

# Amalgam

A diceless role-playing system.

Version 9.2

(Pre-Release)

By Steve Caruso, Nayla Caruso, and Andrew Bell  
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11 Because they rebelled against the WORDS of God : and contemned the counsell of the most high :

12 Therefore hee brought downe their heart with labour : they fel downe, and there was none to helpe.

**Angry**

**Fallen**

**Swordsman**

**Swift**

**Flying**

**Inscrutable**

**Unstoppable**

**Strength**

**Fortitude**

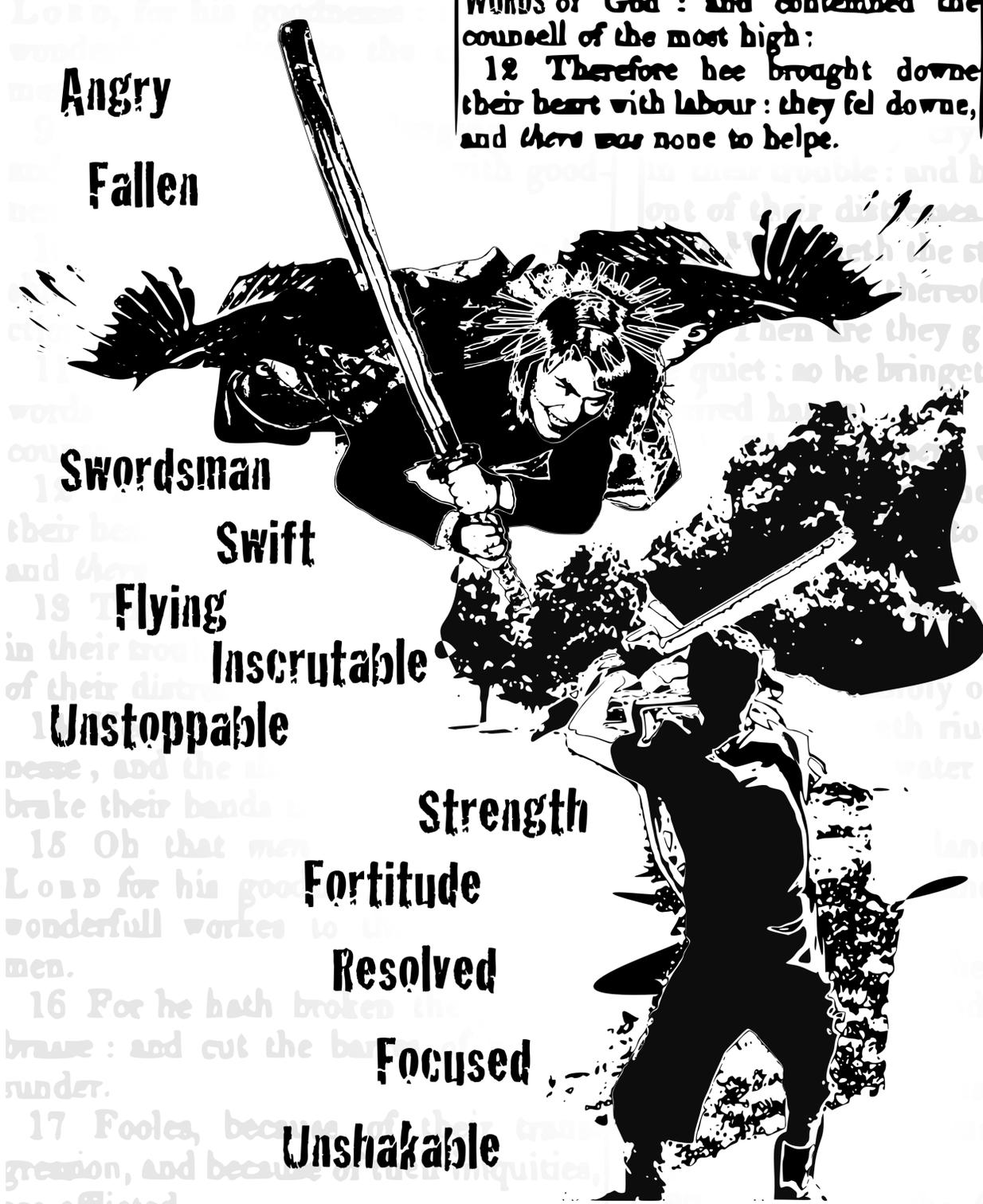
**Resolved**

**Focused**

**Unshakable**

**Wounded**

**Fearful**



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Amalgam is always a work in progress.  
If you have any ideas (or notice any goofs) be sure to send them in:  
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## Chapter 1: A Word Game

**3 And God said, \* Let there be light :  
and there was light.**

**4 And God saw the light, that it was  
good : and God divided † the light from  
the darknesse.**

*3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.*

*4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.*

- Genesis 1:3-4

Words have always had a special sort of strength in the beliefs of men. In the book of Genesis, the God of the Hebrews speaks the world into existence. In the Middle Ages, magicians used “magic words” to command their tricks to work, and in various folk religions knowing the name of a kami, spirit, or angel – a “word of power” – was believed to afford a certain amount of control over the supernatural.

Even in modern times and in secular cultures, in civil proceedings one must “give their word” as a promise, or sign their name – their personal words of identification – onto a piece of paper as a legally binding token. According to the famous Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, words shape thought, and in turn one’s thoughts shape the words they use. In this sense, words in Amalgam are no different, as it

is words that shape your Character and how they shape the world around them.

What will you need to play? A stack of index cards and a pen or other writing implement is sufficient. Another recommended tool that you may find useful in your experience with this game is a good dictionary, as mastery of words and their meanings can give you a great advantage.

Amalgam was designed to be a generic roleplaying system which is well suited for all genres. Where many systems focus upon sets of statistics and numbers to represent more or less realistic simulations of chance, Amalgam focuses more heavily upon role-playing, and how the play of words guide the play of the game.

And this is how...

# Chapter 2: The Amalgamate

## A•mal•ga•mate *n.*

A joined or unified whole.

Everything in this world is made up of pieces. Even the word “pieces” is made up of letters. Each letter makes a sound, and each sound can be broken down into where you articulate it in your mouth. Your mouth is made of several organs, which are in turn made of cells, which are in turn made of molecules, which are in turn... well you get the idea.

