

Skill Challenges

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The GM decides on a level and complexity for the challenge and the players then describe a plan and propose skills for the required "tasks". The GM may/should negotiate over the skills to use, but should not enforce skills unless they are using a "token" on the task to do so. Both GM and players get resources in the challenge to increase the stakes or make things easier/harder where they think it will add tension/enjoyment. The structure should be available for the players to know, and it should be made clear that the GM is expected to use all their "tokens" by the end of the challenge.

Level and complexity of challenge should be decided based on the level of the opposition to the completion of the attempted task (just as with a combat challenge), and complexity to suit perceived difficulty. In particular, the XP value of the challenge should reflect the combat(s) avoided or advantage gained through completing the challenge.

Skill Challenge Types:

The general flow of the challenge is that the GM describes the situation and known obstacles, the players describe their plan, specifying tasks and skills to be used, and the GM describes the outcome following rolls. This basic schema comes in three main variants:

- 1) The "Mission" challenge is where the aim, obstacles to be overcome and opposition to the overall objective are clear at the start. The GM decides the level of challenge and situation, the players then make a complete plan and attempt it task by task. The mission is essentially linear with hurdles to be overcome.
- 2) The "Exploratory" challenge involves a network of nodes with edges to be selected between. Each node has a task to be completed to gain passage/reward.
- 3) The "Journey" challenge is a sequence of obstacles that cannot be seen in totality, but must be revealed one-by-one as the previous obstacles are overcome.

More generally, challenges can be divided into network and linear challenges, with visibility N stages ahead.

Further, challenges may be divided according to the task completion result, as follows:

- 1) Simple challenge, X successes before Y failures gives a reward. The reward may be scaled according to the number of failures (less than Y) before X successes.
- 2) Damage limitation challenge, need a fixed number of tasks to complete (succeed or fail), each failure causes some loss or damage but failures are not limited, successes may give rewards.
- 3) Prize damage limitation challenge, need X successes to complete and gain a reward, each failure causes some loss or damage but failures are not limited.
- 4) Goodie-hunt challenge, continue until a fixed number of tasks are complete (succeed or fail), each success gives a reward and failures may give penalties.
- 5) Limited goodie-hunt challenge, continue until a fixed number of failures, each success gives a reward.

The type of challenge selected will depend on the fictional positioning, and may even change in response to the way that the fictional positioning changes as a result of the characters' actions.

Basic skill challenge task setup:

(Complexity+1)*2 successes at basic tasks before 3 failures, by default. Challenges with a fixed number of tasks (rather than successes) have (complexity+2)*2 tasks to complete; challenges that continue with unlimited successes until a fixed number of failures have a complexity equal to 1 plus the number of failures that cause penalties (HS, equipment loss equivalent to 10% of a magic item of the same level, damage equivalent to a standard monster damage, diseases or curses, the GM gains an extra token, etc.)

"Basic tasks" map to a single success at moderate difficulty by a single character of the party's choice

Failures should map to a loss condition, and may map to lost surges, lost equipment, lost time or additional combat encounters. This loss condition should be set by the GM for each task and revealed to the player - the stakes should always be transparent.

Each SC starts with a number of "tokens" that are used by the GM as "opposition" and a number of "free" tasks that the players may use to gain advantages. One token is available for a complexity 2 challenge, plus an additional two tokens per level of Complexity above 2; the number of "free" advantage tasks is equal to 2 per complexity level over 2 (complexity 1 and 2 challenges give no free advantage tasks).

Difficulty levels are:

- Trivial (automatic success)
- Easy
- Moderate
- Hard
- Impossible (automatic failure)

The players should describe the tasks they are attempting, and these should form a coherent plan to achieve the challenge

success outcome. The GM may negotiate the details of the challenge outcome based on the players' description of the plan, but may not affect the rolls required for success based on these descriptions or the basic outcome of the plan except as provided for by the expenditure of Tokens. The GM may offer additional "free" rolls for Advantages in return for (binding) agreements about challenge outcome.

Varying the "Basic Task":

Group tasks include:

- The "All for One": all players may roll, the best roll (only) counts; difficulty increased 1 level
- The "One for All": all players must roll, the worst result counts; difficulty lowered one level
- The "Plurality": all players must roll, at least half the characters must succeed to get a success

In group rolls, a player may have a character voluntarily take a difficulty 1 higher in order to also aid another single character in the task. They may alternatively voluntarily take a difficulty two levels higher in order to also aid every other character in the task.

