Tricube Tales

Core Rulebook

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Preface

Tricube Tales started as a simple set of guidelines for roleplaying with my five-year-old son. I wanted a system where the GM could handle all the complexity, so the player could roll 1-3d6 and then interpret the results, without needing to apply any arithmetic. The use of tokens also provided my son with a visual and tactile reminder that worked better than using a pen and paper.

However, I found the rules appealed to adults as well—so I decided to expand and flesh out the system.

When DriveThruRPG introduced the "Phone PDF" format recently, I thought it was a good fit for Tricube Tales—it's a portable RPG you can play anywhere, so where better to keep the rulebook than on your smartphone?

But I also decided to offer a print-on-demand version, as some people dislike reading books on their phone, or having electronic devices at the table.

— Richard Woolcock, November 2019.

Introduction

About the Game

Tricube Tales is a minimalist, narrative-driven tabletop roleplaying system. It is designed to handle a variety of different genres and settings, and doesn't require much setup or bookkeeping.

This book assumes that the reader is already familiar with tabletop RPGs, but the rules are reasonably straightforward and should be easy to explain, even to beginners or younger players.

Getting Started

One person assumes the role of Game Master (GM), and they create the world and control the Non-Player Characters (NPCs). Everyone else controls a Player Character (PC), narrating the actions of their protagonist as they drive the story and interact with the game world.

Each player will need three six-sided dice (3d6), as well as three "resolve" and three "karma" tokens. The GM will need some "effort" tokens for challenges, but they don't require any dice.

System Overview

Players roll 1-3 dice (depending on their character archetype) against a difficulty of 4-6 (depending on the situation), and need to succeed with at least one die.

Perks can reduce the difficulty, while quirks can increase it. The players spend karma on perks, and can recover karma from quirks.

The players make all of the rolls. The GM never rolls dice—they only describe challenges, assign the trait and difficulty, and narrate the story and NPC actions.

Choosing a Setting

Before you begin play, it is important to define the setting. The story could be set in the same world as a popular movie or novel, or you could adapt an established setting from another roleplaying game.

When using material from a different RPG, focus on copying the flavor rather than game mechanics. System-agnostic settings are a good fit for Tricube Tales, as they come without any baggage.

Example of Play

A crafty mage explores an ancient crypt...

GM: A heavy door blocks your way.

Mage: Can I open it?

GM: The door is solid, but the lock is crude. You can pick it with an easy agile challenge, but that falls outside the scope of your concept, so you would lose a die. Alternatively, you could break down the door with a standard brawny challenge.

Mage: I will summon a fire elemental with my "pyromancy" perk, and order it to incinerate the door using brute force!

GM: Nice! It's still a standard brawny challenge, though; the difficulty is 5.

Mage: ⚄ ⚅—I'll spend a karma token to reduce the difficulty from 5 to 4.

GM: Okay, your fire elemental blasts the door into cinders. On the other side, two skeletons turn to face you.

Mage: I'll hurl a fireball at them!

GM: Roll a standard crafty challenge; there is one effort token per skeleton.

Mage: ⚅ ⚅ ⚄—Boom! I fry them both with my fireball!

Characters

Creation

To create a character, choose a name, an archetype, a perk and a quirk. If it makes things easier, you can even write out the character as a descriptive sentence, such as "a brawny knight of noble upbringing with a strict code of honor," or "an agile journalist with spider-like superpowers and a propensity for cracking jokes."

Just make sure your character fits the genre and setting!

Archetype

A character's archetype consists of a *trait* (agile, brawny, or crafty) combined with a *concept* (often a profession, but can also include race or other descriptors).

If your character concept has magical powers, you'll be able to overcome many challenges with magic—but if you don't also have an appropriate perk, you won't be able to spend karma on your spells.

Examples: Agile assassin, agile elven ranger, brawny soldier, brawny paladin, crafty journalist, crafty sorcerer.

Perks

Perks represent special talents, abilities, skills, arcane items, professions, etc. You begin with one perk of your choice.

