

DISTEMPER

QUICKSTART



XERO SUM STUDIO

TONY BUSHELL

XERO SUM GAMES
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CREDITS v0.8.530

Game Design, Writing & Layout: Tony Bushell

Artwork: Nenad Cvitanin, Hernán González, Carlos Angeli

Photo Credits: Unsplash, Pixabay, Pexels

Play-Testers & Other Helpers:

Matt Rowe (GrumpyBattersby), Jonathon Canniff (GrumpsterFier),
Gary Johnson (ZeroTheory), Meenia, Jeff Garland, Corey Egan,
Gerd Ellsmore, Eoin O'Donnell, Eliot Savarese, Gordon Bissell,
John Jessop & The Playtest Hub,
Quincy, Cam, Seth & The Order of Janus

Special Thanks: My wife & kids for letting me get this song out of my head and Matt Rowe, my co-conspirator

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01. WELCOME TO THE DISTEMPERVERSE

WHAT IS DISTEMPER?

Have you ever been watching a movie or TV show, or reading a novel or comic-book, and found yourself thinking: "I wouldn't have done that. I would have done something different. Something better. Something smarter than that?"

This is your opportunity to test that theory.

Distemper is a Tabletop Role-Playing Game (TTRPG) wherein a group of 3-6 players collectively tell the story of survivors making their way in the aftermath of a virus that has obliterated most of humanity.

Alone, save for each other and a handful of dice, they are at the center of an unfolding narrative and together they will create an interactive, improvised, and collaborative storyline.

The world they find themselves in is hard and fractured. Each new day brings risks, threats, opportunities, and terrors that the group of players must navigate to ensure their characters survive. And, if they can do that, perhaps they might even be able to figure out how to thrive.

Unlike many traditional games, there are no winners or losers in **Distemper** which unfolds cooperatively between the players and the Game Moderator, who acts as the referee, or director. Together, the group define the challenges and outcomes in order to tell a story that is exciting, enjoyable, fulfilling, memorable, and unique to that group.

With the exception of players and several 6-sided dice, this quickstart provides everything a group needs to start playing. It covers character creation, how to interpret dice rolls, how to make ability and skill checks, the basics of social interactions, and how to take part in combat.

To accompany this guide and put those rules into practice, there is a quickstart adventure, **Chased**, which guides a group through several encounters that will teach them, on the fly, how to play and moderate the game, as well as providing plot hooks to build a larger campaign from.

For players wanting an even simpler experience, there is a single-scene encounter called **Empty** that walks players through the very basics of **dice checks**, **First Impressions**, **Gut Instincts**, **Negotiations** and finally **Combat**.

Many of the rules and concepts in this booklet are expanded on in greater depth in the **Distemper Core Rulebook** which is available for download, along with both **Empty** and **Chased**, and a variety of other game resources, from **DistemperVerse.com**.

So, grab some friends, some scraps of paper, and a handful of dice as you prepare to tell some collaborative stories where your very survival is at stake in a dark, dangerous world in which every move may be your last.

WHO IS DISTEMPER FOR?

Distemper is very much at the realistic end of the TTRPG spectrum. In this world there are no zombies, no aliens, no vampires, and no mutants. There are no healing potions, no wizards, no orcs, elves, or goblins, and most definitely no dragons.

There is just the gnawing cold, biting hunger and, scariest of all, the threat of other, desperate people who care more about their own survival than they do about yours.

Distemper is a game for people that would prefer to explore a post-apocalyptic version of the world we inhabit today, rather than a castle filled with the undead.

This is a reality where players will have to track how many bullets they have and how much food and water is in their backpack, and where it can take days or weeks to heal as a result of the brutally realistic and unforgiving combat system. Ammunition is more meaningful than gold and finding a cache of weapons could significantly change the course of the future for the group and their NPC followers.

Distemper is a game for people who are as interested in negotiating as they are shooting, and for whom the idea of building a community, a religious sect or even a fledgling army and seizing control of a region of territory is more compelling than slaying a dragon. It is for those to whom building a legacy in this version of today's world ultimately has more long-term appeal than clearing out yet another dungeon.

The world of **Distemper** will appeal to fans of *The Road*, *Black Summer* & *The Walking Dead* (with no *Walking Dead*), and anyone who enjoys post-apocalyptic, Dystopian worlds where simply surviving is a struggle.

THE DISTEMPERVERSE

More than just this Tabletop Roleplaying Game that you are reading, **Distemper** is also a series of comic-book stories in which the stories provide an ongoing and constantly developing backdrop to the game.

Together, the stories told globally in the comic book combine with the stories told locally via the RPG to create the **DistemperVerse**, a shared repository of stories that are both told to and, perhaps more importantly, by the players.

GMs and their groups are encouraged to take elements from the comics to use in their own games or even as campaign settings, and they are encouraged to submit the stories they collectively tell via our website and social media so that these stories may be weaved into the developing tapestry of stories that go to make up the ever-evolving gameworld.

Instructions on how to submit your own stories, can be found at **www.DistemperVerse.com**.

02. A BRIEF TIMELINE OF THE VIRUS

JANUARY 21ST

The BBC World Service runs the first news story about H724.

This recently identified virus is initially believed to be a mutation of the common flu and has infected an estimated 100 million people worldwide - more than Tuberculosis or HIV.

Further research reveals that the virus shares characteristics with canine distemper, which is usually only found in dogs.

Although H724 appears to be highly contagious, it also seems to be largely benign, with the most obvious symptom being a relentless cough.

People are reminded to practice good hygiene, to cover their mouths when coughing or sneezing, and to avoid contact with those who appear sick.



MARCH 2ND

Conspiracy theories catch the world over, like gasoline-soaked wildfires.

The virus had been created in a lab. This was a shadow cabal plot to depopulate the world. This was the rise of a new world order. Our Alien overlords were finally here.

This was The Rapture.

Regardless of its origin, it quickly becomes obvious that this widespread sickness has the potential to wreck the global economy.



MARCH 9TH

With no explanation to the outside world, the Russian Federation closes all borders and restricts international and domestic travel.

It makes no difference. Elvis has already left the building and the virus is on the move.

MARCH 28TH

Based on startling new data, the World Health Organization announces that H724 has mutated and is now believed to be airborne.

The mortality rate is revised upward to a staggering 7% and H724-B is officially declared as a pandemic.

APRIL 19TH

The spread of the virus intensifies and the infected die at an exponential rate.

Although nations are now forced to act, it isn't until almost a month after WHO declared a pandemic that all international commercial flights are suspended.

The International Monetary Fund reports that a global recession is inevitable, with multiple, vital supply chains already impacted.

This rapidly leads to hyper-inflation across the globe, which in turn causes civil unrest on a scale that had previously been unimaginable.

Widespread rioting and looting are rampant with authorities using increasing levels of force to maintain order.

The mass starvation only ever seen in poorer nations would soon hit every country on the planet.

FEBRUARY 24TH

A British Reuters correspondent disappears shortly after breaking a story from within Chechnya, where multiple provinces are dealing with a highly contagious virus that the government seems to be struggling to control.

Multiple doctors who treated those affected with the virus were rounded up and arrested, and the correspondent reported that no one would even speculate why.

Chechen officials initially deny the story while simultaneously using the military to quarantine its three most heavily populated cities.

Within days of the correspondent going missing, the entire country is in lock down.

MARCH 5TH

An elderly man in Chile with a relentless cough dies while in the middle of a hacking fit.

An autopsy confirms that in addition to multiple underlying comorbidities, he had all the symptoms of H724.

It was noted that in his last moments, he lunged for the medical staff in what they perceived as an aggressive and hostile manner, although he lacked the vitality to actually do anyone harm.

This was the first recorded death attributed to the Distemper and, for many, truly marked the beginning of the Dog Flu pandemic.

MARCH 20TH

The World Health Organization announces that research indicates that H724 has a mortality rate in line with the seasonal flu.

They reiterate the need for good hygiene to prevent transmission.

APRIL 2ND

Face masks become an increasingly common sight. Although there is no evidence that they help prevent transmission, there is also no evidence that they don't, and manufacturers worldwide step up production to meet demand.

Despite multiple pandemics in years past, the aggressively rapid and virulent spread of the Distemper still takes most governments by surprise. Their responses are uniformly slow, disorganized, and ineffective.

Many authorities try to play the sickness down as little more than a seasonal flu or even a political hoax, which further delays action.

APRIL 26TH

Despite the resources now being thrown at medical research from around the world, testing is still unreliable.

Asymptomatic carriers remain undetectable and only the sick test as being infected. This leads health care professionals to mistakenly clear people carrying the virus, enabling its unchecked spread.





MAY 14TH

Within a week of beginning their research, Berglund's team advises WHO of a new mutation, H724-C, which they now believe to be zoonotic.

There are clear indicators that dogs can transmit H724-C to humans and the media quickly dub it the Dog Flu after reports of several infected patients' pets exhibiting similar symptoms.

Berglund's team note that the dogs become wildly aggressive at the end, often attacking (and thereby transmitting) the disease to their owners and vets.

MAY 3RD

With millions already dead worldwide and untold millions more infected, a coalition of scientists from 14 nations led by Dr. Alex Berglund, a renowned Swedish epidemiologist, begins researching the development of effective testing in hopes of slowing down the spread.



JUNE 14TH

Stories emerge of the mass extermination of dogs and pigeons and various other animals around the world.

Various EU member states secretly start culling herds of livestock for reasons unknown. Most countries have closed their borders in a futile attempt to slow the spread of the infection.

MAY 28TH

As additional data becomes available, the mortality rate of H724-C is again revised upwards, this time to an bewildering 19%.

JULY 14TH

With reliable rapid testing kits now in production, South Korea conducts mandatory, nationwide screening.

The infected (along with any one even suspected of having been exposed) are moved into "survival camps."

South Korean is quickly followed by many other countries, and survival camps appear around the globe.

MAY 8TH

Data provided by a German research institute enables a breakthrough in the development of rapid testing capabilities and Berglund shares his cautious optimism at a press conference.

MAY 21ST

Further testing shows pigeons might also be carriers of the virus, and multiple countries began culls of both animals.

Many nations mandate their citizens voluntarily surrender all dogs for forced euthanasia.

It doesn't go well for either side.

JUNE 5TH

Panic sets in worldwide as people begin to question how much their governments and leaders are actually able to do to protect them in the face of no known containment method, let alone a vaccine.

It slowly starts to sink in for many that while their government can tax them, when they really need help, it can't protect them.

This leads to a season of worldwide riots that cause levels of destruction through civil unrest that burn down whole nations.

There is nothing left to loot by this point and people turn their anger to destroying public buildings.

JUNE 28TH

Unable to cope with so many dead bodies, multiple countries dumb the bodies into mass graves that are visible from space.

Eventually there's no one left to bury or even move the dead and corpses line the streets the world over.

JULY 22ND

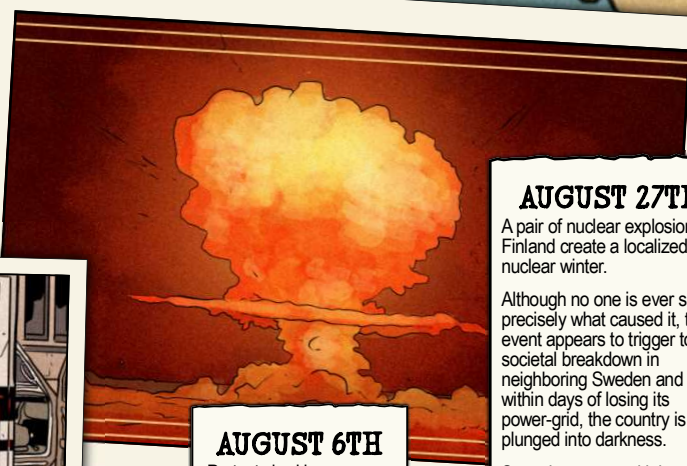
Another wave of riots swell throughout Europe and North America as hordes of scared and starving people are pitted against each other in a desperate struggle to stay alive.

With so few active police, many governments call in what remains of the military to quell disturbances.

With no one to clean up, the corpses are left where they fall, spreading disease.



H724



AUGUST 27TH

A pair of nuclear explosion in Finland create a localized nuclear winter.

Although no one is ever sure precisely what caused it, the event appears to trigger total societal breakdown in neighboring Sweden and within days of losing its power-grid, the country is plunged into darkness.

Soon there are multiple, independent reports of widespread brutality and horror, in addition to unconfirmed reports of cannibalism.

This in turn drives further riots throughout Europe as terrified people demand desperate action from paralyzed governments who are hanging on by their fingertips.



JULY 29TH

Eventually there's no one left to bury or even move the dead and they begin to line the streets.

China begins what it calls "Central Corpse Disposal."

The fires can be reportedly seen from Taiwan.

AUGUST 2ND

The US is quickly followed into Martial Law by most of the EU, Canada, and Australia.

Governments the world over use what limited forces they have left in a vain attempt to retain order.

AUGUST 6TH

Protests had long ago given way to riots and with diminishing manpower, governments became unable to enforce Martial Law.

This, in turn, signals the end of any authorized rule in many countries, as there are no officially sanctioned forces still available for civil control.

JULY 24TH

The fabric of society worldwide continues to inexorably unravel as summer progresses and the Distemper kills more people than the Spanish Flu.

JULY 28TH

With the death toll constantly rising, healthcare services are overwhelmed and begin to break down.

The virus is indiscriminate, and many healthcare workers succumb, leading to a worldwide shortage of anyone qualified to help.

JULY 30TH

The CDC convinces the US government to place Rhode Island, parts of California, and New York City under quarantine.

The bridges that connect Manhattan to the outside world are destroyed, cutting the residents off and leaving them to die.

The blow-back from these actions creates civil unrest on a never before seen scale.

The government responds by implementing Martial Law across the United States.

AUGUST 4TH

Berglund's research team are no closer to any kind of breakthrough.

The UK begins human experimentation to test a possible vaccine and although there is some condemnation, it is lukewarm and largely symbolic.

Within days, the UN, WHO, and the FDA remove all drug research safeguards.

AUGUST 4TH

Berglund's research team are no closer to any kind of breakthrough when the UK begins human experimentation to test a possible vaccine.

Although there is some condemnation, it is lukewarm and largely symbolic as the UN, W.H.O., and the FDA remove all drug research safeguards soon thereafter.





SEPTEMBER 22ND

Normal life has ceased to exist anywhere.

Nationwide lock-downs and food shortages led to uncontrollable riots around the globe.

With no one left to police or provide order, many cities and provinces throughout the world become "No Go" areas for anyone but the locals.

Humanity begins a slow and painful descent back into aggressive tribalism.

AUGUST 30TH

News reports are a continual and horrific song of lament to this inexorably unfolding global catastrophe until eventually, little by little, station by station, country by country, the news reports stop.



DECEMBER 25TH

87% of the population of earth is gone and it is small consolation that anyone who was going to die is already dead.

Just over one billion people remain alive, scattered, cold, hungry, and scared.

Ho, Ho, Ho, Humanity.

OCTOBER 10TH

The rest of the world quickly follows Europe into abject chaos, as national and local governments fail across the planet.

JANUARY

Even though the threat of the virus seems to be passing and while coughs and runny noses can still get people shot, things are leveling out.

However, as wide-scale communications have long since broken down and with no functioning central government to protect and provide for them, it is left to whoever remains to rebuild.

People are on their own.

No one knows for sure what happened, the state of the world, or who is left.

All anyone knows with any certainty any more is that they have to eat and stay warm and will do whatever they need to do in order to make that happen.

All anyone has left to rely on by this point is themselves.

Humanity may have been saved but civilization certainly hasn't been.

SEPTEMBER 9TH

Healthcare is nonexistent in most parts of the world. Corpse disposal has been replaced by ever-growing piles of burning corpses.

Cities begin to catch fire and there are no emergency services left to respond.

OCTOBER 6TH

Isolated in a facility in Belgium, Berglund's research team have introduced synthetic genes into H724 and believe they have line of sight to a vaccine.

However, it won't come fast enough to stop Europe from falling into anarchy as the last remaining governments topple in quick succession.

NOVEMBER 9TH

Barely 7 months after it began, the Dog Flu has wiped out more than 50% of humanity and what is left is frightened, hungry, and scattered.

Centralized services are no longer being provided and, one after another, things just stopped working.

All anyone has left to rely on by this point is themselves.



H724

03. WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

THE WORLD AROUND YOU

Distemper is set one year after the apex of the outbreak of H724 - also referred to as **the Dog Flu** or **the Distemper** - a deadly and contagious form of canine distemper that killed more than 6 billion people in less than a year.

Nowhere and no one was safe. Those who hadn't been stricken down by **the Distemper**, who weren't killed in the food riots that followed as society collapsed, who hadn't starved in the ensuing famines or gotten themselves murdered for the scraps of food in their hands, are now faced with figuring out their ongoing survival.

The fear of the virus is still very real and strong enough to get people with a runny nose killed without warning, but more immediate threats and priorities - like food, shelter, and safety - have taken precedence.

Some elements of society are attempting to knit themselves back together whilst others are pulling at the frayed edges.

Many cities - those that aren't still burning, at least - have devolved into anarchic and chaotic hellholes, whilst others strive to shine as sanctuaries and beacons of hope, even if no one is really sure who they can trust any more.

Everything anyone knew has changed and people are having to do ugly things to survive. As players, you will be faced with ethical choices that test your morality and have long-term impacts on gameplay.

The Rule of Law has been replaced with the Rule of the Gun, and for each instance of people working together to fulfill the basic needs of food and safety, someone, somewhere, is plotting to take it away from them. If you have something of value, you need to be prepared to fight to keep it and if someone else has something that you want or need, then you may have some interesting choices to make.

After all, when starvation is a very real prospect, people quickly reevaluate priorities.

THE WORLD IS ADRIFT

There are no central authorities left, no governments, no military, no supply-chain, and next to no loyalty remains for anyone outside of your family or clan.

Enough people with enough weapons can lay claim to anything - or anywhere - they feel entitled to, unless someone is willing to try and stop them.

In a splintered country where territorial maps are being rewritten at a whim, you are going to have to navigate tribal lines and continually shifting threats as you look for your own place of safety. Or maybe you will decide to just keep moving, dealing with threats as they arise instead of making yourself a sitting target.

SURVIVAL WILL BE HARD

Although parts of the electrical grid remain intact, circuits and relays continue to fail, leaving swaths of the country with no power and no clean water. Staying warm and dry is as important as staying fed and you are going to face continual challenges that range from other humans, to wildlife, to the environment itself - and you will need to solve them all to stay alive.

In addition - and possibly scariest of all - with more than 60 million survivors in North America alone, there are still many human threats that you need to navigate. These range from warlords seizing territory, to religious zealots reveling in the rapture of the end times, to bandits looking to take whatever they can from anyone that has something worth taking, to cannibals looking to make you their next meal.

