

THE SECRET WAR HAS BEGUN!

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ACHTUNG!

Player's Guide

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PLAYER'S
GUIDE

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Chapter 1

Introduction



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Chapter One

Introduction

From the Shadows

The Thompson's barrel glowed red hot as a hail of bullets tore the final Servitor apart, its body jerking like a scarecrow, before it fell and then lay twitching and writhing in the remnants of its Nazi uniform. Behind it stretched a long line of the creature's foul brethren.

"That's the last of them, Prof..." said Sergeant Brandon Carter, as beside him, resistance leader Ariane Dubois holstered her smoking Lugers and Major Jack McMasters wiped the edge of Nelly — his beloved broadsword — clean of foul encrusted gore.

"For now, Sergeant," agreed Deadman, although the Professor seemed to have already forgotten the Servitor horde and was pressing forward, hurrying towards the central plateau. "But I rather suspect they were merely a diversion, meant to delay us. Come along, we haven't much time."

"It is unusual, I have never seen the Professor so animated," whispered Dubois, as her pet demon, fluttered to rest on her shoulder and began to fastidiously clean its claws, "he is like a dog upon the trail."

"He makes rather a poor bloodhound though," grunted McMasters, "to your right, Professor!"

Deadman's course corrected, the quartet moved swiftly through the alien city. Its cyclopean scale was daunting, and its strange structures were constructed of unnatural angles and weird unsettling geometry — it smelt of a deep salt tang and something fouler too. The buildings were still damp, sporting weeds, corals, and fronds, from where they had recently surfaced from beneath the depths of the ocean.

At the base of a sweep of steps which were made for no human feet, there was evidence of another bitter battle. The vile amphibian forms of dozens of Deep Ones lay intertwined with insectoid Mi-Go drones and centurions, all in their death throes. Dark viscous liquids dripped and pooled from where they had cut each other to pieces. The reek of slaughter filled the air which also carried the faint whiff of ozone, from where high energy weapons had recently been discharged.

"I wonder what happened here?" pondered the Professor, "fascinating, no doubt, but we must press on." Awkwardly he began to clamber up the first of the gigantic granite steps.

After a stiff climb, the reconnaissance party reached the vast plateau of the city's central square. The silence was all consuming, not so much as a breath stirred.

At its centre, a vast structure loomed above them, a singular hub from which all the gigantic thoroughfares and slithering avenues of the sunken city radiated like spokes on a wheel. It was a truly gargantuan edifice, an enormous sky-spanning dome carved with all manner of foul sigils and devices and supported by blasphemously engraved pillars. A long avenue of profane, unholy statues marked a processional path toward a set of huge double doors, bolted, chained and so large that a single one of them would have dwarfed the USS Valiant, the destroyer which had deposited them on this remote island.

"I don't like the look of this, not one goddamn bit," said Carter, but undaunted, they plunged on, their footsteps echoing loudly in the unnatural silence. About half way towards the edifice, they began to make out black-robed human figures at the base of the doors, clustered like ants around a honey jar. Strange winged vehicles with bladed rotors were parked off to one side, each bearing a recognisable insignia, a black orb emanating jagged rays.

"The Black Sun!" growled McMasters.

"Fools! What on earth do they think they are doing?" Heedless, Deadman broke into a run with a vigour that belied his age and the rest of the team followed, trailing in his wake. As they drew closer, the faint sound of chanting grew louder and now they could feel the earth pulse and hum, as if a cosmic subterranean heartbeat were originating from deep within the structure.

Before the gates, a cabal of robed Nazi sorcerers were spread in a wide circle around a giant central altar where a cowed man, evidently their leader, intoned an off-key counterpoint over the bodies of several bound sacrificial victims. Flanking the coven was a platoon of leather-overcoated Black Sun stormtroopers, their helmets and gasmasks concealing their faces.



As they approached this grim tableau, the three soldiers instinctively moved into cover behind the statues, but Deadman ran on, waving his arms and exclaiming.

"Stop! Stop! You're meddling with forces beyond your comprehension!"

"Oh, I don't think so, Professor," the cowed sorcerer turned and regarded Deadman with a sneer.

"Albrecht Lohmann!" Deadman exclaimed, recognising the Black Sun's supreme sorcerer. "I should have known, only a Black Sun Prior would be audacious enough to..."

