

# ConfleX

*skill challenge system for  
Dungeons and Dragons 4E*

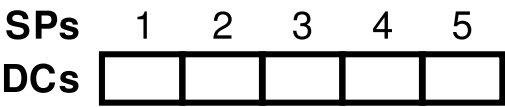
*Version 0.2*

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Conflex is a skill challenge system, an alternative to the Dungeons and Dragons 4E skill challenge system published by Wizards of the Coast in the first Dungeon Master's Guide. It is designed to provide an easy to use, but compelling to play, framework for building skill challenges which simulate complicated situations that react to players' actions in sometimes unpredictable ways.

Conflex is very different from the DMG skill challenge system, and in some ways more complicated, so please read carefully to see if it's right for your group.

Thanks to Travis Dunlap, author of the Obsidian skill challenge system. I've found that system very useful as a GM. This system is intended to supplement, not replace, that system.



Description: \_\_\_\_\_

## Conflict 1

**Failures**

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Description: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Skill(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Implications: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## Conflict 2

**Failures**

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Description: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Skill(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Complications: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## Conflict 3

**Failures**

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Description:	
Primary Skill(s):	
Complications:	

## Conflict 4

**Failures**

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Description: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Primary Skill(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
Complications: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Insight

0	0			
1	1	1		
2	2	2	2	
3	3	3	3	3
4				

**On Victory:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**On Failure:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Core Rules	1
Conflicts	1
Action Phase	1
Reaction Phase	1
Insight	1
Complications	2
Target DCs	2
Examples	3
Negotiation with a Tribal Chieftain	3
Forest Chase	3
Labyrinth	3
Aftermath of a Catastrophe	4
Gameplay Example	4
Advice for DMs	5
Change Log	6



## CORE RULES

### Conflicts

The skill challenge is composed of four **conflicts**. Each conflict represents some factor which opposes the characters.

Each conflict has one or more primary skills that the DM expects to be most useful in handling it, although players are free to come with alternative ways.

At the start of the skill challenge, each conflict has three empty **failure boxes**, and 21 empty **success boxes**, arranged in six rows.

The skill challenge is run via a series of **segments**, analogous to combat rounds. Each segment consists of two phases: the **action phase**, and the **reaction phase**.

During the action phase, characters make skill checks which fill (cross out) success boxes. During the reaction phase, the DM makes failure checks which might fill failure boxes, and may cause other complications for the characters.

The skill challenge is **lost** when any conflict's failure boxes are all filled.

The skill challenge is **won** when every conflict's first four rows of success boxes have been filled.

### Action Phase

During each action phase, the characters roll three skill checks, each against one conflict of their choice. These three checks might be made simultaneously, or sequentially, as the DM feels appropriate for the situation.

Those checks are compared against a set of five DCs (determined by the level of the challenge). Each DC corresponds to a number of **Success Points** (SPs), one through five.

Whenever a character makes a skill check against a conflict, find the highest DC the result matches or exceeds to find how many SPs it awards. Fill that number of success boxes, from smallest number to largest (i.e., left to right, top to bottom).

Once a character makes a skill check during an action phase, until the end of that phase, that player receives a -2 SP penalty to further checks unless the check is

on a different conflict *and* uses a different skill.

Normally, players should roll primary skills. Other skills should either be restricted as a one-time exception (one such exception per player per skill challenge), or given a one or two penalty to SPs awarded.

Once the first four rows of a conflict are filled in, it is **handled**. If all conflicts are handled, the skill challenge is *won*.

### Reaction Phase

Each conflict has a **defense** – the lowest success box number not filled in. The higher the number, the less likely there will be a negative reaction for that conflict, i.e., a filled failure box.

Roll **failure checks** for each conflict, in order, top to bottom. To perform a conflict's failure check, roll an **attack**, an unmodified d20. If the roll matches or exceeds its defense, fill one of its failure boxes. If a conflict's success boxes are all filled in, it is **solved**. Solved conflicts cannot fail.

If a handled conflict would fill its last failure box, instead restore all but the first two rows of success boxes. If a non-handled conflict would fill its last failure box, one player may spend a healing surge to attempt one last check on that conflict, interrupting the current failure check. Fill success boxes accordingly, and recheck the original attack. If it still meets the new defense, the last failure box is filled and the skill challenge is *lost*.

Only one conflict can fill a failure box per reaction phase; once a failure box is filled, stop rolling failure checks until after the next reaction phase.

### Insight

In some scenerios, a DM might not want to make the nature of the conflicts immediately obvious. In that case, an Insight check may be rolled as one of the three checks during the action phase to discover the nature of the conflicts. Use the success boxes under Insight when a player rolls for this purpose. The lowest number not filled gives the insight level. Determine the initial insight level by treating the characters' single highest Passive Insight as a free Insight check.