In Amalgam, Characters are made up of

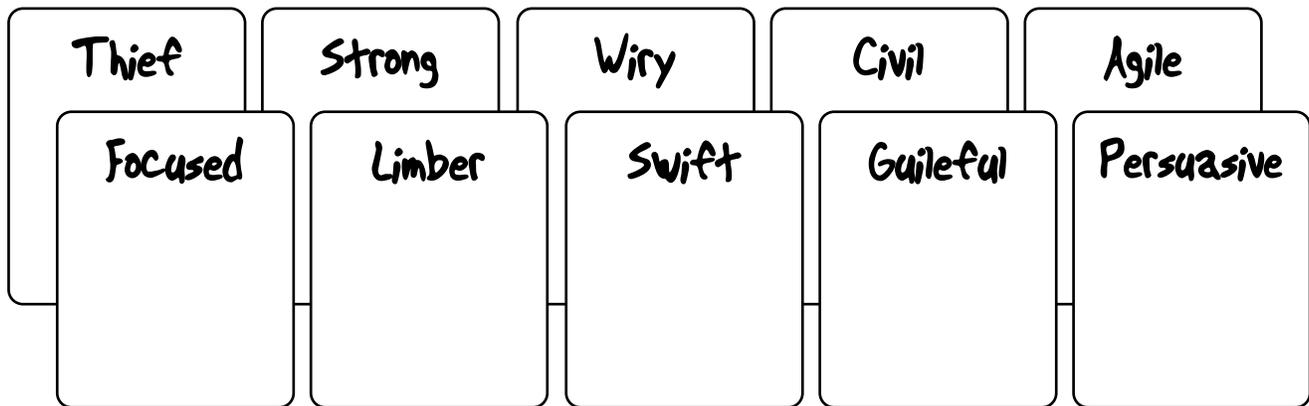
**Words.** So in Amalgam, Characters are quick to conceive. No points, no “rolling up;” a Character is made up by how one would describe them, “in their own words.”

Characters can be “*Strong*,” “*Clever*,” or “*Mysterious*” – they can have “*Moxie*,” or “*Clarity*” or even embody short phrase Words like “*Crack Shot*.” Appropriate Words are up to you and the Storyteller to explore.

## A Character's Words

Now the *Amalgamate*, besides being the title of this chapter, is the name of the overall “pool” of Words that a Character is made up of. To create a Character simply choose 10 *different* Words and write each down on an index card and

lay them out in front of you. Each one of these Words must describe the Character in some way, and be inherent to who they are. For example, if we were creating a Thief, we may come up with something similar to what we see below:



**Thief** – Obviously our character is a thief.

**Strong** – He's done some weightlifting.

**Wiry** – He's not too bulky, but muscular.

**Civil** – Our boy here is no ruffian.

**Agile** – He's quick on his feet.

**Focused** – He's good at ignoring distractions.

**Limber** – He's readily adaptable.

**Swift** – Quick in and quick out.

**Guileful** – He's tricky to let on.

**Persuasive** – And even if he does, he can convince you otherwise.



## Snags

Every Character has quirks and things that make them interesting. **Snags** are Words that embody these things that are generally not advantageous – flaws, or imperfections if you will – such as “Smoker,” “Untrusting,” “Agoraphobic,” etc.. A new Character can take up to 3 Snags, and for each Snag they take, they may add an additional Word into their Amalgamate.

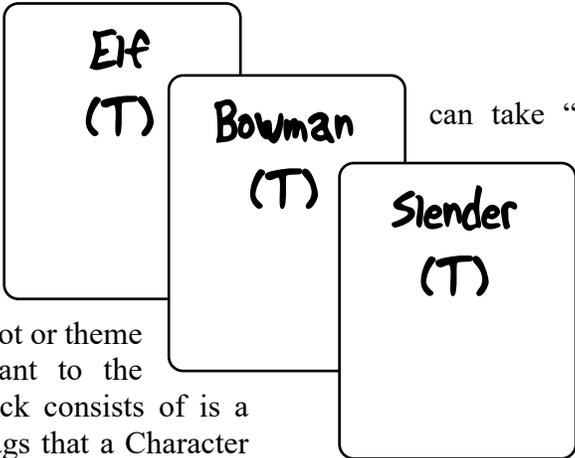
Snags are also, not easy to get rid of, and unless something truly paramount happens in a Character’s story, a Player should anticipate their Character’s Snags sticking with them throughout the game.

Paranoid  
(S)

They are generally marked with an (S) to distinguish them from other Words.

## Stacks

The Storyteller can also offer **Stacks** depending on what the game needs. Stacks can be pretty much anything, from “races” to “character classes” to “archetypes” – plot or theme related combinations relevant to the particular game. All a Stack consists of is a small list of Words and Snags that a Character



can take “for free.” They don’t count towards their Word limit, but they must be accepted as a unit.

Generally, Words in a Stack are marked with a (T) (for “Template”) to distinguish them from other Words.

## Gaining Words

As a Character progresses in Amalgam, instead of gaining experience points or extra levels as they would in other systems, Characters

gain more Words. Generally speaking a Storyteller will award one Word (of the Player’s choice) per excursion. In circumstances of

exceptional play or relevance to the plot, the Storyteller can also award “Bonus Words” for Players.

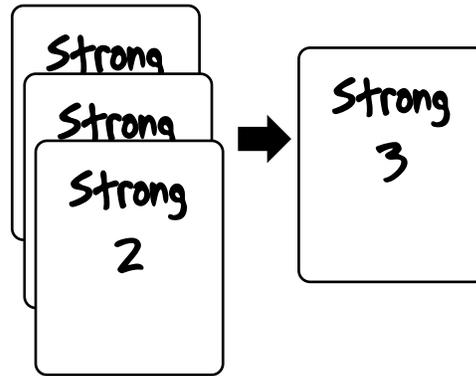
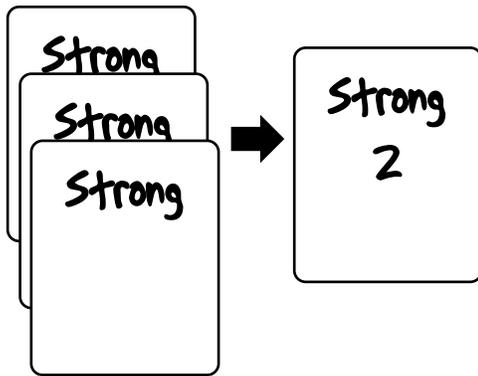
It is also good practice to allow a Player to choose *appropriate* Words for their Character. For example, a Character that did nothing but sit

around and eat pizza for the entire adventure should not get away with a new “*Athletic.*” Once again this is up to the good judgement of the Storyteller and input from all of the Players involved.

