

Henry 'Wraith' Francis (circa 2010).....	323
'Rabid' Anne Gareth (circa 2010).....	324
Dr. Jurassic (circa 2010).....	326
The Enforcer (circa 2010).....	328
Civilians and Soldiers.....	330
Blue-Collar Worker (72 pts).....	330
Hardened Criminal (80 pts).....	330
Performer (79 pts).....	330
White-Collar Worker (80 pts).....	330
Federal Agent (125 pts).....	330
Police Detective (120 pts).....	330
Police SWAT Team Member (125 pts).....	331
Police Patrol Officer (110 pts).....	331
Military Officer (115 pts).....	331
Soldier (95 pts).....	331
Animals.....	332
Avian, Raptor.....	332
Bear.....	332
Canine, Normal Dog.....	332
Canine, Large Dog.....	333
Feline, Wild Cat.....	333
Feline, Big Cat.....	333
Feline, Huge Cat.....	334
Horse.....	334
APPENDIX B: HOW TO PLAY	
A ROLEPLAYING GAME.....	335
What's Gaming?.....	335
The Logic of the Setting.....	336
Why is this 'Fun'?.....	337
Character Generation, or, The Joy of Ham.....	337
<i>Trouble: The Overactor</i>	338
Combat: The Crimson Bliss of Power.....	339
<i>Trouble: The Powergamer</i>	340
Setting and the Sedentary Compensations of the Couch Potato.....	341
Your Mission, Should You Choose to Accept It.....	341
Show Up.....	341
<i>Trouble: Mr. Lazybones</i>	342
Pay Attention.....	343
Let It Go.....	343
Share.....	344
Contribute.....	344

APPENDIX C: HOW TO RUN

A ROLEPLAYING GAME.....	345
The GM's Basic Duties.....	345
The Plot.....	345
<i>A Quick Lexicon</i>	345
The Hook.....	346
<i>Paper Tigers</i>	347
Rising Action.....	348
Climax.....	349
Falling Action.....	351
Conflict.....	351
Rules Resolution.....	353
<i>Keeping the Villain Alive</i>	354
Character.....	355
Description.....	356
The GM's Advanced Duties.....	358
Trust.....	358
Tone Control.....	359
Leadership.....	359
Fair Conflict.....	360
Being a <i>Wild Talents</i> Game Master.....	361
The Iron and the Glass.....	361
Four-Color Options.....	362
Red: I Slept Through History Class.....	362
Gold: Personality Mechanics.....	363
Blue: The 'Woohoo' Issue.....	365
Black: 'Destroy Him, My Punk-Rock Homeless Minions!'.....	366

APPENDIX D: ADVENTURES, SCENES

AND CHALLENGES.....	368
Building an Adventure.....	368
Building a Scene.....	368
Building a Challenge.....	369
Not Whether, But Why.....	369

WILD TALENTS REFERENCE..... 370

CHARACTER SHEET..... 374

INDEX..... 376

Introduction

Welcome to *Wild Talents* Second Edition. *Wild Talents* is a roleplaying game that emulates the worlds of comic book superheroes. You make up the characters and their adventures. From the deadliness of *Top 10* and *V for Vendetta* to the four-color action of *Spider-Man*, *JLA*, and *The Avengers*, *Wild Talents* is built to handle it all.

Wild Talents aims to capture the dynamic action of superhero comics. Superhero games should be fast and exciting. The rules should propel the action, not slow it down. They should be flexible enough to handle anything, quickly, without a lot of page-flipping.

Wild Talents does this with a simple, intuitive rules set called the “One-Roll Engine,” or O.R.E. All character actions are resolved with one roll of the dice. In combat you don’t roll to see who goes first, then again to see if you hit, then again to see if your power works, then again to see how much damage you do, then again to see how far you knock

your target across the street, and so on. And you don’t need to spend a lot of time looking up rules and results for every single action.

In *Wild Talents*, you roll once. That tells you all you need to know.

Creating a character in *Wild Talents* is simple and straightforward, and the modular construction of the rules allows you to tweak them to fit the tone of your game, from the deadly to the over-the-top, instantly.

In its standard, unmodified rules, *Wild Talents* strives for a “realistic” feel, to give a sense of consequences for using superhuman powers with abandon—or failing to use them properly when the time is right. But every chapter is loaded with options to “open up” the game to four-color action and beyond.

The result? A different kind of superhero game. A game that plays fast and lets you easily adjust the rules to your style, making anything possible—from lighthearted brawls to take-no-prisoners realism.

Wild Talents is your game.



About Roleplaying

Wild Talents is a tabletop roleplaying game. What does that mean? First off, it's typically played by a small group of people around a table. You might be spread out on sofas, sitting together at a coffee shop, or all logged on to the same chat room, but "tabletop" is how it started and that's the term that stuck.

In a roleplaying game, you and a few friends come up with interesting characters, see what happens to them, and decide how they react. Typically, each player takes the role of one particular character and describes what that character tries to do in the game. I say "tries" because other characters or events might interfere with what you want to do. What makes a roleplaying game dramatic is that sense of conflict, of uncertainty, where the most interesting character you can create gets embroiled in situations and circumstances you couldn't predict.

So what does a game look like? You have several players, usually between three and six. Each player describes what a character says and does in response to what the other characters say and do. Sometimes you just say what your character is doing, and sometimes you actually speak as your character, like in a play. There's no hard and fast rule on when you do one or when you do the other. The point is to be creative and have fun playing "in character." We've tried to capture the heart of it in the example of play on page 34.

Typically one player of the group serves as game moderator, which is sort of a combination of narrator, director, referee and host. The game moderator (GM) doesn't play just one character—he or she plays every character except the player characters. The GM plays everybody that the player characters meet and comes up with interesting situations for them to resolve. You play the game in "sessions," which basically means whatever stretch of time for which you've gotten together to play in an evening. Most gamers like a session to be two to four hours.

A series of interesting situations is usually called an adventure, and a series of related adventures is often called a campaign. Sometimes people play one-shot, stand-alone adventures, and sometimes they play ongoing campaigns where characters grow and change over time. You can read more about playing and running games in this book's appendices.

Since the GM isn't responsible for a single character, his or her job is to be unbiased, to use the rules of the game to determine what happens when the player characters act.

The game rules, of course, are what you're reading now. *Wild Talents* is a game because it has rules that help you create a character who fits in the group's shared setting, and that help you resolve conflicts in that setting in an exciting way. Instead of arguing about who wins or loses, you use the

Author's Note

I'd like to thank all the people who've made *Wild Talents* a success even before it was released—those gamers out there who spent time (and money) on my ideas. The crazed gamers who frequent the Arc Dream mailing lists and discussion board have my undying loyalty. Thanks so much, guys—you know who you are. Particular thanks go to Rob Mansperger for his terrific design work on our Web site.

I'd also like to thank the ever-patient Greg Stolze, the erudite Kenneth Hite, and the brilliant Todd Shearer for all their hard work on this book. If you like what you find here, support them! Check out Ken's weekly column at Indie Press Revolution (www.indiepressrevolution.com). Buy their stuff—I do!

Again, thanks everybody!

Dennis Detwiller

Wild Talents rules and roll some dice. A character with the advantage usually wins, but in chaotic situations like the big battles that superheroes love so much, strange things can happen.

Wild Talents is a superhero roleplaying game, so the player characters are superheroes. But we use that term in its broadest sense—they're characters with superhuman powers. They might not wear spandex; the hardback edition of *Wild Talents* comes with a detailed game setting in which the superhumans, the "Talents," never wear outlandish outfits. And your characters might not be heroes. They might be supervillains. Or they might be ordinary people trying to get by in extraordinary circumstances.