"Save your breath, Professor, you're late, far too late to prevent this happening now. Shoot him down!" The Black Sun troopers opened fire as one, but McMasters was a step ahead and was already hauling Deadman into cover and safety. Ignoring the gun battle which suddenly erupted around him, Lohmann resumed his dolorous chant and methodically began to slit the sacrificial victims' throats one by one...

"We must prevent him completing that incantation!" urged Deadman. Nodding to the others, McMasters unslung his bow, as the Professor began to mutter a charm of his own.

"Mam'selle Dubois, Sergeant Carter ... on my mark! Three... two... one... now!"

Carter's mythos-fuelled machine gun spat, unleashing a torrent of fire as Dubois' pin-point Luger salvo dropped half a dozen Nazi sorcerers in a single volley. Freed to assume its demon form, Dubois' creature screeched into the skies and then dropped like a thunderbolt, lashing with claws and tail, feasting on the troopers' souls. Yet as the bullets felled all around him, those that targeted Lohmann seemed to slow and falter, falling away, as if he were by protected by some sort of mystical shield.

"Professor?" queried McMasters.

Deadman's hands glowed and eldritch fire bathed McMaster's nocked arrow, imbuing it with sorcerous might. In less than a heartbeat, the bow bent, the mighty tension released and the arrow was in flight, zeroing in towards Lohmann's neck, glowing with a golden nimbus as it tore through his magical defences. Yet at the very last second, the Nazi sorcerer seemed to sense it coming and with a complex hand gesture deflected the missile, turning it aside so that it buried itself in his shoulder.

Grunting in pain, but undeterred, Lohmann continued his work, reversing the knife and plunging it into the last victim's chest, then raising the still beating heart aloft and uttering an incantation so powerful, so blasphemous, so alien, that it generated a percussive wave which flattened all around him.

"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn!"

For a moment, all was stillness again, all silence, and then the inscriptions around the lintel began to glow. There was an ominous pounding sound, reverberating footsteps which shook the very earth itself. With a crack, the huge chains enclosing the door snapped and the doors themselves burst open, thrown back with a rumble like an earthquake.

From deep within the darkness, crimson orbs burned with an unearthly malice. Then an enormous head emerged, a huge octopoid face, the lower half a mass of writhing tentacles. A colossal body rumbled forward into the daylight, leathery wings folded around its blasphemous warty hide.

The dreaming god had awoken and now it spoke...

What is Achtung! Cthulhu?

Achtung! Cthulhu is a setting for Lovecraftian roleplaying during World War II, which allows players to discover the truth behind the malign influence of the Mythos on the Nazi war machine and beyond, as conflict engulfs the globe during 1939-1945.

In this pulp-influenced world of brave Allied heroes and dauntless two-fisted adventure, players will take on the roles of Allied servicemen and women, secret agents, members of the resistance or even hapless civilians caught up in the wider conflict. All stand firm against the twisted might of the Nazi occult: the Cult of the Black Sun, who wield foul magic and summon captive horrors in their bid to unleash Yog-Sothoth, and *Nachtwölfe*, their nominal allies and rivals who place their trust in Atlantean technology, weird science, and strange wonder weapons to prevail.

Players will experience a world where dread secrets and powerful artefacts lie forgotten in ancient ruins, abandoned sites and forgotten cities, and peer deep into dusty

tomes and manuscripts seeking to understand eldritch knowledge that was never meant for the sight of mortals. They'll arm themselves with experimental technology and deadly weapons and learn to wield powerful magical spells or harness potent psychic powers to fight against this uncanny threat.

They'll also encounter exotic native races like the Deep Ones, undersea worshippers of the dreaming god Cthulhu, or the strange Mi-Go, fungoid-insectoid beings from the furthest corners of the solar system who have come to Earth for an unknown purpose. Towering over them all are the monsters, entities and gods of the Mythos themselves, who seek to take advantage of the chaos of the second world war to extend their dominion over the minds of men.

Will your heroes prevail against all odds, or will they, like so many others before, fall to the malign influence of the Mythos? That is your story to tell...

What is the 2d20 System?