## Word Levels

Working with additional words, however, can cause some difficulty keeping them all straight

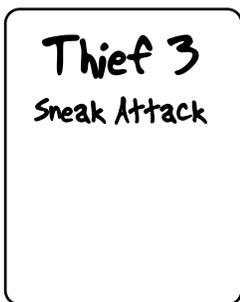
(especially when the list grows long). As a result, Words will automatically combine and *Level* up.



When a Character possesses three of the same Word, they immediately combine to form a *Level 2 Word*, which counts as 2 Words towards resolving an Action. Three Level 2 Words become a *Level 3 Word* (which counts as 3

Words). Where this may seem like a disadvantage (as a Level 3 Word is essentially made up of nine Level 1 Words) don't worry. The reason for this progression will become more obvious in the next Chapter.

## Proficiencies



Once a Word reaches Level 3, a Player may immediately take a *Proficiency* on it. A Proficiency is a “sub-word” that describes a particular specialty or niche use for that Word which allows them a special bonus under

certain circumstances. with Brawler L3 could take “Sucker Punch” which would bestow a bonus when their target isn't expecting an attack.

certain circumstances.

The general rule is that Proficiency is unique enough that Character may only make use of it in very specific circumstances. For example, it would be improper to take “Speedy” on Runner, as it is far too general and could be used practically at any time.

For example, someone with a Runner L3 could take “Sprint” which would give a bonus when speeding over short distances, but not over long hauls.

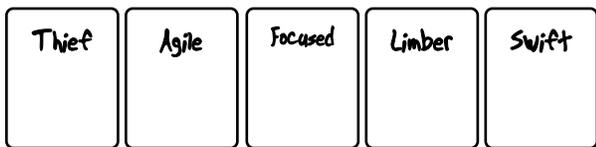
Now, the specific type of bonus that a Character can take depends on several possible choices which are explained in detail in *Chapter 4: Manipulating Words*, but we need to cover a little more about the rules before they'll make much sense. For now, simply keep this in mind.

Proficiencies can also represent particular maneuvers. For example, someone

## Activity & Autonomy

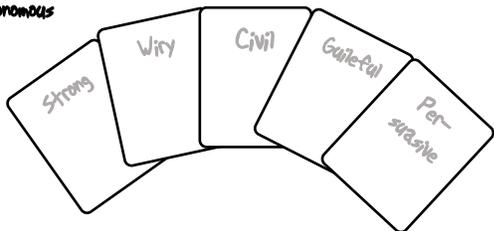
Now that we've decided a Character's Words, we need to better understand how they work within the dynamics of the game. Despite one's achievements and proficiencies in life, one is never all that they are at every time of day. Even if you're usually sharp, the average person wakes up groggy in the morning. If you're tired, after you rest you feel invigorated again. It takes effort to be compassionate in the heat of an argument, and it takes time to think through a problem when distracted.

As such, out of *all* of a Character's Words, they may only have 5 that are **Active** at any give time. Those five Active Words represent and determine what your Character is ready for at that very moment. For example, our Thief friend may want to have the following Active when picking a lock:



Active

Autonomous

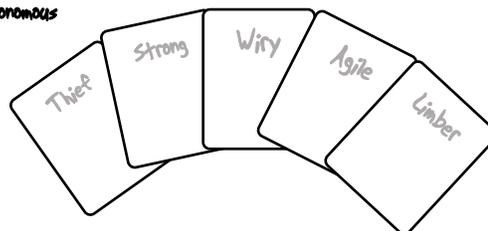


Or the following Active when they are sweet-talking their way out of a tricky situation:



Active

Autonomous



As such, Active Words are the Words that your Character has actively “under control” at any given time.

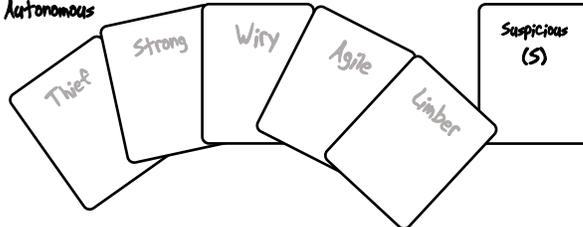
Words that are “Inactive” or **Autonomous** go about their merry way. This is how some Words may cause problems: Any Words that you do not have Active and under control, will act on their own accord.

As a result, Words that are Autonomous generally will not give you any help in a tricky situation unless there is a reasonable exception, for it is the number of relevant Active Words in your Amalgamate that determines how a Character will faire with individual tasks.



Active

Autonomous



There is an exception, however: Snags, for all intents and purposes, are Words that are *always* Autonomous. As a result a Character may never have one of their Snags Active, nor gain an advantage from them under any circumstances.

## Common Words for New Players

Most new Players tend to gravitate towards several classes of Words that make the Character creation process easier:

### Archetype Words

*Archetypes* include things like a Character's race, profession, class, special powers, or other broad concepts about them. It's generally a good idea to start off with one or two Archetypes and then fill out the rest of the Character with *Physical*, *Mental*, and *Social* Words.

### Physical Words

These Words represent a Character's physical prowess, strength, and the ability to stay alive after taking damage.

- Athletic** – You don't tire out easily after physical exertion.
- Brawler** – You're good at duking things out with your fists.
- Driver** – You know how to drive a vehicle well.
- Large** – You're tall or wide and know how to work that to your advantage.
- Legerdemain** – You're quick with your hands and can hide things in them.
- Marksman** – You are good with ranged weapons.
- Martial Artist** – You are familiar with a formal hand-to-hand combat system.
- Quick** – You're swift moving about and don't hesitate.
- Small** – Your frame is smaller than average, and that can come in handy.
- Stealthy** – You're quiet and hard to perceive when it's necessary.
- Strong** – You possess physical strength.
- Swordsman** – You know your way around bladed weapons.

### Mental Words

These Words represent a Character's mental abilities, how they think, how aware they are about details, and what domains of knowledge they have. (In fact, good additions to this list are Words in particular kinds of knowledge.)