Don't let them catch you slipping.



RESOURCES ARE SCARCE

Things are rotting and spoiling and whatever is left of any value is going to be gone soon - but you still need to eat and drink. Whether you decide to scavenge, forage, hunt, or farm, securing resources will be sure to bring you into conflict with someone else at some point.

In addition to food, you will also need to make sure you have the equipment you will need to survive, such as a tent and sleeping bag - to say nothing of a supply of ammunition to ensure your safety.

Some towns and cities are further along in their recovery than others and have started establishing trade-routes with like-minded settlements. A couple of roadside trading posts and taverns have even appeared in various parts of the country, and they are as heavily armed and defended as anything in this new world.

You are going to have to decide if you are going to take your chances on your own, or if you are going to work with - and possibly even recruit - NPCs, to produce a continual supply of food for you and yours.

CIRCLING THE DRAIN

The world everyone knew is gone, along with all the comforts and benefits that it had previously brought.

Anyone who is still alive has likely had to do terrible things to survive, and anyone with half a brain knows it isn't going to get any easier, any time soon.

You will have to decide who you are willing to trust, and just how far that trust will extend as you interact with desperate people.

But, even in the dark there are sparks of hope.

Places remain where people are trying to work together for a brighter future. If you find these communities then you may want to trade, socialize, or simply see what is on offer. Maybe you'll want to try and join them - if they'll allow it - and throw in your lot with a rebuilding effort. You may attempt to raid the place and see what you can steal. You might even try and take over.

Whatever you choose, you will have to decide how you deal with the strangers you encounter and the consequences of the choices you make.

And remember to keep your mask on.

04. HOW TO PLAY DISTEMPER

MAKING A DICE CHECK

If a character is going to do something that will impact the narrative - such as using a skill, negotiating with a Non-Player Character, or fighting - it requires a **dice check** to determine whether it was a success or failure.

Making a dice check involves rolling two six-sided dice (written as **2d6**) and then adding or subtracting various modifiers. If the combined total is **9 or above**, then the attempt was a **Success**.

Higher and lower scores bring additional positive or negative outcomes. These gradations are **Dire Failure**, **Failure**, **Success**, **Wild Success**, and **Moments of Low and High Insight**, and are detailed on **Table 1: Outcomes**.

TABLE 1: OUTCOMES

0-3	Dire Failure
4-8	Failure
9-13	Success
14+	Wild Success
1+1	Moment of Low Insight
6+6	Moment of High Inside

A **Dire Failure** means that in addition to being unsuccessful at the given task something else goes wrong. Examples might be their gun jamming, or the pocket they are picking ripping when removing the loot.

A **Wild Success** means that, in addition to being successful at the task, something else works in the character's favor. This

could be opening a safe and finding not only a map that the character was looking for, but also a small stash of ammunition that is the right caliber for the gun they have.

A **double-one** is a **Moment of Low Insight** and a **double-six** is a **Moment of High Insight**, wherein the character did so astoundingly well or things went so terribly wrong that they learned a valuable lesson. Not only did the character effectively get a **Dire Failure** or a **Wild Success**, but they also received an **Insight Dice** that can be used to affect the outcome of future checks (See **Moments of Insight & Insight Dice** on page 10).

Outside of combat, if a player gets a **Failure** on a dice check, they cannot make the same check again unless circumstances have changed significantly. For example, a player getting a **Failure** when trying to pick a lock wouldn't be able to try again unless he was using different tools.

Note: Dice rolls should be reserved for checks that have a dramatic or narrative impact on the story. If there is no tension, drama, or clear outcome associated with a roll, the situation should be narrated instead.

DICE TERMS

A single, six-side dice is referred to as **d6**

Multiple dice are referred to by a prefix, in the format **2d6** or **3d6**

1d3 means rolling a **d6** and dividing the result in half (rounding up), resulting in a score of **1-3**

Making A Dice Check means rolling 2d6 and adding the scores together. If the total was 9 or above, the **Dice Check** was **Successful**.

Other scores have different results, as shown on **Table 1: Outcomes** on page 8.

NARRATING OUTCOMES

As mentioned, dice should only ever be rolled when there is a direct impact on the narrative that serves the game. Rolling to see if a character can open a door only matters if opening the door (or finding out what is behind it) moves the story along.

As there are gradations of success and failure, it is important to make the results of each dice check, whether positive or negative, meaningful to the event at hand, and it is up to both the GM and the group to jointly define those outcomes.

If the player **Failed** when trying to open the door, did it make enough noise to alert someone to the attempt? Are they now in imminent danger?

If they got a **Dire Failure**, did the character hurt themselves when flinging themselves at the door?

If they got a **Wild Success**, was there something unexpected and welcome behind the door, such as ammunition or food?

If you are the GM, you should encourage the group to help you flesh out the results of each dice roll by **Filling In The Gaps** (see page 10) and ensure it furthers the narrative in both an entertaining and satisfying manner.



ROLL MODIFIERS

Each dice check can have up to 3 different **Modifiers** that are added or subtracted to the result of the 2d6 roll. These modifiers are for **Attributes**, **Skills**, and **Conditions**, each of which has a range of somewhere between -3 and +5.

Dice rolls are expressed in the following format:

2d6 +Attribute Modifier (AMod) +Skill Modifier (SMod) +Conditional Modifier (CMod)

ATTRIBUTE MODIFIERS (AMOD):

TABLE 2: RAPID RANGE MODS

-2	Lame (-2)
-1	Weak (-1)
0	Average (0)
+1	Good (+1)
+2	Strong (+2)
+3	Exceptional (+3)
+4	Human Peak (+4)
+5	Animalistic (+5)

Each character has five physical & mental attributes - **Reason**, **Acumen**, **Physicality**, **Influence** and **Dexterity** (collectively known as the **RAPID Range**). These innate qualities, capabilities and strengths define how adept the character is at performing certain actions or tasks.

The **Attribute Modifiers** are detailed in **Table 2: RAPID Range Mods**.

The **RAPID Range Attributes** range from **-2 (Lame)** to **+5 (Animalistic)**. This number is also their **Attribute Modifier (AMod)** which is added to any dice roll involving that Attribute, such as Physicality if breaking down a door, or Reason if solving a puzzle.

SKILL MODIFIERS (SMOD):

TABLE 3: SKILL MODS

-3	Inept (-3)
0	Untrained (0)
+1	Beginner (+1)
+2	Journeyman (+2)
+3	Professional (+3)
+4	Life's work (+4)

Distemper has a variety of skills with which characters may be familiar. Training in these various skills, or the lack thereof, can impact a dice check.

Skill Modifiers (SMods) range from **-3 (Inept)** to **+4 (Life's Work)**, as laid out on **Table 3: Skill Modifiers**.

SMods are applied to any dice check involving that skill, such as using **Ranged Combat** when firing a pistol, or using **Athletics** when scaling a wall.

SMods usually start at **0 (Untrained)**, although there are a number of skills that are complex enough to require extensive formal training or they start at **-3 (Inept)** and automatically incur a -3 SMod. These are denoted with an asterisks when written, such as Surgery*, Mechanics* or Demolitions*. As soon as a character has 1 level in those skills, their **SMod** goes from **-3 (Inept)** to **1 (Beginner)**.

Each skill is tied to an attribute (such as Sleight of Hand being tied to Dexterity) and **Attribute Modifiers** and **Skill Modifiers** are cumulative. This means means that someone with a Dexterity of 1 (and a corresponding +1 AMod) and Sleight of Hand 2 (a +2 SMod) gets a cumulative dice roll of 2d6 +1 +2.

Although a lack of familiarity with a skill doesn't stop a character from attempting to use it, the GM may decide that what the character is doing is sufficiently challenging that it requires a -1 CMod, such as when trying to scale a sheer wall in the rain, or trying to calm an animal while under fire, as described in **Conditional Modifiers** below.

CONDITIONAL MODIFIER (CMOD):

TABLE 4: CONDITIONAL MODS

-5	Doomed to Failure
-4	Catastrophic
-3	Terrible
-2	Difficult
-1	Challenging
0	No Modifier
+1	Advantageous
+2	Helpful
+3	Fortuitous
+4	Synchronicous
+5	Divine Intervention

Environmental, circumstantial or karmic influences can affect dice checks and these **Conditional Modifiers (CMods)** are applied at the discretion of the GM or at the request of a player (see **Making The Case** on page 10).

Conditional Modifiers range from **-5 (Doomed to Failure)** to **+5 (Divine Intervention)**, and are laid out on **Table 4: Conditional Modifiers**.

Examples could range from a -2 CMod for heavy rain making a wall harder to climb, to a +3 CMod for having a height advantage when shooting at an unsuspecting enemy from behind.

Conditional Modifiers can chain for a cumulative effect. This means that a character might get a +1 CMod from a specific weapon effect in addition to a +2 CMod from their opponent being dazed after a previous attack, and the player might even **Make The Case** for using the darkness to their advantage for an additional +1 CMod.

Whilst this would be expressed as: **2d6 +AMod +SMod +1 CMod +2 CMod +1 CMod**

In order to keep gameplay simple, GMs should try and summarize all CMods as one number. In the example given, this would be: **2d6 +AMod +SMod +4 CMod**

MOMENTS OF INSIGHT & INSIGHT DICE

Each player starts the game with two **Insight Dice** and receives an additional **Insight Dice** each time they get a **Moment of High** or **Low Insight** (see **Making A Dice Check** on page 8). The exact application of an **Insight Dice** is between the player and GM, but common uses are:

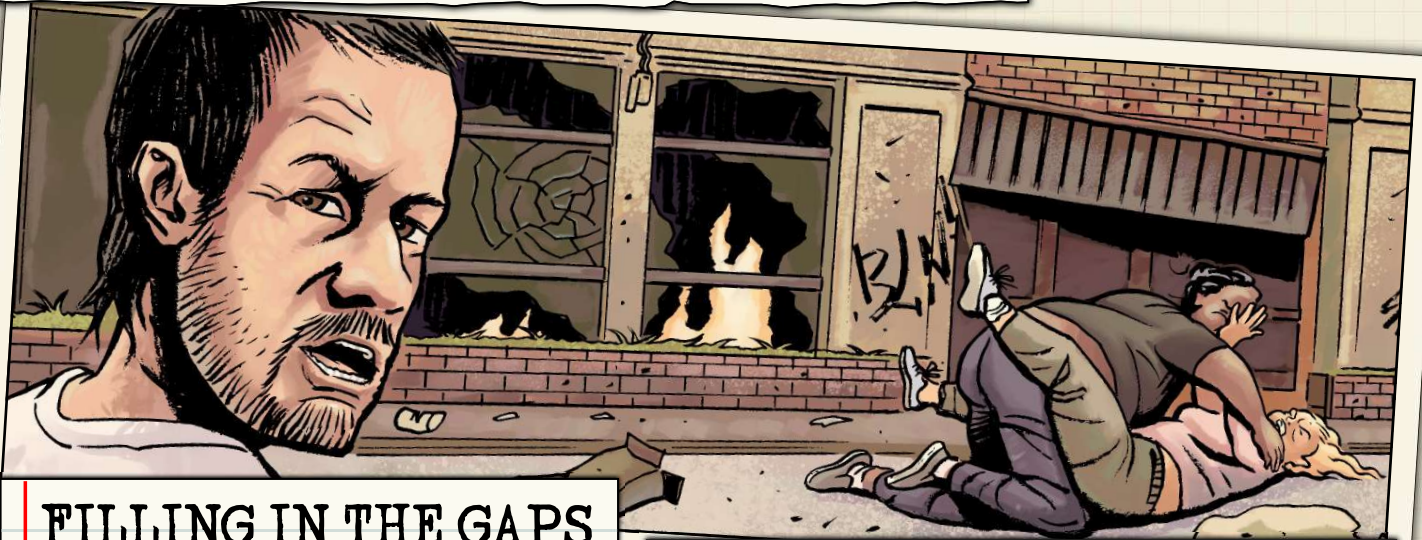
- Adding an additional dice prior to making a check, for a 3d6 dice pool
- Traded in prior to a dice roll for a +3 Conditional Modifier (CMod)
- Re-rolling one or both of the original 2d6 dice rolled, at the cost of one **Insight Dice** per dice re-rolled
- Used to 'bend reality' by allowing a player to find an unexpected clue or have a missing piece of required equipment (such as a rope to scale a wall or being informed of a guard's routine by a drinking buddy)
- If a character would otherwise **Die** (see page 33), they may surrender all of their **Insight Dice** in exchange for recovering 1 Wound Point and 1 Resilience Point for each dice surrendered. Players cannot choose how many dice to use in this method, this costs all of their available **Insight Dice**.

Unspent dice carry over from session to session and should be recorded on the character sheet but once used, **Insight Dice** are immediately surrendered back to the GM.

Although **Insight Dice** can be used by a player to perform an act that helps another player, they are non-transferable and cannot be given directly to another player.

Chain Reactions: If a player using an **Insight Dice** gets a **Moment of Insight (High or Low)**, this causes a **Chain Reaction**. The player receives two **Insight Dice** to add to their pool. They can choose to play immediately or bank them for later.

Note: Although **Insight Dice** cannot be used with **Group Checks** (see **Group Checks** on page 11), if the group roll gets a **Moment of Insight**, each player taking part receives an **Insight Dice**.



FILLING IN THE GAPS

Much of the gameplay in **Distemper** is the group of players collectively and collaboratively telling a story. **Filling in the Gaps** is one of the primary tools the GM has to keep the narrative moving by having the players share what they are seeing or doing.

By having players **Fill in the Gaps**, the GM can ensure the group are all involved in the scene being played by prompting each member to help provide flavor and context.

Players telling each other what they are experiencing and how their character reacts to it is the heart of the game and the GM should ensure all players throw in at least one detail during various situations and interactions.

MAKING THE CASE

Conditional Modifiers (CMods) are a wild card that allow various factors to influence a dice check. Groups are encouraged to make suggestions that enhance the narrative and GMs are likewise encouraged to work these ideas into gameplay, assuming they are congruent within the narrative and make good sense. In addition to having players **Fill In The Gaps**, players are encouraged to **Make The Case** for why they should be able to do something that receives a CMod.

For example, **Making The Case** may range from a group suggesting that as two of their companions are distracting a guard, that the player flanking him would get a +1 CMod to their next initiative check, to a character reasoning that because they grew up in East Texas that their native accent would encourage locals to listen to them. The GM may then agree that this is worth a +1 CMod to any Influence-based checks.

A GM always has the final say in whether **Making The Case** was successful and the CMod added.

GROUP CHECKS

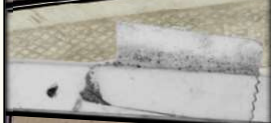
If a group of players are attempting to undertake a task where multiple characters can contribute, instead of having each of them make an individual check they may pool their abilities to make a **Group Check**.

To make a **Group Check**, the player with the highest relevant individual attribute or skill makes their roll. This player adds +1 Conditional Modifier for each member of the group participating. A group take also takes any other group members' relevant attribute and skill modifiers into account, although these AMods & SMods must be the same as the rolling character uses.

FOR EXAMPLE: Four players are attempting to find their way back to their base in the dark. The character who has the highest level of skill in Navigation (or Acumen, if no one has Navigation) would make the roll, adding a +1 CMod for each member helping with the check. They would also add any AMods anyone taking part in the check has for Acumen or SMods they have for Navigation.

This can lead to some potentially large rolls with a significantly higher likelihood of success, reflecting the combined effort of many people.

While **Insight Dice** cannot be used with **Group Checks**, if the group gets a **Moment of High or Low Insight**, each player taking part receives an **Insight Dice** (See **Moments of Insight & Insight Dice** on page 10).



OPPOSED CHECKS

There are times when characters might need to make an **Opposing Check** to quantify their response to the situation, such as two characters having an arm-wrestling contest. Unlike most dice checks in **Distemper**, **Opposed Checks** are resolved on the total scores involved, rather than on the gradation of **Outcomes** usually associated with a dice check.

Both parties start with an **Initiative check** to see who makes the first move (see **Initiative** on page 32).

The initiative winner declares their action, **Fills In The Gaps** as to what they are doing, and makes a check using the relevant attribute or skill.

The other party then makes an **Opposed Check** using an appropriate attribute or skill in response.

Whichever side gets the highest total score win the **Opposed Check**.

In the event of a draw, neither side won and, depending on the nature of the check, it is likely that these checks will continue until there is a clear winner.

Moments of Insight still apply, and a character who gets a **Moment of Low Insight** (a double one) will automatically lose (unless their opponent also gets a **Moment of Low Insight**) and similarly, a character getting a **Moment of High Insight** (a double six) will automatically win, unless their opponent gets the same dice roll. If both sides get a **Moment of Insight**, they go back to **Initiative** rolls and start again.

FOR EXAMPLE: a player character and NPC are engaged in an arm-wrestling contest. The player character wins the initiative and both characters make a Physicality check. The player gets a total score of 12 while the NPC gets 8, so the character is easily able to beat his opponent. Had both sides gotten a score of 12 then neither side has the advantage and **Initiative** is rolled again.

There may be times when different skills or attributes are used on either side - such as one character attempting to use their Influence or Charm to win over another character who uses their Acumen or Survival to see through the attempt.

The GM always has final say on which skills are to be used in the checks.

05. CHARACTER SHEET OVERVIEW

A character acts as a player's eyes, mouth, feet, and hands within the game world. It is what gives them agency and is the mechanism by which players interact with other players, non-player characters (NPCs), and the world around them.

Although in game terms they are little more than a collection of statistics and mechanics – how strong they are, or how well they can fire a weapon – a character is most importantly defined by the voice that a player gives to them, and it is vital that each player has a clear understanding of who their character is if they are to determine how they will act and react to various situations within the gameworld.

Character creation is detailed on pages 14 to 21, but it can be helpful to understand how the various elements tie together before starting, and so each aspect of the character sheet is covered below.

A blank Character Sheet can be found on pages 40-41 and is available for download from www.DistemperVerse.com

1 NAME, AND OTHER PERSONAL DATA

This is where to record your character's name, their profession, and various details that have no substantive impact on gameplay but can help provide some definition and background, such as your character's height, weight, gender, and age.

Also in this section is a space to write the "3 words" that were defined during character creation to sum up your character's personality and outlook. See **Step Xero: Who Are They?** on page 16 for more details.

2 COMPLICATIONS & MOTIVATIONS

Each character has a **Complication** from their life before the pandemic as well as a **Motivation** that serves to drive their behaviors.

Both the **Complication** & **Motivation** serve to help players understand what drives their character and how they would respond in given situations. See **Step Six: What Drives Them** on page 19 for details.

3 RAPID RANGE MODIFIERS

Each character has a series of physical and mental attributes (collectively called the **RAPID Range**) that reflect their **Reason**, **Acumen**, **Physicality**, **Influence** and **Dexterity**. This **RAPID Range** influences how effective they are when undertaking tasks using those attributes.

