

## Skills and Abilities

In the game of Cinis, skills and abilities make up a crucial part of a character. They allow us to judge the chance of success of a given character doing a particular task. To perform a task, all you need to do is determine the relevant skill and ability, the difficulty of the task, and then roll a few dice. The system is designed to be simple enough that GMs and players alike will actually use it.

Skill and ability rolls are the most common dice rolls in a role-playing game and due to this they should sacrifice excessive realism for speed of use; this system is more arbitrary than the combat or magic system, but the speed of use is worth the trade-off.

There is no complex, time-consuming skill web in this system, and there are not millions of specific skills. Instead we have some guidelines which provide for both of these realistic but cumbersome rule systems.

First, if a character is attempting a task and for some reason only has a related skill, but not the one specifically applicable, the player can use the related skill at a penalty.

Second, for players who want their characters to specialize in esoteric or limited fields there are two options: the Eccentric Hobby skill and the Specialization rule.

The Eccentric Hobby is a broad skill which allows for any possible hobby or skill desired (as permitted by the GM, of course). This gives a great amount of flexibility in adding a quirk or strange body of knowledge to a character.

Specialization allows the character to devote extra energy to a subfield within a specific skill, giving increased ability within that subfield. To counter this, however, the character must sacrifice some ability in the overall skill. For more details, see Specialization on page 21.

### Skill Checks versus Ability Checks

Any activity that a character does is either going to be primarily skill based or ability based. The first choice a GM must make is which of the two a given situation is.

A Skill based roll (Skill Check) is going to be governed by the skill level primarily, with an ability score modifier to take into account the secondary effects of Ability. The Ability based roll (Ability Check) is, of course, the other way around.

### A Rough Guide to Skill Rank vs. Competence

GMs and players may both find it useful to have an intuitive idea of when a particular being is really good, just mediocre, or downright poor at a skill. When does one have enough skill ranks to be considered a master lock-pick as opposed to a hack who is lucky to open even the simplest locks? The table below can be used as

Skill Rank	Competence of Being	General Ability Level
None	None	No ability
1	Novice	Can perform basic tasks.
2-4	Competent	Knows the field fairly well.
5-9	Good	Knows the field and its applications.
10-15	Very Good	Can do tricky things with some degree of success.
16-20	Excellent	Superior. Can do many things very well.
21-30	Master	Recognized expert in fields. National treasure material.
31-up	Grand Master	Among the best in the world.

### Assigning the Task Difficulty

Skill and ability checks are made by first determining the absolute difficulty of the task in question without regards to the ability scores and skills of the being in question. See the table below for a list of the possible categories. Task difficulty should be calculated assuming normal competence in the skill. The GM should simply ask herself, "how hard would this task be for somebody who is good but not great at doing such things?"

Note that the physical size, anatomy, etc. of the being attempting the skill might affect the difficulty of a skill. A human being would have more difficulty jumping a ten foot chasm than a twelve-foot giant. Also, some tasks may not be attempted by somebody who does not possess the pertinent skill. For example, a totally untrained person cannot play a complex flute piece, no matter their dexterity or intelligence. The GM should also feel free to assign a large penalty to someone who does not have the relevant skill, instead of allowing the person to have 0. We suggest a penalty of 5 as a reasonable starting point.

A GM may also simply assign a Task Difficulty Number without referring to the table below. The table here is intended only as a rough guide. A GM might decide, for example, that a particular task warrants a Task Difficulty Number of 22 (between Easy and Complex).

The Trivial and Impossible categories, when assigned by the GM to a task, mean that a task is either automatically completed or cannot be successfully completed. Trivial task difficulties should be assigned to those cases where success is simply a matter of routine -

for example, sweeping a floor, oiling one's tools, mounting a horse when one is a healthy and skilled rider, etc. For determining if a task is trivial, the GM should take the ability and skill of the person into question.

Impossible task difficulties apply to those things that simply cannot be done given the circumstances. For example, no matter how skilled at jumping a normal person becomes, she will never succeed at jumping, unassisted, a 500 yard chasm.

**Table 20: Roll Required Given a Task Difficulty**

Difficulty of Task	Task Difficulty Number
Trivial	No roll needed. Success.
Very Easy	15
Easy	20
Complex	25
Difficult	30
Very Difficult	35
Extreme	40
Almost Impossible	45
Allegedly Possible	50
Impossible	Not possible. No roll needed and attempt failed.

### Skill Checks

First the GM simply assigns a difficulty to the task and locates the associated target number. The GM also chooses which ability is being employed as well (some skills can use different abilities in different situations.) Then, the person using the skill rolls 3D12 and adds their Skill Rank in the given skill and the Ability Bonus in the used ability. If the number rolled is greater than or equal to the target number, the character has successfully completed his task. If the number rolled is less than the target number, then the character has not succeeded, and the GM decides what has happened (whether it be nothing, a broken tool, a jammed lock, etc.) based on how badly the roll was failed by.

