segment clock. A more complicated obstacle is a 6-segment clock. A daunting obstacle is an 8-segment clock.

The **effect level** of an action or circumstance is used to tick segments on a clock (see **Effect Levels**, page 10). **It's the GM's job to tick a clock so it reflects the fictional situation.** If the PCs are making a lot of progress, the clock should be ticked a lot. This comes with practice, by properly judging effect levels. But you should always feel free to adjust a clock in play to better reflect the situation if you make a mistake.

You can't usually fill a clock with the effect of a single action. This is by design. If a situation is simple enough for one action, don't make a clock, just judge the outcome based on the effect level of the action.

When you create a clock, make it about the **obstacle**, not the method. The clocks for an infiltration should be "Interior Patrols" and "The Tower", not "sneak past the guards" or "climb the tower." The patrols and the tower are the obstacles — the PCs can attempt to overcome them in a variety of ways.

Complex enemy threats can be broken into several "layers", each with its own progress clock. For example, the Lampblack's HQ might have a "perimeter security" clock, an "interior guards" clock, and a "Bazzo's office security" clock. The crew would have to make their way through all three layers to reach Bazzo's personal safe and whiskey collection.

Remember, a clock tracks progress. It reflects the fictional situation, so the group can gauge how they're doing. A clock is like a speedometer in a car. It *shows* the speed of the vehicle—it doesn't determine the speed.

## SIMPLE OBSTACLES

Not every situation and obstacle requires a clock. Use clocks when a situation is complex or layered and you need to track effort over time — otherwise, resolve the result of an action with a single roll.



## CLOCK EXAMPLES

### DANGER CLOCK

The GM can use clocks to represent progressive dangers like suspicion growing during a seduction, the proximity of pursuers in a chase, or the alert level of guards on patrol. In this case, when a complication occurs, the enemy ticks 1, 2, or 3 segments on the clock, depending on its intensity. When the clock is full, the danger comes to fruition — the guards hunt down the intruders, activate an alarm, release the hounds, etc. (See **Consequences & Resistance**, page 11.)

*The crew is infiltrating the Red Sash's headquarters. The GM makes a clock for the **Alert** level of the guards. Whenever a PC suffers a complication, the GM fills segments on the Alert clock. When the Alert clock fills, the guards are aware of the intruders and react appropriately.*

### RACE CLOCKS

You can create two opposed clocks to represent a contest to see who can do something first. The PCs might have a progress clock called "Escape" while the Bluecoats have a clock called "Cornered." If the PCs finish their progress before the Bluecoats fill their clock, they get away. Otherwise, they're cornered and can't flee. If both complete at the same time, the PCs escape to their lair, but the streets are filled with hunting Bluecoats outside!

### LINKED CLOCKS

You can make a clock that unlocks another clock once it's filled. In the Red Sashes example, above, the GM might make a linked clock called "Trapped" after the "Alert" clocks fill up. When you fight a veteran warrior, she might have a clock for her "Defense" and then a linked clock for "Vulnerable". Once you overcome the Defense clock, then you can attempt to overcome the Vulnerable clock and defeat her. You might affect the Defense clock with violence in a knife-fight, or you lower her defense with deception if you have the opportunity. As always, the method of action is up to the players and the details of the fiction at hand.

### MISSION CLOCKS

The GM can make a clock for a time-sensitive mission, to represent the window of opportunity you have to complete it. If the countdown runs out, the mission is scrubbed or changes—the target escapes, the household wakes up for the day, etc.

### LONG-TERM PROJECT CLOCKS

Some projects will take a long time. A basic long-term project (like tinkering up a new feature for a device) is 8-segments. Truly long-term projects (like creating a new designer drug) can be two, three, or even four clocks, representing all the phases of development, testing, and final completion. Add or subtract clocks depending on the details of the situation and complexity of the project.

A long-term project is a good catch-all for dealing with any unusual player goal, including things that circumvent or change elements of the mechanics or the setting. For example, by default in the game, Trauma is permanent. But maybe a player wants to work on a project where they create a device to draw traumatic spirit-energies into the ghost field, thus reducing a character's Trauma and unleashing a storm of enraged ghosts in the area. It will be a long and dangerous process to set up everything needed to begin and work on a project like this, but almost anything can be attempted as long as the group is interested and it seems feasible to everyone.

### TUG-OF-WAR CLOCK

You can set up a clock that can be filled *and* emptied by events, to represent a back-and-forth situation. For example, you might make a "Revolution!" clock that indicates when the refugee Skovlanders in the city start to riot over the annexation of their homeland. Some events will tick the clock up and some will tick it down. Once it fills, the revolution begins. A tug-of-war clock is also perfect for an ongoing turf war between two crews or factions.

### FACTION CLOCKS

Each faction has a long-term goal. When the PCs take **DOWNTIME** (page 20) the GM ticks forward the faction clocks that they're interested in. In this way, the world around the PCs is dynamic and things happen that they're not directly connected to, changing the overall situation in the city and creating new opportunities and challenges.

The PCs may also directly affect NPC faction clocks, based on the missions and scores they pull off. Discuss known faction projects that they might aid or interfere with, and also consider how a PC operation might affect the NPC clocks, whether the players intended it or not.