- Academic** – You have a secondary education, or doctorate at higher levels.
- Craftsman** – You know how to build different things.
- Medic** – You know how to stop bleeding, dress wounds, and get people back on their feet.
- Observant** – You're constantly attentive to details and things around you.
- Occultist** – You have studied arcane knowledge.
- Resolved** – Even in desperate times you will can see you through.
- Scientist** – You have an analytical mind and can comprehend technical literature.
- Survivalist** – You know how to find necessary resources when they're scarce.
- Tech-Savvy** – You are familiar with how technology works, and perhaps how to exploit it.
- Witty** – You have a sharp wit, and try to keep one step ahead.

### Social Words

These Words have everything to do with how your Character interacts with other Characters and their greater place in society.

- Affluent** – You have wealth that you can call upon.
- Animal Wrangler** – You have an affinity for animals.
- Charismatic** – Your charisma allows you to influence people around you.
- Diplomatic** – You know how to diffuse touchy social situations.

**Empathetic** – You can feel what others are feeling, and even discern motives.

**Expressive** – You can get your point across, or act out a role convincingly.

**Intimidating** – When the time calls for it, you can be downright terrifying.

**Persuasive** – You tend to get people to see things your way.

**Connected** – Need something? You know a

guy.

**Streetwise** – You're familiar with how things are done around here.

**Subtle** – You can conceal your motives well.

You *never* should feel that you are restricted to this list. Any Word that the Storyteller is willing to allow is fair game.

# Chapter 3: Resolving Actions

When confronted with a situation, or an **Action** that a Character wishes to undertake, instead of rolling dice, we need but do three things: First, we need to figure out how apt they

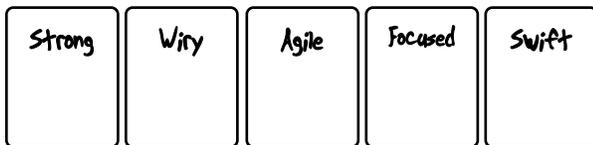
are to complete the Action. Second we must figure out how difficult the task is, and thirdly throw a bit of randomness in to see if they succeed.

## The Pledge

As mentioned above, the first thing to figure out is how prepared or able your Character is to complete an Action. This is simply determined by adding up the number of Words in your Character's Active Amalgamate that would be appropriate to the task.

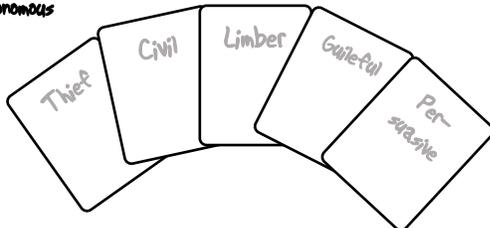
Where one may simply add them up and call out the number, Player may also *address* the Storyteller with a descriptive narrative detailing what they are planning to do and *emphasizing* which Words they plan to do it with. This is known as the **Pledge**.

For example, looking back at our Thief let's assume that he's trying to pick a lock with the following words:



Active

Autonomous



Looking over things carefully, the Thief's Player addresses the Storyteller:

*"**Focusing** carefully, I **Swiftly** pick the lock with my **Agile** fingers."*

This would give him a Pledge of 3. If (as another example) he becomes impatient with the task and gives up, he may choose to say:

*"Getting frustrated, with a **Wiry** grip on the knob, I give the door a **Strong** blow with my shoulder."*

Which would give him a Pledge of 2 with great roleplaying effect.

If the Storyteller believes that one or more of the Words the Player chose to be inappropriate, or notices an Autonomous Word in the Character's Amalgamate that may cause problems (such as a Snag) they may disqualify them, either outright, or respond by identifying them. This reduces the Character's Pledge appropriately.

For example, if a Character who was trying to hide behind some cover had the word Large inactive, the Storyteller might say:

*"As you crouch down behind the bush, your **Large** frame isn't completely covered by the branches."*

This would reduce the Character's Pledge by 1; however, the Player is now completely open to start another Pledge to defend their use of the Words in question. Pledges between Player and Storyteller may go back and forth until either the Player is satisfied with their final Pledge, or the Storyteller after several iterations wishes to call for resolution.

## Difficulty

Next, depending on how hard the task at hand is, the Storyteller will choose an appropriate *Difficulty*. The average task Difficulty is 5. Easier tasks are less, harder or specialized tasks are more. Here is a suggested list of Difficulties which are a good way to feel out the average encounter.

Depending on the situation, the Storyteller may opt to adjust the Difficulty on the fly, and at the Storyteller's option, they may decide to keep the Difficulty a secret.

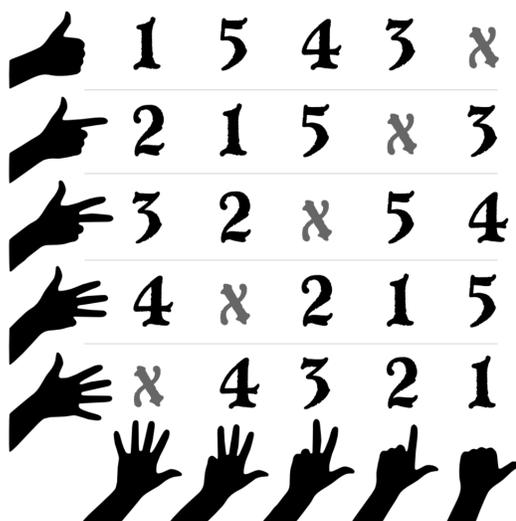
- 1 : Ridiculously easy tasks  
(Breathing. Remembering your name.)
- 2-4 : Easy-to-Everyday tasks  
(Write legibly. Climb a rope ladder.)
- 5 : Average task difficulty  
(Use any standard, trained skill.)
- 6-9 : Tough or Skilled tasks  
(Rig a wagon wheel to fall off.)
- 10 : Hard tasks  
(Picking an average lock.)
- 11-15 : Extremely hard tasks  
(Leap across a 30 foot cavern.)
- 16-20 : Impossibly hard tasks  
(Hack into a government mainframe, blindfolded.)

## Throwing Random Numbers

Random numbers are, traditionally, represented by dice in roleplaying systems; however, dice can in some circumstances be a bit cumbersome or tend to get lost. Amalgam, seeks to rely heavily upon roleplaying as storytelling, so where dice *can* be used (see *Chapter 6: Additional Rules*) throwing random numbers is the preferred method of resolution.