In summary:

#### Making a Skill Check

**You are Okay if  
3D12 + Skill Rank + Ability Bonus  
is greater than  
the Task Difficulty Number**

Choose the ability to use based on what the task at hand is. For example, remembering Juggling Theory in a conversation would use INT, but juggling itself would use DEX. Usually, only one ability is relevant to a skill check, but, in some cases a GM may decide that two or more abilities are relevant to the skill check. In such cases, simply average the ability modifiers. For example, if DEX and REF are both relevant to a skill check, add the REF and DEX modifiers together and divide by two.

#### Example of Skill Use

*Sampa is trying to play a tune on a glass flute to open the Magical Gate of Isla. The GM decides that this would be a Difficult task for a normally competent person (and hence a 30 is the Task Difficulty Number).*

*First the GM says DEX is the base attribute. Sampa has a Dexterity of 25 which gives a modifier of 1. Sampa has a skill rank in Play Instrument: Flute of +2. Sampa's not a great flute-player, but can fumble through most music given a few tries.*

*Chris calculates the roll needed for Sampa to succeed. It's:  $28 - 2 - 1 = 25$ .*

*Now Chris rolls 3D12 for Sampa, trying to get a 25 or above. 26 is the lucky result, and the Magical Gate of Isla slowly yawns open, revealing a vast new world ripe for exploration...*

## Ability Checks

Ability checks are employed when a character wants to do something related to an ability that is not primarily affected by skill, such as lift a heavy object (arguments about the skill of weightlifting aside) or twiddle fingers in some special way.

Ability checks are just like skill checks, except you should add the Ability Score, not Bonus, and subtract 10 to make the scores in the range of skills. Note that this means a 20 ability turns into an equivalent skill of 10, Very Good, and a 35 ability turns into an equivalent skill of 25, Master.

Sometimes an activity is more ability based than skill based, but there is still some skill that plays a role in doing it. Our primary example of this is the Observation skill. In such a situation, add one third the skill rank to the Ability Score, and then make an Ability Check. So, to make an Ability Check, do the following:

### Making an Ability Check

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**You are Okay if  
3D12 + Ability Score + Skill / 3 - 10  
is greater than  
the Task Difficulty Number**

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## The Meaning of the Rolls

So now that the rules have been outlined, here are a few observations on what they mean, and how to capture the feeling of the game with them.

### Success and Failure

First, a failure is relative. In many situations, an accomplished individual doing a difficult task (thus needing around a 20 on the die roll) is not going to fail half the time, but rather is just not going to do the task as well as she might have. One way of capturing a skill failure is to say the task took longer than expected.

### Skill Rules Example-The Pickpocket

*Joola is a poor thief surviving on her wits and talents alone. One day she notices a drunken noble staggering down a dark alley with a heavy pouch at his belt. Thanking the light for her good fortune, she decides to relieve the noble of his burdensome money pouch.*

*The GM decides that this attempted pick pocketing is fairly easy as the noble is drunk and there is nobody else about to notice the theft. Hence, the GM assigns a Task Difficulty Number of 20. The GM further decides that this attempt will depend on Joola's DEX ability - she'll need to do some fancy fingerwork to cut the pouch away from the belt.*

*Joola has a pickpocket skill rank of +5 (she is an average pickpocket) and a DEX of 28, giving her a +2 ability bonus.*

*We're now ready to determine if Joola succeeds. We simply subtract the modifiers from the Task Difficulty Number - in this case we have: 20 - 5 - 2 = 13.*

*So, if Joola is to succeed in her attempt, Joola's player will need to roll a 13 or above on 3D12. Say she rolls an 8. Well, that was a failure, but not by too much. The GM should rule in this case that she was merely unable to obtain the pouch, not that the noble has necessarily noticed her attempts. The GM might alternatively give the noble a Perception check at this point, to see if he notices.*

### Production Values

Often an individual working on a task is pretty much guaranteed not to fail, it is just a question of the quality of the result. For example, a Competent blacksmith will always be able to make a sword under normal circumstances, but the blade's worth will vary greatly. In this case, make a roll, and judge the result by how much the roll was made by.

### Competitive Checks

When two people are pitting their skills against each other, such as a slight of hand artist trying to track a coin in another slight of hand artist's possession, each person should make a skill check and whomever makes it by the greater amount triumphs.

Obviously there are exceptions to this. For example, if the slight of hand artist bungles his attempt to conceal

**Table 21: Quality of Result**

Final Roll Total	Quality
0-5	Extremely poor
6-15	poor
16-25	average
26-30	good
31-40	very good
41-50	excellent
51-60	amazing

the coin, it does not matter what the other slight of hand artist did as he along with everyone else around would notice the horrendous mistake (e.g. the coin is dropped on the ground accidentally and the artist is forced to scabble around on her hands and knees to find it).