Uses of "Tokens":

GM Opposition tokens may be used to:

- Increase the difficulty of a task by one level; this is the basic use of a token
- To specify which specific PC will attempt to complete a specific task, e.g. the dwarf faced with a social task
- To cancel a success, this being typically through described "enemy action"
- To have failure in a single task give two failures in the challenge rather than one; this use must be announced **before** the task roll is made and, if the roll succeeds, the Token is still spent
- To specify a specific skill to be used for a task, overriding the players' proposal; note that the players may choose to approach things completely differently (change plan) in response, in which case the token is not spent
- To make any one skill for any one task trained only (i.e. the skill may be used in the task only by characters trained in the skill)

Earning and using "Advantages":

Any roll may be voluntarily taken at one higher level of difficulty, or an additional roll that counts for failure but not success may be taken at Moderate difficulty, to gain an "advantage". "Free" moderate tasks may be attempted that do not count for failures but give advantages if successful up to a limit of 2 such tasks per complexity level over 2.

An advantage may be used to:

- Reduce the difficulty level of a task by 1 level; use of the advantage **must** be announced before any dice are rolled for the task
- To cancel a failure if a Hard task is completed; this task does not count as a failure in the challenge if failed, and does not reverse any penalties inflicted by the original failure beyond counting towards failure in the challenge overall
- To cancel a failure if a Moderate task is completed; this task **does** count as a failure in the challenge if failed, and does not reverse any penalties inflicted by the original failure beyond counting towards failure in the challenge overall
- To block the deployment of a token; the token blocked is not spent, but may not be used on the current task in any way
- Allow a reroll of a skill by one player for any one task; this may be decided after all rolls for the task are complete
- To add an extra success earned by success in a task (i.e. the successful task gives 2 successes in the challenge rather than one); this use **must** be announced before the task success roll is made, and if failed the advantage is still spent

Power Use in Skill Challenges:

Powers may be used in skill challenges to help complete or to execute tasks. At-Will powers may sometimes be instrumental in the way a task is described, but they will not change the difficulty of the roll needed to complete the task.

Encounter powers will generally give a bonus of +3 to any single task for which they are used. Daily powers will generally reduce the difficulty of any single task that they are appropriate for by 1 level.

Action Points, Magic Items, Money and Rituals:

An action point can be spent to gain an additional "free" Moderate roll for an advantage, or to allow an *immediate* reroll of any skill. Action Point expenditures interrupt the resolution of a roll, so any advantage gained can be used to block a GM intervention, but this does not remove the need to announce an addition of a success or lowering of a task difficulty before the task is rolled for.

Magic Item powers may be used as for character powers, and properties are similar to At-Will powers for this purpose.

Consumable magic items, rituals and money may be used to give bonuses to task rolls or for specific effects as stipulated in the item description. Generally, an item or ritual must be 2 levels below the Challenge level or above to count for a bonus; guideline bonuses would be $+(\text{item/ritual level} + 3) - (\text{Challenge level})$. Money or valuables may be used where the modifier is in the nature of a bribe or sacrifice.

Note that some rituals and items give bonuses to specific skills or rolls; these should be treated as written, outside of the general formula which is intended for general, ad hoc uses of rituals or items.

The Passage of Time

Skill challenges where time is a relevant factor may take place in "time ticks" of combat rounds, short scenes (~5 mins), long scenes (~1 hour), full shifts (~6-8 hours, or an extended rest), weeks (or half-weeks of 3-4 days) or months.

Taking any rest in a challenge scaled to combat rounds forfeits the challenge. Taking a short rest in a challenge scaled in short scenes, or taking an extended rest in a challenge scaled to full shifts results in one automatic failure in the challenge. Taking an extended rest forfeits and challenge scaled in long scenes or smaller time aliquots. Taking periods out of the same length as the challenge time aliquot in general will accrue an automatic failure. Taking time out for a task that takes a full time aliquot of greater size than the one at which the challenge is scaled will forfeit the challenge.

Skill Challenge Summary

Complexity	1	2	3	4	5
Successes needed	4	6	8	10	12
Fixed tasks needed	6	8	10	12	14
Damaging failures needed	0	1	2	3	4
Tokens available	0	1	3	5	7
Free advantage rolls available	0	0	2	4	6