During your game, your actions and their consequences affect the storyline uniquely. The instant a villain pulls the trigger, what happens when your hero tries to dive for cover behind the nearest sofa? Does the hail of bullets hit them full on, taking them down, or do they narrowly miss, spraying the nearby wall instead? When a character is in jeopardy and the outcome is in doubt, it's the dice that decide.

The player pulls out a pair of twenty-sided dice and rolls them to see what happens. A twelve and a fifteen means the hero will feel those slugs penetrating his flesh, his body twitching under the impact. If they rolled a three and a ten, the bullets might be stopped by the sofa's metal frame or whistle by his cheek, failing to find their prey.

Roleplaying games use rules in order to shape or resolve the drama of a story. **Achtung! Cthulhu** utilizes the **2d20 System** (2d20 is shorthand for "two twenty-sided dice"). The dice reign where the gamemaster does not, dictating if the shooter hits their mark, and the fallout and consequences of what follows.

The **2d20 system** also has some unique characteristics which aren't present in other roleplaying games. Rules for **Stress** let you know how much physical and mental

punishment your character can take. Rules for **Momentum** allow your character to push home any advantage, using that successful dive into cover to come up all guns blazing, or make their escape through a handily discovered back door. The gamemaster can use **Threat** to make a Nazi patrol materialise out of the ether, suddenly blocking the hero's escape route and sparking a further encounter (an event that is invoked as a **Complication**).

All of these rules and mechanics, help set the scenes, add suspense, and shape the thrilling storylines that characters from the **Achtung! Cthulhu** universe experience during their daring escapades.

The **2d20 System** is also here to lend a helping hand to players taking their first steps on that road, as they create a unique hero or heroine to fight in the Secret War. **Focuses, personal truths, talents** and other mechanical values come together to flesh out each character's personality — while **skills** and **attributes** define their virtues, as well as their weaknesses. The **2d20 System** does all of this in an easy-to-learn, quick-to-play manner and throughout this book, you'll find plenty of examples to help walk you through the mechanics in engaging ways. Buckle up, pack your trustiest revolver and prepare for action, it's going to be some ride!

Chapter 2

A Secret War?



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Chapter Two

A Secret War?

Rumours, Innuendo and Unverified Accounts

World War II is a global conflict which draws nations from Europe, the Americas, and the far east into its orbit as battles erupt on fronts as diverse as the sweltering jungles of Borneo, the frozen steppes of Russia, and even the remote island chains of the Pacific.

Yet beneath this global conflict another war is being fought, a secret war, which few know about and even fewer understand. Yet, listen closely, when men are in extremis and on the peripheries, you may just hear tales of strange events, unusual happenings, and unsettling accounts of the uncanny—episodes which never make the papers and which leave their tellers fearing for their very sanity.

If you wish your character to enter the strange world of **Achtung! Cthulhu** unburdened by this dangerous foreknowledge then this chapter is not for you, and you should skip forward to Chapter 3: Playing the Game.

However, if you must know more, these short quotes and vignettes are meant to represent some of the rumours, gossip and innuendo which swirl around during wartime and which your character may have overheard. Randomly pick between one and five of them, which will represent the knowledge you have gleaned listening to things you shouldn't. If you simply must know the full story or wish to play a character who has increased knowledge of the arcane, then read them all... at your peril.



SECTION M

"When that V2 landed without going off, we thought we were lucky, surviving by a one-in-a-million chance. When we saw what slithered out of it, and what it did to Ada... well, perhaps it would've been better if it had exploded."

— Vera Baker, East End Resident

"I'd never seen a man killed by an umbrella before, but if it's taught us anything, this war has taught us to improvise!"

Lieutenant Daphne Smythe, WAAF

It was an unusual mission anyway, some obscure mountain in the middle of Norway, no nearby bases, no obvious strategic value. As we came up on target, the skipper gave the order and I'm staring down the sight. The crosshair aligns, and it's bombs away, and they're tumbling down, right on target. But just as they were about to detonate, the rock split apart like an enormous mouth, all jagged fangs and gaping maw, and it simply swallowed them whole. No explosions, no craters, nothing. I've never seen anything like it before, and I doubt I ever will again."

Bombardier Freddie Jones RAF

"They're cheery little fellows those mountain men, led by that Subedar Gopal chap, always ready with a winning smile and a hot cup of char. But once those kukris come out, phew, they're all business and fierce as snow leopards. You wouldn't fancy being Jerry when they come calling I can tell you."