The most important thing is, as a player in a roleplaying game, you decide what your character is like and what your character wants to do. You're not waiting for some other writer to determine your character's fate. You're not waiting for a new add-on to a computer program to let you choose new powers or new directions for your story. You and your friends work together to tell any kind of story you want. That's the unique thrill of tabletop roleplaying.

What You Need to Play

You don't need much to play *Wild Talents* besides this rulebook.

You need lots of ten-sided dice. You can find them at comic book shops or at online stores.

You need scratch paper for writing notes and drawing maps and pictures.

You need characters.

If you're the game moderator (GM), you need whatever notes or maps you have prepared to run the adventure.

Other than that, all you need is imagination.

The New Edition

The first edition of *Wild Talents* appeared in 2006 after literally years of patient waiting by eager fans. The fans were the impetus for *Wild Talents*, after all. It came in response to fan support of our World War II superhero game, *Godlike: Superhero Roleplaying in a World On Fire, 1936–1946*, published originally by Hobgoblynn Press before *Godlike's* creator co-founded Arc Dream Publishing and took over its publication. Fans loved *Godlike's* fast, intense action, and its emphasis on the psychological toll of warfare and heroism, but they wanted to see it in other settings. They came up with *Godlike* games set in ancient Rome, in Vietnam, in ancient England, in worlds of medieval fantasy—and most of all they wanted to see the unique alternate history of *Godlike* extended to the present day. We built *Wild Talents* to make it easy to adapt the rules to any setting and any style of play.

And then we struggled to bring it to print. Arc Dream is a small company. We publish in a niche (gritty, dangerous superhero roleplaying games) of a niche (superhero roleplaying games) of a niche industry (roleplaying games; didn't Tom Hanks make a movie about those once?). We knew from the start that we wanted *Wild Talents* to be a beautiful book, and artists Christopher Shy, Samuel Araya and Todd Shearer produced gorgeous full-color art. But beautiful, full-color books are not cheap.

Finally, we came up with a solution. We'd turn to the fans who demanded *Wild Talents* from the start. We set up a "pledge" drive, where fans could send us their email addresses and say how many copies of *Wild Talents* they'd be willing to pre-order if we had enough to proceed. The goal was to get a few hundred "pledges" in place, and then when it looked like we had enough, we'd invite them to actually place pre-orders, and with that money we'd print a limited edition of 1,000 copies. This being

a niche and all, we figured it would take at least a few weeks to generate the number of pledges we needed to go to press.

It took 36 hours.

We love our players.

A few months later, every one of those 1,000 copies was in the hands of fans. And gamers all over started crying out that they wanted copies, too.

So we started on the new edition. We considered simply reprinting the first edition, but that idea went out the door pretty quickly. First of all, our contracts with the artists limited us to one printing. We'd need to make new deals with them to go to press again. That by itself wasn't a deal breaker; the artists were terrific and we loved to work with them. But we found a lot of things we wanted to do differently in the game. A lot of rules needed to be streamlined and clarified. A lot more information could go into the history of the game world. A lot more sample characters could be added.

Before long, it was clear we weren't looking at an expanded version of the same game, we were looking at a new edition altogether. And if we're already doing a new edition, and we'd need to get new art contracts anyway, let's go ahead and get new art to really make it stand apart, and let's see if we can get it all done by one artist so the book has a truly coherent feel.

So you have *Wild Talents* Second Edition. Its rules have been reworked to better fit the tone we want the game to achieve, and it has all-new illustrations by Todd Shearer, an old friend whose work has made us proud time and again.

If you like *Wild Talents*, you ought to look at the *Wild Talents Essential Edition*, which features the complete rules of *Wild Talents* Second Edition but without the settings chapters. It's paperback, digest-size, black and white, and at only \$10 priced for every game table.

We hope you enjoy *Wild Talents*.

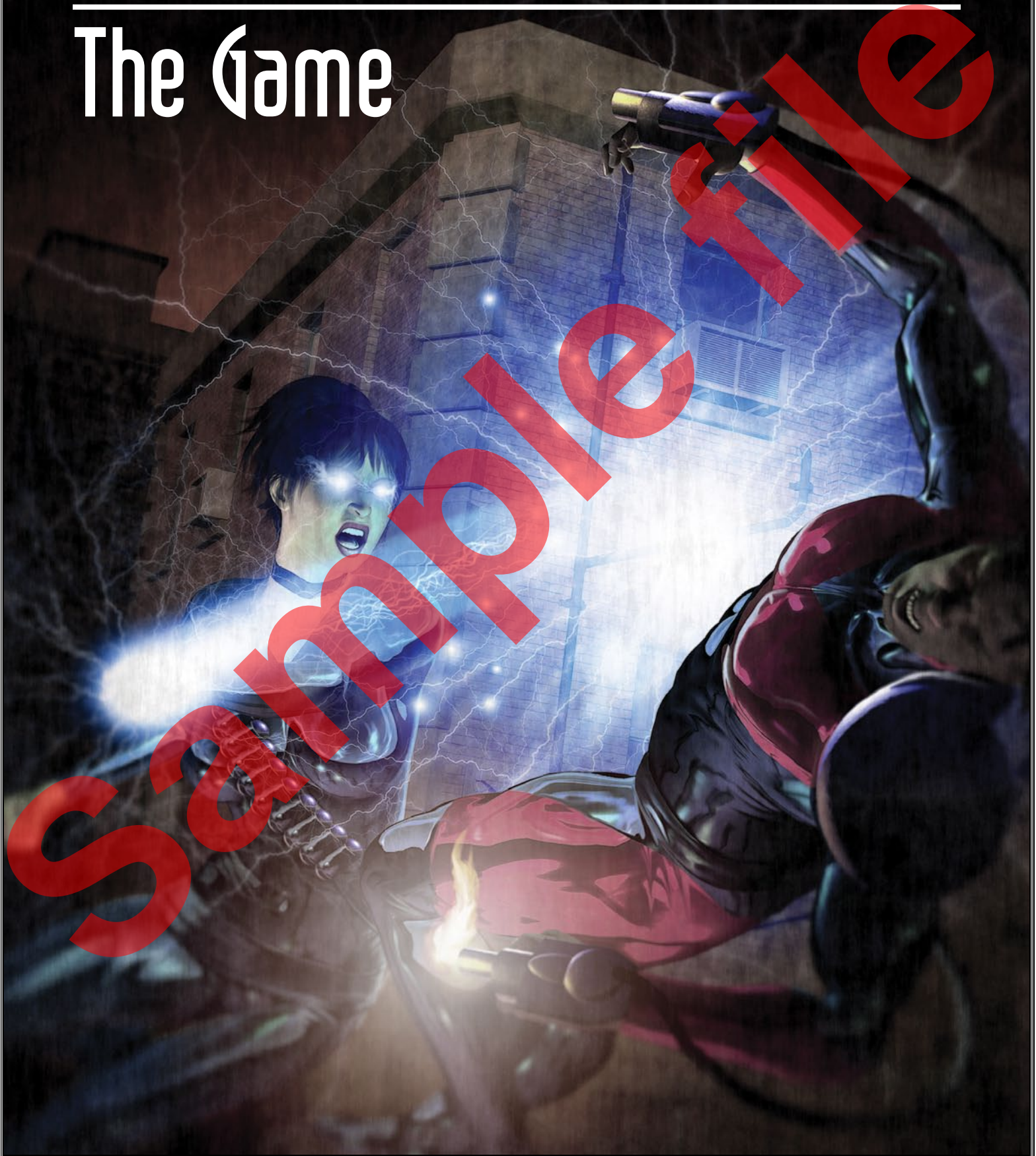
Other Genres

Wild Talents was written with superhero action in mind, but astute players have turned it to every imaginable setting and genre. The first few sourcebooks put *Wild Talents* in Victorian London (*The Kerberos Club*), in the U.S. Civil War (*This Favored Land*), in a modern day where superheroes vie with sinister sorcerers (*Grim War*), in a wrecked dystopia of angry, hopeful ideologues (*eCollapse*), and in a post-Vietnam world that's rocked by the spread of infectious superpowers (*Progenitor*). There have been *Wild Talents* games set in a post-apocalyptic future and in ancient Rome.