Examples: Charming, magical sword, necromancy, noble bloodline, psionicist, quick reflexes, scholar of the occult.

Quirks

Quirks represent hindrances, handicaps, and negative personality traits that can make life difficult for the character. You begin with one quirk of your choice.

Examples: Arrogant, bad eyes, mean, peg leg, ruthless, ugly, vindictive.

Karma & Resolve

Karma represents luck and providence, while resolve represents tenacity, spirit, health, and determination.

Players begin each session with three karma tokens and three resolve tokens. These can be recovered during play, but can never exceed the character's starting quota for the session.

Gear

Gear is considered a narrative tool, used to justify a character's capabilities rather than give bonuses. Players can describe their gear for flavor purposes, but they are usually assumed to have whatever is needed for their archetype and perks.

If you want your character to own an exceptional or arcane item that provides significant benefits, take it as a perk.

Advancement

Characters generally advance every 1-3 sessions, at the GM's discretion, based on the desired length of the campaign.

When your character advances, add a new perk or quirk of your choice—or else convert an existing affliction into a quirk! This represents an ability, foible, or item your character has discovered or developed during the story.

Every second advance may be used to increase either your karma or resolve by one token (up to a maximum of six each) *instead* of adding a perk or quirk.

Archetype

Agile cyborg gunslinger

Perk

Cybernetic arms

Quirk

Arrogant

Archetype

Agile starship pilot

Perk

Lightning reflexes

Quirk

Loose cannon

Archetype

Brawny draconian knight

Perk

Draconic heritage

Quirk

Ruthless

Archetype

Brawny orc mercenary

Perk

Blademaster

Quirk

Greedy

Archetype

Crafty inventor

Perk

High-tech power suit

Quirk

Vigilante

Archetype

Crafty psychologist

Perk

Psychic powers

Quirk

Stubborn

Game Rules

Challenges

If a player attempts something risky, the GM can call for a challenge—they assign it a trait (agile, brawny, or crafty) and a difficulty of 4-6 (easy, standard, or hard).

Players roll 1-3d6 depending on their archetype (see page 28). If a die equals or beats the difficulty, they succeed—if not, they fail. If they succeed on 2-3 dice, the result is an *exceptional* success—narrate a benefit and/or describe a cool outcome.

If the player rolls "1" on *all* their dice, the result is a critical failure, and this is always *very* bad—the GM should narrate a particularly interesting or unfortunate complication related to the situation!

Some challenges require extra effort to overcome. This is represented using effort tokens; each die to equal or beat the difficulty eliminates a token, and the challenge is defeated once all the tokens are gone. PCs can usually work together to overcome such a challenge, and it will require several rolls; failing any of these rolls will have consequences.

Success & Failure

A challenge has four possible outcomes: *exceptional success*, *normal success*, *normal failure*, or *critical failure*.

These results are relative to both the character and the situation, as decided by the GM, and neither the worst-case nor the best-case outcomes should be so extreme that they require suspension of disbelief. It wouldn't be believable for a master thief to *fail* to pick a simple lock, but it might take longer than they expect or result in a complication. Likewise, an unarmed scholar couldn't feasibly slay a dozen elite soldiers in melee combat—at best, they might make a clean escape.

If someone tries to translate a magical text while also having no background in magic or the written language, then even an *exceptional success* might provide them less information than a scholarly wizard would discover on a normal *failure*!

However, there is always a cost for failure—otherwise, the players shouldn't even be rolling for the challenge.

Exceptional Success

Players should be encouraged to narrate the outcome of an exceptional success.

If a challenge *doesn't* use effort tokens, the GM may choose to offer some other mechanical benefit, such as lowering the difficulty of *another* roll by 1 (perhaps to aid the player's next roll, or to help their ally beat the current challenge)—but this cannot reduce the difficulty below 3.

The Price of Failure

The consequences for failure are usually obvious—the character might be spotted while trying to sneak past a guard, miss in combat, or fail to climb up a tree. The GM could also eliminate a resolve token, increase the difficulty of another roll, or introduce some other complication.