Major Derek 'Winter' Frost,
Ox and Beds Regiment

March 20th - 1943

"I'd never heard anything like it. Two days we'd fought Jerry to a standstill and we were pretty beat up, and loled up in the ruins of an old church. I'd pulled first watch and the fog was heavy, wisps of it clinging to the marshy ground. It came on gradually, a weird, uncanny, sound like something flapping wetly, and it smelled so rotten. Then they broke out of the fog, nightmares in SS uniforms with tentacles for heads. I was so shocked I couldn't shout a warning, could only watch as they sprinted toward our lines with a speed that was unnatural. Just as those horrors were about to overwhelm us, there was an eruption like a battalion of giant kettles going off and jets of steam spat out everything those monsters down. It was some of our own boys, wearing red berets and totting some kind of weird experimental weaponry. Captain Harris put his hand on my shoulder and said, 'Thanks old boy, we'll take it from here.'"

Private Mike Finn, XV King's Rifles

"I'M NOT ONE TO TALK, BUT THERE'S SOME STRANGE GOINGS ON OVER THERE AT CLEMENS PARK, PLENTY OF COMINGS AND GOINGS AT ALL HOURS OF THE DAY AND NIGHT AND UNUSUAL ARMY TYPES, BOFFINS AND ALL SORTS WHO COME IN FOR A DRINK SOMETIMES. IT'S ALL VERY HUSH HUSH, BUT CARELESS TALK COSTS LIVES YOU KNOW, SO I'LL SAY NO MORE... THAT'S VERY KIND, I WILL HAVE ONE MYSELF."

GEORGE SMITH,
LANDLORD OF THE GREEN DRAGON,
CUDNAM, KENT

"We were in a tight spot, fighting back to back for our lives against those creatures, and I doubt we had a minute left before they'd have done for us all. Then we heard it, the distant skirl of the pipes wailing like a horde of demented madmen. The things heard it too, for they started to quail visibly then began to break, slinking off with their tentacles between their legs. I've never been so glad to see a Scotsman, I can tell you."

Captain Fred Willis, King's XIth Rifles



MAJESTIC

"So, it's D-Day plus six and we're pushing inland, making good ground as the Krauts are in head-long retreat. We move into this small hamlet, and Joe spots a set of stairs leading down and we're thinking 'hm, maybe there's some wine down there that's in need of liberation. Anyways, we take a nose around down in that cellar and there's no booze, just all these Krauts wearing strange masks and uniforms, laid out in a regular pattern around this kinda altar. I guess. They're dead, but there's also this book, old looking, kinda creepy with some strange symbols on it. For some reason, I gotta know what's inside, like it's calling to me. Just as I'm about to part the covers, a hand snatches it away. I look round there's this older fella, dressed like a college professor or something, and he says, 'I wouldn't touch that, soldier, not if you value your immortal soul.'"

Corporal Dwayne Rogers,
Big Red One Division

"The Department of Mumbo Jumbo is what Hoover used to call them, but damn, I'm glad they're fully operational now. I wouldn't want our boys in the field to face what the Brits had to in '39 without some kind of esoteric support."

Colonel Devon Archer,
5th Infantry Division

"Those Salamander guys are crazy. I mean real crazy, de-ranged, pyromaniacs by name and by nature. I casually ask one for a light and next thing I know, he fires up my smoke with his flamethrower. Burned my eyebrows clean off!"

Private Dan Kelly, US Army

"You don't think a woman can head up the agency? Underestimate her at your peril, Miss Sally Armitage has bigger balls than any man I know and a real nose for spotting talent."

— Anonymous witness
during closed Congressional hearing

Man, I've never been so glad to see anyone in my life. There were these things, creatures like insects, but bigger and with razor teeth and wings and they seemed to spring fresh from the bodies faster than we could mow them down. Anyways, those guys, the *Turks* or whatever dropped straight outta the sky like they was the 7th Cavalry or something. And the firepower they unleashed on those bloodborn? Well, it was just mind-blowing..."