The rules lend themselves to any game where the emphasis is on fun action, with compelling consequences for the characters, no matter where or when it's set.

Part 1

The Game



Chapter 1: The One-Roll Engine

The *Wild Talents* rules encourage speed and realism without sacrificing consistency or requiring endless rolls. We call the rules the “One-Roll Engine,” or “O.R.E.” Originally developed for *Godlike*, the O.R.E. keeps game play fast and exciting by extracting all the information you need—speed, level of achievement, hit location, damage; everything you need to know—from a single roll of the dice. *Wild Talents* is also highly modular, allowing the rules and “feel” to be easily altered to suit any style of game play.

What Makes a *Wild Talents* Character?

Before we get into the nuts and bolts of *Wild Talents*, let’s explain the basics—the essential components of every character and the kinds of things they do in the game. This is a basic introduction to the game; we go into greater detail later.

Character Points

Each *Wild Talents* character gets a number of character points (Points) with which to “buy” abilities. The more Points you have, the more things your character can do.

Stats and Skills

Statistics (or Stats for short) describe the basic qualities of every character. They tell you how strong and smart your character is, how coordinated and commanding, how level-headed and how aware.

The Stats are Body, Coordination, Sense, Mind, Charm and Command. They’re measured in dice. In normal humans they range from 1 die to 5 dice (or 1d to 5d in game shorthand). In superhumans,

who can have Hyperstats and Hyperskills, they can go up to 10 dice (10d).

You don’t roll those dice to determine your Stat; instead, that’s the number of dice you roll when you want to use the Stat. So if you have two dice in Mind, whenever you try to out-think someone you roll two dice. However, usually whenever you use a Stat to do something, you’re also using a Skill.

Skills are specific learned abilities such as driving a car or speaking Vietnamese. Like Stats, Skills are measured in dice, from 1 to 5 dice in normal humans, up to 10 dice in superhumans.

Every Skill is based on a Stat—driving a car fast around a corner requires balance and hand-eye coordination, so the Driving Skill is based on the Coordination Stat. To use a Stat and a Skill, roll the dice you get for your Stat and the dice you get for your Skill. If you have 2d in Coordination and 3d in Driving, you roll 5d.

Base Will and Willpower

Most characters, normal and superhuman alike, have a Base Will score that defines their internal resilience, confidence, and drive. It rarely changes.

Most superhumans also have a Willpower score, which drives their incredible powers. Self-confidence is crucial to achievement; tragedy and defeat sap the abilities of the most powerful hero.

Base Will and Willpower aren’t measured in dice like Stats and Skills; they’re measured in points that you spend to do superhuman things. Base Will starts equal to the sum of your Charm and Command Stats, but you can improve it by spending character Points. Willpower starts equal to your Base Will. You can also improve it during play by accomplishing great things.

Motivations and Experience

Each character has two essential motivations: one Passion and one Loyalty. A Passion is some personal, internal desire or belief that the character pursues. A Loyalty is an external motivation, some other character, group or cause that the character serves or defends. Each motivation gets a numerical rating; divide your Base Will score between them. The greater the motivation's score, the more Willpower points you can get in the game by pursuing or defending it—and the more you can lose if you fail to do so.

Your character gets better at doing things by spending Experience Points (XP), which you earn at the end of each game session. Having disadvantages—or, more accurately, playing your character's disadvantages faithfully—allows you to earn more XP.

Powers

A power is some ability that is impossible to ordinary human beings. Flight is a power. Being able to lift a bus with your own hands is a power. Shooting laser beams from your eyes is a power. Being able to teleport across the street is a power.

As you might guess, only superhumans have powers. Of course, some powers are built into objects that anyone can use, even normal humans—but it takes a superhuman to create that kind of object.

In *Wild Talents*, superhumans are sometimes called Talents and their powers are called Talent powers—although occasionally the powers themselves are called Talents, too. We'll try not to confuse you.

We also call powers "Miracles." That doesn't imply that they have some divine origin (although in your game they might; it's up to you), but to drive home their sheer impossibility. These aren't works of extraordinary skill or adrenaline-fueled feats. They're beyond anything human.

Wild Talents Stats

Stats are the foundation of most character actions in *Wild Talents*.

Body: Strength, endurance and physical resilience.

Coordination: Hand-eye coordination and manual dexterity as well as agility.

Sense: Alertness and perceptiveness.

Mind: Memory and reasoning.

Charm: Charisma and influence.

Command: Innate leadership, strength of personality and the ability to keep a cool head in a crisis.

However, some powers enhance or exaggerate human abilities. A power might simply add dice to your Body Stat to make you superhumanly strong, or it might add dice to your Computer Programming Skill to make you impossibly proficient with computers. Those powers are called Hyperstats and Hyperskills, because they increase Stats and Skills.

If your power doesn't add dice to a Stat or a Skill, it's measured with its own dice, from 1d to 10d. In that case you don't roll them in conjunction with a Stat's dice. You roll the Miracle's dice pool alone.

Dice Pools and Matching Sets

When a *Wild Talents* character tries to do something heroic or just plain difficult, you roll a number of ten-sided dice ("d" for short—so "6d" means six dice) to see if the action succeeds. The dice you roll are called a dice pool. (If you've played *Godlike*, *Vampire: The Masquerade*, or *Shadowrun* you're familiar with the concept.)

When you roll, look for matching dice.

Inspirations

While *Wild Talents* is flexible enough to handle any style of superhero gaming with speed and excitement, the standard, unmodified rules tend toward the “cinematically gritty” end of the spectrum.

Our primary inspirations were such comics as *The Dark Knight Returns*, *Top 10*, *The Ultimates*, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* and *Watchmen*, and movies such as *Batman Begins*, *The Dark Knight*, *Iron Man*, *Spider-Man*, *X-Men* and *The Matrix*.

They're comics and films that combine dizzying action, intense characterization, and enough of a sense of the consequences of it all—the impact of superpowers and the decision to use them on heroes and the people they love—to keep us in suspense. To us, that is the heart of *Wild Talents*.

If you get a set—as in a set of two or more matching dice—your action succeeds. The higher the matching numbers, and the more of them that are the same, the better.

If you roll no matching dice, your action fails.

EXAMPLE: The strange alien hero IAM attempts to hit a supervillain with his katana. The Stat that governs hitting things is Body, and IAM's Body is two ten-sided dice (or 2d). The Skill involved is Melee Weapon (Katana), and IAM's is 4d. Therefore he has six dice, or 6d, in his Melee Weapon (Katana) dice pool. If IAM rolls 1, 2, 2, 5, 6, and 9 with his 6d, he hits the villain; the matching 2s mean a success. But if he rolls 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 9, he misses because none of his rolled dice match.