A critical failure is always very bad, no matter how skilled the character, and often represents a stroke of bad luck. If the character would lose one resolve on a normal failure, then they'd usually lose *two* resolve on a critical failure.

Narrate the Outcome

Don't simply announce that a character has failed—describe the consequences of their failure, and try to explain what *does* happen rather than what *doesn't*. Instead of saying the character "critically fails to pick a lock," describe how the tip of the tool snaps off inside the lock. Don't just say that the character "fails to dodge the attack"—describe how the foe lunges at them and slams a fist into their jaw.

Defeat

Characters are "defeated" when they run out of resolve (or effort tokens), and the victor decides their victim's fate.

Defeated characters gain an affliction appropriate to the situation, such as a broken arm, a phobia, a bruised ego, etc. They recover all of their resolve, but are usually unable to actively participate in the remainder of the scene—they might be unconscious on the ground, fleeing in terror, or too hurt to continue. They can usually play again in the next scene.

Afflictions

Afflictions are defined by the victor and can be treated like temporary quirks (or permanent quirks if caused by a critical failure), except the GM decides when to apply them. A PC with more than three afflictions is retired from play, although they can be brought back if one or more of their afflictions are cured.

Death is a matter of narrative. Players might decide to kill a foe in combat, but the GM should warn players in advance if failing a challenge will result in death.

Recovery

Certain afflictions (e.g., "fleeing in fear") are removed automatically at the end of a scene, but others may last hours, days, or longer, at the GM's discretion. A PC with a suitable perk can spend karma to cure an affliction (e.g., "regeneration" to heal a wound)—but *permanent* afflictions (i.e., those caused by critical failures) will cost permanent karma to remove, unless converted into quirks using advances.

Opposed Challenges

Most challenges consist of PCs working together against external threats, but on occasion, they may wish to oppose *each other*. If this occurs, both players roll as normal, but each should treat the other's highest die roll as the difficulty of their *own* challenge (i.e., highest roll wins).

On a tie, the player who matched the difficulty with the most dice achieves a normal success (e.g., ⚄ ⚄ ⚄ is a normal success against ⚄ ⚄ ⚃ or ⚄ ⚃ ⚃). Should the players each roll the same number of matching dice, try to interpret the result in a way that favors both sides equally.

If both players roll a critical failure, then each suffers a terrible outcome.

NPC Confrontations

There may also be situations where two NPCs have a direct confrontation with each other, rather than against PCs. The GM can usually just decide the outcome, but if an unpredictable result is desired, ask the players to roll for the NPCs.

Combat

Combat and other conflicts can easily be resolved as regular challenges, but if you prefer to have a turn-by-turn exchange of attacks, use these guidelines.

NPCs as Challenges

The GM assigns foes a difficulty of 4-6, based on their power relative to the PC. Most enemies should be difficulty 5.

Each foe also has one or more effort tokens to represent their resolve. If you have a group of similar enemies, such as a horde of goblins, treat them as a single challenge with extra effort tokens.

Resolution

Turn order should follow the narrative where possible, and players make all the rolls—they roll to attack on their turn, and to defend on the enemy's turn. They only lose resolve on a failed *defense* roll.

Players should only make one defense roll each turn. When facing *multiple* foes, roll against the most dangerous attacker.

Example of Combat

A brawny dwarven battle priest and an agile elven ranger encounter a group of goblinoids while exploring some ruins.

GM: Four goblin archers ready bows, while two hobgoblins draw cudgels. You can attack first if you use ranged attacks. Standard difficulty; you need 5+ to hit.

Elf: I shoot! ⚄ ⚂ ⚂—one goblin drops dead, my arrow buried in its throat!

Dwarf: I draw my warhammer, raise my shield, and charge the hobgoblins!

GM: Okay, but first roll to evade the goblins' arrows, standard difficulty.

Elf: ⚀ ⚃ ⚅—I easily dodge aside.

Dwarf: ⚂ ⚅—an arrow gets lodged in my shield, and I carry on charging.

GM: Okay, you rush the hobgoblins. Make your attack, standard difficulty.