Sergeant David Harris, US First Army





BLACK SUN

"Have you ever seen dead men rise? Men who you fought alongside, who you watched spill their blood, who you held as the light went out in their eyes? Have you seen them as they come back to life? Have you ever watched as they twitched and staggered and stood, leaking blood, their sightless eyes staring at you from beyond the abyss, a shambling parody of their former selves, raised by the power of hell magic?"

Hauptmann Ernst Fischer

"The snow covers everything, blankets the frozen city, but there's something living under it, something unnatural and it takes a fresh victim every night. It's swift, silent and deadly and it leaves no trace."

Feldwebel Otto Brandt, 4th Panzer Army, Stalingrad

"The sand gets everywhere, the sandstorms will strip exposed flesh to the bone and the fly swarms are appalling. But, my friend, if you ever see anything that resembles a ziggurat in the deeper wastes, then turn around immediately and head back from whence you came. No Egyptian Pharaoh ever built those, but something much older and far more dangerous."

Feldwebel Kurt Jaeger, Afrika Korps

"I don't like them and I don't trust them. An aura of unwholesomeness clings to them like a shroud on a corpse. I'd rather fight alongside the legions of hell than those Black Sun bastards. Come to think of it, they're pretty much the same thing."

Corporal Friedrich Fleischer

NACHTWÖLFE



"The American tankers are brave men, no doubt, but their Stuarts and Shermans are no match for our Tigers and Panthers one on one. It takes a strange kind of courage to face a superior enemy but there are so many of them, and they swarm like crows flapping around an eagle, dragging us down with sheer numbers. So that we must always fall back, fall back. It was during one such retreat that we were pursued by a squadron of Shermans. We came to a crossroads and prepared to make our stand.

The odds were against us, you can only fire so many rounds in a minute and they can flank and encircle, probe where your armour is weakest. But what should come rumbling out of a nearby barn, but a tank destroyer of an unfamiliar design, four gun barrels lit by a strange blue glow. It made short work of those attacking Shermans, slicing through them like they were made of aluminium. I popped the hatch to thank our saviours but they did not emerge and all I could see was a curious wolf's paw insignia on the turret, as it trundled off in pursuit, far swifter than any tracked vehicle has a right to be."

— Rolf Earhart, Tiger Tank Commander

"The kristall ... the Blauer Kristall... that is all those wolves think about. If you offered them their own weight in diamonds or a fistful of the Kristall, they would choose the Kristall every time."

Horst Köhler, miner

"One guy, it was just one guy I tell you. He had on this strange backpack and these kind of weird plates, one in each hand. But he lifted that Sherman clean over his head and tossed it into a ditch, like I'd toss away a spent k-ration."

— Private James Sterling,
50th Infantry Division, US Army

Mi-Go.

We were a flying column deep in the heart Burmese Jungle, when we came across an ancient tumbledown temple. It was crawling with them: drones, warriors and more. In an instant we were surrounded, and it looked like our end had come. Without thinking, I laid down my arms, walked forward speaking as calmly as I could, managed to convey that we were lost and intended no harm—in the same tone I'd use if I were making enquires at a country pub for directions. A single [redacted] emerged and in a buzzing approximation of human speech it intoned 'Begone!'. We didn't need a second invitation I can tell you."

Major Malcolm Reid, Chindits, Burma

"Just a room full of brains in jars, who, what... is responsible for that kind of horror? But that wasn't the worst of it, for they still lived in some bizarre way, if you can call that life. Then I began to hear their voices, not out loud, but inside my head, voices that screamed and screamed and wouldn't let up."

Private Matthew Wyatt,
29th Infantry Division, US Army

"This war is fought on many fronts and in many theatres, but few stranger than the quest which took us to the peaks of the ancient Himalaya. There, on certain paths where the villagers will not tread, you can see them rise at the full moon, a swarm which dances and capers in honour of gods whose names were ancient before the Earth was formed..."

Captain David Hutchings, Indian Army

EYES ONLY

DEEP ONES

"There are things, vast things that lurk beneath the surface hidden amongst those ageless depths that would drive men insane if they could but see them in their entirety. They are the leviathans which belong to that ancient undersea race and those behemoths can seize and squash a U-boat as easily as cuttlefish crushes a clam."