The Cardinal Rules

There are a couple of rules for *Wild Talents* to always keep in mind, no matter how you change the system to suit your particular style. Most rules can be changed or dropped easily; but if you change these cardinal rules, unforeseen problems might crop up. Everything in *Wild Talents* is mutable, but these rules should be dealt with carefully—changing them can seriously affect game play.

Rule #1: Roll only when a task is difficult or the outcome is significant. For all the nifty things you can do with dice rolls in *Wild Talents*, you should roll only when you meet two requirements.

First, roll a dice pool only if the action is difficult enough that a regular person with no training probably couldn't pull it off. If an action is trivially easy, there's no point in rolling it. A game in which every action required a roll—lacing your boots, making coffee, reading the paper—would be tedious. Similarly, if you try something absurd (“I'm going to shoot down the sun!”) there's no point in rolling, because no matter how well you roll it's just not happening.

Second, roll only if the outcome is important to the game. After all, some actions are challenging but irrelevant. Maybe you want to show up one of your fellow players by beating him at a game of chess. You can both roll to see who plays better—but unless something significant is at stake, it's unnecessary.

If you're a player, don't roll unless the GM asks you to. And if he doesn't allow a roll when you think you should get one, mention it, but play along and trust his judgment. After all, only the GM knows what's coming next in the game.

Rule #2: Never roll more than 10 dice. The more dice you roll, the better the chance of success. If you roll only one die, there's no chance of success. But if you roll 11 dice or more, there's no chance of failure. In *Wild Talents* you never roll more than ten dice.

It's entirely possible to have more than 10 dice in a pool. If you have 9 dice in Driving and 5 dice in Coordination, you have a 14d Driving dice pool. If you lose dice for some reason, they come off those 14 dice. But you can't actually roll more than 10.

Of course, sometimes it's important to know how well you succeed, especially compared to other superhumans. For these kinds of actions we use special dice that are reserved for superhumans, called Hard Dice ("hd") and Wiggle Dice ("wd"). Want to be more superhumanly agile than a superhuman with 10d in Coordination? Don't get 20 dice in Coordination—get 10 Wiggle Dice instead.

Remember: Under no circumstances do you roll more than 10 dice.

Rule #3: Round Down! Certain rules in *Wild Talents* require you to divide points or dice pools, sometimes leaving you with less than whole numbers. In this case, always round down. We've seen some nasty in-game fights brew over this simple fact—so now you're forewarned. If a player says, "Well, it doesn't say anything about it in the book!" direct him here:

ALWAYS ROUND DOWN.

Resolving Basic Dice Rolls

If you roll a set, the action succeeds. However, there are different levels of success—some are faster, deadlier, or just plain better than others. Sometimes other people or forces are working against you, to stop your success; so even if you succeed, their success cancels yours out.

In *Wild Talents*, every dice roll has two measures of success—height and width.

Height is the quality of the action. Width is the speed of the action.

Height is the number on the matching dice. If you roll two 5s, the height of the roll is 5. Height is a measure of quality of a success. The higher (or

"taller") the roll, the better the success. A successful action with a height of 10 is more effective than one with a height of 5.

Width is the number of matching dice. If you roll four 6s, the width of the roll is 4. Width is usually speed: The wider the roll, the faster the success. But in combat, width also determines damage. An action of width of 4 happens quicker (and in combat causes more damage) than one of width 3.

The shorthand for these results is written as "width x height." I know it looks like math, but all it means is that a dice roll of width 3 and height 10 is written as 3x10—representing a fast, perfectly executed action.

Note that height (quality) is essentially random, while width (speed or impact) is rarely greater than 2.

What happens if you roll more than one set of matching dice—which one do you use? Whichever you prefer, but not both. Let's say you roll a 3x1 and a 2x10 in the same dice pool. If you're running a race, the 3x1 is a good idea because it's faster (width 3, height 1). If quality is more important, the 2x10 is best (width 2, height 10).

Dice Pools and Power

While height and width tell you how well and how fast your action succeeded, the overall scale of an action—its power, reach, or impact—is determined not by the roll but by the size of the dice pool itself. A 9d energy blast has longer range than one with 4d. A character with 8d in the Miracle Flight goes faster than one with 5d. A speaker with a Persuasion dice pool of 7d can sway more people than one with 3d.

So if you're just comparing power or scope of effect, don't roll; just look at the number of dice in the pool, and the bigger one is faster, more effective or more powerful. (For guidelines on gauging powers see the various Stats' effects starting on page 45 and **Power Capacities** on page 111.)



Loose Dice

Unmatched dice in your dice pool are called “loose dice.” They come in handy in a few circumstances.

Sometimes an action is easy enough that you’re certain to succeed, but you still want to know how well you succeeded. Easy enough. Just look at the highest single die in your dice pool, whether or not it has a match. That’s the height of your roll. If the height beats the Difficulty, your action succeeds. The width is considered 1, if it matters, unless you do roll a match.

Say you’re trying to repair a car engine (in this case, measured in days). But you’re working in your own garage, with all the tools you need and a little time to tinker, so the GM allows a loose roll: Take four days, roll your pool, and use the highest die for the roll’s height.

Botching It

If your roll fails and all your loose dice roll low (5 or under), your performance is particularly substandard: You slip and fall, your gun jams, you drop your power hammer on your foot, whatever.

The GM decides whether a botch might apply to your lousy roll, and what the exact result is, based on the circumstances.

Beginner’s Luck

At the GM’s discretion, if your action fails but all your loose dice roll 6 or higher you may get a “beginner’s luck” bonus of some kind even though the action failed—maybe your shot missed but took out a window, showering the targets in glass and distracting them for a round.

Come up with a possible result and suggest it to the GM; if he or she likes it, that’s what happens.

Time: Combat Rounds and Beyond

The width of a roll tells you how long the action takes. Most actions take place in combat rounds. Each round represents a couple of seconds, enough for every character involved in the action to try to do one thing. We talk more about combat rounds later.

Depending on the action, however, the time scale for a task can be measured in combat rounds, minutes, hours, days, or even longer. The GM sets the time scale based on the specifics of the action. Breaking down a door might take rounds, fixing a car, hours, and decoding a complicated communiqué, days. But there are circumstances where they may take longer; it's up to the GM.

Once the time scale is determined, make the roll: Brawling to break down the door, Knowledge (Mechanics) to fix a car, Knowledge (Cryptography) to decode the communiqué.

Subtract the width of the successful roll from 5 to find out how many units of time it takes to complete the task.

If your Brawling roll is 3×7 , it takes two rounds to smash down the door ($5 - 3 = 2$).

If you roll a 2×3 on your Knowledge (Mechanics) pool and the time scale is hours, it takes three hours to fix the car: 5 hours minus the width of 2 equals 3.

If your Knowledge (Cryptography) roll is 4×2 , it only takes one day ($5 - 4 = 1$) to decode the communiqué.

If an action's time increment is "10 minutes," it takes $(5 - \text{width}) \times 10$ minutes: 50 minutes for a failure, 30 minutes at width 2, 20 minutes at width 3, and so on.

No matter how wide you roll, a task always takes at least one unit of time. If you get a width of five or wider, the job still takes one day, hour, minute, or round.

Time Increments

- Century
- Decade
- Year
- Month
- Week
- Day
- Hour
- 10 Minutes
- Minute
- Round

Hard Dice and Wiggle Dice

Wild Talents uses one die type (the d10) for all rolls. But there are also two special ways of rolling dice: Hard Dice and Wiggle Dice.

Hard Dice and Wiggle Dice are significantly more powerful than regular dice. Use regular dice to resolve regular actions; Hard Dice and Wiggle Dice resolve special actions—most often, the use of powers.