Dwarf: ⚄ ⚂ ⚅—I use my "berserker" perk to reduce the difficulty to 4, then I smash their skulls as I roar with rage!

Elf: New turn? ⚄ ⚄ ⚄—I will use my "marksman" perk and kill the remaining goblins with *one* arrow! Shish kebab!

Archetypes

A character's archetype consists of a *trait* (agile, brawny, or crafty) combined with a *concept* (usually a profession), and this combination determines how many dice they roll for challenges.

Agile characters roll 3d6 for anything related to quickness, dexterity, reflexes, or stealth. They also roll 3d6 for ranged combat (but see page 29).

Brawny characters roll 3d6 for any challenges based on strength, toughness, stamina, or athletics. They also roll 3d6 for melee combat (but see page 29).

Crafty characters roll 3d6 when they perform challenges related to charisma, intellect, willpower, or perception. They also roll 3d6 for mental combat (but see "Combat Styles" on page 29).

When characters lack the appropriate trait for a challenge, they only roll 2d6. If a particular challenge requires special knowledge that falls outside the scope of their concept and perks, then reduce the number of dice they roll by one.

Example Archetypes

A brawny barbarian rolls 3d6 to swing a sword, 2d6 to throw a spear, and 1d6 to pick a lock. An agile elven ranger rolls 3d6 to sneak silently through the forest, 2d6 to spot a hidden enemy, and 1d6 to negotiate a legal treaty. A crafty wizard rolls 3d6 to throw a fireball at someone, 2d6 to climb a rope, and 1d6 to swing a greatsword in combat.

Combat Styles

A character's preferred combat style (i.e., melee, ranged or mental) is *usually* based on their trait. However, this can also be changed if another style better fits their concept. For example, an agile thief may be better at melee combat, while a crafty gunslinger might prefer ranged combat.

The character's combat style must be chosen during character creation, and it can't be changed later. This combat style is used for both attacking *and* defending.

Note: Mental combat includes magic attacks, persuasion, intimidation, etc.

Context is Important

Crafty characters generally roll 3d6 for social challenges, but that doesn't mean they're always better at them.

A crafty old witch normally rolls 3d6, but courting a young man falls outside the scope of her concept, so she'd only roll 2d6 in such a situation. Perhaps she also has a "warty nose" quirk—if so, that might well increase the difficulty of the challenge, or add a complication.

An agile rake normally rolls 2d6, but courting a young lady is well within the scope of his concept, so he wouldn't lose a die—and he might have a "charming" perk, which could reduce the difficulty of the challenge. He could even spend a karma token to describe the young lady becoming infatuated with him.

But of course, the rake would roll 1d6 to persuade a jilted husband to give him a break, and the crafty old witch would roll 3d6 to convince a young woman to try out her spinning wheel, or take a bite from a juicy red apple.

Perks

Characters with a relevant perk can ask the GM for insight or clues about one particular situation, receive a temporary benefit (such as special gear or aid from an NPC), overcome obstacles that would generally be impossible for other people (such as using their wings to fly up onto a rooftop), and so on.

The exact benefits and uses of a perk are always at the GM's discretion, but a broadly defined perk has a wider scope, therefore a more narrowly defined perk (including any perk that is particularly niche for the setting) should have more impact when it *does* come into play.

If a player wants to use their perk to *significantly* impact the story, they must spend a karma token to do so.

Karma can also be spent to reduce the difficulty of a challenge by 1—make this decision *after* rolling, and make sure you narrate how the perk gives you an edge. No more than one karma may be spent in this way for each challenge.

A Deeper Look

If you want to do something with a perk that most people could not even *attempt*, and this activity shouldn't require a roll, you'll need to spend a karma token to do so. For example, using "necromancy" to conjure a spirit for questioning, or using "supernatural insight" to obtain valuable hidden clues about a crime scene.

If you want to do something that isn't normally possible, but which your perk should allow you to at least *attempt*, you don't need to spend any karma, but you still need to roll. For example using your "superhuman strength" to lift a bus.

