



# GEARS

*A Role Playing Game System by Michael Wolf*

# Credits

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Playtesters: Xxx

# Special Thanks

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I want to thank the following persons for their support and advice:

Michael Garcia, Verena Knorpp, Rob Lang, Joshua Macy, Roberto Micheri, Andrew Modro

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# CORE RULES

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## Introduction

Gears is a free role playing game system that was created with the busy GM in mind. You don't have to read a book with the size of the NY phone book before you can start playing. Character creation takes only a few minutes and after that you can start playing in almost any genre.

## Dice Basics

Gears uses regular six-sided dice. Usually you have to roll several dice, sum up the results and add a modifier. As a shorthand we usually use something like that: 3d6+2. This means, you have to roll three dice, sum up the result and add 2.

## Basic Task Resolution

The basic task resolution method is to roll 3d6 and compare it to a given **mastery level**. Is the result equal or lower than the mastery level, the task succeeds. If the circumstances make the task at hand easier or harder, the GM may modify the dice roll by adding a **difficulty modifier**. The mastery level consists of a skill rank, the value of the relevant Primary Trait and a modifier.

Please note that a roll result of 17 or 18 always fails, while a result of 3 or 4 is considered a critical success. But as always GM discretion is advised. There are tasks that can never succeed, even if the player rolls a 3 or 4! You can't move mountains by sheer will alone.

## Competitions

In cases two characters compete with each other, both have to make a roll against the relevant trait or skill. This need not be the same trait or skill for both characters. If one character succeeds but the other fails, the situation is pretty clear. If both win, the one

with the higher margin of success wins. If both fail the one with the smaller margin of failure wins the competition. If both have rolled the same margin of success/failure, it's a tie.

## Golden Rule

The rules in this book are written on paper and not set into stone. If some situation arises where a rule doesn't make sense, use common sense. If you are the GM and you don't like a rule, just change it.



You'll notice that there are many situations that are not described in the rules. Game masters are encouraged to make their own rules and rulings if needed. Feel free to make Gears your own!

## The Three Primary Traits

Each character in Gears is described by three Primary Traits. These traits are:

- **Physique (PHY)**  
Physique describes the physical abilities of a character, like his agility, health and strength.
- **Intellect (INT)**  
Intellect is a measure of a character's mental capabilities .
- **Charisma (CHA)**  
Charisma describes a character's social abilities, the impression the character makes on other people and even the physical attractiveness.

Each of the Primary traits is usually ranked from 1 to 18. The human average is 8.

## The Secondary Traits

The Secondary Traits are calculated after character creation and are directly linked to the Primary Traits. Please note that you always round down when calculating Secondary traits.

- **Health (HT)**  
Health or Hits is a measure of how much damage a character may take before going down.  
 $HT = 10 + PHY$
- **Speed (SP)**  
A character's base speed is  $10 + (PHY / 3)$  in yards

Whenever the Primary Traits are changed permanently, the Secondary Traits have to be recalculated. There are situations when the Primary Traits are only temporarily changed. The Secondary Traits are unaffected by this.

## Skills

Skills are the learned abilities of a character like the ability to wield weapons or a profession. Each skill is ranked using the following ladder:

Rank	Difficulty Modifier
Untrained	-2
Novice	+0
Journeyman	+2
Master	+4

Each skill is also linked to one of the five primary traits. When you try to perform a task using one of your character's skills, the mastery level is determined by the sum of the relevant attribute and your skill rank.

**Example:** *Mike's character Tycho wants to sheer the wall of a building using his Athletics*

*skill. He is a novice climber, so he has a bonus of +0. Athletics is a Physique-related skill, so he has to roll against his PHY on 3d6 to succeed.*

In most cases a character is at least considered untrained in a skill and has at least a fair chance at succeeding. But there are a few advanced skills that can only be used with proper training, like *Sorcery* or *Medicine*.

## General Modifiers

There are circumstances in which the GM can decide that a task at hand is easier or harder



than usual. In these cases he can apply an additional modifier to the roll.

Task difficulty	Difficulty Modifier
Easy	-2
Routine	+0
Challenging	+2
Very Hard	+4
Impossible	+6

## Combat Turns

Whenever combat occurs, the order in which everyone acts becomes more important. In order to reflect that, player characters and non-player characters act in turns.

