

CoC d20, House Rules / Re-Write, v1.31 (12/17/09)

I run a fairly pulp-ish version of Call of Cthulhu. I like action and shootouts, so I want PCs to be fairly durable. Not D&D-durable, but more durable than the default in most Call of Cthulhu games. These are the house rules I've developed over the course of running the game for 2 years, including lessons I've learned from 4e, Star Wars, Pathfinder, and the like.

Your characters probably won't die from a single gunshot. Probably not, but it's possible. On the other hand, your characters can easily die from *several* gunshots, or a single, very lucky shot. Be smart and be safe – don't just randomly shoot things. If you're in a gunfight, look for cover. It could save your life.

(1) Statistics

- **Strength** applies to Melee hit/damage and carrying capacity. Also, a Strength **bonus** (but not a penalty) applies to Vitality Points. It also applies to Grapple checks to either grab or escape.
- **Dexterity** applies to AC, Reflex saves, Initiative, and Ranged To-Hit.
- **Constitution** applies to Fortitude saves. It also equals Wound Points.
- **Intelligence** grants bonus skill points and influences *many* skills. Essential to learn magic.
- **Wisdom** (x5) gives starting Sanity. It also affects Will saves and perception.
- **Charisma** is used for Psychic abilities, and affects interpersonal interaction. Also, used for Luck when needed.

Choose one of the following arrays:

18, 14, 12, 11, 10, 8 *or* 16, 15, 14, 12, 11, 8 *or* 16, 14, 14, 13, 10, 10 *or* 14, 14, 14, 14, 12, 11
(Or, use a standard d20 point-buy, 31 points, but no attributes under 8; and only 1 attribute under 10.)

I may give an opportunity to gain bonus attribute points if you pledge to keep a gaming journal, find a picture for your character, or else enhance the gaming experience in other ways.

(2) VP/WP

Starting characters have 6 + Strength Bonus VP. At every full level, they gain **4** additional VP, not modified for high or low statistics.

Characters have Wound Points equal to their Constitution score.

Cultists, policemen, bankers, priests, astronauts, *more powerful* astronauts, and the like will follow this same scheme, unless they're basically mooks or minions, at which point they just have HPs as normal. Monsters don't worry about silly distinctions like this and just have HPs – usually a lot of them.

- In most circumstances, characters will take VP damage before taking any WP damage. When a character is unable to defend him- or herself, damage *may* go to WP first, at my option.
- A character with 0 VP still acts at full capacity.
- A character, upon taking any WP damage, needs to make a Fortitude save vs. DC 5 + WP taken. Failure means they are stunned and cannot act next round.

- Characters with 2 or 3 WP remaining are seriously hurt. They move at half speed, and are at -2 to AC, Reflex and Will saves, all attacks, and all skill or ability checks.
- Characters with 1 WP are critically injured. They move at 5' per round, are at -4 to AC, Reflex and Will saves, attacks, and all skill or ability checks. Any serious exertion requires a DC10 Fortitude save after the action is taken; failure drops them to 0 WP.
- A character with 0 WP is unconscious and may be dying. They never go negative, but excess damage makes the saving throw more difficult. Immediately upon hitting 0, they must make a Fort save vs. DC 15. Failure means death. Every round, they must make a DC 10 Fortitude save to survive. DC 15 will stabilize. Any additional hits mean a new save vs. DC 10 + Damage Taken (minimum DC 15), and they need to make new saves on their turn. Correctly-applied first aid can stabilize a character, and can *possibly* rescue a recently-killed character from death. (This will be an extended Heal Skill Challenge, difficulty determined at the time based on factors such as time since death, blood loss, conversion of limbs to tentacles, and beheading).
- *Confirmed* critical hits (which threaten on a 19-20 for most deadly weapons, or on 20 on less-lethal weapons) damage Wound Points directly. Mythos creatures simply take maximum damage instead of WP. Mooks and minions are killed outright from any critical hit.

VP recovers at the rate of 1 point per hour of light activity, or 2 points per hour of rest. WP recovers at the flat rate of 1 point per **day**. All recovery times can be doubled with proper medical care. As a side note, a character who dropped to 0 WP must recover at least 4 WP before they can act at full capacity.

(3) Skills

The Skill List is somewhat condensed. Also, the following rules apply...

- All characters choose (8 + Int Mod) class skills. They start with 3 ranks in each class skill. If you need help picking these skills, I have lists of common Professions in the core rulebook.
- 1st-level characters get 8 + Int Modifier skill points to assign, beyond this.
- There is no penalty for assigning Ranks to Cross-Class Skills, but you can only assign 1 skill point to any given skill per half-level, unless you receive special training.
- Your maximum Skill Rank in any skill is 3 + Your Level. This is rounded up, so a level 1½ character could have 5 ranks in any skill.
- At every half-level, you will receive 4 Skill Points. On achieving every full level, you will receive 4+Int Modifier Skill Points.

(4) Feats

Your character starts out with 1 feat from any category, plus at least one bonus feat based on his or her Character Type (see below). You gain one additional feat at every *odd-numbered level*, starting at 3rd.

(5) Character Types

- Offense-Option characters gain 1 free Weapon Proficiency, 1 good save, a high Attack Bonus, and 1 extra Combat or Defensive Feat at 1st level.
- Defense Option characters gain 2 good saves, a level-based AC bonus, a low Attack Bonus, and 1 extra Skill or Defensive Feat at 1st level.

(6) Sanity

Sanity is a big deal in Call of Cthulhu. No matter how much combat you stay out of, you will have the joy of watching your Investigator slowly go mad. (You'll have the joy of watching your Investigator *quickly* go mad if you use your brain for things it's not intended for – such as casting spells or using psychic powers.) Mostly, I'm using the regular rules. However, I have changed the rules for Temporary and Indefinite Insanity.