If a perk should let you automatically bypass a challenge then you may spend a karma token *instead* of rolling (but make this decision *before* you roll the dice). For example, using "flight" to fly over a river that everyone else needs to swim across, or walking past soldiers who can't harm you, because you are "incorporeal" (even if this challenge uses effort tokens).

If the challenge is usually possible for

everyone, you can still describe how you use your perk to increase the odds, and may later spend karma to retroactively reduce the difficulty. For example, using your "cybernetic legs" to help you jump from one rooftop to another.

If you only use a perk to add flavor to a scene (e.g., beating a challenge through magic that can just as easily be overcome with mundane skills or items), you don't have to spend karma. For example, using telekinesis instead of your hands to push open a door is just a matter of narrative.

Another Perspective

Always try to think of perks in terms of overcoming challenges. Players only roll if it's important to the story, but if they use a perk to bypass a challenge *without* rolling, it costs them karma. Likewise, it costs karma to reduce the difficulty of a challenge—but if they only use a perk to flavor the *narrative*, it *doesn't* cost karma.

If a player has no karma, the GM may offer them a complication instead.

Related Knowledge

Perks generally imply lesser knowledge in any related field. For example, a "car mechanic" would also have some degree of general mechanical knowledge—they might not know much about aircraft, for example, but they'd still have a far better chance of fixing one than someone with no mechanical skills. Similarly, someone with a "swordmaster" perk could apply their martial expertise to other combat situations, a "surgeon" perk also implies general medical training, and so on.

Assisting Allies

Players can also use perks to assist their friends and allies. For example, a "divine healer" might remove a wound affliction from an injured friend, while a "fearless commander" might help their ally resist a fear-based attack. When one PC assists another, either may pay the karma cost.

Assisting someone doesn't change the standard expenditure limit of one karma per challenge; if you spend karma to aid an ally, they cannot also spend their own karma to reduce the difficulty further.

Stacking Perks

Although it isn't possible to spend more than one karma per challenge, nor lower the difficulty a second time using karma, players may still *describe* stacking perks.

Just as the narrative impact of a perk depends on how narrowly defined it is, so multiple perks should *also* have more narrative impact than a single perk.

Don't forget, success is relative to the PC's *overall* competence (see page 21).

Quirks

Players must declare their intent to use a quirk *before* rolling for a challenge. They should describe their character's actions in a way that incorporates the quirk, and then increase the challenge difficulty by 1 (this can even take it above 6).

Players usually recover one karma for using a quirk, but if they succeed at the challenge, they may recover one resolve instead (if they wish). Only one quirk *or* affliction can be used for each challenge.

Complications

The GM can also offer players karma in exchange for a complication. Should the player accept this offer, use their quirks for inspiration—the professor with "bad eyes" may have overlooked a major clue, while the "mean" thug may have insulted the wrong person.

Of course, complications can also be based on the situation, or perhaps even archetypes or perks. But when possible, try to tie them to a character's quirks.

GENRE RULES
R.I.P.

Cybernetics

Just like mundane gear, cybernetics can either be handled as background flavor or treated as a perk, depending on how much impact you want it to have within the game. An individual with extensive cybernetic augmentation may also wish to take a suitable quirk to represent the physical and psychological drawbacks of their various implants.

Fear & Insanity

A frequent staple of horror stories, fear should be treated the same way as other challenges: crafty characters should roll 3d6, while other characters roll 2d6, and individuals without prior experience or exposure to the particular source of fear (as indicated by their concept and perks) reduce the number of dice they roll by one. Failure on a fear challenge results in the loss of one resolve token—if the character loses all resolve, they generally flee the scene, or receive an appropriate form of mental disorder.

Hack-and-Slash

If gameplay involves dungeon crawls or lots of monster-bashing, you might wish to assign your NPCs traits and ranks.

Traits

Foes can have one or more traits: Agile, brawny and crafty increase the difficulty of challenges against them that use those traits; clumsy, weak or stupid *reduce* the difficulty. Shooting an "agile and weak" goblin is difficulty 6, for example, while hitting them in melee is difficulty 4.

