

Blades in the Dark: Proofreading Sample

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ROLLING THE DICE

Blades in the Dark uses six-sided dice. You roll several at once and read the **single highest result**.

- ◆ If the highest die is a **6**, it's a **full success**—things go well. If you roll more than one **6**, it's a **critical success**—you gain some additional advantage.
- ◆ If the highest die is a **4 or 5**, that's a **partial success**—you do what you were trying to do, but there are consequences: trouble, harm, reduced effect, etc.
- ◆ If the highest die is **1-3**, it's a **bad outcome**. Things go poorly. You probably don't achieve your goal and you suffer complications, too.

*If you ever need to roll but you have zero (or negative) dice, roll two dice and take the single lowest result. You can't roll a **critical** when you have zero dice.*

All the dice systems in the game are expressions of this basic format. When you're first learning the game, you can always "collapse" back down to a simple roll to judge how things go. Look up the exact rule later when you have time.

The most common result is **4/5**, partial success. This means that your character will tend to succeed, but at a cost—you'll rarely get away clean. *Blades in the Dark* is a game about underdog characters who are in over their heads. The dice mechanic reinforces this by making partial success crop up again and again. This is a good thing! Trouble is where the fun of the game happens.

To create a dice pool for a roll, you'll use a **trait** (like your **FINESSE** or your **PROWESS** or your crew's **TIER**) and take dice equal to its **rating**. You'll usually end up with one to four dice. Even one die is pretty good in this game—a 50% chance of success. The most common traits you'll use are the **action ratings** of the player characters. A player might roll dice for their **SKIRMISH** action rating when they fight an enemy, for example.

There are four types of rolls that you'll use most often in the game:

- ◆ **ACTION ROLL.** When a PC attempts an action that's dangerous or troublesome, **you make** an action roll to find out how it goes. Action rolls and their effects and consequences drive most of the game. See page XX.
- ◆ **DOWNTIME ROLL.** When the PCs are at their leisure after a job, they can perform downtime activities in relative safety. **You make** downtime rolls to see how much they get done. See page XX.
- ◆ **FORTUNE ROLL.** The GM can make a fortune roll to disclaim decision making and leave something up to chance. *How loyal is an NPC? How much does the plague spread? How much evidence is burned before the Bluecoats kick in the door?* See page XX.
- ◆ **RESISTANCE ROLL.** A player can make a resistance roll when their character suffers a consequence they don't like. The roll tells us how much stress their character suffers to reduce the severity of a consequence. *When you resist that "broken leg" harm, you take some stress and now it's only a **sprained ankle**, instead.* See page XX.

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STRESS & TRAUMA

STRESS

Player characters in *Blades in the Dark* have a special reserve of fortitude and luck called **STRESS**. When they suffer a consequence that they don't want to accept, they can take stress instead. The result of the **RESISTANCE ROLL** (see page XX) determines how much stress it costs to avoid a bad outcome.

*During a knife fight, Daniel's character, Cross, gets stabbed in the chest. Daniel rolls his **PROWESS** rating to resist, and gets a 2. It costs 6 stress, minus 2 (the result of the resistance roll) to resist the consequences. Daniel marks off 4 stress and describes how Cross survives.*

*The GM rules that the harm is reduced by the resistance roll, but not avoided entirely. Cross suffers level 2 harm (**Chest wound**) instead of level 3 harm (**Punctured lung**).*

PUSHING YOURSELF

You can use stress to push yourself for greater performance. For each bonus you choose below, take **2 stress** (each can be chosen once for a given action):

- ◆ Add **+1d** to your roll. (See **Action Rolls**, page XX.)
- ◆ Add **+1 level** to your effect. (See **Effect**, page XX.)
- ◆ Take action when you're incapacitated. (See **Consequences**, p. XX)

The ability to push yourself for +1d means you effectively have at least 1d in every action as long as you have stress to burn. Even 1d gives you a 50/50 chance of success. This is the core "scoundrel's luck" in the game system. Even when you're in a bad spot, trying to do something for which you have no experience or training, you can dig deep and give yourself a chance. (*A much better chance than rolling 2d and taking the lowest when you have zero dots.*)

It's important to remember this! Some players tend to forget and dismiss actions for which they have zero dots. "Nah, I can't do that. I don't have **Attune**. I'd have to roll 2d and take the worst. Ugh." As long as you have stress to burn, you can get 1d and give any action a decent shot.

TRAUMA

When a PC marks their last stress box, they suffer a level of **TRAUMA**. When you take **trauma**, circle one of your **trauma conditions** like *Cold, Reckless, Unstable*, etc. They're all described on the next page.

When you suffer **trauma**, you're taken out of action. You're "left for dead" or otherwise dropped out of the current conflict, only to come back later, shaken and drained. When you return, **you have zero stress** and your vice has been satisfied for the next downtime (see **Vice** on page XX).

STRESS & TRAUMA

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RESISTANCE & ARMOR

When your PC suffers a consequence that you don't like, you can choose to resist it. Just tell the GM, "No, I don't think so. I'm resisting that." Resistance is always automatically effective—the GM will tell you if the consequence is reduced in severity or if you avoid it entirely. Then, you'll make a **resistance roll** to see how much stress your character suffers as a result of their resistance.

You make the roll using one of your character's **attributes** (**INSIGHT**, **PROWESS**, or **RESOLVE**). The GM chooses the attribute, based on the nature of consequence:

- ◆ **INSIGHT**: Consequences from deception or understanding.
- ◆ **PROWESS**: Consequences from physical strain or injury.
- ◆ **RESOLVE**: Consequences from mental strain or willpower.

Your character suffers **6 stress** when they resist, **minus the highest die result from the resistance roll**. So, if you rolled a **4**, you'd suffer 2 stress. If you rolled a **6**, you'd suffer zero stress. If you get a **critical** result, you also **clear 1 stress**.

*Ian's character, Silas, is in a desperate **skirmish** with several Red Sash duelists and one of them lands a blow with their sword. Since the position was desperate, the GM inflicts severe **harm** (modified by any other factors). They tell Ian to record level 3 harm, **"Gut stabbed"** on Silas's sheet. Ian decides to resist the harm, instead. The GM says **he can reduce the harm by one level if he resists it**. Ian rolls 3d for Silas's **Prowess** attribute and gets a **5**. Silas takes 1 stress and the harm is reduced to level 2, **"Cut to the ribs."***

Usually, a resistance roll **reduces the severity** of a consequence. If you're going to suffer fatal **harm**, for example, a resistance roll would reduce the **harm to severe**, instead. **Of** if you got a complication when **you were sneaking** into the manor house, and the GM was going to mark **3** ticks on the **Alert** clock, she'd only mark **2** (or maybe **1**) if you **resisted the complication**.

You may only roll against a given consequence once.

The GM also has the option to rule that your character **completely avoids** the consequence. For instance, maybe you're in a sword fight and the consequence is getting disarmed. When you resist, the GM says that you avoid that consequence completely: you keep hold of your weapon.

By adjusting which consequences are reduced vs. which are avoided, the GM establishes the overall tone of your game. For a more daring game, most consequences will be avoided. For a grittier game, most consequences will only be reduced with resistance.

The GM may also threaten several consequences at once, then the player may choose which ones to resist (and make rolls for each).

*"She stabs you and then leaps off the balcony. **Level 2 harm** and you **lose the opportunity** to catch her with **fighting**."*

"I'll resist losing the opportunity by grappling her as she attacks. She can stab me, but I don't want to let her escape."

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