A Hard Die is a special die that is always a 10. You don't roll it; it's automatically 10. If you have two or more Hard Dice in a dice pool, you always succeed (and succeed dramatically) because you always have at least two matching 10s. Like every other die, Hard Dice count towards the ten-die maximum. They're abbreviated "hd," so seven Hard Dice is "7hd".

The downside of Hard Dice is that while they're extremely powerful and effective, they're inflexible. A heat ray using Hard Dice is always as deadly as possible; a super-piloting Skill using Hard Dice always flies as straight and fast as possible. There's no faking it with Hard Dice, no controlling the result. If you attack with a power or Stat that has a significant number of Hard Dice, you kill people.

Hard Dice represent a reflexive, perhaps even unconscious ability; Hard Dice in a pool with normal dice crank up the reliability of the action but reduce flexibility. If you use Hard Dice, you must use all of them.

A Wiggle Die is like a wild card in poker: You assign it any number you want, after you've rolled all the other dice in your pool. This makes Wiggle Dice even better than Hard Dice—any dice pool roll with even a single Wiggle Die succeeds, and if you have two Wiggle Dice you can choose any level of success you like! You can even choose not to succeed or to succeed up to a certain level, if you want—a luxury that Hard Dice don't have.

Like every other die, Wiggle Dice count towards the ten-die maximum. They're abbreviated "wd," so six Wiggle Dice is "6wd".

Wiggle Dice represent a versatile, flexible power.

La Belle Curve

Here's a rough guide to your chances of getting at least one match. As you can see, the benefit of raising a pool from 8d to 10d doesn't even come close to the payoff of raising one from 3d to 5d.

Dice	Odds of One or More Matches
2d	10%
3d	28%
4d	50%
5d	70%
6d	85%
7d	93%
8d	98%
9d	99.6%
10d	99.9%

Difficult Actions

Rolling a set of matching dice is hard enough, but sometimes things are even tougher than that. If your action is more challenging than usual, it incurs a penalty. In *Wild Talents*, there are several kinds of penalties: A difficult action might incur a Difficulty rating, a penalty die, a gobble die, or (rarely) it might require a minimum width.

Difficulty Rating

Particularly challenging actions attempted outside combat often incur Difficulty ratings. A Difficulty rating is a minimum height necessary for a match to be counted as a success. If your match isn't at least as high as the Difficulty rating, you fail.

The GM assigns the minimum height necessary to succeed based on the circumstances. If a door is extremely thick, the GM can decide that a Brawling height of 5 or less is insufficient to break it down. If an aroma is somewhat subtle, he can decide that your Perception roll must have a height of at least 2 or you don't detect it.

Only particularly hard tasks should have Difficulty ratings; requiring a roll at all indicates that even a well-trained person has only a 50% chance.

Difficulty	Rating
Easy	No roll required
Challenging	1 (default)
Difficult	3
Very hard	5
Extremely hard	7
Near impossible	9

Penalty Dice

In other situations that are extremely chaotic and stressful, a particularly difficult action doesn't get a Difficulty rating, it suffers a penalty die. Each penalty die removes one die from your dice pool before you roll. Penalty dice remove Hard Dice first, then normal dice, then Wiggle Dice.

Penalty dice apply most often in combat or when circumstances spiral beyond your control.

Sample Action	Penalty
Multiple actions	-1d
Called shot	-1d
Special maneuver	-1d
Long range	-1d
Melee attack while running	-1d
Ranged attack, moving target	-1d

Gobble Dice

When circumstances are seriously out of control, you suffer a gobble die instead of a penalty die. A gobble die doesn't just remove a die from your dice pool, it removes a die from your highest rolled set. Not only do you have to roll a match, but you have to roll with enough width to keep at least two matching dice despite the gobble die. The odds of that are very low unless you have multiple Hard Dice or at least one Wiggle Die.

A gobble die applies most often in combat when the GM decides your action is almost certainly going to fail, but success is possible if you happen to roll miraculously well or if you have superhuman prowess.

Take a Gobble Die If You . . .

- Suffer an injury
- Attack beyond long range
- Make a ranged attack while running

Minimum Width

Sometimes a task is difficult because you have to accomplish it very, very quickly. After all, blasting a car before it rounds the corner is harder than if it's parked at the curb. Since width indicates speed, the GM can assign a minimum width necessary for a roll to succeed.

Requiring a width greater than 2 substantially reduces the chance of success. A width of 3 is improbable with a normal dice pool, while a width of 4 is nearly unheard of without powers.

Requiring a minimum width of 3 makes a task very, very hard.

Special Maneuvers

When you declare the action you can declare one of these special maneuvers instead of an ordinary action. Attempting one of these moves causes you to lose a die from your dice pool before rolling.

You may attempt more than one special maneuver in the same action, but—unless the maneuver's description says otherwise—you can't use the same special maneuver more than once with a single action.

These maneuvers can apply to any action.

Expert action: Set one die to any value before rolling the rest.

Determined action: Ignore the especially unfortunate effects of a botch (page 22).

Fast action: +1 width for speed purposes only.

Multiple actions: If you roll two sets, you may use each of them with a separate action. You can attempt more than one extra action by giving up additional dice.

Dice Options

These rules apply only if the GM says so!

Alternate Hard Dice

If you dislike the inflexibility of Hard Dice but still want a step between regular dice and Wiggle Dice, at the GM's discretion, it's easy to change the way Hard Dice work. Here are a couple of variants. When constructing a character (see Building a Character, page 38), these dice options cost the same number of Points as regular Hard Dice.

Expert Dice ("ed"): Instead of using Hard Dice that are always 10, you can choose the die's height before you roll. However, no two expert dice can be the same. To score a match with expert dice you must roll the same number with regular, hard, or Wiggle Dice.

Fixed Dice ("fd"): Choose the die's height at character creation; it always "rolls" that number. This is the same as Hard Dice, but you can choose to fix the die at 1, 5, or whatever, rather than 10. Or the GM may decree that all Hard Dice for all characters are some particular number other than 10.

Squishy Dice

If dice are squishy, you can raise a successful roll's height by lowering its width, or vice versa. For example, if you had a squishy 4x4, you can make it 3x5, 2x6, or even 7x1—as long as the total of the width and height are the same. However, a roll can't be squished above a height of 10 or below a width of 2.

You squish the dice immediately after rolling them, and can only squish them once per round. Note that you can only squish regular dice—you cannot squish Hard Dice or Wiggle Dice!

Once you squish a roll, the other dice in the pool are thrown out. You can't squish dice from one set and then add them to another set for one big mega-set. Choose the set and then squish.

Squishy rolls put much more control over the degree and type of success into the hands of the players. For a four-color game, the GM might allow every character to squish rolls at will. For a somewhat realistic game, the GM might only allow squishing by a single step—a 3x3 could become 2x4 or 4x2, but not 5x1—or require a cost of 1 Willpower point per step.

Too Many Tens!

This is a good way to spice up high-powered games that feature loads of Hard Dice and Wiggle Dice. ("Another head shot—another perfect jump—yawn!") In dynamic contests, Hard Dice cancel out Hard Dice and Wiggle Dice cancel out Wiggle Dice. A canceled-out die becomes a regular rolled die. This only applies for dice of the same kind—Wiggle Dice do not cancel out Hard Dice (and vice versa).

For example, say you have a Brawling pool of 6d+4hd and you're fighting a villain with a Brawling dice pool of 7d+2hd+1wd. The pools become 8d+2hd and 9d+1wd, respectively.