Ranks

PCs start at rank 1, increasing their rank every 4th advance (i.e., at 4, 8, 12, 16 and 20), to a maximum of rank 6. NPCs also have a rank, chosen by the GM.

When facing someone of higher rank, increase your challenge difficulties by 1 (even if this takes them above 6). Against a foe of *lower* rank, *reduce* them by 1. For opponents 3+ ranks higher or lower, use the "Power Levels" genre rule.

Defeating Monsters

As a quick rule of thumb, most monsters require a number of effort tokens equal to their rank to defeat. A "boss" monster should require double that number, and may also be one rank higher than his or her lesser kin—these fearsome foes can represent major antagonists, or the "Big Bad" at the end of an adventure, and the GM should use them sparingly.

Trappings

The GM must also make common-sense judgment calls. A non-magical arrow is unlikely to cause any damage to an iron golem, no matter how skilled the archer, whereas a flaming torch would probably destroy an animated scarecrow in one hit. Equally, the types of attack a foe can make depends on their gear and implied capabilities—a goblin armed with a club can only make melee attacks, but if they have a spear they can choose to throw it, and of course, goblin shamans can make mental attacks using their magic.

Example Bestiary

Bear: Rank 2. Brawny.
Dragon: Rank 5. Brawny and crafty.
Goblin: Rank 1. Agile and weak.
Golem: Rank 3. Brawny and stupid.
Kobold: Rank 1. Stupid and weak.
Lich: Rank 4. Crafty.
Mummy: Rank 3. Clumsy.
Ogre: Rank 2. Brawny and stupid.
Orc: Rank 1. Stupid.
Skeleton: Rank 1. Stupid.
Troll: Rank 2. Brawny and stupid.
Vampire: Rank 3. Agile.
Wolf: Rank 1.
Wraith: Rank 2.
Yeti: Rank 2. Brawny.
Zombie: Rank 1. Clumsy and stupid.

Magic & Psionics

Many fantasy, horror, and even science fiction settings describe characters with supernatural powers such as telekinesis, alchemy, psionics, etc. These arcane gifts can be easily represented as perks.

A character with such a perk can do anything a trained person in the setting could achieve with appropriate tools, as long as it thematically fits their type of magic. Spending karma allows the mage to perform even greater feats of magic, overcoming any challenge a professional could manage with specialized gear.

Always think of magic in terms of the result. It doesn't matter if the psionicist disintegrates the door, or just causes the lock to spring open—if the goal is to get through the door, they've succeeded.

But don't forget, magic is primarily a narrative tool, and it doesn't change the mechanics. If the GM calls for an agile challenge to open a lock, the mage must still *resolve* it as an agile challenge, even if they use magic to bypass the door.

Magic Limitations

If a magic perk is overly broad in scope, the GM should ask the player to choose a limitation. Here are some examples:

Destructive: Your spells cause lots of environmental and collateral damage.

Draining: Your spells drain you, and may involve blood sacrifices. You spend resolve instead of karma for magic.

Focus: You require a focus to channel your spells, such as a wand, staff, or holy symbol. If lost or broken, the focus item requires several days to replace.

Personal: Your magic works on your own body and possessions, but can't be used directly on others.

Ritualistic: Your strongest spells take time to cast. You can't spend any karma unless you've a few minutes to prepare.

Source: Your magic requires a nearby source of suitable energy or matter; you cannot conjure things from thin air.

Unsubtle: You need to make gestures and incantations to cast spells, making it obvious when you're using magic.

Spell Lists

In some settings, spellcasters learn fixed lists of predefined spells. You can easily simulate this in Tricube Tales by adding some further requirements to those who have taken an arcane perk.

Mages can choose three spells during character creation; these determine how and when they can use their magic.

Each spell needs to have a name and a limitation—e.g., "fiery bolt (destructive)," "lightning shield (personal)," "illusionary disguise (ritualistic)," etc.