To do so, the Player of the Character in question turns and faces the Storyteller (or another player if they wish) and engage in an alternate form of Rock-Paper-Scissors. Instead of throwing one of the three traditional gestures of the game on the fourth shake ("one, two, three – shoot!") the two parties extend 1 to 5 fingers. The collection of pointing digits shown is added up. The rule is: **If the total is over 5, subtract 5.** The result is a rather random number between 1

and 5 (very useful for our purposes). This is known as a *Random Throw*.



## Success and Failure

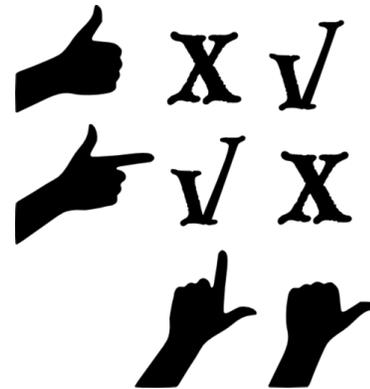
Pledge + Random Throw  $\geq$  Difficulty  
**Success!**

Pledge + Random Throw < Difficulty  
**Failure!**

To actually determine the *Success* or *Failure* of the Action, take a Random Throw, add the Character's Pledge to it, and if the final value (known as the Character's *Performance*) meets or exceeds the Difficulty, the Character succeeds. Otherwise the attempt is a failure and the Character is otherwise unable to complete their Action.

## Degree of Success

When one Succeeds at an Action, the result may have to take the *Degree of Success* into account. This determines exactly how well your Character has pulled the Action off. The value is simply determined by the highest Level Word used in the Action. For example, if someone's highest Level Word was a Strength L3, their Degree of Success is 3. If someone's highest Level Word was a Smart L1, their Degree of Success is 1.



## Critical Throws & Failures

Of course, there always has to be a catch and that is exactly how *Critical Throws* and *Critical Failures* work. In throwing a random number, if by some twist of fate **doubles** show up (both parties throw the same number of fingers as indicated by "X" on the *Throwing Random Numbers* chart), a flash round of odds and evens is played.

**If you throw evens, you have scored a *Critical Throw*.** Your Performance becomes your Pledge + 10 and if you Succeed, your Degree of Success is **doubled**.

**If you throw odds, you have scored a *Critical Failure*.** Both your total Performance and Degree of Success are reduced to **0**.

## Taking 5

When a Character is not in a situation that is under duress, is unopposed, and has plenty of time to work at a task, their Player may opt to **Take 5**. Effectively, in such a situation, a Character can resolve an Action with a Performance equal to their appropriate Word Levels + 5 without the need for a Throw.

This, of course, eliminates the possibility of a Critical Throw, but at the same time eliminates the possibility of a Critical Failure. The Storyteller is the ultimate authority on when such a resolution is appropriate to attempt.

## Plinth

When a Character is in a new situation and decides they wish to proceed without exerting themselves, the Storyteller may allow them to resolve an action by their *Plinth*, or a Performance equal to the total Level of their appropriate Words without a Throw. If their Plinth is over the normal Difficulty, they in essence receive an automatic success.

Their Plinth cannot be used more than once for any situation, and further attempts must be Thrown.

Common situations where resolving an Action by a Character's Plinth may be a good idea include:

- Picking up first-impression details of a new scene they come across.
- Doing everyday Actions as part of their routine.
- Any other effortless Action.

# Chapter 4: Manipulating Words

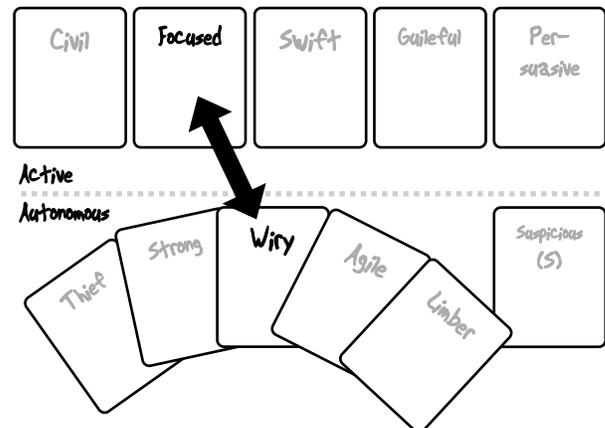


Words in Amalgam can be “manipulated” in a variety of ways to achieve a number of in-game effects. In this chapter we’ll go over the rules concerning them.

## Switching Words

The most rudimentary way of manipulating Words is determining which Words are Active and which are Autonomous. As such, **Switching** allows you to swap Words in and out of your Active Amalgamate during the course of the story.

Generally, a Player may switch *one* of their Character’s Words in before taking an Action. If a Player chooses to take no Action with their Character for that round, or takes an Action that involves waiting (such as aiming or setting themselves up to spring a trap), they may switch two Words rather than one.



If the Character is not in a stressful situation, they may swap their Words however they wish. Free-swapping is especially useful

## Imposing Words

Whenever a Character tries to affect another Character (whether by persuasion, by diplomacy, sword and shield, etc.) they may attempt do so by **Imposition**.

Imposition is the process by which a Character can temporarily alter the Words in another Character's Amalgamate. For example, to quiet a frightened Character, they may impose the Word "Calm." To sneak past a guard, they may try to impose the Word "Oblivious," or to physically hurt another Character, they can try to impose the Word "Wounded."

Depending on the setting and genre of the game, the Storyteller and Players collectively may come up with conventions for various in-game effects.

Let us say that our Thief Character wishes to fast-talk their way past security into a building. By taking an Action with a Difficulty of 5, the Thief may attempt to Impose the Word of their choice upon their opponent. An opening Pledge might be something like the following:

*"With a **Civil** tone, I **Guilefully** express to him in a **Persuasive** manner that I left my identification in my office upstairs... He seems like a **Compliant** sort."*

In the above example, our Thief is Pledging *Civil*, *Guileful*, and *Persuasive* against the guard (a Pledge of 3) in an attempt to Impose the word *Compliant*, so that he may pass.

Now, after the acting Character makes their initial Pledge for their Action, the defending Character may immediately Pledge any appropriate Active Words they have in their Amalgamate to increase the Difficulty by their combined Level. They may not, however, alter their current configuration beforehand by swapping any of their Words.

while Taking 5 or in preparation for a conflict or quest.