In addition, sometimes when two people are pitted against each other, one will naturally have an easier time of it. For example when someone is trying to hold a closed door shut while another person tries to force it open, the former person has a massive advantage. In these cases, simply give decrease the Difficulty of the task for the advantaged contestant and then proceed as outlined above.

#### **A Morko Competition (Ability Checks)**

*Jun-jun moSmythe and Raco moDundur are doing the Morko leg competition at a Glub tent in the southern Sander plains. Jun-jun is unlucky enough to be standing on a chest which gives him a disadvantage. Raco, as challenger, is attempting to trip Jun-jun. He is shorter than Jun-jun, but has a Brawling Skill of +4, which the GM rules is pertinent*

*The GM says tripping in Morko when you are shorter is Very Difficult, and not being tripped in Morko when you are taller is Complex. However, since Jun-jun is on a chest, it becomes Difficult for him. They both roll, Jun-jun gets a 25 and Raco gets a 28. Raco gets a 4/3 = +1 for his Brawling skill, and so has succeeded by 4 and Jun-jun succeeded by 2, so Raco has successfully, but barely, tripped Jun-jun.*

### **When to Require a Skill or Ability Check**

Some ability checks are proper, others frivolous and against the spirit of role-playing. First, under all but the most extreme circumstances the GM should not make use of INT checks to see if the character performs as the player wishes; this takes the fun out of role-playing. The GM should rely on players ability to play their characters in a realistic manner.

Perception checks are the most common ability check. Whenever the character stops to listen for noises, searches for a secret compartment in a chest, or looks for someone hidden in the shadows, the character is using her perception and should roll a perception check.

Reflexes might be checked in the case of unexpected traps or accidents that might be dodged or avoided.

A special form of ability checks are Resistance Rolls (RRs). RRs are made to reduce the effects of special attacks. See page 150 for more on this.

#### **Skill Rules Example-The Gardener**

*Rankis, an incompetent garrison guard, decides to try to grow himself a little garden behind the barracks. He worked as a farmer for a couple of years, and hence has a farming skill rank of +2.*

*The GM decides that growing a small garden behind the barracks is a Complex task (a Task Difficulty Number of 24) because the soil is poor, the rainfall sporadic, and the location prone to plundering by pigs kept by the other guards. The GM also decides that the relevant ability here is INT - farming is as much about knowing how, where, and when to grow things as it is about hard labor.*

*Rankis is a bit on the dull side - he has an INT score of 15, resulting in a modifier of -1.*

*We can then calculate the roll needed on 3D12 for success. It is:  $24 - 2 - (-1) = 24 - 2 + 1$  (Rankis' slow wits make his task more difficult) = 23.*

*So, to succeed, the GM (who is controlling Rankis) would need to roll a 23 or above on 3D12. The odds are against a successful garden, but nobody would be surprised if Rankis were to succeed.*

## Optional Skill Rules

The following optional rules are merely recommended. The above skill rules are fine just as they are. These optional rules address two issues: first, certain tasks may be in the end trivial for those who are skilled enough and hence such people should automatically succeed, and (b) ability modifiers at low levels can swamp skill ranks and give an extreme advantage to those with high abilities. The following two optional rules address these issues.

### (1) Trivial Skill Checks

If, after modification for rank and ability, the target number of the skill check is 10 or below, the character or NPC automatically passes the skill check.

### (2) Ability Modifier Restrictions

A being can never have more helpful ability point modifiers applied to a skill check than she has skill ranks. For example, if Gorab has lock picking +1 and a DEX of 35, he would usually have an ability modifier of +5. However, according to this optional rule, Gorab only gains an ability modifier of +1. He's still better than the average novice, and his DEX will help him as he develops even more greatly, but given his low degree of skill, a high DEX can only help him so much. Ability penalties for low abilities are always applied in full.

## Skill Lists

The following is a complete list of skills in the game.

### Note on Notation in Skill Lists

Many skills have the same first word as they are similar, and so we want them to be grouped together. We tack on the qualifier by adding a ':' character after the first word. For example we have:

Ceremony: Learn

Ceremony: Perform

These ':' characters denote separate skills, not specializations of a single skill.