You can create more potent spells by giving them additional limitations. This narrows their scope, and the GM should be more flexible when interpreting their effect. Perhaps your "invisibility sphere" is ritualistic *and* requires a focus, but can be used to conceal the entire party.

New spells are learned during play, at the GM's discretion—perhaps a wizard can learn from scrolls or spellbooks, or maybe the GM awards sorcerers a new spell each time they gain an advance.

Mounts & Minions

Armored knights frequently ride their loyal steeds into battle, while fearsome necromancers raise undead minions to serve them in combat. These helpers can generally be abstracted away much like gear—either handle them as background flavor, describing their actions as part of your challenge rolls, or treat them as a perk if you would like them to provide a mechanical benefit.

Non-Human Races

Fantasy settings frequently include non-human races, such as elves and dwarves, just as science fiction settings often have alien species. Even many horror settings include supernatural creatures, such as vampires and werewolves.

In many cases, the race can simply be part of the archetype—for example, an agile elven ranger, or a brawny dwarven soldier, or a crafty gnome illusionist.

Another option is to handle the race as a perk (perhaps an elf can spend one karma to see in pitch darkness or recall ancient elven battle techniques), or even a quirk (maybe the half-orc is treated as an outsider, and has little understanding of human etiquette or culture).

If the GM wants character races to be a more influential part of the game, treat them as a separate option chosen during character creation. In this case, the race can be handled (from a game mechanics perspective) as both a perk and a quirk, depending on the needs of the story.

Power Levels

In a fantasy world, a demigod can easily overpower a normal human. Similarly, a vampire or werewolf in a horror setting would outmatch a mere mortal, a mech pilot would completely outgun regular infantry, and a cosmic superhero could obliterate a street-level superhero.

In most cases, these scenarios can be handled using relative interpretations of success and failure, assigning afflictions appropriate to the character and story. An invulnerable alien superhero might not be harmed by bullets, but ricochets could still kill the innocent bystanders he'd sworn to protect, resulting in a loss of resolve. Running out of resolve would still lead to defeat—perhaps he receives a "humiliation" or "despair" affliction, as the gangsters escape from the shootout, leaving the poor superhero to deal with the angry press and a pile of corpses.

In other cases, a foe might simply be no threat at all. In this case, there is no need to roll; just narrate the outcome.

Sieges & Battles

Sometimes, combat takes place between armies rather than individuals, each side maintaining its own pool of tokens. The PC commander uses crafty challenges to control their forces and eliminate all of the opposing side's tokens, with the GM assigning a difficulty to attack or defend based on the relative power and tactical advantages of the two armies.

Individual PCs can make a difference in such conflicts, but the risks are great. These heroes can eliminate tokens from the opposing army, but if they fail their defensive challenge rolls, they lose their *own* resolve tokens.

Indirect Battles

This approach can also be used for other scenarios, such as a legal battle between two businesses, turf wars between gangs or guilds, cyber warfare between nation states or high-tech organizations, etc.

As always, individuals can contribute their efforts, but the risks will be high.

Superheroes

One quick and easy solution for creating superheroes is to base their concept on their mundane persona and handle their superpowers as perks. Thus, you might have an agile journalist with his "spider powers" perk, or some crafty filthy-rich inventor with an "iron power suit" perk. As always, the GM should give narrowly defined perks more impact than broadly defined ones. Overly broad superpowers can also be given limitations in the same way as magic (see "Magic & Psionics").

If you've decided to base your game on a particular movie or book, you can keep things simple by allowing players to base their concept, perk, and quirk on a specific superhero. If the player wants to attempt something the superhero can do in the film or comics, then it would fall within the scope of their archetype, and could be further enhanced as a perk. If the character in the film or comics has any notable flaws or foibles, then those can also be used as a quirk.

Power Limitations

As with magic, if a superpower is overly broad in scope, then it should be given a limitation. Here are some examples:

Devices: Your abilities are granted by special gadgets or equipment, which can be temporarily disabled or lost.

Grounded: Most superheroes possess some form of airborne locomotion, such as flight, web-slinging, ice slides, super-leaping, etc. But you are limited to using mundane means of travel.