Although **RAPID Range** attributes start at **-2 (Lame)** and go to **5 (Animalistic)**, **0 is Average**, and is the starting value for all characters.

Your character's **RAPID Range** attribute is also their **Attribute Modifier (AMod)** and is applied to any dice check using that attribute.

These mods are outlined on **Table 2: Rapid Range**.

TABLE 2: RAPID RANGE MODS

-2	Lame (-2)
-1	Weak (-1)
0	Average (0)
+1	Good (+1)
+2	Strong (+2)
+3	Exceptional (+3)
+4	Human Peak (+4)
+5	Animalistic (+5)

The **RAPID Range** attributes are:

REASON: How smart, how quick, and how well educated a character is, in addition to how well they process and retain data. Characters with a high **Reason** tend to be good at skills that require an elevated degree of mental agility.

ACUMEN: The midpoint between perception and cunning, **Acumen** affects a character's ability to read a situation or person and defines how well they can turn things to their advantage. Characters with a high **Acumen** are very in tune with their surroundings and tend to rely on their instincts.

PHYSICALITY: Not only a measure of how strong, tough, or athletic a character is, **Physicality** also represents how much self-control and will-power they are about to exert. Characters with a high **Physicality** are capable of amazing feats of strength and discipline.

INFLUENCE: A measure of how much charm, charisma, or sheer physical beauty a character possesses, in addition to how well they are able to use that to their advantage. Characters with a high **Influence** are often able to convince, manipulate, or bend others to their will.

DEXTERITY: Agility, reflexes and hand-eye coordination, characters with a high **Dexterity** often tend to be good at skills and activities that require being nimble, quick on their feet, or having a high degree of fine motor skills.

4 SKILLS

Most **Skill Modifiers** start at **0 (Untrained)** and go up to **+4 (Life's Work)** for a subject a character has devoted many years of their life to studying and perfecting, as laid out on **Table 3: Skill Modifiers**.

There are some skills that required such specialized training (such as **Demolitions*** or **Surgery***), that characters without that training start at **-3 (Inept)**. As soon as a character gets 1 level, they go from **-3 (Inept)** to **+1 (Beginner)**. These skills are denoted on the character

PERSONAL INFORMATION																																																																																																															
NAME:	Pesky LaRue		PROFESSION:	Petty Criminal																																																																																																											
AGE:	32	WEIGHT:	168 lbs	HEIGHT:	5' 7"	GENDER:	Male																																																																																																								
DESCRIBE YOURSELF IN 3 WORDS:				1 Shrewd, Manipulative, and Sneaky																																																																																																											
COMPLICATION:				2 Betrayed				MOTIVATION:				Revenge																																																																																																			
REASON:				0				ACUMEN:				2				PHYS:				3				ITY:				1				INFLUENCE:				1				DEXTERITY:				1																																																																			
SKILLS (RANK YOURSELF FROM 0-4)																																																																																																															
-3 [Combat] Demolitions* (PHY)														- [Knowledge] Farming (REA)														-1 [Innate] Athletics (DEX)																																																																																			
2 [Combat] Melee Combat (PHY)														- [Knowledge] General Know. (REA)														- [Innate] Hunting (PHY)																																																																																			
- [Combat] Ranged Combat (DEX)														4 [Knowledge] Psychology* (REA)														-1 [Innate] Navigation (ACU)																																																																																			
2 [Combat] Unarmed Combat (PHY)														- [Knowledge] Research (REA)														-1 [Innate] Scavenging (ACU)																																																																																			
2 [Criminal] Lock-Picking* (REA)														- [Knowledge] Tactics* (REA)														- [Sway] Animal Handling (INF)																																																																																			
2 [Criminal] Sleight of Hand (DEX)														- [Mechanic] Armorsmith* (DEX)														-1 [Sway] Barter (ACU)																																																																																			
2 [Criminal] Stealth (DEX)														- [Mechanic] Tinkerer (DEX)														- [Sway] Entertainment (INF)																																																																																			
- [Medicine] First Aid (REA)														- [Mechanic] Vehicle Rep.* (DEX)														2 [Sway] Inspiration (INF)																																																																																			
- [Medicine] Pharmacology* (REA)														- [Mechanic] Weaponsmith* (DEX)														3 [Sway] Manipulation (INF)																																																																																			
-3 [Medicine] Surgery* (REA)																																																																																																															
SECONDARY STATS																																																																																																															
WOUND POINTS: 10 + 12 + DEX														DM MELEE: -PHI AMod														INITIATIVE: DEX +3 ACU										CDP: ○○○○○○																																																																									
RESILIENCE POINTS: 7 + PHY														DM RANGED: 5														ENCUMBRANCE: 4 PHY										INSIGHT DICE: ●●●●●●																																																																									
MORALITY: 3														PANIC THRESHOLD: 50% of Original HP (total rounded down)														BREAKING POINT: 5 REA										RATIONS: ●●●●●●																																																																									
WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT																																																																																																															
NAME: Fists														WP: 1d3+2														TYPE: (M) R E S														RANGE: (E) C M L D														Damage: 1d3 + PHY + Unarmed Combat																																																							
NAME: Baton														TYPE: (M) R E S														6 RANGE: (C) M L D														COND: P (U) W D B														TRAITS: N/A																																																							
WP: 2+D3														RP: 5[100%]														ENC: 1														CLIP: N/A														AMMO: ○○○○○○○○○○○○																																																							
NAME: Sawed-Off Shotgun														TYPE: (M) R E S														RANGE: (E) C M L D														COND: P (U) W D B														TRAITS: 2																																																							
WP: 2+3d6														RP: 5[50%]														ENC: 1														CLIP: 2														AMMO: ●●●○○○○○○○○○○																																																							
EQUIPMENT: Standard Lock-Picks														ENC: 1														COND: P (U) W D B														TRAITS: +1 Lock-Picking* checks																																																																					
EQUIPMENT:														ENC:														COND: P U W D B														TRAITS:																																																																					
ARMOR:														ENC:														DM:														COND: P U W D B														ARMOR:														ENC:														DM:														COND: P U W D B													

TABLE 3: SKILL MODS

-3	Inept (-3)
0	Untrained (0)
+1	Beginner (+1)
+2	Journeyman (+2)
+3	Professional (+3)
+4	Life's work (+4)

sheet with an asterisks, such as Surgery*.

Players should write in the number of levels in each skill next to the skill name for ease of reference during play.

Each level in a Skill brings a corresponding +1 SMod to any check involving that skill, and so a character with **Unarmed Combat 2** would

write that on their sheet and receive +2 for any Unarmed Combat checks.

Each skill is associated with an attribute, such as Stealth with Dexterity. As AMods and SMods are cumulative, the associated attribute is written next to the skill name in parenthesis, such as Stealth (Dex).

For ease of reference, **Skills** are grouped on the character sheet by type. These group are: **Criminal, Combat, Innate, Knowledge, Mechanic, Medicine, and Sway Skills.**

5 SECONDARY STATS

Secondary Statistics are derived from the **RAPID Range** attributes as well as certain **skills**, all of which are all explained in detail during the **Character Creation** stage.

Secondary Stats either have a direct bearing on combat, such as **Wound & Resilience Points, Initiative, and Defensive Modifiers**, or they can have some other impact on gameplay, such as how much weight the character can carry (**Encumbrance**), their

Panic Threshold, their **Breaking Point**, and their **Morality** score.

This section is also where to record how many **Insight Dice** and **Character Development Points (CDP)** the character has. Each character starts with 2 **Insight Dice** (see **Moments of Insight & Insight Dice** on page 10) and 0 **Character Development Points (CDP)**. Both of these are earned or awarded and then spent at various points during the game, or the character's **Evolution** (see the **Distemper Core Rulebook** for more details on **Character Evolution**).

6 WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT

All characters start the game with a limited amount of weapons, ammunition, and equipment. Each of these items should be recorded in this section and you should circle the correct **Type, Range, & Condition** of the weapon for ease of reference. Each weapon section also has an ammunition tracker that should be marked as ammo is consumed.

Additionally, one weapons section records how much damage a character does with their bare **Fists**.

Additionally, this section has a Rations tracker. Each character starts the game with two Rations (enough to eat and drink for 2 days) and you should mark those on this sheet, removing one at the end of each game day.

NOTE: If your character doesn't have an item listed on their character sheet, they don't have it in the game.

7 PORTRAIT

Whether this is a sketch, a photo, a stock image, a panel from one of the comics, or even just a description, this is where to record how your character appears to others.

8 BACKGROUND INFO & NOTES

This section is to track the various details that help develop the character. If the character was created via the **Backstory Generation** process (see page 14) then they should already have a story that was created as they created their character, this should be recorded here. If a player choose to simply spend CDP to build the character they wanted, they should use their imagination to **Fill In The Gaps** about their character's background story.

9 RELATIONSHIPS


Relationships between player characters and non-player characters are important in **Distemper**, and players will find themselves having different interactions with each one. Some interactions are defined by **First Impressions** and **Gut Instincts** (see page 30) and may factor into **Negotiations** (see page 31). The CMods influencing those interactions should be recorded here, next to the NPC's name.

10 ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT & NOTES

In addition to Weapons & Equipment, each character starts the game with one **Incidental Item** to help provide them with color and context, as well as a **Basic Survival Kit** which contains a Sleeping Bag and a Tent, that should all be recorded in this section.

Anything not recorded elsewhere on the sheet or any other details that the player wishes to remember should go into this section. This might include details like whether your character is perpetually grumpy, if they are searching for friends and family, or if they have a habit of shuffling a deck of cards as they look for a sucker to get into a game. Anything that helps you remember how you are playing belongs here.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION & NOTES



Although born Percy LaRue, Pesky was given his nickname since before he could walk. Raised on the east side of Chicago, Pesky lived with his crack-addicted mother and younger brother, Elias. At an early age he got as good at hiding the truth as he was at shop-lifting food.

Pesky dropped out of high school at 14 and spent the next few years pocketing enough food for him and his family. Fat Fingered Frankie, a local hustler, took a liking to the young boy and helped him up his skills as a petty thief.

As he grew, Pesky found he had a way with the ladies who loved his 'bad boy trying to be good' shtick as much as their boyfriends hated it, and he often found his best defense was the pool cue in his hands.

Although Pesky was able to avoid being sucked into a street gang, he never made it beyond being a petty criminal who had multiple run-ins with the law. After the death of his mom, he felt increasingly responsible for his younger brother.

Pesky has spent much of the last few months on the move. He has gotten good at searching through empty houses, finding what others have missed, as learning how to survive off the land. Not everyone he has encountered has appreciated his approach to communal property, and his ability to defend himself has also improved.

Pesky still feels betrayed by Marty Kaczynski, who he had partnered with early on as he tried to get out of Michigan when everything collapsed. They had agreed to work together to find some kind of food source or safety, but Marty had beaten him while he slept and stole his horse and supplies, leaving Pesky for dead. Pesky doesn't know if Marty is still alive or not, he just knows that he still dreams of what he'll do once he catches up to him and has an opportunity to take his revenge.

Pesky, who has been in many pool hall fights, found a baton in an abandoned police car and felt that it was similar enough to a broken pool cue to match his fighting style. He also picked up a shotgun and got 3 shells after rolling d6. He takes a set of Standard Lock-Picks as his piece of Equipment and a map of the area as his Incidental item.

RELATIONSHIPS

NAME:	MODIFIER:	NAME:	MODIFIER:
Marty Kaczynski	-3		

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT & MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

INCIDENTAL EQUIPMENT: Map of area

SURVIVAL EQUIPMENT: Tent & Sleeping Bag



06. CREATING A CHARACTER

The characters at the core of the stories told in **Distemper** are not action movie heroes with seemingly endless skills and proficiencies who are prepared for every eventuality, they are very much ordinary people navigating extraordinary circumstances.

Distemper offers various ways to create a character, and the method you choose might depend on the clarity of vision you already have for your character, how much time you have to prepare, or perhaps if the GM has given you specific requirements for the story they want to tell. However, ultimately it is up to you as a player to define the character you want to play and use the method that best suits you.

BACKSTORY GENERATION:

If you want to define each element of your character and watch them evolve over the course of their lives, the **Backstory Generation** process allows you to choose each individual detail and create exactly the character you want to play.

Backstory Generation is a life-pathing process where players allocate **25 Character Development Points (CDP)** towards customizing their character's attributes and skills. However, the **Backstory Generation** process goes beyond just increasing attributes or buying skills, and players are prompted to make note of specific details that help define and flesh out their lives before the Dog Flu. In doing so, characters will have a brief history that reflects the various stages of their lives, such as their upbringing, education, their hobbies, their jobs, and any influential people they met along the way. This helps establish a cohesive framework for who they were before the pandemic, and how they will react to situations presented in the game.

To track the output of the **Backstory Generation** process, there is a character generator available from **DistemperVerse.com/resources**.

PARADIGMS

If you prefer to quickly jump into the game without much preparation, you can choose from the dozen available **Paradigms** (see page 24). These allow you to play a specific and familiar type of character, such as a school teacher, a small town sheriff a biker, or a preacher. Simply add a name and a few other key details about your character, and you are ready to start playing.

PREGENS

The quickest option is to simply choose one of the many pregenerated characters, or **Pregens**, available at **DistemperVerse.com**. These characters come fully defined, including their statistics, backstory, and equipment, allowing you to start playing without any additional work.

An example character, **Percy "Pesky" LaRue** is created during this walk-through to illustrate the **Backstory Generation** process, and is available for download along with other **Pregens** from **DistemperVerse.com/pregens**.

TAKING THE QUICK ROUTE:

Experienced players who are already familiar with the **Xero Sum Engine** may choose to skip the first five steps of this process, with the GM's agreement.

Instead, they should allocate 5 Character Development Points to raising their **RAPID RANGE** Attributes and 20 CDP to their Skills. They may not raise attributes beyond **3 (Exceptional)** or skills beyond **3 (Professional)**.

NOTE: It is still recommended that players **Fill In The Gaps** about their character's past, as this will provide a better understanding of their motivations and reactions in various situations.

07. BACKSTORY GENERATION PROCESS

STEP ZERO: WHO ARE THEY?

Who are you going to be? Define as much as you know of their concept at this point and choose 3 words that describe your character.

SEE PAGE 16 FOR DETAILS

STEP ONE: WHERE THEY GREW UP

Spend 1 CDP raising a RAPID Range Attribute from 0 to 1 (or from -3 to 1). Spend 4 CDP raising Skills from 0 to 1, or 1 to 2. Skills cannot be raised to level 3 during this step

SEE PAGE 16 FOR DETAILS

STEP TWO: WHAT THEY LEARNED

Spend 1 CDP to raise a RAPID Range attribute from 0 to 1, or 1 to 2. Spend 2 CDP raising Skills from 0 to 1, or 1 to 2. Skills cannot be raised to level 3 during this step.

SEE PAGE 17 FOR DETAILS

STEP THREE: WHAT THEY LIKED TO DO

Spend 1 CDP to raise a RAPID Range attribute from 0 to 1, or 1 to 2. Spend 4 CDP raising Skills from 0 to 1, or 1 to 2. Skills cannot be raised to level 3 during this step.

SEE PAGE 17 FOR DETAILS

STEP FOUR: HOW THEY MADE MONEY

Spend 2 CDP on raising RAPID Range attributes from 0 to 3, and 7 CDP on raising Skills from 0 to 3. Both attributes and skills can be raised from 2-3 during this step.

SEE PAGE 18 FOR DETAILS

STEP FIVE: WHAT THEY LEARNED AFTER

Spend 3 CDP on raising Skills from 0 to 3.

SEE PAGE 19 FOR DETAILS

STEP SIX: WHAT DRIVES THEM

Choose a Complication and a Motivation for your character from Tables 4 & 5, or roll 2d6 for random elements.

SEE PAGE 19 FOR DETAILS

STEP SEVEN: SECONDARY STATS

Work out their Wound Points, Resilience Points, Defense Modifiers, Initiative Modifier, Encumbrance Limit, Panic Threshold and Breaking Point.

SEE PAGE 20 FOR DETAILS

STEP EIGHT: WHAT THEY HAVE

Choose a Primary & Secondary weapon from tables 11-13. Weapons requiring ammo start with 1d6. Players pick one piece of Equipment from table 14 and an Incidental item from table 15. Each character starts with a Survival Kit and 2 days of rations.

SEE PAGE 21 FOR DETAILS

SUMMARY: FINAL FLAVOR

You should now have at least 1 sentence per step, and your background should be fleshed out. Make a note of any additional details that help define the character. Check that the 3 words you picked in step one are still valid.

SEE PAGE 21 FOR DETAILS

STEP XERO: WHO ARE THEY?

Distemper gives you the flexibility of defining your character concept in different ways.

Some may start by deciding who they want to be in the post-apocalyptic world, while others may come to their character concept organically through the **Backstory Generation** process.

Regardless of when it's decided, you should be able to summarize your character to the group in just a few sentences before the game begins. The concept can be simple or complex, depending on your preference.

STEP XERO: WHO ARE THEY?

Write down as much of your character concept as you have already defined.

To illustrate your character's personality and behaviors, choose three descriptive words that define who they are. This could be how they perceive themselves or how others perceive them. These three words are intended to help guide your character's reactions and decisions in various situations.

Write the three 3 words under **Personal Information** on your character sheet.

- Are you a shepherd or are you the hunter?
- Are you a leader trying to rally people behind an idea or are you just trying to stay alive?
- Do you have the medical training that will keep the sick and wounded alive or are you just extremely good at doing to others before it is done to you?
- Are you a dark and malevolent soul in search of a kingdom or a wiser, older soul who still wants to see the good in everyone?

Each player can decide how much of this information you are going to share with the group (and what you want to keep to yourself) but having a good understanding of your characters' concept will help guide your decisions when trying to decide how they would react to a given situation or when role-playing as that character.

Regardless of how much you have decided by this point, you should choose 3 descriptive words that help you summarize who your character

is. Are they stubborn? Angry? Compassionate? Perceptive? Whichever 3 words you come up with, write them on your character sheet.

With a character concept as minimal as a streetwise petty criminal who has always survived by relying on his wits, the 3 descriptors for Pesky LaRue are: Shrewd, Manipulative, and Sneaky.

STEP ONE: WHERE THEY GREW UP

The **Where They Grew Up** step typically covers the first 10-15 years of a character's life, during which many of their attitudes and outlooks are formed. It's important to consider how and where your character was raised and the impact it had on them as, while each character's childhood will be unique, considering these factors can help you shape your character's backstory and motivations.

During the **Backstory Generation** process, reflecting on what your character learned during their early life is crucial.

- Were you raised on a farm, developing a strong Physicality and understanding of the natural world, or were you raised by academically focused parents where Reason was valued above all else?
- Were you a street urchin, relying on your Acumen and dexterity to survive, or did you grow up in a circus where their ability to Entertain and Charm others was crucial for survival?