Easier Multiple Actions

When attempting multiple actions, roll the higher of the dice pools involved, not the lower pool. If you only score one match, it must be used for the higher dice pool.

Adaptable Dice

If you roll a success, you can spend one point of Willpower to change the height of your match to the number of the highest loose die in your roll.

Multiple Actions

Doing two challenging things at the same time is not easy—but it's possible.

To attempt multiple actions, first declare that you are attempting two (or more) things at once, and calculate the dice pools for the tasks. If you're driving and shooting, for example, the two pools are Driving and Ranged Weapon.

If you are using the same Skill dice pool or Miracle more than once in a combat round, use only that pool. So if you're shooting twice, it's just your Ranged Weapon Skill.

Now roll the smaller of the pools—and take one penalty die from it per extra task. So if you're performing two actions, take one penalty die from the smaller pool and roll. If you attempt three actions at the same time, take two penalty dice from the smallest pool and roll.

Remember: Drop Hard Dice first, then regular dice, and Wiggle Dice last. If you have more than 10 dice in your pool, subtract the dice before rolling.

If you roll more than one set, assign the sets to each action however you like. If you get only one set, choose which task succeeds. If you fail to get any sets at all, both fail.

Hard Dice and Wiggle Dice

If you possess Hard Dice or Wiggle Dice in the pools, you still roll the smaller of the two, even if the Hard or Wiggle Dice are in the smaller pool. However, you can use those dice to make a set only for their particular Stat, Skill or Miracle pool.

If you have $5d+2wd$ in Driving and $9d$ in Ranged Weapon, roll the lower pool minus 1d, or $4d+2wd$ —but the Wiggle Dice can only be assigned to Driving.

If you score an exceptionally wide single set—meaning four or more dice match—you can split that into two (or more) successes.



You can't perform multiple static tasks at the same time if they're on different time scales. If one action takes combat rounds and another takes minutes, don't bother with multiple actions; just do the shorter action first.

EXAMPLE: The strange alien IAM, under attack by a dozen superpowered thugs from the End Gang, is dodging and using one of his alien gadgets to produce a terrifying hallucination at the same time. His Dodge dice pool is 5d and his Projected Hallucination is 4d+1wd. They are the same size, so he opts to roll the 4d+1wd—which drops to 3d+1wd after he loses the dice penalty. He rolls 3, 5, and 7, and sets the Wiggle Die to 7, for a set at 2x7: He has only one set and must use it on the hallucination, since that's the pool with the Wiggle Die. His dodge attempt fails.

Static Rolls, Contests and Opposed Rolls

There are three types of dice pool rolls: static rolls, contests, and opposed rolls.

Static Actions

A static roll is when you're struggling against circumstance or an inanimate object. The situation is static—it isn't actively changing in response to you and trying to make life more difficult. Just roll the dice. If you get a match, you succeed.

In a contest or an opposed roll, you need to succeed against somebody else's roll.

Contests

A contest is when you're competing against another character. Running a race is a classic contest. In a contest, you're rolling against someone else's roll. The widest set finishes first, but the highest set is more effective or efficient. If width is a tie, the highest set goes first.

Which is more important—height or width? That depends on the contest. If it's a foot race, width (speed) matters most. A racer that rolls a 4x2 outruns someone with a 2x10; he might not run with the grace of the guy that rolled a height 10, but he finished first. The winner with a wide but short result might be out of breath and disoriented compared to the loser with a high but narrow roll, but he still came in first.

If time is no object, the victor may simply be the person with the tallest roll. In a chess match—where what matters is the move, not how quickly you choose it—a 2x10 beats a 4x4. The 4x4 player moves more decisively but not as wisely.

EXAMPLE: The vigilante called the Enforcer is trying to outrun Officer "Rabid Anne" Gareth of the NYPD Talent Squad. Gareth rolls her 6d Athletics dice pool and comes up with 2x10. The Enforcer rolls his 10d Athletics dice pool (!) and comes up with 2x9, 2x7 and 2x6. That's a lot of sets, but none is higher than 10. Thanks to her higher roll, Gareth gains ground on the Enforcer.

Opposed Rolls

In an opposed roll, you're trying to actively interfere with another character's action. Use an opposed roll when it's not enough to act first or best, but when you want the other guy to fail and fail *hard*.

An opposed roll is like a contest, but if your width and height are both equal to or greater than your opponent's width and height, each die in your set becomes a gobble die for your opponent. Even better, if your opponent attempted multiple actions, the gobble dice affect each of his or her sets.

EXAMPLE: With Officer Gareth catching up, the Enforcer decides to make things interesting. He attempts multiple Athletics actions, with one action to oppose her roll by knock-

ing a trash can into her path and another roll to make his escape. Gareth simply wants to catch up. Gareth rolls 2x6 and 2x2 and goes with the 2x6; the Enforcer's 9d pool (he lost 1d for multiple actions) rolls 2x8 and 3x3. The Enforcer uses the 2x8 to oppose Gareth's roll. Its width is the same as hers and its height is greater, so the two dice from the Enforcer's 2x8 become gobble dice. One gobbles a die from her 2x6, ruining it. Gareth still has her 2x2 to fall back on—but the Enforcer's other gobble die removes a die from it, too! Gareth is left with no successes at all. She trips over the trash can as the Enforcer dashes away with his 3x3.

Improving the Odds

There are a couple of ways you can improve your chances of success with an action. The most common are taking extra time and cooperating with others.

Taking Your Time

If you take extra time to accomplish a task you can get one or two bonus dice with it. You gain +1d per time unit spent preparing to complete the task. You can gain a maximum of +2d in this manner. For example, if you aim a pistol for two combat rounds, you get +2d to your attack roll.

If you're not under threat of attack and you have some time to think, you can also take time to reduce the Difficulty of a task. Every extra unit of time you spend concentrating on the problem—see **Time**, page 23—reduces the Difficulty by 1.

For example, let's say cracking a code is measured in days, and the code you want to break is Difficulty 4: If you take three days of concentration on the problem and then roll, roll against Difficulty 1. (The time it takes after all that preparation is still 5 – width in days; just add the time spent preparing to the total.)

You can take time to reduce Difficulty and also take time to get bonus dice.

Even better, with the GM's permission, you can take an automatic success in an action without rolling, by taking the maximum amount of time the task requires. This results in a minimal result, equivalent to a width of 1 and a height of 1; but if that's good enough, it succeeds.

For example, if the action normally requires 5 – width hours, and you take five hours to attempt it, with the GM's permission, you automatically succeed with a 1x1.

Damage or anything that incurs a gobble die during this time negates all the benefits of taking your time.

Cooperating on a Task

Two or more characters can cooperate on a task. For a static roll, start with the largest dice pool among the characters involved and add +1d per character assisting, up to a maximum roll of 10 dice.

If it's a contest, it gets a little more complicated. The people working together roll their dice pools separately. If one gets a set, any other character who rolls that number on any die in his or her pool—in a set or on any die at all—can add it to the first guy's set, expanding its width.

If both score sets, use the tallest roll but the lowest width, because the faster guy has to wait for the slower one to catch up.

EXAMPLE: Two goons from the End Gang are trying to hold down the vigilante called the Enforcer. The GM says both sides need to roll Brawling, and the goons' pools are 4d each. The first goon rolls 2, 2, 3, and 5, for 2x2. The second goon rolls 3, 3, 4, and 9, for 2x3. They use the taller roll, 2x3—but since the first goon rolled a “loose” 3 in his pool he can add it to the set for a 3x3.