Captain Horst Grobler, U-Boat 645

"They walk amongst us you know, half-breeds, hybrids, some strange unholy mix of man and beast. Who knows how many of them there are or how high they've ascended. The Senate, Congress, even the White House itself?"

Commander Paul McAvoy,
Office of Naval Intelligence

"We swam toward that vast undersea city and my first impression was of a large grouping of rocky stone towers, lit by the phosphorescent fronds of seaweeds and other strange lambent fish species. The towers were adorned with all manner of esoteric markings and clustered around a central monolithic structure which seemed to function as the creatures' civic centre or more likely, place of worship. It was there I encountered an assembly of their elders, mages and warriors, and they had a fearful ultimatum waiting for me."

Major Desiree Jones

"I've seen them, strange beings rising from the waves on a cloudless night when the tide is in flood, with their unnatural eyes and their spiked crests. That obscene chattering speech as each calls to each, ugly, hopping flopping things that no sane mind should have to countenance."

Pierre Malraux, French Resistance

Chapter 3

Playing the Game



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Chapter Three

Playing the Game

Achtung! Cthulhu is a game of heroic deeds and bold action in a Secret War where dauntless Allied heroes battle tittering Nazi villains in epic, thrilling, seat-of-your-pants adventures. Yet even the bravest heroes require rules to help frame and describe their mighty deeds and actions.

This chapter covers the core rules of *Achtung! Cthulhu* forming the foundation of the game, and will be referenced regularly, so you should read and familiarise yourself with them for use during roleplaying sessions and adventures.

Dice

Achtung! Cthulhu uses two different types of dice to resolve the actions a character attempts and the situations they face. If more than one dice of the same type will be rolled at once; these dice are referred to as a **dice pool**.

D20s

The most commonly-used is the twenty-sided die, abbreviated to **d20**. D20s are used for resolving skill tests, and for rolling on random tables. Two to five d20s will be required, noted as **Xd20**, where X is the number of dice to be rolled. 2d20 means that two twenty-sided dice should be rolled, and 5d20 means five should be rolled. It's helpful to have at least two d20s for each player, as more than one player may be rolling at the same time.

Rerolls

Special talents or other rules, allow you to reroll dice. Roll those dice again, and the new results replace the original ones, even if they are worse.

Some situations allow for a specific number of dice to be rerolled, while others allow all the dice in a pool to be rerolled. You can always choose how many dice you want to reroll, up to the number listed — you can always choose *not* to reroll a die if you want to keep the result.

CHALLENGE DICE

The second type of dice are **Challenge Dice**, abbreviated to this symbol: . These six-sided dice are used primarily for inflicting stress in combat. Each  has four faces with three possible results — a score of 1, a score of 2, and two faces showing “”, or an **effect**—as well as two blank faces.

Effects inflict 1 stress, and also trigger special effects like additional damage (see Chapter 4: Action p.26), depending on the circumstances of the roll. If there are multiple special rules that trigger when an effect is rolled, then all of them trigger even if only 1 effect is rolled.

A pool of Challenge Dice is rolled all at once, and their results added together. Multiple Challenge Dice are noted as **X**, where X is the number of dice rolled. So, **4** indicates that four Challenge Dice should be rolled, and their results added together.

Roll the Bones

If you don't have special Challenge Dice available, you can use normal six-sided dice instead; treat any roll of a 3 or 4 as blank, and any roll of a 5 or a 6 as an effect.

Challenge Dice Result

D6 ROLL	CHALLENGE DICE ROLL	RESULT
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	0	0
4	0	0
5	1, plus effect	1, plus an effect
6	1, plus effect	1, plus an effect



Skill Tests

Player characters in *Achtung! Cthulhu* are daring, dynamic individuals, skilled in their chosen fields, and knowledgeable enough in other fields to ensure they can overcome a wide range of problems, given enough time and the right tools.

In any situation where a character's success is in doubt, where failure is interesting, or where there is risk involved, you need to make a **skill test**.