STEP ONE: WHERE THEY GREW UP

To reflect what the character learned during their early life, you get **1 Character Development Point** to add to their any **RAPID Range attribute**, raising it from **0 (Average)** to **1 (Good)**.

You also get **2 Character Development Points** to spend on any of the **skills** listed on page 25.

During this step of the **Backstory Generation** process, buying 1 or 2 levels in a skill both cost 1 CDP per point.

Skills cannot be raised beyond **2 (Journeyman)** during Step One.

Characters start with a **RAPID Range** of **00000** and you receive **1 Character Development Point (CDP)** to add to any of their **RAPID Range attributes**, which raises it from **0 (Average)** to **1 (Good)**.

Additionally, you'll receive **2 CDP** to spend on any of the skills listed on page 25. When purchasing levels in a skill during any step, each level costs 1 CDP per point. Putting 1 CDP into a skill that starts at **-3 (Inept)** takes it to **1 (Beginner)**.

NOTE: Skills cannot be raised beyond **2 (Journeyman)** during this step.

To help shape your character's backstory, make a note of where and how they were raised and any defining events that may have influenced their formative years, summarizing it in 1-3 sentences.

Although born Percy LaRue, Pesky was given his nickname since before he could walk. Raised on the east side of Chicago, Pesky lived with his crack-addicted mother and younger brother, Elias. At an early age he got as good at hiding the truth as he was at shop-lifting food.

Pesky puts 1 Character Development Point into Acumen, and 1 Character Development Point each into Manipulation and Sleight of Hand, to get **1 (Beginner)** in those two skills.

STEP TWO: WHAT THEY LEARNED

This step covers what your character picked up over the years, how it shaped their outlook, their abilities, and how it prepared them for their adult lives.

- Did you get your education from books in an academic institute where an eye for detail was paramount to success?
- Were you raised on a commune where you learned by doing, honing the practical skills that came through experience, not reading?

No matter where they learned their lessons, your characters' experiences during this education step of their life gives you **1 Character Development Point** to spend increasing any RAPID Range attribute from **0 (Average)** to **1 (Good)**, or from **1 (Good)** to **2 (Strong)**.

STEP TWO: WHAT THEY LEARNED

During this step you can allocate **1 Character Development Point** towards raising any **RAPID Range attribute**, as well as **4 Character Development Points** towards raising **skills**.

It costs **1 CDP** to raise a Skill from **0 (Untrained)** to **1 (Beginner)**, or from **1 (Beginner)** to **2 (Journeyman)**.

Skills cannot be raised above **2 (Journeyman)** during the **What They Learned** step.

You also get **4 Character Development Points** to spend on raising skills. It costs **1 Character Development Point** to raise a skill from **0 (Untrained)** to **1 (Beginner)**, or from **1 (Beginner)** to **2 (Journeyman)**. Skills cannot be raised above **2 (Journeyman)** during the **What They Learned** step.

Make a note of how and where your character got their Education, summarizing in 1-3 sentences any specific lessons they learned or an impactful figures that may have influenced, hindered, or mentored them during this period.

Pesky dropped out of high school at 14 and spent the next few years pocketing enough food for him and his family. Fat Fingered Frankie, a local hustler, took a liking to the young boy and helped him up his skills as a petty thief.

Pesky puts a Character Development Point into Dexterity to reflect the number of times he needed to make a quick getaway and spends his 4 CDP on taking Sleight of Hand to **2 (Journeyman)**, and takes **1 (Beginner)** in Athletics, Barter, and Navigation.

STEP THREE: WHAT THEY LIKED TO DO

This step is where you can add some additional depth to your character by thinking about how they spent their free time, and how that affected their skills and RAPID Range attributes.

- Were you an avid rock climber, honing your Physicality and mental discipline?
- Were you a bookworm, constantly learning new trivia and vital facts?

STEP THREE: WHAT THEY LIKED TO DO

Add **1 Character Development Point** to any **RAPID Range Attribute**. During this step, you can raise an attribute from **2 (Strong)** to **3 (Exceptional)**.

Allocate **4 CDP** to the skills that reflect your characters' passions, interests, and hobbies.

In this step, Skills cannot be raised above **2 (Journeyman)**.

You get **1 Character Development Point** to apply to raising a RAPID Range attribute. During this step, attributes can be raised from **2 (Strong)** to **3 (Exceptional)**.

You also get **4 Character Development Points** to allocate to skills that reflect your character's passions, interests, and hobbies - the things that really motivated them as a person before the outbreak. Skills cannot be raised above **2 (Journeyman)** in this step.

Make a note in 1-3 sentences of what was it that made your character who they were before the pandemic - what did they do for fun? What were their hobbies? What made them tick?

As he grew, Pesky found he had a way with the ladies who loved his 'bad boy trying to be good' shtick almost as much as their boyfriends hated it, and he often found his best defense was the pool cue in his hands.

Pesky puts 1 Character Development Point towards Influence, raising it to **1 (Good)** and spends one of his 4 Character Development Points on getting another level in Manipulation to take it to **2 (Journeyman)**, and 3 points on getting **1 (Beginner)** in Intimidation, Melee Combat, and Unarmed Combat

After these steps, Pesky LaRue has gone from a RAPID Range of 00000 and no skills to a RAPID Range of 01011. He has the following Skills: Athletics 2, Barter 1, Intimidation 1, Manipulation 2, Melee Combat 1, Sleight of Hand 2, and Unarmed Combat 1

STEP FOUR: HOW THEY MADE MONEY

During this step you define what it was that your character did for work - or, at least, how they made money - before the Dog Flu. There are 12 **Professions** listed below that reflect common occupations along with associated vocational skills.

You receive **2 Character Development Points** to spend on any **RAPID Range attribute**, which can be raised from **2 (Strong)** to **3 (Exceptional)** during this step.

To represent the expertise and mastery that comes through the years your character has devoted to learning their craft, you get **7 Character Development Points** to allocate to various skills. Skills can be raised from **2 (Journeyman)** to **3 (Professional)** during this step.

The listed **Professions** and related skills are simply thematically appropriate suggestions and you're free to choose skills that better fit your character concept. If none of the listed **Professions** align with your vision, you can create a custom profession by allocating 7 CDP on the skills that match the idea you have in mind. You should still be prepared to **Fill in the Gaps** for the rest of the group about your character's background and how they got their skills.

STEP FOUR: HOW THEY MADE MONEY

Add 2 Character Development Points to any RAPID Range Attributes. You can raise them from **2 (Good)** to **3 (Exceptional)** during this step.

Choose a **Profession** and allocate 7 CDP to any of the vocation skills. Skills can be raised from **2 (Journeyman)** to **3 (Professional)** during this step.

If there is no **Profession** that matches your concept, allocate 7 CDP to skills of your choice and **Fill In The Gaps** as to what they did.

The Professions are: **Academic, Driver, Entrepreneur, Law Enforcement, Mechanic, Medic, Military, Outdoorsman, Outlaw, Performer, Politician, and Trader.**

Make a note of what it was that they did to make money before the virus and summarize in 1-2 sentences any defining events or interactions they may have had during this time in your life, particularly as it comes to helping explain their choice of skills and background.

Although Pesky was able to avoid being sucked into a street gang, he never made it beyond being a petty criminal who had multiple run-ins with the law. After the death of his mom, he felt increasingly responsible for his younger brother.

Pesky puts an additional **Character Development Point** into Acumen, raising it to **2 (Strong)**, and 1 point into Physicality raising it to **1 (Good)**. Choosing **Outlaw** as his **Profession**, he gets 7 CDP to spend on raising skills. He spends 2 points on both Lock-Picking* and Stealth, and then an additional point in Intimidation, Manipulation, and Unarmed Combat.

PROFESSIONS & VOCATIONAL SKILLS

ACADEMIC:

Entertainment
Farming
General Knowledge
Pharmacology*
Psychology*
Surgery*
Tactics*

DRIVER:

Barter
Lock-Picking*
Navigation
Scavenging
Stealth
Tinkerer
Vehicle Repair*

ENTREPRENEUR:

Barter
General Knowledge
Inspiration
Manipulation
Psychology*
Sleight of Hand
Tinkerer

LAW ENFORCEMENT:

Athletics
Hunting
Intimidation
Manipulation
Ranged Combat
Stealth
Tactics*

MECHANIC:

Armorsmith*
Barter
General Knowledge
Scavenging
Tinkerer
Vehicle Repair*
Weaponsmith*

MEDIC:

First Aid
General Knowledge
Inspiration
Manipulation
Pharmacology*
Psychology*
Surgery*

MILITARY:

Athletics
Demolitions*
Hunting
Ranged Combat
Survival
Tactics*
Unarmed Combat

OUTDOORSMAN:

Animal Handling
Farming
Hunting
Melee Combat
Navigation
Stealth
Survival

OUTLAW:

Intimidation
Lock-Picking*
Manipulation
Psychology*
Sleight of Hand
Stealth
Unarmed Combat

PERFORMER:

Athletics
Entertainment
Inspiration
Manipulation
Psychology*
Sleight of Hand
Stealth

POLITICIAN:

Barter
Entertainment
Inspiration
Intimidation
Manipulation
Psychology*
Tactics*

TRADER:

Barter
General Knowledge
Inspiration
Manipulation
Scavenging
Sleight of Hand
Tinkerer

STEP FIVE: WHAT THEY LEARNED AFTER

This new world is nothing but harsh lessons and struggles. Survivors have all had to pick up some new tricks in order to get by. In this step you detail what they have learned since civilization fell apart to cope with the challenges they face.

- Have you developed an eye for spotting useful items among the trash?
- Have you had to fight to stay alive, honing your boxing skills out of necessity?

You get **3 Character Development Points** to apply to spend on the skills that reflect what they have learned in order to stay alive. Skills can be raised from **2 (Journeyman)** to **3 (Professional)**.

Make a note in 1-2 sentences of what was it that made your character who they were before the pandemic - what did they do for fun? What were their hobbies?

Pesky has spent much of the last few months on the move. He has gotten good at searching through empty houses, finding what others have missed, as learning how to survive off the land. Not everyone he has encountered has appreciated his approach to communal property, and his ability to defend himself has also improved.

Pesky puts one Character Development Point towards getting **1 (Beginner)** in Scavenging and Survival and then adds an additional point to Melee Combat, raising both to **2 (Journeyman)**.

After these first five steps, Pesky LaRue has gone from a RAPID Range of 00000 and no skills to a RAPID Range of 02111 and the following skills: Manipulation 3, Athletics 2, Intimidation 2, Lock-Picking* 2, Melee Combat 2, Sleight of Hand 2, Stealth 2, Unarmed Combat 2, Barter 1, Scavenging 1, and Survival 1.

STEP SIX: WHAT DRIVES THEM

Before coming together as a group, each character has had their own experiences and drives that are captured in their **Complications** and **Motivations**. These elements help provide depth to a character's background as well as creating potential plot developments, to be determined by the GM.

- What is the dark secret you are hiding from others in their group?
- What is the obligation that is holding you back or driving you forward?
- Where are you trying to get to?
- Is there something you are trying to rediscover or rebuild?
- Are there NPCs who are involved?
- If you are focused on self-preservation, will you put yourself at risk for others?

While only the GM needs to know your **Complication** and **Motivation**, you should have a good understanding of what happened and how that might impact gameplay, and you should make a note of any NPC names that may become relevant later.

Pesky still feels BETRAYED by Marty Kaczynski, who he had partnered with early on as he tried to get out of Michigan when everything collapsed. They had agreed to work together to find some kind of food source or safety, but Marty had beaten him while he slept and stole his horse and supplies, leaving Pesky for dead. Pesky doesn't know if Marty is still alive or not, he just knows that he still dreams of what he'll do once he catches up to him and has an opportunity to take his REVENGE.

STEP SIX: WHAT DRIVES THEM?

Either choose a **Complication** and a **Motivation** for your character from **Tables 4 & 5**, or roll 2d6 for a random element to weave into your Backstory.

TABLE 5: COMPLICATIONS

2	Addiction
3	Betrayed
4	Code of Honor
5	Criminal Past
6	Daredevil
7	Dark Secret
8	Family Obligation
9	Famous
10	Loss
11	Outstanding Debt
12	Personal Enemy

TABLE 6: MOTIVATIONS

2	Accumulate
3	Build
4	Find Safety
5	Hedonism
6	Make Amends
7	Preach
8	Protect
9	Reunite
10	Revenge
11	Stay Alive
12	Take Advantage

STEP SEVEN: SECONDARY STATS

Secondary Stats define certain aspects of a character and each has an impact on gameplay. Some **Secondary Stats** are combat related (how much damage a character can sustain before dying), some of them are more mechanical (how much weight can they carry before becoming exhausted), and others have a less direct and more tangential effect on the game, such as the point when a character freaks out.

Wound Points (WP) determine how much damage a character can take before they become **Mortally Wounded**, and then **Die**.

Resilience Points (RP) are a measure of how much damage it takes to **Incapacitate** a character.

Defensive Modifiers (DM) affect not only the chance for a character to be hit but can also mitigate damage before affecting their WP/RP.

Initiative determines the order in which a participant acts in combat, and a character's **Initiative Modifier (Init)** influences where they fall in that ranking.

Encumbrance (ENC) is how much weight a character can carry before becoming Encumbered and needing to stop and rest or drop something.

Panic Threshold (PT): During combat or particularly stressful situations, characters may lose Resilience Points and if they lose enough, they may **Panic** (see page 33).

Breaking Point: Similar to **Panic Threshold**, each character has a **Breaking Point** before they have some kind of freak-out or psychotic episode. **Breaking Point** rules are covered in the **Distemper Core Rulebook**.

Morality is a measure of how true a character is acting to their own ethical compass. Each character starts with a **Morality** value of 3, which can be affected over time. The Morality rules are covered in the **Distemper Core Rulebook**.

Wound Points: As Pesky has both a **Physicality & Dexterity of 1**, he starts with $10+1+1$, or 12 WP.

Resilience Points: With a **Physicality 1**, Pesky starts with $6+1$, or 7 RP.

Defensive Modifiers: With both a **Physicality & Dexterity of 1**, Pesky starts with a -1 Defense Modifier for both Melee and Ranged.

Initiative Modifier: Pesky's **Acumen of 2** and **Dexterity of 1** means he starts with a $0+2+1$ Initiative Modifier, or +3.

Encumbrance: With a **Physicality of 1**, Pesky starts with an Encumbrance of $6+1$, or 7.

Panic Threshold: Pesky's has 7 Resilience Points, making his Panic Threshold 3 (50% of 7, rounded down).

Breaking Point: With a **Reason of 0** and **Acumen of +2**, Pesky gets a Breaking Point of $3+2$, or 5.

Morality: Like all characters, Pesky starts with a **Morality of 3**.

STEP SEVEN: SECONDARY STATS

Wound Points (WP): Characters start with **10 Wound Points + Physicality AMod + Dexterity AMod**

Resilience Points (RP): Each character starts with **6 Resilience Points + Physicality AMod**

Defensive Modifiers (DM): A character's **Melee Defensive Modifier** is their **Physicality AMod**

A character's **Ranged Defensive Modifier** is their **Dexterity AMod**

Initiative Modifier (Init): The sum of **Acumen** and **Dexterity AMods** is an **Initiative Modifier** which is added to initiative checks

Encumbrance (ENC): Characters start with an **Encumbrance** value of **6 + Physicality AMod**

Panic Threshold (PT): Each character has a **Panic Threshold** that is half of their original **Resilience Point** total, rounded down

Breaking Point: The **Breaking Point** for each character is **3 + Reason AMod + Acumen AMod**

Morality: Each character starts with a **Morality of 3**

STEP EIGHT: WHAT THEY HAVE

Each character picks a **Primary** and **Secondary weapon** from Tables 11-13 on pages 28-29, and receives 1d6 of ammunition per weapon.

Each character make take one piece of **Equipment** from Table 14 as well as an **Incidental** item from table 15 that provides no combat value but may otherwise be useful (such as eye glasses or a map of the area).

Additionally, each character gets a **Survival Kit** consisting of a tent and sleeping bag, as well as 2 units of **Rations**, enough to last them 2 days.

Make a note of everything your character has on their sheet and **remember**, if it isn't written on your character sheet, you don't have it in the game.

STEP EIGHT: WHAT HAVE THEY GOT?

Pick a **Primary** and **Secondary** weapon from **Tables 11-13**. If the weapon requires ammo, you start with d6.

Pick 1 item from **Table 14: Equipment**.

Pick an Incidental item from **Table 15**.

You start with a Survival Kit and 2 days rations.

Pesky, who has been in many pool hall fights, found a baton in an abandoned police car and felt that it was similar enough to a broken pool cue to match his fighting style. He also picked up a shotgun and got 3 shells after rolling d6. He takes a set of Standard Lock-Picks as his piece of Equipment and a map of the area as his Incidental item.

STEP NINE: FINAL FLAVOR

During the **Backstory Generation** process you were prompted to note down relevant facts about your character as you progressed through the various steps. By now, you should have a good idea of who your character was before the pandemic and who they have become since.

Transpose this information onto your character sheet, along with any other relevant details that can aid you in role-playing as your character. This may include physical features, personality traits, quirks, or personal beliefs.

Your character might gallows humor and find laughter in even the darkest moments, or maybe they are the brooding and silent type who watches everything but says nothing. They could be still struggling to come to terms with the loss of their previous life, or they may have accepted this new, hazardous world and are committed to flourishing in it.

Now is a perfect time to revisit the three words you picked to define your character in Step Xero. Do those words still match your character's personality now that you are done with the **Backstory Generation** process, or do you need to make changes?

If you ever find yourself at a loss as to how to react to a situation or how to role-play as your character, refer back to the paragraph you have created and the three defining words to guide your actions.

STEP NINE: FINAL FLAVOR

Copy the sentences you wrote during the Backstory Generation process onto your character sheet.

Check that the three descriptors you chose in **Step Xero** still ring true, and make adjustments if they don't.

Make any additional notes on your character sheet that will help you remember who your character is.