Intimidating: Your abilities manifest in a way that can invoke feelings of fear and dread, terrifying the innocent.

Negation: You can't use your powers while exposed to a specific substance.

Non-Offensive: Your powers can't be used to attack someone directly.

Suit-Up: You must change your form or appearance to utilize your powers.

Unreliable: You lack full control over your powers. Whenever you attempt to spend karma on this perk, the GM may introduce a complication instead.

Supernaturals

When someone is defeated, they gain an affliction. Should a PC be defeated by a supernatural creature's infectious bite or claws, the GM can assign an appropriate affliction, such as "lycanthropy," "zombie virus," "vampirism," etc.

Unlike quirks, which are activated by the player, the GM can decide when and how afflictions are used during play. A newly infected werewolf has no control over their transformation or the carnage they cause—but they could later convert their affliction into a quirk, as they learn to control their condition.

Likewise, afflictions give no benefits, but a player can later take supernatural perks such as "preternatural strength" or "rending claws." If the PC takes a broad perk encompassing a range of abilities, they should also pick a limitation (much like Magic Limitations)—for example, a "werewolf gifts" perk might only apply if the character first shapeshifts into their wolfman form.

Removing Afflictions

If an affliction isn't permanent, the GM might offer a story-based way to remove it—perhaps slaying the vampire who bit them reverses their condition, or there's a cure for the zombie virus. Permanent afflictions can also be removed, but this costs permanent karma.

More drastic solutions might also be permitted, such as converting a "zombie virus" affliction into an "amputated leg" quirk (at the usual cost of an advance).

Gradual Decline

Some conditions offer *no* benefits at all. While many novels and TV shows depict supernatural creatures as sapient beings, others portray them as mindless beasts driven by rage, instinct, and hunger.

Such infections may take the form of a slow decline—victims of a zombie bite might survive hours or even days before they eventually succumb. The GM could even use future afflictions to represent a character's gradual transformation.

Vehicles

Whether you're a pirate captain, a tank driver, a starship commander, a ghostly biker, or a mech pilot, all vehicles can be handled in a similar way.

The easiest approach is to treat them like mundane gear, or as perks if they're particularly powerful. But if the vehicles are a major part of the setting, they can instead be built like characters.

Vehicles as Characters

Major vehicles start with a concept (but not a trait), a perk, and a quirk. They do not have any karma, but they begin with three resolve tokens and can advance at the GM's discretion.

The driver (or pilot) makes challenge rolls using their own trait, but they can utilize their vehicle's concept, perks, and quirks as if they were their own.

Use the "Power Levels" genre rule for combat between vehicles of significantly different strength—such as a starfighter against a dreadnought.

Scenario

The PCs are an outlaw motorcycle gang, causing trouble as they drive from town to town. Can the bikers remain one step ahead of the law, or will the cops finally catch up with them?

Archetype

Cruiser motorcycle

Perk

Maneuverable vehicle

Quirk

High-profile

Scenario

The PCs are highly-trained mech pilots, each controlling their own war machine in defense of the planet. Can they defeat the invading aliens, or will the people of Earth be exterminated like bugs?

Archetype

Light battle mech

Perk

Fast

Quirk

Lightly armored

Scenario

The PCs are a crew of firefighters who drive a tiller truck. They must fight fires and deal with other hazards, while also rescuing people (and the occasional pet) from dangerous situations.

Archetype

Tiller fire truck

Perk

Quint (fire apparatus)

Quirk

Requires two drivers

Scenario

The PCs are a ragtag crew of interstellar explorers, seeking out new life and new civilizations among the stars. The galaxy is a vast place—who knows what secrets are out there, waiting to be discovered?

Archetype

Exploratory starship

Perk

Powerful sensors

Quirk

Malfunctioning AI

Scenario

The PCs are the crew of a battle tank, on tour in hostile territory. But some of the enemy soldiers appear to be more than human. Are they part of a secret military experiment, or something else entirely?

Archetype

Battle tank

Perk

Heavily armored

Quirk

Conspicuous