Specializations should be denoted with a '-' character, such as:

Foraging- grasslands

### Complete List of Skills

Acrobatics (P)  
 Acting  
 Alchemy (S)  
 Appraisal: Various  
 Architecture & Engineering (S)  
 Brawling  
 Calligraphy (S)  
 Carousing  
 Ceremony: Alteration (S)  
 Ceremony: Learn (S)  
 Ceremony: Perform  
 Climbing (P)  
 Cooking  
 Craft: Book Restoration  
 Craft: Various  
 Dancing (P)  
 Disguise/Costume  
 Eccentric Skill  
 Farming (P)  
 "Fool"/Jester  
 Foraging (P)  
 Forgery: Craft Specific  
 Forgery: Paper/Documents (S)  
 Fortune Telling  
 Galley Rowing (P)  
 Gambling & Games  
 Geography & Map Use (S)  
 Herding (P)  
 Horsemanship (P)  
 Hunting  
 Joust/Tilt  
 Juggling  
 Law (S)  
 Library Research (S)  
 Literature (S)  
 Lore/History: Folklore, soils, etc.  
 Magic: Modeling  
 Magic: Physical



Magic: Quality  
Magic: Spirit  
Management (S)  
Mathematics (S)  
Medicine, Academic (S)  
Medicine, Herbal  
Medicine, Practical  
Meditation & Self Control  
Mining (P)  
Music Theory/Composition (S)  
Natural Science (S)  
Navigation (S)  
Painting/Drawing  
Performance Art  
Philosophy (S)  
Physical Exercise (P)  
Pick Locks  
Pick Pockets  
Play Instrument  
Rabble Rousing  
Read/Write Foreign Language (S)  
Religion  
Rhetoric (S)  
Remedial Work  
Rope & Tool Use  
Running (P)  
Sailing (P)  
Sewing & Weaving  
Singing  
Sleight of Hand  
Speak Language  
Sports - General (P)  
Stealth  
Storytelling  
Swimming (P)  
Tactics/Strategy  
Teaching (S)  
Train Animals  
Tend Children (P)  
Theology (S)  
Tracking  
Use Shield  
Use Siege Machinery  
Use Weapon: Bow  
Use Weapon: Crossbow/Gun  
Use Weapon: Dagger/Knife  
Use Weapon: One-Handed Swinging  
Use Weapon: Two-Handed Swinging  
Use Weapon: Polearms  
Use Weapon: Quarterstaff  
Use Weapon: Sling  
Use Weapon: Spear  
Use Weapon: Sword  
Use Weapon: Thrown Blade

Use Weapon: Thrown Javelin  
Use Weapon: Trident and Net  
Use Weapon: Whip  
Weather Watching

### Skills Divided by Category

#### Magic- Ritual

Ceremony: Alter  
Ceremony: Learn  
Ceremony: Perform

#### Magic- Spell

Magic: Modeling  
Magic: Physical  
Magic: Quality  
Magic: Spirit

#### A List of Lore Skills

Anatomy  
Animals  
Ceremonial Lore  
Coven  
Craft  
Demonology  
Dueling  
Fools & Jesters  
Geography  
Great Voyages  
Heraldry and History of Kingdom  
Herbs and Fungus  
History of Magic  
Legendary Heroes  
Masonry  
Military  
Military Unit  
Plants  
Political  
Regional  
Religious  
Sailing  
Sea Animals  
Soil & Rocks  
Wilderness

#### Physical

Acrobatics  
Climbing  
Dancing  
Farming  
Foraging  
Galley Rowing  
Herding  
Horsemanship  
Mining  
Physical Exercise  
Running



Sports - General  
Swimming

**Scholarship**

Accounting  
Alchemy  
Archetecture & Engineering  
Ceremony: Alter  
Ceremony: Learn  
Forgery:Paper/Documents  
Fortune Telling: Astrology  
Law  
Library Research  
Literature  
Magic: Modeling  
Magic: Physical  
Magic: Quality  
Magic: Spirit  
Management  
Map Use  
Mathematics  
Medicine, Academic  
Music Theory/Composition  
Natural History  
Navigation  
Philosophy  
Read/Write Foreign Language  
Recital  
Rhetoric  
Teaching  
Theology

**Combat- Melee**

Brawling  
Joust/Tilt  
Use Shield  
Use Weapon: Bow  
Use Weapon: Crossbow/Gun  
Use Weapon: Dagger/Knife  
Use Weapon: One-Handed Swinging  
Use Weapon: Two-Handed Swinging  
Use Weapon: Polearms  
Use Weapon: Quarterstaff  
Use Weapon: Sling  
Use Weapon: Spear  
Use Weapon: Sword  
Use Weapon: Thrown Blade  
Use Weapon: Thrown Javelin  
Use Weapon: Thrown Wooden Spoon  
Use Weapon: Trident and Net  
Use Weapon: Whip

**Combat- Thrown**

Juggling  
Weapon: Thrown Dagger

Weapon: Thrown Javelin  
Weapon: Thrown Wooden Spoon

**Combat- Missile**

Weapon: Bow  
Weapon: Crossbow/Gun  
Weapon: Sling

**Skills Not Found on Occupation Lists**

Action Tracking

This skill is used by the Gen-ral race.

Berzerking

This skill is used by some types of barbarians.

Skill Catagorization

Arcana vs. Corpus vs. Lore vs. History