THE BALLAD OF PESKY LARUE

This is the character sheet for Pesky LaRue, the example character created during the **Backstory Generation** process, and is available for download and use in a game from **DISTEMPERVERSE.COM/PREGENS**

PERSONAL INFORMATION			
NAME: Pesky LaRue		PROFESSION: Petty Criminal	
AGE: 32	WEIGHT: 168 lbs	HEIGHT: 5' 7"	GENDER: Male
DESCRIBE YOURSELF IN 3 WORDS: Shrewd, Manipulative, and Sneaky			
COMPLICATION: Betrayed		MOTIVATION: Revenge	
REASON: 0	ACUMEN: 2	PHYSICALITY: 1	INFLUENCE: 1 DEXTERITY: 1

SKILLS (RANK YOURSELF FROM 0-4)		
-3 [Combat] Demolitions* (PHY)	[Knowledge] Farming (REA)	1 [Innate] Athletics (DEX)
2 [Combat] Melee Combat (PHY)	[Knowledge] General Know. (REA)	[Innate] Hunting (PHY)
[Combat] Ranged Combat (DEX)	-3 [Knowledge] Psychology* (REA)	1 [Innate] Navigation (ACU)
2 [Combat] Unarmed Combat (PHY)	[Knowledge] Research (REA)	1 [Innate] Scavenging (ACU)
2 [Criminal] Lock-Picking* (REA)	-3 [Knowledge] Tactics* (REA)	1 [Innate] Survival (ACU)
2 [Criminal] Sleight of Hand (DEX)	-3 [Mechanic] Armorsmith* (DEX)	[Sway] Animal Handling (INF)
2 [Criminal] Stealth (DEX)	[Mechanic] Tinkerer (DEX)	1 [Sway] Barter (ACU)
[Medicine] First Aid (REA)	-3 [Mechanic] Vehicle Rep.* (DEX)	[Sway] Entertainment (INF)
-3 [Medicine] Pharmacology* (REA)	-3 [Mechanic] Weaponsmith* (DEX)	[Sway] Inspiration (INF)
-3 [Medicine] Surgery* (REA)		2 [Sway] Intimidation (PHY)
		3 [Sway] Manipulation (INF)

SECONDARY STATS			
WOUND POINTS: 10 + 12 + DEX	DM MELEE: -PH AMod	INITIATIVE: DEX+3ACU	CDP:
RESILIENCE POINTS: 7 + PHY	DM RANGED: -DE AMod	ENCUMBRANCE: 6 7PHY	INSIGHT DICE:
MORALITY: 3	PANIC THRESHOLD: 50% of original RP total (rounded down) 3	BREAKING POINT: 3 5REA + PHY	RATIONS:

WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT			
NAME: Fists	WP: 1d3+2	TYPE: (M) R E S	RANGE: (E) C M L D
Damage: 1d3 + PHY + Unarmed Combat			
NAME: Baton	TYPE: (M) R E S	RANGE: (E) C M L D	COND: P (U) W D B
WP: 2+1D3	RP: 5(100%)	ENC: 1	CLIP: N/A
NAME: Sawed-Off Shotgun	TYPE: M (R) E S	RANGE: (E) C M L D	COND: P (U) W D B
WP: 2+3d6	RP: 5(50%)	ENC: 1	CLIP: 2
EQUIPMENT: Standard Lock-Picks	ENC: 1	COND: P (U) W D B	TRAITS: +1 Lock-Picking* checks
EQUIPMENT:	ENC:	COND: P U W D B	TRAITS:
ARMOR:	ENC:	DM:	COND: P U W D B

A stylized, high-contrast image of a person wearing a dark jacket and a balaclava, holding a handgun. The image has a graphic, almost stencil-like quality with a limited color palette.

Pesky dropped out of high school at 14 and spent the next few years pocketing enough food for him and his family. Fat Fingered Frankie, a local hustler, took a liking to the young boy and helped him up his skills as a petty thief.

Although Pesky was able to avoid being sucked into a street gang, he never made it beyond being a petty criminal who had multiple run-ins with the law. After the death of his mom, he felt increasingly responsible for his younger brother.

Pesky has spent much of the last few months on the move. He has gotten good at searching through empty houses, finding what others have missed, as learning how to survive off the land. Not everyone he has encountered has appreciated his approach to communal property, and his ability to defend himself has also improved.

Pesky still feels betrayed by Marty Kaczynski, who he had partnered with early on as he tried to get out of Michigan when everything collapsed. They had agreed to work together to find some kind of food source or safety, but Marty had beaten him while he slept and stole

his horse and supplies, leaving Pesky for dead. Pesky doesn't know if Marty is still alive or not, he just knows that he still dreams of what he'll do once he catches up to him and has an opportunity to take his revenge.

Pesky, who has been in many pool hall fights, found a baton in an abandoned police car and felt that it was similar enough to a broken pool cue to match his fighting style. He also picked up a shotgun and got 3 shells after rolling d6. He takes a set of Standard Lock-Picks as his piece of Equipment and a map of the area as his Incidental item.

NAME: MODIFIER: NAME: MODIFIER:

Marty Kaczynski

-3

INCIDENTAL EQUIPMENT: Map of area

SURVIVAL EQUIPMENT: Tent & Sleeping Bag

08. SKILLS, PREGENS & PARADIGMS

SKILLS

Skills denote training or aptitude at performing certain tasks, like picking a lock or riding a horse and a character's familiarity and aptitude in that area will affect their dice checks. Each skill is tied to an attribute and the more naturally gifted a character is, the more competent they will be when using related skills.

TABLE 3: SKILL MODS

-3	Inept (-3)
0	Untrained (0)
+1	Beginner (+1)
+2	Journeyman (+2)
+3	Professional (+3)
+4	Life's work (+4)

These Skill Modifiers (or SMods) range from **-3 (Inept)** through to **+4 (Life's Work)** and are applied to all dice checks using that skill. Although starting characters are initially capped at **+3 (Proficient)**, **+4 (Life's Work)** can potentially be achieved over time as part of the character's **Evolution**.

Characters start with the majority of their skills at **0 (Untrained)** and they can still use those skills but receive 0 SMod on the check. Additionally, the GM may even decide to apply a -1 CMod, due to the complexity of the check or other external factors.

Certain skills require very specific training and anyone without that training are considered **Inept** and automatically incur a -3 SMod. These skills are denoted by an asterisks when written, such as Lock-Picking* and Surgery*. These start at **-3 (Inept)** but go to **1 (Beginner)** with the allocation of **1 Character Development Point**.

A full list of Skills can be found on the following page.

PARADIGMS VS. PREGENS

For those wishing to just get into the thick of the action, there are 16 **Paradigms** included that, with a minimum of customization, can be played almost immediately.

Paradigms represents a familiar trope, stereotype, or role within a group, and each comes predefined with the attributes and a skill set to match the concept. Each is detailed on pages 26-27, and Paradigm Character Sheets that can be customized are available at **DistemperVerse.com**.

The Paradigms included are: **Bar Owner, Beat Cop, Biker, EMT, Family Doctor, Farmer, Flea Market Trader, Hot Rod Mechanic, Mayor, Mercenary, Petty Criminal, Preacher, Rural Sheriff, School Teacher, Semi-Pro Athlete** and **Trucker**.

A player simply needs to pick a **Paradigm**, give them a name, choose a **Complication** and **Motivation** from Tables 4 & 5 (on page 19), and define their attitude to the world in 3 words to begin playing.

Although each **Paradigm** already has their RAPID Range, skills and Secondary Stats defined, it is really when you define key elements of their personality - their name, age, **Complication** and **Motivation**, the 3 words that describe their character, even their Incidental Item - that you breathe life into your character. It is these elements that give you a sense of who your character is and how they will act.

As an even quicker alternative to **Paradigms**, there are multiple **Pregenerated Characters**, or **Pregens**, available for download. These **Pregens** come with all of their RAPID Range Attributes, Skills, Complications, Motivations, and Secondary Stats defined, in addition to a semi-complete Backstory that provides an easy jump off pointing while still allowing plenty of room for customization.

The library of **Pregens** available at **distempervers.com/pregens** will be updated with the release of each adventure and sourcebook.

SKILL NAME	TYPE	ATTRIBUTE	SKILL DESCRIPTION
Animal Handling	Sway	Influence	An understanding of both the science and the art behind training animals. From basic tricks, to breaking in stubborn colts, to caring for herds of livestock
Armorsmith*	Mechanic	Dexterity	Working knowledge of how to design, build and repair armor. This applies to vehicles and buildings as well as personal armor
Athletics	Innate	Physicality	Grace, coordination, but also a reflection of how well a character is able to climb, jump and react to physical challenges or obstacles
Barter	Sway	Acumen	Being able to arrange negotiations, trades, appraise goods, and haggle for the best deal
Demolitions*	Combat	Physicality	The art of blowing things up, ranging from creating improvised Molotov cocktails to the precision use of military grade compounds
Entertainment	Sway	Influence	No matter if it's by dancing, magic, ventriloquism, music, story telling or being a funny guy, this character can keep people entertained
Farming	Knowledge	Acumen	A good understanding of how to work the land, livestock, or both, to provide for a large number of people
First Aid	Medicine	Reason	Enough medical knowledge to stabilize and heal most wounded patients, in addition to being able to care for most ailments, sicknesses, and diseases
General Know.	Knowledge	Reason	Knowing a lot about random things and the ability to recall minute and useful facts at opportune moments, including about the local area or region
Hunting	Innate	Physicality	Being able to track prey as well as knowing how to prepare, use, and avoid, traps
Inspiration	Sway	Influence	Being able to motivate groups and individuals towards a collective goal by sharing a vision or evoking specific emotions
Intimidation	Sway	Influence	The ability to get information out of someone through psychological or physical coercion. Sometimes both.
Lock-Picking*	Criminal	Acumen	Knowledge of most common, as well as many uncommon or rare, locks, safes and security systems, as well as how to bypass them
Manipulation	Sway	Influence	A character can use manipulation to influence or control others through lying, flattery, cunning, and deceit. Whether it is used for good or evil depends on their motivation.
Melee Combat	Combat	Physicality	A melee weapon is like an extension of the body and this skill increases both the accuracy and damage done when wielding one
Navigation	Innate	Acumen	An almost uncanny sense of direction that allows someone to successfully plot and chart courses with unerring accuracy
Pharmacology*	Medicine	Reason	An understanding of the use, effects and creation of various drugs and allows for someone to use plants and other makeshift methods to provide medical care
Psychology*	Knowledge	Influence	Understanding what makes someone tick and being able to use that knowledge to help them - or use it against them. This can also help with larger group dynamics
Ranged Combat	Combat	Dexterity	Proficiency with various forms of ranged weapons, from slings to bows to pistols to shotguns to sniper rifles. If it can be propelled, this skill makes it more accurate
Research	Knowledge	Reason	The ability to chase tidbits of information, prove a hypothesis to a conclusion, and ingest large amounts of data and become a relative expert in a short time
Scavenging	Innate	Acumen	Knowing where to look for specific items, as well as how to evaluate the condition and value of found items
Sleight of Hand	Criminal	Dexterity	Misdirection and deftness that ranges from doing simple card tricks, to being able to hide something in plain sight, to picking a pocket
Stealth	Criminal	Physicality	Knowing how to move without drawing attention and being able to avoid detection
Surgery*	Medicine	Reason	An advanced understanding of human anatomy and care, including where and how to cut to save a patient, how to set broken bones, and to treat infections & diseases
Survival	Innate	Acumen	Being able to use an otherwise hostile environment - including urban environments - to their advantage and surviving in inhospitable terrain and living off the land.
Tactics*	Knowledge	Reason	An understanding of how to apply military and interpersonal theories to get the upper hand or an advantage. Can be used in or out of combat situations.
Tinkerer	Mechanic	Dexterity	The natural inclination and ability to make something out of nothing, fix seemingly unfixable things, as well as to make something that works, work better
Unarmed Combat	Combat	Physicality	From pugilism to martial arts, a trained fist can be as deadly as any weapon
Vehicle Repair*	Mechanic	Dexterity	Being able to repair, maintain and customize vehicles. This can range from getting a broken truck moving again to mount a canon to the roof of a sedan
Weaponsmith*	Mechanic	Dexterity	Knowing how to build high quality weapons from scratch, in addition to maintaining, repairing and customizing existing weapons

Bar Owner 12020

WP 10 RP 6 DMM 0 DMR 0
INIT 2 ENC 6 PT 3 BP 6
Complication: Loss
Motivation: Build

SKILLS: Manipulation 3, Barter 2, Entertainment 2, Scavenging 2, Tinkerer 2, Athletics 1, First Aid 1, General Knowledge 2, Inspiration 1, Psychology* 1, Sleight of Hand 1, Stealth 1, Unarmed Combat 1

WEAPONS: Fists 1d3+1
 Light Pistol [4] 3+1d6;
 Hatchet 3+1d3;

EQUIPMENT: Walkie-Talkie;
 Survival Kit (Tent, Sleeping Bag);
 2 Rations;



BEAT COP 01121

WP 12 RP 7 DMM 1 DMR 1
INIT 2 ENC 7 PT 3 BP 4
Complication: Code of Honor
Motivation: Protect

SKILLS: Hunting 2, Unarmed Combat 2, Scavenging 2, Athletics 1, First Aid 1, General Knowledge 1, Inspiration 1, Intimidation 1, Lock-Picking* 1, Manipulation 1, Melee Combat 1, Navigation 1, Psychology* 1, Ranged Combat 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1, Weaponsmith*

WEAPONS: Fists 1d3+3
 Heavy Pistol [5] 3+2d3;
 Tactical Baton 2+1d3 (100%);

EQUIPMENT: Handcuffs;
 Survival Kit (Tent, Sleeping Bag);
 2 Rations;



BIKER 02102

WP 13 RP 7 DMM 1 DMR 2
INIT 4 ENC 7 PT 3 BP 5
Complication: Personal Enemy
Motivation: Hedonism

SKILLS: Navigation 2, Vehicle Repair* 2, Barter 1, Demolitions* 1, Hunting 1, Intimidation 2, Lock-Picking* 1, Manipulation 1, Melee Combat 1, Ranged Combat 1, Scavenging 1, Sleight of Hand 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1, Unarmed Combat 1

WEAPONS: Fists 1d3+2
 Sawed-Off Shotgun [5] 2+3d6;
 Tactical Baton 2+1d3 (100%);

EQUIPMENT: Toolkit;
 Survival Kit (Tent, Sleeping Bag);
 2 Rations;

FLEA MARKET TRADER 12020

WP 10 RP 6 DMM 0 DMR 0
INIT 2 ENC 6 PT 3 BP 6
Complication: Loss
Motivation: Accumulate

SKILLS: Barter 3, Manipulation 2, Scavenging 2, Sleight of Hand 2, Entertainment 1, First Aid 1, General Knowledge 1, Psychology* 1, Research 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1, Tinkerer 1, Vehicle Repair* 1, Weaponsmith* 1

WEAPONS: Fists 1d3
 Hammer 1+1d3 (100%);
 Hunting Knife 2+2d3;

EQUIPMENT: Toolkit;
 Survival Kit (Tent, Sleeping Bag);
 2 Rations;



HOT ROD MECHANIC 11102

WP 13 RP 7 DMM 1 DMR 2
INIT 3 ENC 7 PT 3 BP 5
Complication: Loss
Motivation: Build

SKILLS: Armorsmith* 1, Barter 1, Demolitions* 1, First Aid 1, General Knowledge 1, Lock-Picking* 1, Melee Combat 2, Navigation 1, Ranged Combat 1, Scavenging 2, Sleight of Hand 1, Survival 1, Tinkerer 2, Vehicle Repair* 3, Weaponsmith* 1

WEAPONS: Fists 1d3+1
 Pump-Action Shotgun [3] 5+2d6;
 Baseball Bat 4+1d6;

EQUIPMENT: Toolkit;
 Survival Kit (Tent, Sleeping Bag);
 2 Rations;



PETTY CRIMINAL 01112

WP 13 RP 7 DMM 1 DMR 2
INIT 3 ENC 7 PT 3 BP 4
Complication: Criminal Past
Motivation: Take Advantage

SKILLS: Manipulation 3, Barter 2, Lock-Picking* 2, Sleight of Hand 2, Stealth 2, Unarmed Combat 2, Athletics 1, Intimidation 1, Melee Combat 1, Ranged Combat 1, Scavenging 1, Survival 1, Tinkerer 1,

WEAPONS: Fists 1d3+3
 Sawed-Off Shotgun [5] 2+3d6;
 Brass Knuckles +1 WP/RP;

EQUIPMENT: Standard Lock-picks; Survival Kit (Tent, Sleeping Bag); 2 Rations;



PREACHER 11030

WP 10 RP 6 DMM 0 DMR 0
INIT 1 ENC 6 PT 3 BP 6
Complication: Code of Honor
Motivation: Preach

SKILLS: General Knowledge 3, Inspiration 3, Manipulation 3, Psychology* 3, Barter 2, Intimidation 2, Research 1, Scavenging 2, Entertainment 1, Sleight of Hand 1

WEAPONS: Fists 1d3
 Makeshift Club (Bible) 1+1d3 (100%);
 Staff (Walking Stick) 2+2d3 (100%);

EQUIPMENT: Loudspeaker;
 Survival Kit (Tent, Sleeping Bag);
 2 Rations;



RURAL SHERIFF 02021

WP 11 RP 6 DMM 0 DMR 1
INIT 3 ENC 6 PT 3 BP 5
Complication: Code of Honor
Motivation: Build

SKILLS: Intimidation 2, Manipulation 2, Survival 2, Animal Handling 1, Barter 1, General Knowledge 1, Hunting 1, Inspiration 1, Lock-Picking* 1, Navigation 1, Ranged Combat 1, Scavenging 1, Sleight of Hand 1, Stealth 1, Tactics* 1, Unarmed Combat 1, Weaponsmith* 1

WEAPONS: Fists 1d3+1
 Heavy Pistol [5] 3+2d3;
 Hunting Knife 2+1d3;

EQUIPMENT: Handcuffs;
 Survival Kit (Tent, Sleeping Bag);
 2 Rations;

EMT 21011

WP 11 RP 6 DMM 0 DMR 1
INIT 2 ENC 6 PT 3 BP 6
Complication: Code of Honor
Motivation: Find Safety

SKILLS: First Aid 3,
Pharmacology* 2, Psychology* 2,
Scavenging 2, Athletics 1,
Barter 1, General Knowledge 1,
Inspiration 1, Manipulation 1,
Navigation 1, Sleight of Hand 1,
Stealth 1, Surgery* 1, Survival 1
Tinkerer 1

WEAPONS: Fists 1d3
Makeshift Club 1+1d3 (100%);
Taser 1 (100%);

EQUIPMENT: First Aid Kit;
Survival Kit (Tent, Sleeping Bag);
2 Rations;



COSMETIC SURGEON 31010

WP 10 RP 6 DMM 0 DMR 0
INIT 1 ENC 6 PT 3 BP 7
Complication: Code of Honor
Motivation: Protect

SKILLS: Manipulation 3,
Surgery* 3, General Knowledge 2,
Pharmacology* 2, Psychology* 2,
Tinkerer 2, Athletics 1, First Aid 1,
Scavenging 1, Sleight of Hand 1,
Stealth 1, Survival 1

WEAPONS: Fists 1d3
Tranquilizer 0+Stunned;
Makeshift Club 1+1d3 (100%);

EQUIPMENT: Doctor's Bag;
Survival Kit (Tent, Sleeping Bag);
2 Rations;



FARMER 01202

WP 14 RP 8 DMM 2 DMR 2
INIT 4 ENC 8 PT 4 BP 4
Complication: Loss
Motivation: Build