Extended Contests

Some contests seem like they ought to be more involved than simply a single roll. In that case, play it out as a series of contests and opposed rolls. The goal is to accumulate width from successive rolls, each representing a stage of the action as described by the players and GM.

Race or Chase? The first thing to decide: Are the opponents reaching for a static amount of accumulated width, or does one need to beat the other by that amount? If they're reaching for a static target, the first one to reach the target wins. That's perfect for a long race to a finish line.

In a chase, one is trying to escape or gain a significant lead and the other is trying to catch up. If the one being pursued accumulates so much more width than the other side, he or she escapes or succeeds and the chase ends. If the pursuer accumulates any more width than the quarry, he or she catches up and the chase ends. The chase might start with the quarry having a lead of a few points of width.

What Width? The thing to decide is the ultimate goal: How much width needs to be accumulated for one side or the other to win and end the extended contest? Since each action is likely to result in a gain of two width for one side or the other, a target of five accumulated width is good for most chases, and 10 accumulated width is good for most races.

Obstacles and Complications: Next, the GM needs to decide if any obstacles are going to stand in the characters' way, and the complications that can ensue if you fail to overcome them.

Each obstacle can apply a Difficulty rating to a character's roll. For dramatic impact we recommend starting with a standard roll—no Difficulty rating—and escalating the Difficulty with each new obstacle, Difficulty 3 for the second obstacle and Difficulty 6 for the third.

If you roll a match but its height is less than the Difficulty, you fail to gain any ground; you accumulate no width. This is also the result if you simply refuse to roll at all this turn, slowing your progress in order to navigate the obstacle carefully. You can try again next turn, when there probably isn't an obstacle.

If you fail the roll outright while facing an obstacle, you fail to accumulate width and also get a complication. Complications range from bad to worse. Perhaps you sideswipe another vehicle so your car takes damage, or maybe you get sand in your eyes and take a penalty die next turn.

If you fail outright when there's an obstacle and your roll is a botch (page 22), the complication is a catastrophe: You collide with an innocent bystander, blow out a tire, smash into a wall, or sprain an ankle so you take a penalty die every turn until the complex contest ends.

As a guideline, add an obstacle no more than every other turn or so, and no more than two or three in any extended contest. Their most important function is not to hold up the characters, but to get the players to come up with more and more creative details to use in the contest.

Contest or Opposition? Once the extended contest begins, the action proceeds in turns. Those can either be the same as combat rounds—an action-packed second or three—or each turn can represent whatever time unit is appropriate.

Each turn, each participant rolls a dice pool for their actions. The dice pool depends entirely on what Skill or power the character is using to get ahead in the extended contest. If it's a foot chase, it's probably Athletics or a power like Unconventional Move. If it's a social contest, it might be Lie, Persuasion, Intimidation, or whatever is most appropriate.

The main thing for each player to decide is whether he or she is rolling to make progress—to

gain width—or to interfere with the other side’s roll.

Making progress requires a contest; best roll wins for the moment, but in most circumstances both sides accumulate width for successful rolls.

Interfering requires an opposed roll; if it succeeds, it inflicts gobble dice on the other side.

Multiple actions and special maneuvers are perfectly acceptable, and highly recommended, as long as they fit the characters’ actions and the circumstances. With multiple actions, for example, you could attempt one action to oppose your opponent’s roll and another one to simply gain ground by accumulating more width for yourself—turning into a very crowded street to lose a pursuer, for instance. Expert actions (setting a die to any value before rolling) can help overcome high Difficulty ratings. Actions that increase width for a specific purpose (a fast action, for example) don’t count because they don’t affect the overall width of the roll.

Pursuit and persuasion are two classic examples, so we’ll show how those work here. The same concepts apply for any extended contest.

Example: Pursuit

In a pursuit, one character is trying to escape from another. The GM must decide how much of a lead the pursued character must gain in order to escape—how much his accumulated width must exceed the pursuer’s—and how many obstacles he or she wants to throw in the players’ way.

Players oppose each other’s rolls by taking reckless risks and deliberately seeking out obstacles—driving at speed on the sidewalk and between stopped cars, hurdling barricades and gaps between buildings, whatever fits the situation.

Here’s a sample pursuit, with vehicles in city streets:

Goal: Chase, five width. Likely dice pools: Driving, Perception, any movement power.

Obstacle: Traffic jam. *Difficulty:* none. *Complication:* Damage to vehicle. *Catastrophe:* Severe damage to vehicle.

Obstacle: Pedestrians. *Difficulty:* 3. *Complication:* One penalty die next turn while getting around them. *Catastrophe:* Run into an innocent bystander; damage to bystander and to vehicle.

Obstacle: The bridge is out! Gun it! *Difficulty:* 6. *Complication:* Screech to a halt before plunging into the river; chase ends. *Catastrophe:* Plunge into the river; chase ends.

Example: Persuasion

In an extended social contest, each side attempts to sway the opinion of others by building arguments in debate or gaining influence in conversation and public appearances. The GM must decide how much influence one character must gain to overcome the other. Obstacles are unlikely, unless other parties get involved.

Players oppose each other’s rolls with counter-arguments, sly innuendo or embarrassing slander, depending on whether it’s a courtroom debate or a series of competing media appearances.

Here’s a sample, with each side attempting to tip public opinion before some election or referendum.

Goal: Race, 10 width. Likely dice pools: Lie, Performance, Persuasion, Leadership, any persuasion or manipulation power.

Obstacle: The spoiler: A hopeless but enthusiastic third party enters the debate. *Difficulty:* none. *Complication:* Poorly-timed response proves unpopular; one penalty die next turn. *Catastrophe:* Poorly-timed response loses you substantial support; one penalty die every turn until the contest ends.

Obstacle: Media frenzy. *Difficulty:* 3. *Complication:* Embarrassing public appearance; opponent gets one bonus die next turn. *Catastrophe:* Media trumpets humiliating secrets; opponent gets one bonus die every turn until the contest ends.



Obstacle: Some disaster (“Will they pull Holly from the well in time?”) diverts public attention. *Difficulty:* 6. *Complication:* Waste time regaining headlines; lose 1 accumulated width. *Catastrophe:* Tasteless joke or frustrated comment about the disaster shows up on the Internet; lose 3 accumulated width.

About Combat

When characters in *Wild Talents* fight, it’s resolved in static rolls, contests and opposed rolls, just like other actions. But we go into a lot more detail for the combat rules, because the results can be so drastic. An unlucky social encounter can leave your character embarrassed or a step further from solving the mystery; an unlucky fight can leave your character crippled or dead.

In a fight, width determines how quickly you act and how much damage your attack does; height determines where you hit the enemy. This may seem counter-intuitive—shouldn’t height, or the attack’s quality, determine damage?—but in *Wild Talents*, where you hit is far more important than how hard. A blow to the leg is far less dangerous than the same blow to the head.

Wild Talents tracks two kinds of damage, Shock and Killing. Shock damage can disable your character; Killing damage can permanently maim or kill your character.

See **Chapter 4: Combat** for the complete rules.

Rules Summary

Any important and challenging action in the game is resolved with a roll of 10-sided dice called a dice pool. If you're using a Stat and a Skill, the Stat dice and Skill dice combine to form a dice pool. If you're using a power, the power's dice usually form their own dice pool. No dice pool ever has more than 10 dice.

Most actions are basic actions. If someone is trying to outperform you or stop you, it's a contest or an opposed roll.

Basic Actions

To attempt a challenging action, roll your dice pool. If any dice come up matching, the action succeeds. The more dice that match (called the "width" of the roll), and the higher their face value (called the "height"), the better. A matching set of ones is good, but a matching set of tens is a lot better.