The DM should inform the players about a number of conflicts equal to the current insight level, starting from the first one, including number of failures, primary skills, complications, and current defense. Handled conflicts do not count against the current insight level, and the DM should inform the player about their status for free.

## Complications

Each conflict might have one or more **complications**. A complication represents a special characteristic:

### Confrontational

- On a failure, one character must spend two healing surges, or this conflict is lost.

### Distracting

- On a failure, for the next segment, each skill check crosses out one less box.

### Fundamental

- On a failure, restore (un-cross-out) 6 success boxes from each of the next conflicts.

### Important

- Use one less conflict.
- During failure check on this conflict, roll twice, and use the higher result.
- This conflict is lost on a failure count of four, instead of three.

### Individualistic

- Each character must maintain, in addition to the normal global instance, his or her own extra instance of this conflict, with individual success boxes and failure count.
- Whenever a character rolls against this conflict during an action phase, apply that result to both the global and his or her individual instance. Each other character may then roll against his or her own instance.
- Roll failure check only once on this conflict; same attack against every instance, global and individual. Apply any consequences from complications individually.
- If a character loses his or her individual instance, he or she may not participate further in the skill challenge.
- Only the global instance counts towards overall victory or defeat.

### Precarious

- This conflict starts with one failure box filled in.

### Tiring

- On a failure, for the next segment, each skill check costs a healing surge.

## Success Point Target DCs

	1	2	3	4	5
Level 1	14	17	19	22	24
Level 2	15	18	20	23	25
Level 3	15	18	21	23	26
Level 4	16	19	22	24	27
Level 5	16	19	22	24	27
Level 6	17	20	23	25	28
Level 7	17	20	23	26	29
Level 8	18	21	24	27	30
Level 9	18	21	25	28	31
Level 10	19	22	26	29	32
Level 11	19	22	26	29	32
Level 12	20	23	27	30	33
Level 13	20	24	27	31	34
Level 14	21	25	28	32	35
Level 15	21	25	29	32	36
Level 16	22	26	30	33	37
Level 17	22	26	30	34	38
Level 18	23	27	31	35	39
Level 19	23	27	31	35	39
Level 20	24	28	32	36	40
Level 21	25	29	33	37	41
Level 22	26	30	34	38	42
Level 23	26	30	35	39	43
Level 24	27	31	36	40	44
Level 25	27	31	36	40	44
Level 26	28	32	37	41	45
Level 27	28	33	37	42	46
Level 28	29	34	38	43	47
Level 29	29	34	39	43	48
Level 30	30	35	40	44	49

## EXAMPLES

The following examples demonstrate the type of situations Conflex is designed to handle.

### Negotiation with a Tribal Chieftain

*The party encounter a primitive settlement of half-orcs. They are quickly surrounded, but not attacked. Their leader steps forward, willing to talk.*

#### Conflict 1: Culture-gap

*This is a culture completely foreign to the party. Without careful thought, they risk accidentally alienating potential these allies.*

Primary Skill: Nature (representing anthropology)

Secondary Skill (-1 SP): History

Complication: Fundamental

*A basic misunderstanding sets the party back across the board*

#### Conflict 2: Show of strength

*These people prize strength, and the party must convince them that they are worth listening.*

Primary Skill: Intimidation

Complication: Distracting

*A few warriors inch forwards, eager to slay the outsiders; the leader holds them back, but the commotion makes progress more difficult*

#### Conflict 3: Common ground

*There is little reason for mutual trust, but perhaps the party can sieze upon religious similarities.*

Primary Skill: Religion

Secondary Skill (-1 SP): Bluff

Complication: Precarious

*Religion is a touchy issue – contradicting the local beliefs could quickly doom the party's efforts.*

#### Conflict 4: What do you want?

*The party is after something, and to get it they're going to have to ask. Tact is the wise course.*

Primary Skill: Diplomacy

#### Victory:

The party gains some valuable information about their surroundings, and perhaps a divine blessing to aid in the coming tribulations.

#### Defeat:

The party is attacked, perhaps with the opportunity to try to run, or just sent on their way empty handed.