At the begin of each combat, initiative is determined. Usually it's sufficient to use common sense here. In most cases the attacker acts first, followed by the defender.

**Optional:** Each player rolls 3d6 and adds his INT trait. The characters then act in the order



of the results - the one with the highest result may act first.

## Combat Actions

In each round of combat a character may perform either one full action or two half actions plus a reasonable amount of free actions.

**Free actions** are for example dropping something you hold in your hands, shouting a few words, falling, riding in a vehicle or on a horse or looking around.

**Half actions** are moving, attacking with a weapon, or casting a readied spell.

**Full actions** are running, drawing a weapon, reloading a gun or crossbow or removing a backpack.

Some actions take even longer than that. Preparing a magic ritual or donning armor will probably take longer than most combats. As always GM discretion is advised.

## Combat Movement

Characters in Gears can either walk or run during combat. The maximum movement rates are given in the table below.

Movement	Range
Walking	1x SP in yards
Running	3x SP in yards

## Attack Rolls and Defense

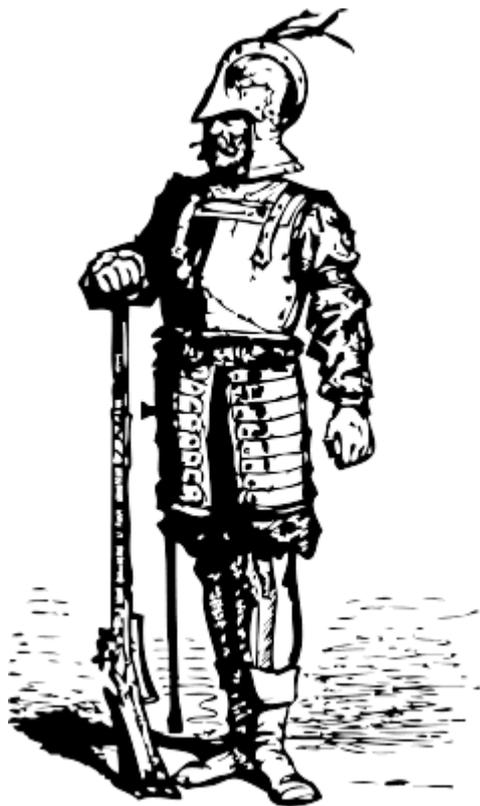
To determine if an attack has hit and perhaps even caused damage the attacker rolls against his relevant combat skill plus any given modifiers. Lighting conditions, distance to the target, injuries, the defenders' Defense skill and other factors may influence the chances to hit.

	Modifier
Opponent unaware of attack	-4
Partial Darkness / Light smoke	+4
Total Darkness / Thick Smoke	+6
Flanking target	-2
Behind target	-4

When attacking with ranged weapons the distance to the target plays an important role when determining the hit chances. Each ranged weapons has a short, medium and long range.

	Short	Medium	Long
Modifier	+0	+2	+4

No weapon may used to attack target farther away than two times its Long range.



## Damage and Armor

When an attack hits he causes the listed damage for the weapon used (see Appendix for weapon and armor statistics). An unarmored target takes full damage and its Health or Fatigue is reduced. If the target wears armor, the armor rating is subtracted from the damage first.

**Optional:** Every time the damage of an attack exceeds the armor rating, the armor rating is reduced by one. When the armor rating drops to zero, the armor has become useless and must be replaced.

## Damage bonus

Some weapon damage is not fixed but is dependent of the wielder's strength. The weapon causes a basic damage that is then modified by the damage bonus. This bonus is calculated by  $PHY - 10 / 2$ . The result is rounded down.

## Damage and Dying

Combat damage does severely affect a characters performance in and out of combat. Injured or fatigued characters suffer under some check modifiers. These modifiers are applied to all task resolution checks. And if Health drops to zero, the character may.

Condition	Modifier
Health < 50%	+2
Health < 25%	+4
Health = 0	Character is dying

## Natural Healing

As long as a character hasn't reached zero Health he heals naturally. A character whose HT has dropped to zero must be attended to by someone with first aid training (magical healing works, too) or he dies within 3d6 minutes. A successful *First Aid* check restores the character back to 1 HT.