SKILLS: Farming 3,
Animal Handling 2, Hunting 2,
Stealth 2, Survival 2,
Athletics 1, Barter 1,
First Aid 1, General Knowledge 1,
Navigation 1, Ranged Combat 1,
Scavenging 1, Tinkerer 1,
Vehicle Repair* 1

WEAPONS: Fists 1d3+2
Sawed-Off Shotgun [5] 5+2d6;
Hunting Knife 2+2d3;

EQUIPMENT: Angler's Kit;
Survival Kit (Tent, Sleeping Bag);
2 Rations;

MAYOR 12020

WP 10 RP 6 DMM 0 DMR 0
INIT 2 ENC 6 PT 3 BP 6
Complication: Famous
Motivation: Build

SKILLS: Manipulation 3,
Inspiration 3, Barter 2,
Entertainment 2, General
Knowledge 2, Intimidation 2,
Tactics* 2, Psychology* 2,
Stealth 1, Survival 1

WEAPONS: Fists 1d3
Makeshift Club 1+1d3 (100%);
Taser 1 (100%);

EQUIPMENT: Loudspeaker;
Survival Kit (Tent, Sleeping Bag);
2 Rations;



MERCENARY 01202

WP 14 RP 8 DMM 2 DMR 2
INIT 3 ENC 8 PT 4 BP 4
Complication: Dark Secret
Motivation: Stay Alive

SKILLS: Athletics 2,
Hunting 2, Melee Combat 2,
Ranged Combat 2, Stealth 2,
Survival 2, Tactics* 2,
Unarmed Combat 2,
Demolitions* 1, First Aid 1,
Intimidation 1, Weaponsmith* 1

WEAPONS: Fists 1d3+4
Carbine [6] 5+1d6;
Hunting Knife 2+2d3

EQUIPMENT: Walkie-Talkie;
Survival Kit (Tent, Sleeping Bag);
2 Rations;



SCHOOL TEACHER 21020

WP 10 RP 6 DMM 0 DMR 0
INIT 1 ENC 6 PT 3 BP 6
Complication: Loss
Motivation: Find Safety

SKILLS: Research 3,
General Knowledge 2,
Manipulation 2, Psychology* 2,
Athletics 1, Entertainment 1,
First Aid 1, Inspiration 1,
Intimidation 1, Scavenging 1,
Sleight of Hand 1, Stealth 1,
Tinkerer 1

WEAPONS: Fists 1d3
Makeshift Club 1+1d3 (100%);
Taser 1 (100%);

EQUIPMENT: Flashlight;
Survival Kit (Tent, Sleeping Bag);
2 Rations;



SEMI-PRO ATHLETE 00212

WP 14 RP 8 DMM 2 DMR 2
INIT 2 ENC 8 PT 4 BP 3
Complication: Famous
Motivation: Find Safety

SKILLS: Athletics 3,
Entertainment 2, Inspiration 2,
Manipulation 2, Tactics* 2,
First Aid 1, Intimidation 1,
Melee Combat 1, Psychology* 1,
Scavenging 1, Sleight of Hand 1,
Stealth 1, Survival 1,
Unarmed Combat 1

WEAPONS: Fists 1d3+3
Baseball Bat 4+1d6 (100%);
Hunting Knife 2+2d3;

EQUIPMENT: Flashlight;
Survival Kit (Tent, Sleeping Bag);
2 Rations;



TRUCKER 02102

WP 13 RP 7 DMM 1 DMR 2
INIT 4 ENC 7 PT 3 BP 5
Complication: Loss
Motivation: Stay Alive

SKILLS: Demolitions* 2,
General Knowledge 2, Navigation 2,
Vehicle Repair* 2, Barter 1,
Hunting 1, Lock-Picking* 1,
Manipulation 1, Melee Combat 1,
Research 1, Scavenging 1, Sleight
of Hand 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1,
Tinkerer 1, Unarmed Combat 1

WEAPONS: Fists 1d3+2
Sawed-Off Shotgun [5] 5+2d6;
Makeshift Club (Tire Iron) 1+1d3;

EQUIPMENT: Walkie-Talkie;
Survival Kit (Tent, Sleeping Bag);
2 Rations;

09. WEAPONS & EQUIPMENT

STARTING LOAD-OUT

Each character picks both a Primary & Secondary weapon from **Tables 10-12**. Any weapon requiring ammunition starts with 1d6 ammo.

Each character also get a **Survival Kit** containing a tent and sleeping bag, and 2 **Rations**, which is enough to keep them fed for 2 day.

Additionally, each character may pick one item from **Table 9: Equipment** list and one **Incidental** Item that provides no combat value, such as a compass, flashlight or lighter.

Write of all this on your character sheet. If it's not written on the sheet, it isn't in the game.

NOTE: A starting character may not take so much equipment that they exceed their Encumbrance limit.

TABLE 11: MELEE WEAPONS

Name	Skill	Range	Rarity	WP Dam.	RP	Enc
Baseball Bat	Melee	Engaged	Common	4 + 1d6 + PHY	100%	1
Brass Knuckles	Unarmed	Engaged	Uncommon	+1 Unarmed	100%	0
Bullwhip	Athletics	Close	Uncommon	1 + 1d3	100%	1
Club	Melee	Engaged	Common	5 + 1d6 + PHY	100%	2
Fire Axe	Melee	Close	Uncommon	3 + 2d3 + PHY	50%	1
Hatchet	Melee	Engaged	Common	3 + 1d3 + PHY	50%	1
Hunting Knife	Melee	Engaged	Common	2 + 2d3 + PHY	50%	0
Kitchen Knife	Melee	Engaged	Common	2 + 1d3 + PHY	50%	0
Machete	Melee	Engaged	Uncommon	3 + 2d3 + PHY	50%	1
Makeshift Club	Melee	Engaged	Common	3 + 1d3 + PHY	100%	1
Sledgehammer	Melee	Engaged	Uncommon	3 + 3d3 + PHY	100%	2
Spear	Melee	Close	Uncommon	2 + 2d6 + PHY	50%	1
Staff	Melee	Close	Common	2 + 2d3 + PHY	100%	1
Sword	Melee	Engaged	Uncommon	3 + 3d3 + PHY	50%	1
Tactical Baton	Melee	Engaged	Uncommon	4 + 2d3 + PHY	100%	1
Taser	Melee	Engaged	Uncommon	0 (Stuns)	200%	1
Wood Axe	Melee	Close	Common	5 + 1d3 + PHY	50%	1

TABLE 15: INCIDENTAL ITEMS

Name	Rarity	ENC
Bible	Common	0
Deck of playing cards	Common	0
Disposable Lighter	Common	0
Eye Glasses	Common	0
Map of Area	Common	0
Musical Instrument	Common	0
Personal Item (Photo)	Uncommon	0
Pocket Knife	Uncommon	0
Walkman	Uncommon	1
Zippo Lighter	Common	1

TABLE 12: RANGED WEAPONS

Name	Skill	Range	Rarity	WP Dam.	RP	ENC	CLIP
Automatic Rifle	Ranged	Long	Uncommon	5 + 2d6	50%	3	30
Black Powder Rifle	Ranged	Long	Uncommon	5 + 1d6	50%	2	1
Bow	Ranged	Medium	Common	4 + 1d6	50%	1	1
Carbine	Ranged	Medium	Uncommon	5 + 1d6	50%	1	30
Compound Bow	Ranged	Long	Uncommon	4 + 2d3	50%	2	1
Crossbow	Ranged	Medium	Uncommon	4 + 1d6	50%	2	1
Heavy Pistol	Ranged	Close	Uncommon	3 + 2d3	50%	1	9
Hunting Rifle	Ranged	Long	Common	5 + 1d6	50%	2	12
Light Pistol	Ranged	Close	Common	3 + 1d6	50%	1	6
Pump-Action Shotgun	Ranged	Close	Uncommon	2 + 3d6	50%	2	2
Sawed-Off Shotgun	Ranged	Medium	Common	5 + 2d6	50%	2	5
Sling-Shot	Ranged	Close	Common	1+1d3	100%	0	30
Sniper's Rifle	Ranged	Distant	Rare	2 + 3d6	50%	2	10

TABLE 16: RATIONS

Name	Rarity	ENC
Standard	Common	0.5
Luxury	Common	0.5
Military Grade	Uncommon	0.25

TABLE 13: SPECIAL & EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS

Name	Skill	Range	Rarity	WP Dam.	RP	ENC	CLIP
Grenade	Athletics	Close	Uncommon	2 + 2d6	100%	1	1
Mortar	Demolitions*	Distant	Rare	5 + 2d6	100%	2	1
Rocket Launcher	Demolitions*	Distant	Rare	3 + 3d6	100%	3	1
Flame-Thrower	Demolitions*	Close	Rare	3 + 2d6	100%	2	1
Molotov Cocktail	Athletics	Close	Uncommon	1 + 1d3	100%	0	1
Tranquilizer Gun	Ranged	Medium	Rare	0	100%	1	1

ITEM USE & UPKEEP CHECKS

The condition of each weapon or piece of equipment starts out in **Pristine** condition but over time, they will become **Used**, **Worn**, **Damaged**, and finally **Broken**, as detailed on **Table 10: Item Condition**.

To ensure items remain in good working order, they will require some form of regular **Upkeep Check**.

Normal use of equipment or weapons - such as spending a night in a tent or target practice with a pistol - causes no degradation or damage to the item being used. However, if an activity puts the item under duress, or if the character might not be able to pay enough attention to using the item correctly - such as firing a rifle during an intense and prolonged firefight, or having to urgently pull up a tent in the middle of the night - then they need to make an **Upkeep Check** on the item to prevent it taking damage and dropping a level of **Condition**.

There are specific skills that can be used to attempt an **Upkeep Check** for various items - **Vehicle Repair*** for cars, **Weaponsmith*** for guns, **Armorsmith*** for armor, and **Tinkerer** for general equipment - and characters must have at least 1 level in that skill in order to perform an **Upkeep Check**.

If the **Upkeep Check** is **Successful** then the item remains at the same **Condition** level.

On a **Failure**, it drops one level of **Condition**.

On a **Wild Success** or **Moment of High Insight**, the **Condition** improves by one level (up to a maximum of **Used**).

On a **Dire Failure** or **Moment of Low Insight**, the item is immediately **Broken**.

Players should keep track of the **Condition** of all of their items in the **Weapons & Equipment** section of their character sheet.

TABLE 10: ITEM CONDITION

1	Pristine	Pristine items are not prone to misfiring or breaking. After a while the item is considered to be Used , and cannot be returned to Pristine .
2	Used	An item that has been used but is still in great working order is considered Used .
3	Worn	Once an item has been in service for a while it is considered Worn . The item will need continued upkeep to make sure the condition doesn't drop any further.
4	Damaged	An item that has been used repeatedly and when it's effectiveness, efficiency or reliability are in question, it is considered Damaged . A Damaged item will continue to function, but any skill check using it incurs a -1 CMod until it is repaired back to at least a Worn condition. A Dire Failure while using a Damaged item immediately changes its condition to Broken .
5	Broken	If it functions at all, the item clearly no longer works as intended. A Broken item is one repair attempt away from being discarded. Someone with level 3 in a relevant skill (such as Armorsmith* or Weaponsmith*) can attempt to repair a Broken item to Damaged , but it can never be repaired to Worn or Used again.

TABLE 14: EQUIPMENT

NAME	RARITY	ENC	NOTES
Angler's Set	Uncommon	1	+2 to Fishing attempts
Backpack	Common	0	+2 Encumbrance
Basic Survival Kit	Common	2	Tent, Sleeping Bag
Bicycle Repair Kit	Common	0	
Binoculars	Common	1	+1 Perception Check when at Long or Distant Range
Climbing Gear	Uncommon	1	Includes ropes, carabiners, and harnesses, and can be used for scaling buildings or cliffs
Compass	Common	0	+1 Navigation Checks
Doctor's Bag	Uncommon	1	+2 to any First Aid or Surgery Check; heals 1+2d3 over a 24 hour period
Fire-starting Kit	Uncommon	0	
First Aid Kit	Common	1	+1 to any First Aid Check; heals 1+1d3 over a 24 hour period
Fishing Kit	Common	1	+1 to Fishing attempts
Flashbang	Uncommon	1	Anyone at Close range when detonated must make a PHY check or be blinded for 1d3 rounds
Flashlight	Common	0	
Grappling Hook	Uncommon	1	+1 to Athletics checks when climbing
Handcuffs	Uncommon	0	
Instant Camera	Uncommon	1	6 Charges, +1 Charm when used on people in pictures
Horseshoe Tools	Uncommon	1	
Loudspeaker	Uncommon	1	+1 Intimidate or Inspiration checks
Military Backpack	Uncommon	0	+2 Encumbrance
Night Vision Goggles	Uncommon	1	Allows the wearer to see clearly at night
Radio Scanner	Common	0	Can listen for emergency broadcasts or communications between other survivors
Road Flare	Common	1	
Rope	Common	1	
Smoke Grenade	Uncommon	1	Anyone at Close range when detonated must make a PHY check or be blinded for 1d3 rounds
Survivalists Kit	Uncommon	2	Waterproof Tent, Sleeping Bag, Fire-starting Kit, 3 days of rations
Standard Lockpicks	Uncommon	0	+1 to Lock Picking Attempts
Criminal Lockpicks	Uncommon	0	+2 to Lock Picking Attempts
Hunting Traps	Common	1	
Toolkit	Common	1	+1 Mechanics* check
Walkie-Talkies	Uncommon	1	Allows characters to communicate up to a range of 20 miles
Water Filtration Unit	Uncommon	1	Allows purification of water
Weapons Toolkit	Uncommon	1	Required for Weapons maintenance and repairs
Workman's Toolkit	Uncommon	1	+2 Mechanics* check

10. INTERACTING WITH OTHERS

No matter how many people were killed by the **Dog Flu**, there are more than enough remaining to make life difficult for anyone else around them.

Interacting with other survivors is an integral part of the game and although most interactions will come in the form of conversations between the players and the GM, certain mechanics can help define how PCs and NPCs interact.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Whenever characters encounter NPCs for the first time they will create a conscious or subconscious impression which can determine the course of their relationship. This is determined by the outcome of a **First Impressions** check.

MAKING A FIRST IMPRESSIONS CHECK

A **First Impressions** uses **Influence**, **Inspiration**, **Intimidation**, or **Manipulation**, with the players **Filling in the Gaps** as to the specifics of their attempt and what they are saying.

Although **First Impressions** checks can be done per individual character, when a group is encountering an NPC for the first time they can elect to make a **Group Check**.

If multiple characters encounter an NPC at the same time, they should make a **First Impressions** Group check (see **Group Checks** on page 11) as the NPC will be weighing up the collective threat.

If the player gets a **total of 9 or above** on their **First Impressions** check then they are **Successful**, and the NPC has no particularly adverse or positive reaction towards them. They get a 0 CMod to future interactions with that NPC.

If they get a **total of 8 or below**, they **Failed** to make a good **First Impression** on the NPC who becomes wary of them. They get a -1 CMod to all future social interactions with this NPC.

If they get a **total of 3 or below**, no matter how they have **Filled In The Gaps** this **Dire Failure** makes the NPC suspect they might be threatening or even outright hostile, and there is a -5 CMod to all future interactions. Depending on the character's next move and demeanor, this may even initiate

combat (see **Combat** on page 32)

If they get a **total of 14 or above**, this **Wild Success** overcomes any suspicions the NPCs may have and they succeed in making a favorable **First Impression**. They get a +1 CMod to all future social interactions with this NPC.

If they get a **Moment of Insight** (double ones or double sixes) during the **First Impressions** check, it counts as a **Dire Failure** or a **Wild Success**.

Any Conditional Modifier that comes out of this check should be written in the **Relationships** section on the character card, as it will influence future social interactions with that NPC, such as **Negotiations** and **Sway** skill checks.

GUT INSTINCTS

Similar to a **First Impressions** check to see how they came across to an NPC, characters can also make a **Gut Instinct** check to see what they pick up about an NPC.

MAKING A GUT INSTINCT CHECK

This requires the character to use **Psychology***, **Survival**, **Tactics***, or their **Acumen** to get a read on the NPC.

If they **Fail** this check, then they really get no read on this person.

If they are **Successful**, the GM should give the player some insight as to what their take is. Do they get a sense that this NPC be trusted? Does the NPC feel shifty? Are they acting like they have something to hide, or do they appear to have a truly open and inviting nature?

On a **Dire Failure**, perhaps the character becomes very taken with the NPC and are inclined to trust them. Perhaps they remind them of a lost family member or friend and on a **Wild Success**, perhaps they realize that nothing this character says should be taken lightly.

Players would do well to remember that no matter the result of a check, appearances will often be deceiving, and they should act on what their character knows, rather than what they feel.



NEGOTIATIONS

Although many situations are black and white, there will be times when individuals or groups may have a request or something to offer and will want to **Negotiate** some kind of settlement between the various parties.

Negotiations allow for characters and NPCs to interact through a process of **Gambits & Rebuttals**, and are an **Opposed Check**.

While the result uses a defined mechanic, there will typically be a lot of back and forth and this is a great opportunity for the group to **Fill in the Gaps** and role-play.

MAKING A GAMBIT:

The side leading the negotiation makes a check for their opening **Gambit** by making an **Influence, Barter, Entertainment, Inspiration, Intimidation, Manipulation** or **Psychology*** check, depending on the situation, their approach, and the desired outcome.

If their approach **Fails** then their tactic or argument falls short in the eyes of their opponent who now gets a +1 CMod to their **Rebuttal** check.

A **Dire Failure** means that their **Gambit** is not only unsuccessful but is either so weak or offensive that the other side doesn't even feel compelled to respond, and negotiations are over.

Depending on the initial posture of the **Gambit**, this could even lead to aggression or hostility.

A **Success** means that the **Gambit** had the desired effect, and the other party is interested or intrigued, and there is a -1 CMod to their **Rebuttal** check.

A **Wild Success** means that the **Gambit** resonated with the other side, who now have a -3 CMod to their **Rebuttal**.

MAKING A REBUTTAL:

The other side now gets to make a **Rebuttal** check which will determine how the **Negotiations** resolve themselves.

A **Rebuttal** check uses **Acumen** or any skill that matches the tone of their response. This could be **Barter, Inspiration, Intimidation, Manipulation, Psychology***, or **Tactics***, all depending on the situation.

If the character making the **Rebuttal** check **Fails** then they were unable to present a cogent argument and **Negotiations** are at an impasse.

On a **Dire Failure**, things fail so spectacularly that the **Negotiation** is over, and the situation could easily become hostile.

If the character making the **Rebuttal** gets a **Success**, the other side are potentially swayed by their arguments and may well consider their counter.

On a **Wild Success**, the side making the **Rebuttal** have made a truly compelling counteroffer and the other side is very likely to consider their proposal.