## Forest Chase

*After a disasterous encounter with the locals, and facing an overwhelming force, the party flees into the woods.*

#### Conflict 1: Gotta get ahead

*The main force is right on their tail. Some assistance scaling hills and fallen trees could help lose them.*

Primary Skill: Athletics

Complication: Fundamental

*The party slowed down too soon – their foes approach. They must flee again, or they will certainly be caught.*

#### Conflict 2: Everyone has their limits...

*Who knew running for your life could be so tiring!*

Primary Skill: Endurance

Complication: Individualistic, Tiring

*Some last longer than others.*

#### Conflict 3: Running in circles?

*The best route of escape is a straight line. But if they're not careful, they could wind up back where they started.*

Primary Skill: Nature (representing orienteering)

#### Conflict 4: Can't run forever

*If they don't find somewhere to hide, they might just run out of places to run.*

Primary Skill: Stealth

Complication: Confrontational

*Turns out that wasn't such a good place to hide. With a little sacrifice, though, they gain some space to try again.*

#### Victory:

They manage to lose their pursuers, and live free – at least for now.

#### Defeat:

Their efforts are in vain. They must fight and risk capture, or worse.

## Labyrinth

*Is it a long forgotten fortress? A test? Someone's home? Who knows; but we want what's in it.*

#### Conflict 1: Haven't we been here before?

*Navigation is tricky, but with the right skill-set, not impossible.*

Primary Skill: Dungeoneering

Secondary Skill (-1 SP): Perception

Complication: Fundamental

*A dead end means traveling to a new area, with new traps. It also means more time down there.*

### **Conflict 2: What's that thing?**

*The labyrinth is rife with traps, but the right kind of person can figure them out.*

Primary Skill: Thievery

Complication: Confrontational

*Missed one! A brave soul dives to take the brunt of the fireball trap.*

### **Conflict 3: Has it been days?**

*The heat is getting to them.*

Primary Skill: Endurance

Complication: Individualistic, Tiring

*He can stumble along, but not much else.*

### **Conflict 4: There's something up ahead...**

*They approach the end, but have they alerted what's waiting for them?*

Primary Skill: Stealth

On three failures: They don't lose the skill challenge, but they don't get the surprise round on the dragon.

#### **Victory:**

They get through the labyrinth relatively unscathed.

#### **Defeat:**

It was too much for them. They come to in a small barred cell...

## **Aftermath of a Catastrophe**

*The explosion was heard for miles around. Wasn't there a building here?*

### **Conflict 1: I have to find him!**

*A crowd has formed, and some try to enter the rubble, but any who go in might spoil whatever evidence there is to be found, or otherwise hinder our investigation.*

Primary Skills: Diplomacy and Intimidate

### **Conflict 2: Navigating the rubble**

*This looks a little unstable...*

Primary Skill: Dungeoneering

Secondary Skill (-1 SP): Streetwise

Complication: Confrontational

*A misstep results in an injury, but nothing too bad.*

### **Conflict 3: It's not done yet**

*Residual magical energy is still in the air, threatening to flare up. A skilled mage might be able to help...*

Primary Skill: Arcana

Complication: Tiring

*The mage tries, but fails, to suppress the storm. They can ride it out amongst the rubble. But can they afford to wait?*

### **Conflict 4: The search**

*Why'd we come in here again?*

Primary Skill: Perception

#### **Victory:**

They find some useful evidence amongst the rubble.

#### **Failure:**

They're forced to leave without finding much.

## **GAMEPLAY EXAMPLE**

This example uses the Labyrinth skill challenge described above.

A level 4 party decides to enter an underground complex in search of rumored treasure.

DM checks insight level; it's 1, thanks to the Cleric's passive insight.

DM: "As you begin exploring, it becomes apparent that you must navigate carefully to avoid getting lost."

Fighter: "So, dungeoneering? OK, I'm good at that. I can lead you guys through this."

He rolls and gets a 21; 2 SPs, raising the defense from 4 to 8.

DM: "You think you're on the right track; but after walking around a bit more, you realize study of the surroundings might be prudent."

Fighter: "So I can roll again?"

DM: "If you roll that again this soon, there'll be a significant penalty to the check."

Cleric: "I have a decent dungeoneering. Henrik, need some help?"

She rolls and gets an 18; 1 SP raising the defense to 10.

DM: "You're helping out, but you're not feeling too confident."

Rogue: "Can I use streetwise? This place is

constructed, right?"

DM: "Sure, but it'll be less effective than dungeoneering."

She rolls and gets a 25. It would be 4 SPs, but because streetwise is a secondary skill, it is treated as 3 SPs. Three success boxes are filled, raising the defense to 14.

DM: "OK, let's see what happens"

DM rolls failure check on the first conflict, and gets a 12; no failure. On the second conflict, rolls a 7.

DM: "You underestimated the strain of walking around down here, and are momentarily fatigued. Now that you think about it, it is rather hot down here. If you don't pace yourselves, you'll get exhausted. Each of the next three checks will cost a healing surge."