The height of a roll determines the quality of success. A pair of tens is a spectacular success; a pair of ones is marginal.

The width of a roll determines its speed. If you roll three ones, your action goes faster than if you had rolled two ones, or even two tens. A roll's width determines how long the action takes (and sometimes other things, like how much damage is healed when you perform first aid). The wider the roll, the quicker the action. Usually we say an action takes a number of seconds, minutes or combat rounds minus the width of the roll, so it might be "5 – width minutes" or "7 – width rounds."

See page 21.

Contests

When two characters' actions are competing, roll the dice for each and compare their heights and widths. If speed is crucial—the characters are racing, for instance—width is most important. If width is tied, use height as a tiebreaker. If speed is not important, compare height first and use width as a tiebreaker. If both width and height are the same, use the number of dice in the dice pool as a tiebreaker.

If both rolls fail and you still need to know who did better, you have two options. You could simply compare their dice pools. Or you can have the contestants keep rolling until someone wins.

See page 28.

Opposed Rolls

When one character is not just trying to be better than another, but is actively interfering with another character's action—trying to block an attacker's every strike, make an interview subject stumble over his words, or trick a pursuer into following the wrong trail—it's an opposed roll. In an opposed roll, if your width and height are both at least as good as your opponent's, your dice remove or "gobble" dice from his or her sets.

See page 28.

Combat

Combat is resolved in rounds. Each round lasts a few seconds, just long enough for each character to do one thing. An attack roll's width determines the amount of damage (either Shock or Killing) and which attack goes first. Height determines hit location.

See page 59.

Example of Play

This section will give you an idea what a game of *Wild Talents* plays like. If you're new to the game, you might want to read the rules first, then come back here to see how it works.

The player characters in this scene are Henry “Wraith” Francis and “Rabid” Anne Gareth, police officers with the so-called “Talent Squad” in a city with a large population of superhumans. “Rabid Anne” is a normal human with a cool head and powered armor. “Wraith” can turn incorporeal, and while incorporeal he can fly and turn invisible. They’ve been sent on a drunk-and-disorderly call.

Game terms are defined under “Definitions.”

GM: Your skimmer pulls to a stop and hovers high over the address Dispatch gave you. It's a professional section of town. Mainly skyscrapers and street-level bodegas and sports bars, plus a few older, smaller buildings. There are blue-and-red flashes down on the street. Cop cars.

Wraith: I bring the skimmer down to street level.

Rabid Anne: I radio in that we're here. Any sign of the disturbance?

GM: Yep. As your skimmer touches down, one of the regular cops waves and points to a bar. A sign with a big neon football is marked “First Round and Ten.” The glass front has been shattered. There's smoke coming out. It's dark in there, but you see something big moving around.

Rabid: I activate my armor's sensors. Can I see inside better?

Wraith: I leave my window open and wraith out through the door, then wave to the cop. “What's up?”

GM: The cop doesn't react to your trick. He looks worried. He says, “It's Doctor Jurassic!”

Wraith: I thought he was a good guy!

GM: You said that in-character? Okay. The cop gives you a look. “No kiddin'. Tell him.”

Definitions

2x10: Read as “two by ten,” a roll in which two of the dice came up 10s: width 2, height 10.

Adventure: A self-contained storyline that usually lasts one to four game sessions. Adventures can be strung together as a campaign.

Base Will: Points measuring a character's internal fortitude, drive, and resilience.

Bonus Dice: Extra dice you can roll if the circumstances are particularly favorable.

Campaign: An ongoing story usually involving the same group of core characters in the same setting, comprising multiple adventures.

Cinematic: A style of play emphasizing action and danger but allowing for exceptional heroics; think *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

Combat Phase: A segment of a combat round. Each round has three phases: declare, roll, and resolve.

Combat Round: A brief span of time in a scene, a few seconds long, in which each character gets at least one action.

Contest: A situation where two characters' actions compete. The highest set usually wins.

Damage: Harm suffered by a character or object. Measured in Shock and Killing damage (abbreviated S and K).

Declare Phase: The first phase in a combat round, in which all characters announce what they're trying to do.

Defense: Any action that attempts to prevent an effective attack from succeeding, such as dodging or blocking. Many Miracles can defend.

Dice Pool: The dice that you roll to see if your character's action succeeds. Dice pools generally are rolled only when an action is especially challenging and the outcome is important to the game. For most other actions, no roll is required—the GM just decides what happens.

Dice pools are determined by adding together a Stat and a Skill, or by looking at a power's dice rating.

Difficulty: The minimum height that a matching roll must be for success.

Extended Contest: A series of contests and opposed rolls that resolve a long conflict; often used for pursuits or tense social encounters.

Four-Color: A style of play that emphasizes over-the-top heroics and dramatic action, as in the JLA and Avengers comics.

GM: The Game Moderator or Game Master, the referee who creates the adventure, the campaign setting, and all non-player characters, and runs the game for the players.

Gobble Dice: Opposed actions such as dodging and blocking are contests rolled against the attack roll. If the opposing roll's height and width beat the opponent's roll, each die in the set removes or "gobbles" one die from the opponent's sets, turning success to failure.

Gritty: A style of play that emphasizes tension, danger, and the consequences of carelessness. *Top 10* and *The Ultimates* are good examples.

Hard Dice: Dice that are never rolled, but are always set to 10. They represent a predictable, inflexible, superhumanly powerful effect; in combat, powers with Hard Dice kill people fast.

Heavy Armor: Thick armor, equivalent to solid steel plating, built to deflect heavy weapons.

Height: The number showing in a set of matching dice. Height indicates the effectiveness of a successful action.

Hit Location: Where a successful attack hits: leg, arm, torso or head. The attack roll's height determines hit location.

Hyperbrain: A nickname for a character with superhuman intelligence.

Hyperstat/Hyperskill: Superhuman ability in a trait that normal humans share, such as unnatural strength or skill.

Wraith: I nod at the cop. Rabid, what's the score?

Rabid: "Please. Call me Anne. Or Officer Gareth." Can I see inside?

GM: Ambient light is bright outside, late afternoon and all, so night vision doesn't do you any good. But zooming in you can see pretty well. The windows are about ten feet tall. Inside, it looks like the lower half of a tyrannosaurus rex staggering drunkenly across the room.

Rabid: Crap. All right. I get out of the car. And flip the safety off my gun. Let's head inside.

Wraith: Right. I fly over to the door and yell out, "Doctor—" What's this guy's real name?

GM: Daniel Tunbridge.

Wraith: "Doctor Tunbridge! This is the police. You need to turn human and calm down!"

GM: Inside, the bar is three stories tall, with balconies surrounding a central open area. Lots of big-screen TVs. All smashed. There are a few people inside—a couple of bartenders cowering behind the main bar, and some people stuck on the balconies. Doctor Jurassic is a full-size, real-life T-rex. He turns, suddenly looks not at all wobbly, and roars. LOUD.

First combat round. Declare your actions. Wraith, you have the lowest Sense Stat, so you declare first. Then Anne. Then Jurassic.

Wraith: Ah, nuts. I'm defending with my "insubstantial" power. It's a Useful Power Quality.

Rabid: If there's enough of a wall under the broken window, I'll hunker behind it. Otherwise I'm dodging if he comes at us.

GM: There's no wall, just broken glass. He's not charging at you, but his roar is bad enough—roll 'em!

Wraith: Looks like 10, 8, 5 and 3, and I'll set my Wiggle Die at 10. So I'm defending at 2x10. Width 2, height 10.

Rabid: . . . No matches. Damn.