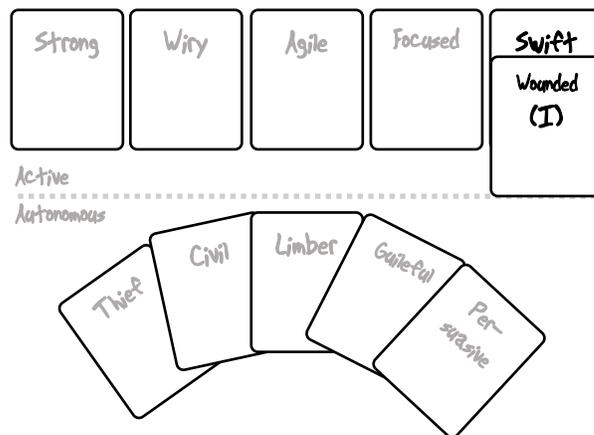
So now, the guard (played by the Storyteller) may reply with the following Pledge:

*"Being **Stubborn** by nature, I want to do this by the book. Let's hear this story."*

The guard has Pledged *Stubborn* in his defense, making his Pledge equal to 1.

Now our Thief will make their Throw at +3 (their total Pledge) against a Difficulty of 6 (an Average Task of 5 + the guard's Pledge). A little tricky, but doable.

If the acting Character succeeds, the defending Character must now deal with the Imposition. A number of their Active Words (equal to the Degree of Success – known as **Influence**) are now **Imposed**. When a Word is Imposed, it is temporarily removed from the Character's Amalgamate and replaced with another Word. If you're using index cards to keep track of your Character's Words, simply deal an appropriate Word card on top of the affected one – conventionally marked with (I).



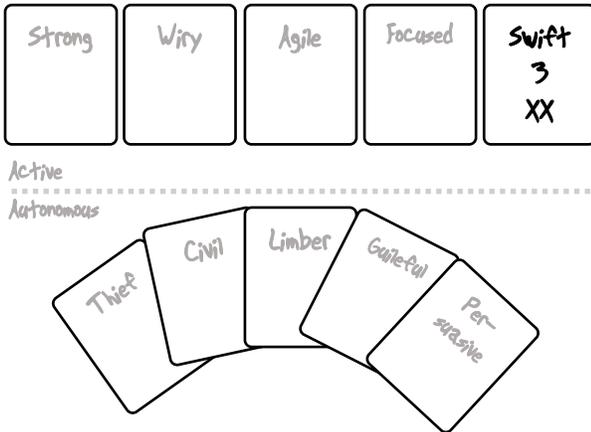
If there are more than can fit in your Active Amalgamate, the remainder are dealt in Autonomous.

The Words that were Pledged in defense are the first to be Imposed. Once those run out, the pool of choices opens up to include the Character's Active Amalgamate, and in both cases it is the defending Player's choice which Words are changed.

In certain circumstances, a Player may opt not to Pledge any Words in Defense of an

## Multi-Level Words & Influence

When dealing with Influence, Words of multiple Levels (i.e. Level 2 or higher) have a special advantage: They can resist more Influence before they are overcome.



For example, let's say that the security guard's *Stubborn*, from our previous example, was a Level 2. In this case, an Influence of 1 would not be enough to alter a Level 2 Word. Instead, the Storyteller will have to note down how much Influence the guard's *Stubborn* has been hit with (usually with dots or Xs). The next time someone tries to Impose upon that Word,

## Restoring Words

One can *Restore* Words back to their previous state either over time or through in-game efforts.

Generally, all Imposed Words are returned to their previous forms at the beginning of an adventure, after a good night's sleep, or at any point where the Characters have had enough time to properly recover (in similar manner to Influence).

Imposition. For example, if another Character is trying to heal them, it would not be a very good idea to resist. Even in this situation, the Storyteller may counter-Pledge any Autonomous Words that might get in the way.

the previous Influence will be taken into account as well.

Multiple points of Influence can be absorbed in this way by multiple Words at a time. For example, if a Character has two Level 2 Words Pledged in defense, and is hit with 2 points of Influence, they may opt for each of their Level 2 Words to absorb one point each, allowing the Character to continue unscathed.

Now, the "banked" Influence accumulated will eventually go away as would be appropriate. Under normal circumstances, this means that they should go away when the Character has adequate time to rest and recover or is otherwise removed from the relevant context. If the Character is continually subjected to stress (no sleep, torture, etc.), the Influence will not go away.

One last and very important thing to remember is if the defending Character did not Pledge any Words in defense then, when absorbing Influence, all of their Words are treated as if they are Level 1 (i.e. 1 point of Influence causes them to change). They have been simply caught off guard.

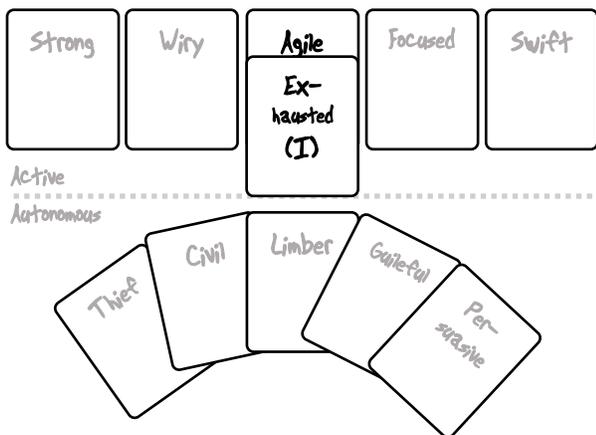
For Characters who wish to be more proactive in Restoring their Words, they can be brought back to their previous state by succeeding in actions where the Imposed Words would have been used. In a sense, by succeeding without their help they are able to restore their confidence in their own abilities.

Characters may also opt to try and Restore Words through healing or meditative

abilities – essentially Imposing the prior Words back to their proper places. The Difficulty for such an action is equal to 5 + the total Level of Imposed Words. The Degree of Success is then deducted from the Influence of whichever

Words are appropriate. Once all Influence on a Word is removed, the Word is restored, and equal levels of its Imposed counterpart is removed from the Character’s Amalgamate.