ROLLING THE DICE

1. **Choose Attribute + Skill:** The gamemaster chooses which **attribute** and which **skill** are appropriate for the skill test, and if any of the character's **focuses** apply. Add together the attribute and the skill chosen: this is the **target number** for each d20.
2. **Set the Difficulty:** The gamemaster sets the **difficulty** for the skill test, normally between 0 and 5. The difficulty is the number of **successes** you must generate with your dice to pass the skill test.
3. **Roll the Dice Pool:** Assemble your dice pool. You start with 2d20, but you can buy up to 3 more d20s with Momentum (p.20), and after you've added any dice, roll the entire dice pool.
4. **Check For Successes:** Each d20 that rolls equal to or less than your **attribute + skill** target number scores 1 success.
 - a. Any die that rolls a 1 is a critical success, and generates 2 successes.
 - b. If you have a focus that applies you will score a critical success if a d20 rolls equal to or less than your **skill** rating.
 - c. Each die that rolls a 20 causes a **complication**. (p.22).
5. **Check Successes Against the Difficulty:** If the number of **successes** generated equals or beats the difficulty of the skill test, then you have passed. If the number of successes scored is less than the difficulty, you have failed.
 - a. Each success above the difficulty becomes a point of **Momentum**, (p.20) a valuable resource for players which tips the odds in their favour.
6. **Get the Result:** The gamemaster describes the **outcome**, and if the test was successful you can spend Momentum to improve the result further. After this, the GM introduces any complications.

Behind Enemy Lines

Captain Jim Swann, a grizzled British special forces veteran and Section M operative, is deep behind enemy lines on a scouting mission to infiltrate a Black Sun castle, when he encounters two Black Sun troopers out on patrol. Swann needs to get round them, and needs to do it quietly. He wants to sneak past them, which will need a skill test.

Swann has an **Agility** attribute of 10 and a **Stealth** skill of 2, so the target number of his skill test is 12 (10+2). The Black Sun troopers have walked past him, so as long as he can be quiet he can sneak off behind them, so the **difficulty** of the test is 1. He rolls 2d20, which scores 7 and 15. 7 is below his target number, while 15 isn't, but he's done it! He got 1 success, which is enough to tip-toe quietly away from the patrolling troopers.

TEST DIFFICULTY

When the Gamemaster calls for a skill test, they set a **difficulty**, which describes how challenging the task is. Skill tests have a base difficulty of 1, though more routine skill tests can have a difficulty of 0. Difficulties can also be affected by **truths** (see p.21).

You will always be informed of the difficulty of the skill tests you attempt: player characters are skilled professionals with fate on their side, who can evaluate how challenging an activity is. This allows you to decide whether you want to spend Momentum or Fortune points to improve your chance of success.

Example Difficulties

DIFFICULTY	EXAMPLE
0	Researching a widely known subject
1	Overcoming a simple lock
2	Driving across challenging terrain
3	Disguising yourself well enough to pass muster under intense scrutiny
4	Deciphering an unknown alien language
5	Retaining your sanity as your stare into the face of an elder god!

Difficulty Zero Tests

If a test is difficulty 0, it does not require a dice roll: it is automatically successful with zero successes, and no risk of complications. However, because no roll is made, it cannot generate Momentum and you cannot spend any Momentum on the outcome.

At the gamemaster's discretion, you can still choose to roll the dice against a difficulty of 0 to generate Momentum as normal — because zero successes are required, every success generated is Momentum — but complications can still occur if you roll a 20.

Reconnaissance

Sergeant Sarah 'Roo' Walker is engaged in reconnaissance of a Nazi checkpoint on the approach to the Black Sun castle. She can see the basic lay of the land thanks to her binoculars, so the skill test is difficulty 0, but she decides to roll anyway so she can pick out more details. She gets 1 success, generating 1 Momentum. From her vantage point she can ask the gamemaster a question about the checkpoint, however one of her d20s rolls a 20, causing a complication. The GM describes the Black Sun guards pointing at her through her binoculars — sunlight has glinted off her binocular lens and she's been spotted. Now she needs to get out of there, sharpish!

ASSISTING OTHER CHARACTERS

If the situation allows, characters can work together as a team when attempting a skill test, with one character acting as the **leader**, and the others as **assistants**. To assist with a skill test, you must describe how you are assisting the skill test's leader. If the gamemaster agrees, then you roll only 1d20, using your own **attribute + skill** target number, and your own focus (if any). So long as the leader generates at least one success, then you add your successes to theirs. You can still generate complications as normal.