If a **Negotiation** is a **Failure**, another attempt cannot be made until the situation changes. This might be in terms of what is being asked or offered, or because external events have altered the circumstances.

NOTE: Just because one side wishes to **Negotiate**, the other side doesn't have to agree to take part, and negotiations can easily fall apart before both sides are even at the table.

It is also possible for an NPC to negotiate with a player, and whilst a player still has agency and can decide on the negotiation outcome themselves, they should be prepared to **Fill in the Gaps** as to how the exchange unfolds and work with the GM to further the narrative.



11. COMBAT

COMBAT ROUNDS

Combat takes place in Rounds lasting 3-6 seconds.

Each Round is broken up into three phases: **Initiative**, **Actions** and **Resolution**

1. INITIATIVE: Initiative decides the order in which combat unfolds and when each combatant acts. All participants make the following roll for Initiative at the beginning of each Round:

$$\begin{aligned} &2d6 &+ &\text{Dexterity AMod} \\ &&+ &\text{Acumen AMod} \\ &&+ &\text{CMods} \end{aligned}$$

The order of action follows the dice results from high to low. In a tie, PC's always beat NPCs and if multiple characters tie then actions or attacks by those characters are considered simultaneous.

A player may choose to defer one or both of their actions until any point later in the round, as they may want the opportunity to wait and react to an unfolding situation.

2. ACTIONS: Each combatant gets 2 Actions per each Round and can choose from any of the 18 available actions described on page 34. They are:

Aim, Attack, Charge, Coordinate, Cover Fire, Defend, Dice Check, Distract, Fire From Cover, Grappling, Inspire, Move, Rapid Fire, Ready Weapon, Reposition, Sprint, Subdue and Take Cover.

A character can choose to take two different actions, or the same action twice. Additionally they may choose to defer one or both actions until later in the round, and so a character might **Aim** on their first action but wait to see how other players actions are resolved before using their second action later in the round to **Attack**.

3. RESOLUTION: Once all combatants have taken both of their Actions, dealt or received damage, and after any deferred or delayed actions or attacks have taken place (such as a grenade exploding, gas kicking in, or a character Repositioning) the Round is considered **Resolved**. The next Round then begins, starting with a new Initiative Roll.

In the second and subsequent Rounds, any PC who wasn't attacked and who didn't attack anyone else in the previous Round may add +1 to their next Initiative Roll to reflect them having a cooler head than those in the heat of combat.

INITIATIVE

Initiative is decided at the beginning of each combat round and sets the order in which participants in combat act, from highest to lowest.

Characters who weren't attacked and didn't attack in the previous round get a +1 Initiative CMod on their next roll.

An **Initiative check** is:

$$2d6 + \text{Initiative Modifier (Dexterity AMod + Acumen AMod + CMods)}$$



ATTACK ROLLS

An **Attack Roll** is a combat-related dice check. Like with other checks, a player must **score 9 or above to be Successful**.

Attack Rolls are calculated as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} &2d6 + \text{Physicality AMod for Melee attacks} \\ &+ \text{Dexterity AMod for Ranged attacks} \\ &+ \text{SMod from relevant combat skills:} \\ &\quad \text{Melee Combat, Ranged Combat,} \\ &\quad \text{Unarmed Combat, Demolitions*} \\ &+ \text{CMods, at the discretion of the GM} \\ &+ \text{Any Weapon-specific Modifiers} \\ &- \text{DMM / DMR of opposing character} \end{aligned}$$

DAMAGE

All attacks deal two types of damage that affect the victims **Wound Point** and **Resilience Point** totals. **Resilience Point** damage is generally inflicted at 50% of the **Wound Point** damage, rounded down.

Damage is weapon specific and has both a consistent and a random value, as shown for each weapon.

FOR EXAMPLE: A Rifle does 5+1d6 Wound Points (WP) damage (for a total of 6 to 11 WP). As each attack also inflicts half the **Wound Points** as **Resilience Point** damage (rounded down), a successful Rifle attack doing 6 WP damage will also deal 3 RP damage.

Melee weapons that inflict blunt force trauma (such as clubs or batons) may do the same amount of **Resilience Point** Damage as **Wound Point** damage as a character is more likely to be bludgeoned into an **Incapacitated** state than killed outright. These weapons are marked with "100% RP" on the character sheet.

When using Melee Weapons, the Physicality AMod of the user is added to the damage done. As an example, the damage for a Baseball Bat is calculated as follows:

$$4 + 1d6 + \text{PHY AMod}$$

For any character fighting with just their fists, damage is calculated as follows:

$$1d3 + \text{Physicality AMod} + \text{Unarmed Combat SMod}$$

This means that a character with a Physicality of 1 and Unarmed Combat 1 would do 1d3 +1 +1 damage.

See pages 28-29 for a complete list of weapons and their damage output.

PANIC

If a character takes enough damage that they are reduced to half their original **Resilience Point** total (rounded down) then they must make a Successful Reason, Inspiration or Psychology* check to retain control, otherwise they have **Panicked**.

To determine how their character reacts, the player must roll 2d6 and check against **Table 7: Panic Effects** below:

TABLE 7: PANIC EFFECTS

2	Babbling	The character's fear manifests as nonsensical speech for 1d3 rounds
3	Loose Grip	They drop whatever they are holding and must spend an action to pick it up
4	Twitchy	Unable to control their spasms, -2 CMod on all attacks for 1d3 rounds
5	Rattled	Unable to focus properly, -2 on next Initiative Roll
6	Frozen	Character loses both of their actions for 1d3 rounds
7	Escape	Character disengages and spends 1d3 rounds trying to get out of combat
8	Intimidated	Character receives a -2 CMod on attacks for the next 1d3 rounds
9	Scream	Character spends the next 1d3 rounds screaming, oblivious to everything
10	Tunnel vision	Character's can only focus the most immediate threat for 1d3 rounds
11	Berserk	The character attacks the NPC closest to them
12	Faints	Character falls to the ground unconscious for 1d3 rounds

INCAPACITATION

A character reaching 0 **Resilience Points (RP)** becomes **Incapacitated** for 1d6 Rounds - Physicality Modifier, with a minimum of one round.

They take no more damage while **Incapacitated** unless they are specifically targeted.

Upon regaining consciousness, they recover 1 RP immediately, and then an additional RP for each Combat Round that they are not actively engaged in combat, up to half of their maximum.

When not in combat, a PC recovers 1 RP per hour and recovers all remaining RP with a good night's rest.

MORTAL WOUNDS & DEATH

A character reaching 0 Wound Points is **Mortally Wounded** and they have 4 Rounds + Physicality Modifier until they succumb to their injuries and will **Die**.

A **Mortally Wounded** character can be **Stabilized** with a Successful Reason, First Aid, or Surgery* check. If this takes place whilst combat is still happening, then **Stabilizing** a **Mortally Wounded** character uses both Combat Actions and the character making the attempt is unable to do anything else.

Only one attempt can be made per round to **Stabilize** a **Mortally Wounded** character.

Wound Points naturally heal at a rate of 1 WP per day of rest.

NOTE: Combat in **Distemper** is brutal and unforgiving and the only way to prevent a character who wasn't **Stabilized** from subsequently **Dying**, is if the player surrenders all of their **Insight Dice** to the GM, (assuming that the player has at least one Insight Dice). If that happens, the character recovers 1 Wound Point and 1 Resilience Point for each Insight Dice surrendered.

SUBSISTENCE DAMAGE

PCs need to eat and drink at regular intervals in order to stay healthy. A character can go one day without eating or drinking with no adverse impact but on the second and subsequent days of not eating, they take **Subsistence Damage** at the rate of 1 Wound and Resilience Point per day.

If they drop to 0 RP, they become too weak to move and become **Incapacitated**. At 0 WP, they must be fed to be **Stabilized**, otherwise they will **Die**, and any character that becomes **Incapacitated** through **Subsistence Damage** will need to be tended to and fed by another character until they heal enough to look after themselves.

Assuming the players find a food source such as tinned goods, plants, fruit, vegetables, game, fowl, or fish, then they start to heal at a rate of 1 WP and 1 RP per day until they are at full health again.



COMBAT ACTIONS

AIM: +2 CMod to the next Attack on their target. The character's next action must be an Attack, or the Aim is lost.

ATTACK: Any attack, Unarmed or with a Ranged or Melee Weapon. If this is used for both actions against the same target brings a +1 CMod to the second use as the first attack helped them narrow in on their target

CHARGE: Using both actions, this allows a character to move twice, and end their action with either a Melee or an Unarmed Combat Attack

COORDINATE: A character making a Successful Tactics* check on a target they can clearly see provides a +2 CMod against that target to any character within Close range of the player character. On a Wild Success, this carries over to the next round as a +1 CMod

COVER FIRE: Characters doing this must make a separate Attack against each person/group and on a Success, the target gets a -2 CMod to their next action, skill or attribute check.

DEFEND: This action adds +2 to the character's Defensive Modifiers for the next incoming attack. This does not carry over into the next round.

DICE CHECK: An action can be used to make any Attribute or Skill check the character requires.

DISTRACT: A Successful Intimidation, Psychology* or Tactics* check Distracts a target who then loses one of their next Combat Actions.

FIRE FROM COVER: Characters who have taken cover can use both combat actions to come out of cover, fire their weapon, and return to cover without losing their Defensive Modifier on incoming attacks.

GRAPPLING: A character can make an Opposed Check (see **Opposed Checks** on page 11) using Unarmed Combat to pin an enemy in place.

INSPIRE: On a successful Inspiration check, a target at Close range gains an additional Combat Action this round. A character can only be Inspired once per round.

MOVE: Players can change Range bands (see **Range** on page 35).

RAPID FIRE: A character can make two rush shots per round. The first one suffers a -1 CMod, the second has a -3 CMod. If a character uses this for both Combat Actions, they suffer a -2 CMod and -4 CMod to those attacks.

READY WEAPON: Unless a weapon is ready to use, it must be readied. This action must also be taken to reload or if a weapon becomes jammed.

REPOSITION: This action takes place at the end of a round in the Resolution phase, allowing a character to get situated for their next attack.

SPRINT: Both actions can be used to Sprint and cover 3 times the normal amount of ground in a single move. At the end of the round, the character must make a successful Athletics check to avoid becoming Winded and needing to rest, losing one of the Combat Actions in the following round.

SUBDUE: When attempting to Subdue another character, full Resilience Point damage is done but Wound Point damage is dealt at 50% (see **Damage** on page 33). Can only be used with Unarmed or Melee attacks.

TAKE COVER: Taking Cover gives a +2 Defensive Modifier for all attacks that take place against that character during that combat round.

GETTING THE DROP

When the tension is rising between a group of characters and combat feels inevitable, one member of group may choose to act first, thereby **Getting The Drop** on everyone else.

In game-terms, this amounts to the character taking one single action before anyone else rolls for Initiative. A character might **Get the Drop** by readying a weapon, moving into position, or sucker-punching an opponent.

Only one combatant can **Get The Drop** and if multiple characters wish to attempt it then it is the character with the highest combined Dexterity and Acumen AMods who succeeds. If there is a tie and no clear winner, no one **Gets The Drop** and combat moves directly to the Initiative phase.

It is also possible that the GM may decide that an NPC is going to try and **Get The Drop** on the players. If both the player and GM announce that they are planning on making this move, whichever character has the highest combined Dexterity and Acumen Modifiers wins.

NOTE: Any player who **Gets The Drop** automatically incurs a -3 CMod on their next Initiative Roll, returning to normal on subsequent Initiative rolls.



RANGE

Range in **Distemper** is handled in an abstract manner. Rather than absolute distances, each character's position is relative to one another and is determined by range bands.

TABLE 9: RANGE BANDS

1	Engaged (+1)
2	Close (+2)
3	Medium (+3)
4	Long (+4)
5	Distant (+5)

The range bands are: **Engaged (1)**, **Close (2)**, **Medium (3)**, **Long (4)** and **Distant (5)**.

Each range band has a value in parentheses, and to move between bands it takes the cumulative total of the current range band, and the other bands that preceded it.

This means it takes:

- 1 round to move from Engaged to Close
- 3 rounds to go from Close to Medium
- 6 rounds to go from Medium to Long
- 10 rounds to go from Long to Distant
- 15 rounds to go from Engaged to Distant.

ENGAGED: Close enough to wrestle, **Engaged** combat gives a +1 CMod to Melee attacks and a -1 to Ranged attacks.

CLOSE: If characters can hear each other clearly when combat is at **Close** range. Melee combat can only take place at **Close** range with weapons that have a longer reach (such as a Spear) and suffers a -1 CMod penalty. This is the ideal range for Pistols, although any type of Firearm gets a +1 Range CMod to Attacks at **Close** range.

MEDIUM: Far enough away that a pistol shot would be wasted without taking aim but close enough that a machine gun can still cover a room, **Medium** range gives no Modifiers to any attack and is perfect for carbines or a bow.

LONG: Too far for an accurate pistol shot but perfect for Rifles, being at **Long** range gives a -5 CMod to any pistol shot but a +1 to a Rifle shot.

DISTANT: Far enough away that characters will not be able to hear each other clearly without radio equipment and may not even be able to see one another. Only someone with a high degree of skill with ranged weapons and the appropriate equipment (such as a hunting or sniper's rifle) can strike a target at **Distant** range.

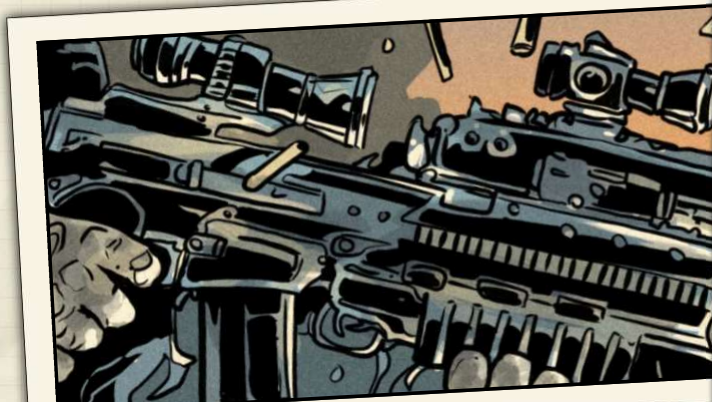
CALLED SHOTS

Players with at least 1 level in **Ranged**, **Melee**, or **Unarmed Combat** can attempt a **Called Shot** by picking a specific part of an opponent's body (such as their head or limb) or an object (such as the gun an opponent is carrying).

Players must state they are taking a **Called Shot** before making the check and **Fill In The Gaps** as what they are trying to achieve. They must also get a **Wild Success** or **Moment of High Insight** to connect, otherwise the attack misses completely.

If the attack connects then it is up to the player and GM to decide what happens. A successful **Called Shot** to the knee with a baton might cripple a pursuer or a **Called Shot** with a pistol might remotely detonate a container of gasoline.





ARMOR

Whilst uncommon, armor can be a life saver. Not only does it make it harder for an attack to hit, but armor also lessens the amount of damage that gets through.

Each piece of armor has a **Defensive Modifier (DM)** that is applied to any attack attempts, reducing the likelihood that it will connect. If an attack does land, the damage is also reduced by the same **Defensive Modifier**.

Armor DMs are cumulative and stack, so a character wearing Riot Gear (-2 DM) and bearing a Riot Shield (-2 DM) gets a total of -4.

Armor degrades with each incoming blow and an **Upkeep Check** must be made after each combat engagement to prevent the item from dropping a level of condition (see **Upkeep Checks** on page 29).

UNARMED VS MELEE VS RANGED COMBAT

In terms of game mechanics, there is very little difference between Melee, Unarmed and Ranged Combat. Dice checks and damage modifiers remain the same and all are potentially lethal, and the most notable differences are in the details.

- Unarmed attacks require no weapon and no ammunition, but do the lowest amount of damage. A character's strength (reflected in their Physicality AMod) and training in martial arts or pugilism (reflected by levels of skill in Unarmed Combat) both improve the amount of damage done.
- Melee weapons are hand weapons such as clubs or knives. They often do less damage than a ranged weapon and require the attacker to be close to their target, but the damage dealt with Melee weapons is increased by a character's Physicality AMod. Although they won't run out of ammunition, Melee weapons can break with repeat use.
- Ranged weapons can be the most lethal but not only do they require ammo in a world running short, some weapons have certain range restrictions (such as a sniper's rifle).
- When attempting to use a ranged weapon against a character who is fighting with someone else at Engaged range, the character gets an automatic -3 CMod to their ranged attack for the additional complexity. If they miss their original target, then they must get a **Failure** on a second Ranged Combat attack with a +3 CMod to avoid hitting the second combatant. This +3 reflects how close the other combatant is to the target you were shooting at.



TABLE 8: ARMOR

Name	Rarity	ENC	DM	Notes
Chainmail	Uncommon	2	3	Requires PHY 1 or -1 CMod to all actions
Leather	Common	1	1	
Makeshift Shield	Common	1	1	
Metal Helmet	Uncommon	0	1	
Plate Steel	Uncommon	3	4	Requires PHY 2 or -2 CMod to all actions
Riot Gear	Uncommon	3	3	Requires PHY 2 or -2 CMod to all actions
Riot Shield	Uncommon	1	2	
Tactical Armor	Uncommon	1	2	

12. NOW WHAT?

If you have made it this far then you have everything you need (in terms of game mechanics) to play the game. From creating a character to making and interpreting the dice checks that determine how successful your character is when performing certain tasks, to navigating (and hopefully surviving) combat, to interacting in social settings with other survivors.

So, what comes next?

For GMs and groups wishing to just jump in, there is a Jumpstart available called **Empty** which guides a new group through the basics of the game. In this single scene encounter, a group of Pregens explore a gas station in search of an arc welder. It contains everything needed to play through this scene (and this rulebook is not required).

For groups wanting a more robust experience, there is a companion adventure to this quickstart, **Chased**, which is available at **DistemperVerse.com**. **Chased** is designed to help get a group oriented by walking the GM and players through the basics of the game via several encounters that highlight when and how to make dice checks, how to interpret the outcomes, and how to handle social and combat encounters.

Built from a simple introductory point of finding something to eat, **Chased** can serve as either a one-shot adventure or can be the perfect jumping off point into a larger campaign as it provides a GM with locations and NPCs with which they can begin to populate their world. **Chased** comes with 6 Pregens, allowing a group to simply pick characters and start playing. Multiple other beginner and one-shot adventures, as well as comic book short stories that provide context and background information are available from **DistemperVerse.com**.

For GMs wanting to build their campaign from scratch, the **Distemper Core Rulebook** offers many suggestions on how to get started, with the obvious themes and drivers being the need to secure supplies and find safety.

How and where those stories are told is up to the group but, as **Distemper** is set just a few sneezes from now, keeping the setting local and familiar can make it easy for GMs and players to quickly get engaged.