## Exhausting Words



When your Character is attempting to perform an Action that is exceedingly difficult or wishes to put everything they have into the

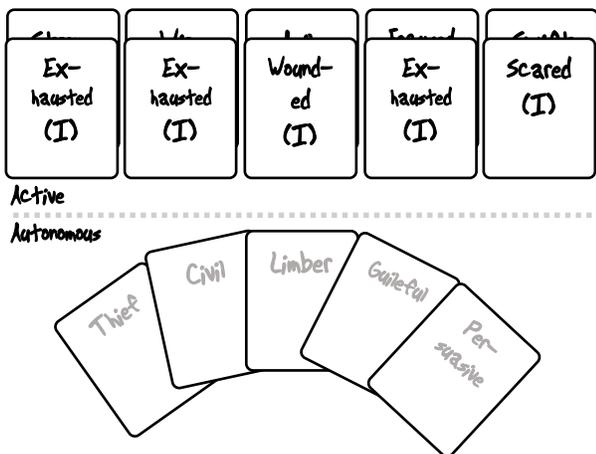
result, their Player may choose to **Exhaust** one or more of their Active Words.

Each Word they choose to Exhaust, must be declared before the Action is resolved with a Throw, and may be counted as *double* its Level. As a result, however, at the end of the Action it is immediately Imposed by the word “Exhausted.”

All *Exhausteds* that are acquired in this way cannot be Restored without appropriate in-game actions, such as an uninterrupted rest or non-trivial healing efforts. If a Character Exhausts all of their Active Words at once, at the end of their Action they become Incapacitated.

One cannot Exhaust Words when they Take 5 or use their Plinth.

## Incapacitation & Destroying Words



If a Character has all of their Active Words Imposed upon, they become **Incapacitated**. If it is from physical Imposition, they’ve been knocked down. If it’s from mental Imposition, they are stunned. For all intents and purposes, they are unable to act until they are able to Switch in at least 3 fresh, unhindered

Words, either one at a time or have them Restored by another Character.

Additionally, once a Character has no more Active Words to Impose upon, further Imposition can **Destroy** them. Strength is shattered. Beauty is ruined. Willpower is cut to ribbons. In short, they are removed from the Character’s Amalgamate and can only be gained back through the awarding of Experience.

Losing a Word is a jarring event, and should be roleplayed accordingly. For example, if a Character were to lose the word “Calm,” it would be appropriate for them to become suddenly panicked. If they were to lose the word “Strong,” the in-game effect may be that they have broken a bone.

Words that are Destroyed leave their Active slots empty, and must have other Words Switched in to take their place.

When all of one's Active Words are Destroyed – i.e. all Active slots have been emptied in this manner, no matter how many Inactive Words they may still have left – they expire as a Playable Character. If it is from

physical wounds, they die. If it is from emotional damage, they go insane, etc. The Character is now the Storyteller's responsibility and the Player must start afresh.

## Combat Rounds

Sometimes when flurries of Impositions go back and forth, the flow of play needs to become more organized to facilitate it. **Combat Rounds** are quick and clean(er) way in Amalgam to solve this problem.

**First**, each Player must Pledge what their Character intends to do, describing their actions along with their Words that fit. This can be a good time for the Players to collaborate and coordinate with each other.

If Weapons or Armor are involved, read up on the chapter on Items to understand how they work. Aggressive Actions are carried out by Imposing appropriate Words.

For example, for physical combat “Wounded,” “Broken,” “Bleeding,” etc. For mental combat “Confused,” “Dazed,” “Complacent,” “Panicked,” etc.. Overall, the Words you Impose upon opponents should always serve a purpose, from Imposing “Ignorant” upon them to sneak by or by

Imposing “Wounded”s them to bring them down.

**Second**, the Storyteller assigns Difficulty modifiers to each player based upon the quality of their descriptions and tactical considerations. “Called shots” like trying to Impose Blindness may take on modifiers depending on the situation. If there are a lot of Characters to keep track of, these can be represented by putting tokens down on the table, or handing over index cards.

**Third**, everyone Throws *at the same time* against the Storyteller to determine their Performances and potential Degrees of Success.

**Fourth**, the Characters then act in the order of their Performances, the Storyteller detailing their Successes and Failures.

**Finally**, when all else is settled, start a new round until there is no need to keep up rounds.

## Word Proficiencies

Back in Chapter 2 we discussed **Proficiencies**, “sub-words” that describe a particular specialty or niche use for that Word which allows them a special bonus under certain circumstances.

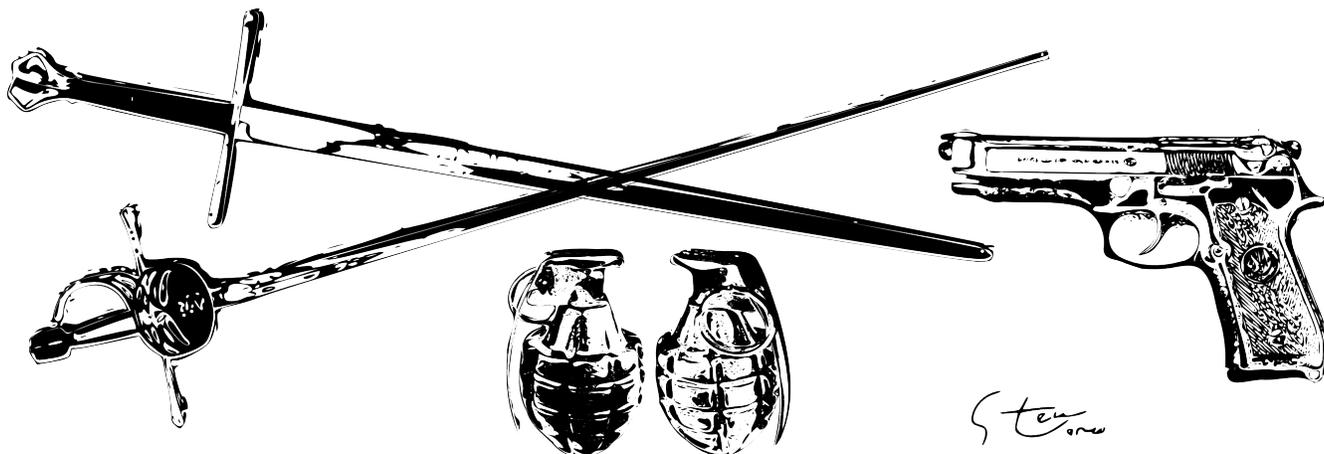
To re-iterate, the rule is that a Proficiency must be unique enough that the Character may only make use of it in very specific circumstances. For example, it would be improper to take “Speedy” on Runner, as it is far too general.