The gamemaster has the final say on whether you can assist — there might be limited space, or the test might be something only one person can attempt. You do not have to use the same **attribute + skill** combination as the other characters involved in the test — indeed, assistance is often best provided by contributing something different. You cannot purchase additional d20s while assisting, but your dice don't count towards the leader's 5d20 limit.

OPPOSED TESTS

At times, you will find yourself in direct opposition to an opponent, and these situations call for an **opposed test**. With an opposed test, there is an **active character** (the character who is trying to accomplish something) and the **reactive character** (the one trying to resist or avoid the active character's efforts). If there is more than one character on each side, then they may assist (see below).

Both characters attempt a skill test normally, with a base difficulty of 1, which may be adjusted by the GM. The outcome of the opposed test depends on both characters' results.

- ✘ **Active Character Succeeds, Reactive Character Fails:** The active character achieves their goal, and their test is successful.
- ✘ **Active Character Fails, Reactive Character Succeeds:** The active character fails to achieve their goal, but the reactive character completes theirs.
- ✘ **Both Characters Fail:** Neither character achieves their goal.
- ✘ **Both Characters Succeed:** Compare the total Momentum generated on each character's skill test. The character with the higher Momentum wins, and achieves their goal, but loses one Momentum for each Momentum their opponent scored. The loser then discards all the Momentum they generated, and cannot spend any. In the case of a tie, the active character wins, but doesn't have any Momentum left.

Toodle-pip Old Chap!

Captain Jim Swann has now infiltrated the Black Sun castle and pauses for moment in a forbidden library to take stock and get his bearings. A Black Sun Canon suddenly emerges from the shadows and with no time to draw weapons, Swann decides to take to his heels, with the Canon in swift pursuit.

Swann attempts to lose the Canon in the castle's labyrinthine corridors, so they both need to make an **Agility + Athletics** test, with a difficulty of 1. They roll and check their successes. Swann scores 2 while the Canon only scores 1, meaning they both passed the test but Swann scores one more Momentum than the Canon. Swann wins, saves his Momentum, and utters a quick "Toodle-pip, old boy!" to the Canon as he ducks around several corners, doubles back and manages to lose himself in the maze of ancient corridors.



EXTENDED TESTS

Some actions and outcomes are too complicated to be covered by a single test and in this case, you will attempt an extended test which is used to represent problems that take more time and effort. This could be a lengthy action like cracking a complicated code, sneaking through a shadowy compound, or working multiple tumblers to break into a bank vault. Extended tasks use the same mechanism as taking stress and injuries in combat, except these injuries are called **breakthroughs**.

Breakthroughs

The breakthroughs needed to complete an extended test can be thought of as the key moments when solutions are discovered to solve a difficult problem. Depending on the scale of the problem, the number of breakthroughs required is called the **magnitude** — and ranges between 1 and 5. When you have made enough breakthroughs, you've passed the extended test.

Stress Track

Each extended test has a stress track, and a number of breakthroughs which must be made before the extended test is complete. The stress track represents how much work is needed to resolve the problem, ranging in size from 5 to 20, while the breakthroughs represent the tasks that need to be completed.

Resistance

If a problem is especially tricky, the extended test may also have some native resistance which reduces the effect of your stress rolls (it can be thought of a bit like Armour or Cover, hindering your efforts to inflict stress). Most extended tests have a resistance of 0, but some will have more, reducing the stress you can inflict on the track each time.

Resolving Extended Tests

Whenever you pass a skill test to overcome the extended task, you roll 4d6 with bonus d6 from any applicable attribute (for example the bonus you gain from your Brawn attribute for a physical task). If you have the right tools or an appropriate skill kit, you might also gain the Piercing or Vicious effects from your rolls (the GM will decide) (see page 35).

If you inflict 5 stress in one go, or the test's stress track is filled, you have achieved a breakthrough! But even before that, individual breakthroughs can be made at the GM's discretion which will affect your subsequent progress. These might include:

- ❖ **Difficulty Reduction:** Any remaining skill tests made to overcome the problem are reduced in difficulty by 1.
- ❖ **Resistance Reduction:** The stress track's resistance is reduced.
- ❖ **Challenge Dice Increase:** From now on you gain +1d6 for each roll made against the problem.
- ❖ **Establish a Truth:** A new truth is established, reducing or increasing the difficulty of your skill tests.