Wizard: "How can we avoid this in the future?"

DM: "You can roll endurance; one person bears primary responsibility, but each of you will need to roll individually."

Fighter: "Sounds like I'm the best person to take lead on this. I'll spend the healing surge"

He rolls and gets lucky: a 28; 5 SPs, raising the defense to 12. The other players roll and get mixed results.

Rogue: "Hmm, I'm not liking this place..."

Cleric: "What else should we be watching out for down here?"

DM: "You can roll insight to find out"

Cleric: "I guess it's worth the surge"

She rolls a 24

DM: "OK, you're not sure what else to expect down here, but you don't have a great confidence about your current path down here."

Fighter: "I'll roll dungeoneering again. I've got plenty of surges. No penalty now, right?"

DM: "Right."

He rolls 26; 4 SPs, enough to handle the first conflict. The defense is now 17.

DM: "You're pretty confident about your current path, but you know that if it's the wrong path, you might significantly increase your time down here. That's three checks."

DM rolls 6 on the first conflict; 10 on the second

DM: "Bree and Paelias, you're still having trouble with the heat. If this happens again, you'll be out of the skill challenge. The rest of you are doing fine."

DM continues rolling failure checks, since only individual instances failed, not the global one, and gets a 4 on the third check. The fighter's last check brought this conflict within the insight level, but they haven't had a chance to do anything about it yet.

DM: "Diesa, just as you realize that it might be a possibility, a trap is triggered. Someone has to lose two healing surges; you all can decide who."

Fighter: "I'll do it."

DM: "OK, Henrik steps on a pressure plate; a poison dart flies into his leg."

Rogue: "This sounds like my area of expertise. Roll thievery?"

She rolls 20; 2 SPs. The defense is now 8.

DM: "You figured out that trap, but you suspect there are more out there."

Wizard: "Well, at least my DEX is decent..."

He rolls 24; 4 SPs. The defense is now 14.

Fighter: "I definitely want you guys to keep involved, so let's do another endurance"

He rolls 25; 4 SPs.

DM rolls failure checks: a 19 on the first conflict! This rolls back a lot of progress.

DM: "Henrik believes he's on the right path, but his spirits drop as he turns a corner. Unfortunately, it's a dead end. He realizes that much of the party's progress as been in vain. He's not sure where he went wrong."

*Play continues... will they overcome their misfortune? Or will this mistake doom their excursion?*

## ADVICE FOR DMs

Conflex provides, hopefully, a fair way to generate results for player's actions. It's up to you to weave those results into a compelling narrative.

## Conflex is not a Script

The conflicts in a Conflex skill challenge are not steps on a path the players are required to walk. They factors in the world which would have create serious problems for the characters if they do not deal with them. Keep this in mind both while designing the skill challenges, and while running them.



## Be Flexible

Design should be iterative – don't get married to a particular scenerio for your players, and try to shoehorn it into a Conflex skill challenge. Not every scenerio makes for good gameplay, so adjust the scenerio until you arrive at something that works.

While running a Conflex skill challenge, events may crop up in unexpected orders. Make sure you have some way of handling them within your story.

## Conflex is not Universal

Conflex is not designed to replace all DMG or Obsidian skill challenges. I've found Obsidian skill challenges particularly apt for research-based or perception-based skill challenges. Conflex is meant for situations in which multiple factors are acting to oppose the players essentially simultaneously, and they must balance their response to all of them.

## Appropriate Consequences

Unlike DMG and Obsidian skill challenges, and similar (but to a lesser degree) to 4E combats, the players are expected to win. Don't be afraid to make a failed Conflex skill challenge have significant consequences. While a TPK (Total Party Kill) would generally be unwise, capture or another major setback is not unreasonable.

## Creative Solutions

Players may sometimes come up with ways of dealing with conflicts you don't expect. Unless you're convinced their solution would be as effective as the ones you did expect, its generally best to stick with the core rules – a once per skill challenge attempt, or a small SP penalty.

## Number of Players

Conflex has so far only been tried with a five-player party. I don't expect that much would need to be done to adapt to four- or six-player parties. Since action economy in Conflex doesn't scale with number of players, the main difference will be the degree to which characters cover each skill. Until more playtesting has been done, I would suggest using Conflex as-is for all numbers of players, and adapt on the fly if necessary.

## CHANGE LOG

### Version 0.2

Reworded Core Rules section, adding clarifications.

Changed multiple-check penalty from -5 on skill check itself, to -2 SPs; more consistent with how secondary skills work.

Added gameplay example.

### Version 0.1

Initial release.