A quick word on “closing your eyes.” This is a pretty popular way to avoid confronting the horrors of Things Man Was Not Meant to Know. Sometimes, not witnessing a horror is enough to let you pretend everything is okay. Sometimes, though, it's not, and no matter how hard you close your eyes, you won't be able to avoid the realization that the world is far more frightening than your human mind can cope with. (Also, if your eyes are closed, it's much easier to shoot and/or eat you.)

- You may suffer Temporary Insanity if you take more than ½ your Wisdom score in a single event. Instead of making a second Sanity check, make a Will save vs. DC 5 + Sanity Lost.
- You may suffer Indefinite Insanity if you lose more than 20% of your Sanity in **1 Hour**. If you do, make a Will save vs. DC 15 (or higher if I say so).
- If you drop to 0 Sanity, you're Permanently Insane. Congratulations on your new character!
- You regain 1d6 points of Sanity every time you go up in level.

(7) Psychic Characters

Making a Psychic character is a little rough. There's a steep entry requirement (15 Charisma), a steep feat requirement (2 if you want to do anything other than try and sense things with it), and a steep Sanity requirement (you automatically lose Sanity every time you use an active power). It's a blessing and a curse. I'd recommend having no more than one psychic character, but if you want more, go for it!

(8) Experience

You will gain 1 experience point for every session you both survive *and* are either in danger, or doing something useful and productive. If your Investigator hangs out at headquarters drinking coffee while everyone else is risking life and limb, you will gain no experience that session. Every 2 XP earns you a half-level. You gain 4 skill points at the half-level mark, and your remaining skill points plus everything else at the full level mark.

(9) Rules

This may seem like a weird category, but bear with me for a moment.

I will run Call of Cthulhu as a relatively rules-light game. We won't be using minis or a battle map, but might use sketches every once in a while. I'll keep most of the rules in my head; you don't need to know them very well. Just roleplay your character, keeping in mind their personalities, quirks, skills, and abilities. Remember what you're good at, and what you're not so good at. Leave the mechanics to me, and expect more world-consistency than rules-consistency.

Condensed Skill List

Physical Skills Acrobatics (Balance/Tumble) Athletics (Jump/Climb/Swim) Ride	Criminal Skills Disable Device (incl. Open Lock) Disguise Escape Artist Forgery Stealth (Hide/Move Silently) Sleight of Hand Streetwise	Technical Skills Computer Use Demolitions Drive Heal Operate Heavy Machinery Pilot Repair
Social Skills Bluff Diplomacy Gather Information Intimidate	Survival Skills Animal Handling (incl. Empathy) Survival (Choose Terrain)	Perceptive Skills Perception (Listen/Spot) Investigation (Search) Sense Motive
Knowledge/Education Skills Appraise Language (1 rank per language) Research Accounting Anthropology Archaeology Architecture Art Astronomy Biology Chemistry Electronics Engineering Geography Geology History Law Local Area Mathematics Medicine Meteorology Occult Philosophy Physics Psychology Religion <i>Note that in many cases, these fields overlap. For example, an Archaeologist knows some Geology as it relates to stratigraphy. An Astronomer will know some Physics. Someone with Art knowledge will know the influential History of a piece, etc.</i>	Craft/Performance Skills Examples Include: Carpentry Chemistry Clockwork Electronics Gunsmith Painting Photography Poetry Sculpting Songwriting Writing Dance Drums Flute Saxophone Singing Trumpet <i>Etc... Really, limitless.</i>	Other Skills Concentration Psychic Focus Spellcraft Cthulhu Mythos (may not be chosen at start)

Revised Feat List

<p><u>Skill Feats</u> Skill Focus (+3 to One Skill) Skill Development (+2 to 2 related skills)</p> <p><u>Combat Feats</u> Weapon Proficiency (in a Group*) Weapon Focus (specific weapon) Blind-Fighting Drive-By Attack Expertise Improved Critical (Must be high-level) Improved Initiative Martial Artist (d4 damage) Improved Grapple Expert Martial Arts (d6 damage, crit 19) Superior Martial Arts (d8 dmg) Point Blank Shot Far Shot Precise Shot Rapid Shot Multishot Shot on the Run Rolling Shot Power Attack Cleave Quick Draw Two-Weapon Fighting (incl. Ambidexterity) Weapon Finesse</p> <p><u>Defensive Feats</u> Dodge Mobility Spring Attack Durability (+3 WP) Great Fortitude Iron Will Lightning Reflexes Sanity (gain 1d6+4 sanity, to a max of 5xWisdom) Toughness (+3 VP)</p>	<p><u>Psychic Feats</u> Sensitive Biofeedback Trance Remote Viewing Dowsing Mind Reading Mind Probe Psychokinesis Psychometry Second Sight Telepathy</p> <p><u>Other Feats</u> Animal Affinity Combat Casting Endurance First Aid (+5 on Heal checks to prevent death) Run Track Wealth</p> <p>* Weapon Groups include: Melee, Thrown, Pistol, Rifle, Shotgun, Submachine Gun. Alternately, you can choose a kind of training (Law Enforcement, Military, Hunting, etc.) and pick several specific weapons you'd use for that field. For example, a police officer may know their service revolver, a specific shotgun, and nightstick. A character with Military background may know a specific rifle or two, a specific pistol, and grenades.</p>
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Note that many feats have prerequisites. Check the Call of Cthulhu d20 book for examples. Also, any feat indented under another feat's name has that feat as a prerequisite (e.g. all Psychic feats require Sensitive.)