Something like “Sprinter” may be more appropriate, as then it would only garner advantages on short-distance running, or once at the very beginning of a chase.

In these circumstances, the Proficiency gives a +1 to the Character's Performance and, if successful, an additional +1 to their Degree of Success.

Proficiencies, however, cannot absorb Influence like Word Levels do.

# Chapter 5: Items

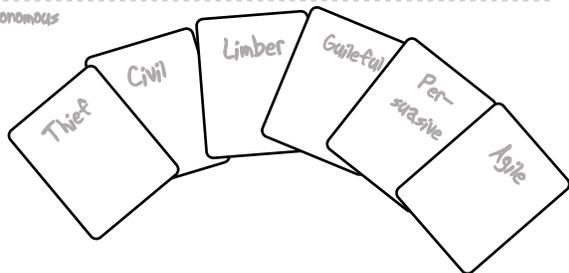


**Items** are treated as Words which range from Levels 1 to 5. In order to use an Item, you must either:

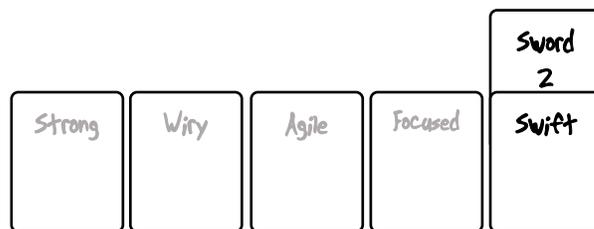
1) Switch it in as Active Word, essentially using one of your Active slots to accommodate it:



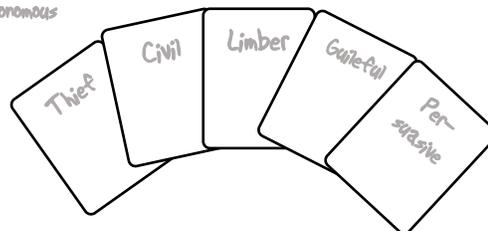
Active  
-----  
Autonomous



Or 2) if you have a Word appropriate for its use (say Gunslinger for a firearm), you may Switch it in *on top* of that Word as if it's a Proficiency of the same Level:



Active  
-----  
Autonomous



If an Item which is Switched in Actively is Imposed (case 1), it has somehow been dropped, disabled, jammed, or otherwise needs repairs before it can work properly again.

If it's an Item used as a Proficiency (case 2), it will need to be Switched to another Word or Switched in Actively before it can be used again.

## Item Level

**Item Level** is generally determined by how powerful or well-suited to a particular purpose it is. It is best to make common, "mundane" items Level 1. For example, Items

which you could not accomplish a task easily without, such as a screwdriver, a can opener, a key, should all be Level 1. Good "standard" items should be Level 2, and high-quality Items

should be Level 3. Level 4 items are harder to find and usually denote exceptional crafting

where Level 5 should be reserved for unique or rare items.

## Weapons

*Weapons* generally, excusing the pun, give you an edge in combat by increasing the number of appropriate Word Levels in your Amalgamate as well as higher-level Weapons giving you a boost to your Degree of Success beyond the Level 3 cap of normal Words.

### Example Weapons:

- LEVEL 1:** Knives, Slingshots, Small Projectiles
- LEVEL 2:** Swords, Polearms, Shortbow, Handguns
- LEVEL 3:** Fine Blades, Longbow, Longarms
- LEVEL 4:** Assault Rifles, Hollow Points, Magic Axes
- LEVEL 5:** Legendary Blades, Explosives

## Armor

*Armor*, once Active may be Pledged in defense of whomever is trying to harm you. For example, if our Thief has a Flak Jacket L2, any other Character attempting to attack them would have a -2 penalty on their Throw (or have their Difficulty increased by 2, depending on how you look at it).

Additionally, to determine a reasonable Level for a piece of Armor, the Storyteller should take the total area that it covers, along with its quality into account. For example, it would be foolish to give something as small as a Codpiece (regardless of how... confident a Character is about themselves) any more than one Level.

Finally, different types of Armor are not appropriate in different situations. Something

### Example Armor:

- LEVEL 1:** Knee or Shoulder Pads, Protective Gloves
- LEVEL 2:** Hardened Leather, Kendo Bogu
- LEVEL 3:** Chainmail, Flak Jacket
- LEVEL 4:** Full Kevlar, Steel Breastplate and Greaves
- LEVEL 5:** Full Steel Armor, Bomb Squad Armor

made of Kevlar will stop a bullet, but a knife would cut through it with little trouble. It is up to the Players and the Storyteller to keep these situations in mind, and is not something that is worth a chart to outline in this book. Brains and common sense should take precedence over manipulating the rules to undue advantage.



## Chapter 6: Additional Rules

The following are a number of alternate or additional rules that some Storytellers and Players can use:

### Using Dice

Some roleplayers do prefer the feel of dice in their hands rather than simply flicking fingers. This can be accomplished using standard 6-sided dice. When resolving actions, add up your appropriate Words as usual, but instead of throwing fingers, roll a die. On 1-5, it

resolves as usual, but a roll of 6 prompts a Critical Throw Check. Roll another die, and on an even number (2, 4, 6) the roll is a Critical Throw, where on an odd number (1, 3, 5) the roll is a Critical Failure. From there, play resumes normally.

### Advanced Items

Some Storytellers may find items with merely a Level value far too simplistic. Instead, they may treat an Item like a separate Amalgamate. Give the item its own number of Words, as well as a specified number of Active

Slots that determine how many of those Words can be Active at a given time. The players will be required to configure their Words as strategically as possible.

### Risk

When a Character is performing an Action and wishes to take a gamble, the Storyteller may allow them to take a few levels of *Risk*. For each Level of Risk employed, the Character's Performance is reduced by one, but

their Degree of Success is increased by one. This gives the effect of reducing their chances of Success, but increasing the benefits of succeeding if they do.

### Plot Points

If a Character does something truly extraordinary, the Storyteller may opt to award them a *Plot Point*. The Player who owns a Plot

Point may choose to use it as a +1 bonus on any Throw that they choose, provided they announce it beforehand.

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