Whilst many play for the escapism and fantastical element of RPGs and some want their stories to take place in a very different part of the country or world to where they live, there is a lot of value to having the game be set in a locale or environment that is familiar and resonates with the group. Having the players leverage their local knowledge of the area - with new threats and challenges being added by the GM - can add a different level of intimacy, familiarity, and enjoyment to the game.

Before starting a game play, the players and the GM should spend some time discussing the specifics of what they are hoping to get out of the game, with a focus on duration, content, and tone.

Is the group looking for a one-shot adventure with a defined beginning and end that is played out during one, maybe two sessions, or is this the start of an open-ended, sandbox campaign that will unfold over months or possibly even years?

Similarly, the group should discuss the tone of game and their level of comfort with content. At its core, **Distemper** is a game about survival in a broken, dark and dangerous world, but players should not be made to feel uncomfortable with the story or subject matter and the group should collectively decide if they are looking for a violent, combat heavy story of pillaging and conquest, or are they more interested in role-playing as a member of a community trying to rebuild what they can of the society they lost, whilst facing overwhelming odds?

Once these topics have been settled, the players and GM should review the types of characters that they will be playing, the skills they will collectively bring, and, how the group knows each other (or how they will meet) and, lastly, where they are going to start the game.

Whichever way the group chooses to go, grab as many dice as you can find (virtual or real) and then double-check and see if you have some more. See if you have any that are a cool color.

It's time to get started.



RULES REFERENCE

DICE CHECKS

All attribute or skill checks require a **total score of 9 or above** to be successful and take the format:

2d6 + Attribute Modifier (AMod)

Add their Reason, Acumen, Physicality, Influence or Dexterity AMod, for a range of -2 to +4

+ Skill (SMod)

Add relevant SMods from Skills for a range of -3 to +3

+ Conditional Modifier (CMod)

For any external influences or unexpected factors, ranging from -5 to +5, at the GM's discretion

OUTCOMES

0-3	Dire Failure
4-8	Failure
9-13	Success
14+	Wild Success
1+1	Moment of Low Insight
6+6	Moment of High Insight

MODIFIERS

Each **Dice Check** can have up to three possible Modifiers that are added to the final total.

Attribute Modifiers (AMods): All characters have 5 RAPID Range attributes (**Reason, Acumen, Physicality, Influence, & Dexterity**) ranging from 0 to 4. This number is the **Attribute Modifier** (or **AMod**), that is added to any check that uses that Attribute.

Skill Modifiers (SMods): Each character has a variety of skills, with a **Skill Modifier** (or **SMod**), ranging from 0 to +4, that is added to any check using that skill.

Note: Some skills require some degree of specialized training and attempting to use one without the training incurs a -3 **SMod**. These skills are marked with a *.

Conditional Modifiers (CMods): Any dice roll can have a **Conditional Modifier** (or **CMod**) ranging from -5 to +5 which is added at the GM's discretion to reflect external factors that can influence the dice check.

FILLING IN THE GAPS

Having the players **Fill in the Gaps** about what they are seeing or doing can help the GM ensure that the whole group are contributing to the narrative.

The GM may call upon players to provide details about what they are seeing or doing that flesh out the scene or actions for the rest of the group.

MOMENTS OF INSIGHT

A roll of double one or double six (a score of 2 or 12) is either a **Moment of Low** or **High Insight** wherein the task went so flawlessly well or so disastrously awry that the character learned an important lesson about what not to do or gained a deep understand of how and why they were successful.

Regardless of any AMod, SMod or CMods being applied to the roll, a double one is always treated as a **Dire Failure** and a double six is always treated as a **Wild Success**.

As a result of this roll, they receive an **Insight Dice** that can be used to affect the outcome of future dice checks.

INSIGHT DICE

Insight Dice allow players to affect dice rolls or other elements of gameplay in their favor.

Each player starts the game with **2 Insight Dice** and receives an additional **Insight Dice** each time they roll a **double one** or a **double six** and have a **Moment of Insight**.

Common uses for **Insight Dice** are:

- Adding an additional dice before making a check, for a **3d6** dice pool
- Re-rolling one or both of the original dice
- A **+3 Conditional Modifier**
- 'Bending reality' to allowing a player to find an unexpected clue or suddenly have a missing piece of required equipment
- Instead of **Dying**, a character can surrender all of their **Insight Dice** in exchange for recovering 1 Wound Point and 1 Resilience Point for each dice surrendered. Players cannot choose how many dice to use in this method, this costs all of their **Insight Dice**

There is no limit to how many **Insight Dice** a player can have and once used, **Insight Dice** are surrendered back to the GM.

Although **Insight Dice** can be used by a player to perform an act that helps another player, they are non-transferable and cannot be given directly to another character.

GROUP CHECKS

A group of players may elect to make a **Group Check** and pool their abilities so long as they are using the **same Attribute or Skill**.

The player with the highest individual Attribute or Skill makes a dice check, factoring in AMods and SMods from the group members, and adding a +1 CMod for each person contributing. **Insight Dice** cannot be used during Group Checks.

OPPOSED CHECKS

If two characters are working against one another (during a chase, for example), an **Opposed Check** is used.

This starts with both characters making an initiative check to see who goes first.

The initiative winner then makes a dice check using the relevant attribute or skill and the other player makes a responding check.

Unlike most other dice checks in **Distemper**, an **Opposed Check** relies purely on one side beating the score of the other. If there is no clear winner, the **Opposed Check** starts over.

Moments of Insight still apply, and a character who gets a **Moment of Low Insight** (a double one) will automatically lose (unless their opponent also gets a **Moment of Low Insight**) and anyone getting a **Moment of High Insight** will automatically win, unless their opponent gets the same dice roll, in which case **Initiative** is re-rolled.

SKILL LIST

Animal Handling [Sway] (INF)
Armorsmith* [Mechanic] (DEX)
Athletics [Innate] (PHY)
Barter [Sway] (ACU)
Demolitions* [Combat] (PHY)
Entertainment [Sway] (INF)
Farming [Knowledge] (ACU)
First Aid [Medicine] (RSN)
General Knowledge [Knowledge] (RSN)
Hunting [Innate] (PHY)
Inspiration [Sway] (INF)
Intimidation [Sway] (INF)
Lock-Picking* [Criminal] (ACU)
Manipulation [Sway] (INF)
Melee Combat [Combat] (PHY)
Navigation [Innate] (ACU)
Pharmacology* [Medicine] (RSN)
Psychology* [Knowledge] (INF)
Ranged Combat [Combat] (DEX)
Research [Knowledge] (RSN)
Scavenging [Innate] (ACU)
Sleight of Hand [Criminal] (DEX)
Stealth [Criminal] (DEX)
Surgery* [Medicine] (RSN)
Survival [Innate] (ACU)
Tactics* [Knowledge] (RSN)
Tinkerer [Mechanic] (DEX)
Unarmed Combat [Combat] (PHY)
Vehicle Repair* [Mechanic] (DEX)
Weaponsmith* [Mechanic] (DEX)

COMBAT ROUNDS

Combat Rounds last 6-10 seconds, and consist of 3 phases: **Initiative**, **Actions**, **Resolution**.

1. Initiative: At the beginning of each round, all participants make an Initiative check (**2d6+Init Mod**) to determine the order in which they act, going from the highest to the lowest score, with draws taking place simultaneously. Anyone who was neither attacked nor attacked someone else gets a +1 to their next Initiative roll.

2. Actions: Each combatant gets two Combat Actions per round and may take the same action twice or choose two different actions.

3. Resolution: Certain actions, weapons, or effects will be resolved in this phase after all characters have taken their actions and before the round is complete.

At the end of the **Resolution** phase, combat cycles to a new round and a fresh Initiative check.

INITIATIVE TRACKER

INITIATIVE is decided at the beginning of each combat round and sets the order in which participants in combat act, from highest to lowest.

An **INITIATIVE CHECK** is:
2d6 + **Dexterity AMod**
+ **Acumen AMod**
+ **Perception SMod**

Name	Mod	score	order

A form-fillable PDF version of this **INITIATIVE TRACKER** is available from www.distempervorse.com/resources

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Characters meeting NPCs for the first time should see how they are being perceived by the NPC by making either an **Influence**, **Inspiration**, **Intimidation**, or **Tactics*** check and **Fill in the Gaps** as to the specifics of what they are doing.

If multiple characters encounter him at the same time, they should make a **Group First Impression** check.

GUT INSTINCTS

Characters can also see what their **Gut Instinct** about an NPC is by making a **Psychology***, **Survival**, **Tactics***, or **Acumen** check.

If they are successful, the GM should give the player some insight as to what their take is. If they fail, the GM may mislead them.

COMBAT ATTACKS

Attack rolls, like all other checks, requires a score of 9 or above to be successful.

Attack rolls take the format:

2d6 + AMod

Physicality for Melee & Unarmed
Dexterity for Ranged

+ **SMod**

Melee Combat, Ranged Combat,
Unarmed Combat, or Demolitions*

+ **CMod** as determined by the GM

- **Target's Ranged or Melee**
Defensive Modifier

COMBAT ACTIONS

AIM: +2 CMod on the next attack against one target. The next action must be an Attack.

ATTACK: Make a Combat Roll

CHARGE: Uses both actions but lets a character make 2 moves and end in a Melee or Unarmed attack

COORDINATE: On a successful **Tactics*** check, this character can provide allies at Close range with a +2 CMod against a specific target

COVER FIRE: A Success inflicts a -2 CMod on the target's next action.

DEFEND: +2 to Defensive Modifiers

DICE CHECK: Any Attribute or Skill check

DISTRACT: A Successful **Intimidation**, **Tactics*** or **Psychology*** check causes the target to lose their next action

FIRE FROM COVER: Uses both actions to come out of cover, fire, and return to cover

GRAPPLING: An Opposed check to pin a target in place

INSPIRE: A Successful **Inspiration** check gives a target at close range an additional Combat Action

MOVE: Change Range bands

RAPID FIRE: Can make two shots per action, but the first incurs a -1 CMod and the second a -3 CMod. If used for both actions, it incurs -2 and -4 CMods

READY WEAPON: Prepares a weapon for use or clears a jammed weapon.

REPOSITION: Can move during the Resolution phase

SPRINT: Can cover 3 times the usual amount of ground. Requires an **Athletics** check or lose one of the Combat Actions in the next round

SUBDUE: Can attack and cause 50% of the usual Wound Point damage but 100% of Resilience Point damage

TAKE COVER: +2 Defensive Modifier against all incoming attacks during that round. on next attack

NEGOTIATIONS

Negotiations are broken into **Gambits** & **Rebuttals**.

A character or NPC states their offer or request by making an **Influence**, **Barter**, **Charm**, **Deception**, **Entertainment**, **Inspiration**, or **Intimidation** check, and **Filling in the Gaps**.

If the other side agrees to the request or demand, the **Negotiation** is over.

On a **Dire Failure**, the **Negotiation** immediately falls apart.

On a **Failure**, the other side gets a +1 CMod on their **Rebuttal**.

On a **Success**, there is a -1 CMod to any **Rebuttal**.

On a **Wild Success** there is a -3 CMod to any **Rebuttal**.

Once the other side has heard the opening **Gambit** out, they can offer their **Rebuttal** by making an **Acumen**, **Barter**, **Perception** or **Survival** check.

On a **Dire Failure** or **Failure**, there is no common ground but there is potential to have created an enormous amount of bad feeling.

On a **Success** or **Wild Success**, their counter is met favorably and a deal or agreement can be reached.

NPCs can attempt to **Negotiate** with characters and although the players always have agency over what they will accept or agree to, they will need to **Fill In The Gaps** about what they are thinking or saying if they decide not to hold to the terms of the **Negotiation**.

PANIC

If a character is reduced to half their original **Resilience Point** total then they must make a Successful, **Inspiration**, **Psychology*** or **Reason** check to retain their self-control or they have **Panicked**.

Players should roll 2d6 and check against the table below for the effect:

Roll Effect

2: Babbling: PC is nonsensical for 1d3 rounds

3: Loose Grip: PC drops whatever is holding and must spend an action picking it up

4: Twitchy: Unable to control their spasms, -2 CMod on all attacks for 1d3 rounds

5: Rattled: Unable to focus properly, -2 on next Initiative Roll

6: Frozen: Character loses both of their actions for 1d3 rounds

7: Escape: Character disengages and spends 1d3 rounds trying to get out of combat

8: Intimidated: Character receives a -2 CMod on attacks for the next 1d3 rounds

9: Scream: Character spends the next 1d3 rounds screaming, oblivious to everything

10: Tunnel vision: Character's can only focus the most immediate threat for 1d3 rounds

11: Berserk: The character attacks the NPC closest to them

12: Faints: Character falls to the ground unconscious for 1d3 rounds

ITEM UPKEEP

Characters will need to regularly maintain their weapons & equipment to ensure they continue to work as intended.

After prolonged or careless use of an item, a character with at least 1 level in **Tinkerer**, **Weaponsmith***, **Armorsmith***, or **Vehicle Repair*** can make an **Upkeep Check**. On a **Failure**, the item drops a level of **Condition** (see page 29).

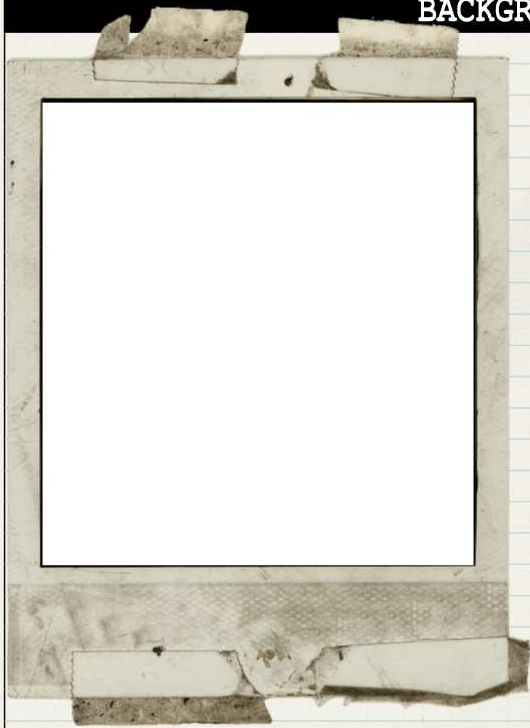
PERSONAL INFORMATION				
NAME:		PROFESSION:		
AGE:	WEIGHT:	HEIGHT:	GENDER:	
DESCRIBE YOURSELF IN 3 WORDS:				
COMPLICATION:		MOTIVATION:		
REASON:	ACUMEN:	PHYSICALITY:	INFLUENCE:	DEXTERITY:

SKILLS (RANK YOURSELF FROM 0-4)		
-3 [Combat] Demolitions* (PHY)	[Knowledge] Farming (REA)	[Innate] Athletics (DEX)
[Combat] Melee Combat (PHY)	[Knowledge] General Know. (REA)	[Innate] Hunting (PHY)
[Combat] Ranged Combat (DEX)	-3 [Knowledge] Psychology* (REA)	[Innate] Navigation (ACU)
[Combat] Unarmed Combat (PHY)	[Knowledge] Research (REA)	[Innate] Scavenging (ACU)
-3 [Criminal] Lock-Picking* (REA)	[Knowledge] Tactics* (REA)	[Innate] Survival (ACU)
[Criminal] Sleight of Hand (DEX)	-3 [Mechanic] Armorsmith* (DEX)	[Sway] Animal Handling (INF)
[Criminal] Stealth (DEX)	[Mechanic] Tinkerer (DEX)	[Sway] Barter (ACU)
[Medicine] First Aid (REA)	[Mechanic] Vehicle Rep.* (DEX)	[Sway] Entertainment (INF)
-3 [Medicine] Pharmacology* (REA)	-3 [Mechanic] Weaponsmith* (DEX)	[Sway] Inspiration (INF)
-3 [Medicine] Surgery* (REA)		[Sway] Intimidation (PHY)
		[Sway] Manipulation (INF)

SECONDARY STATS			
WOUND POINTS: 10 + PHY + DEX	DM MELEE: - PHY AMod	INITIATIVE: DEX + ACU	CDP: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
RESILIENCE POINTS: 6 + PHY	DM RANGED: - DEX AMod	ENCUMBRANCE: 6 + PHY	INSIGHT DICE: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
MORALITY: 3	PANIC THRESHOLD: 50% of original RP total (rounded down)	BREAKING POINT: 3 + REA + PHY	RATIONS: 0 1 2 3

WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT				
NAME: Fists	WP: 1d3+	TYPE: (M) R E S	RANGE: (E) C M L D	Damage: 1d3 + PHY + Unarmed Combat
NAME:	TYPE: M R E S	RANGE: E C M L D	COND: P U W D B	TRAITS:
WP:	RP: 50/100%	ENC:	CLIP:	AMMO: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
NAME:	TYPE: M R E S	RANGE: E C M L D	COND: P U W D B	TRAITS:
WP:	RP: 50/100%	ENC:	CLIP:	AMMO: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
EQUIPMENT:	ENC:	COND: P U W D B	TRAITS:	
EQUIPMENT:	ENC:	COND: P U W D B	TRAITS:	
ARMOR:	ENC:	DM:	COND: P U W D B	ARMOR:
	ENC:	DM:	COND: P U W D B	

BACKGROUND INFORMATION & NOTES



RELATIONSHIPS

NAME :

MODIFIER:

NAME :

MODIFIER:

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT & MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

INCIDENTAL EQUIPMENT:

SURVIVAL EQUIPMENT:

DISTEMPER



TRUST NO ONE.
DON'T STOP MOVING.
DON'T CLOSE YOUR EYES.
DON'T LET THEM CATCH YOU SLIPPING.
THE BIGGEST THREAT IS OTHER PEOPLE.

DISTEMPER is a post-apocalyptic tabletop roleplaying game set one year after a deadly mutation of 'canine distemper', transmitted by Man's Best Friend has wiped out 90% of humanity.

Groups of 3-6 people will take on the roles of survivors who must navigate a harsh and fractured world to stay alive. Food, water, and shelter are the most basic needs, but making it through the day often requires risking it all.

Will you keep moving, recruit allies, or try to rebuild? Whatever you choose, desperate people and harsh conditions will make every decision a matter of life and death.

Maybe you will recruit NPCs to your cause and take control of an area or territory.

Maybe you will rebuild. Maybe you will become warlords or start your own religious sect.

Whatever you choose, you will have to be prepared to fight to keep it.

DISTEMPER is grounded in realism, with no zombies, mutants, or aliens to contend with. The game world is a dangerous place, and players must be prepared to fight to survive. With only their wits, skills, and a handful of dice, they must tell collaborative stories of survival, betrayal, and redemption in a world where every move may be their last.

Grab some dice, some friends, and prepare to tell collaborative stories in a harsh and fractured world where every move may be your last.



TONY BUSHELL



XERO SUM STUDIO

XERO SUM GAMES
better games by design



XSG0103