A character who is resting most of the day, avoiding hard travel, strenuous activities etc. regains 2 HT per day. If the rest is broken, he can still regain 1 HT on that day. The rate of healing can increased by an attending physician (which needs the Medicine skill). See the relevant section for details.

## Talents

Aside from skills each character may acquire a number of talents. Talents usually grant access to special abilities that improve skill checks in certain circumstances or bend the rules in others. Talents are categorized into Minor and Major talents.

**Example:** *Andy's character Darion has the Disarm talent. It allows him to disarm an enemy after successfully parrying an attack. He may make a check against the appropriate skill to disarm the opponent. If successful, the attacker loses his weapon.*

There's a list of talents in the Appendix, but the players and GM can make up their own talents.

## Quirks

A quirk is an odd habit, like always chewing gum, a slight fear of heights or a notorious curiosity. Each character may have up to three quirks (GM approval needed). Each quirk grants one additional CP during Character Creation. Quirks are a great way to add flavor to any character!

## Character Creation

Player characters in Gears are created using a point-buy system. In a standard campaign, each character starts with 32 Character Points (CP) which he can use to buy traits, skills and talents. Please note that not more than 12 CPs should be put into the Primary Traits. This can of course be changed by the GM as he sees fit.

In order to speed up character creation, the Appendix provides a list of "job packages" and "background packages". These packages contain preselected skills and talents suited for a certain profession or upbringing.

Before distributing CPs each player should think about a character concept first. What kind of person does he want to play? Where was he born? Does he have any siblings? Are his parents still living? What motivates him? What's his outlook on life? What does he want to accomplish?



If you are happy with the basic concept, start by buying the Primary Traits.

Each player character starts with 8 points in each Primary Trait. Raising a Trait by one costs 1 CP. If you lower a Trait below 8, you get an additional CP for each point below 8. Player characters shouldn't start with Primary Traits lower than 5 or higher than 18.

After buying the Primary Traits you can purchase skills and talents. See the Appendix for a complete list of skills and talents.

Skill rank	Cost in CP
<b>Untrained</b>	0
<b>Novice</b>	2
<b>Journeyman</b>	4
<b>Master</b>	6

Talent	Cost in CP
<b>Minor talent</b>	3
<b>Major talent</b>	6

## Starting Equipment

Each character may buy starting equipment for 500\$ (or 500 gold, credits, nuyen or whatever currency your setting uses). Certain talents may modify the amount of money you have available. The GM may also modify this number as he sees fit. After purchasing some basic equipment, the character is ready for adventure!

## Character Advancement

Characters in Gears earn experience when they successfully overcome obstacles like problems they face during their adventures, enemies they have to defeat or riddles they have to solve. This experience is measured in the form of Experience Points (EPs) the GM gives to the players at the end of each session (or adventure).

The players can then use these points for raising their Traits and Skills or to buy new Talents.

- **Raising Primary Traits**  
Raising a Primary Trait to the next rank costs your current rank in EPs.

- **Raising/Buying skills**  
Characters can raise their skills between sessions using their EPs. To learn new skills at Novice rank the character has to find a trainer. The training may cost money in addition to EPs at the GM discretion.

Skill rank	Cost in EP
<b>Novice</b>	4
<b>Journeyman</b>	6
<b>Master</b>	8

- **Buying new Talents**  
Buying new Talents is not something you can do between sessions without an appropriate description on how the character acquired the new ability. Sometime finding a trainer is sufficient but sometimes getting a new Talent may be a whole adventure in itself.

Talent	Cost in EP
<b>Minor talent</b>	6
<b>Major talent</b>	12



- **Buying off quirks**  
If a character wants to get off a quirk he can either replace it by a new one with the GMs permission or buy it off for 2 EPs.

APPENDIX 

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## General Skills

The following table lists all general skills available in Gears.

Skill name	Trait	Bas/Adv	Description
<b>Air Vehicles</b>	PHY	Advanced	Air vehicles allows the piloting and basic maintenance of all air-based vehicles like balloons, airships, helicopters, airplanes etc.
<b>Land Vehicles</b>	PHY	Basic	Land vehicles allows the driving and basic maintenance of all land-based vehicles like donkey carts, cars, motorcycles, hover tanks, etc.
<b>Riding</b>	PHY	Basic	This skills allows the riding of tamed beasts, like horses, riding dogs, dragons, etc.
<b>Sea Vehicles</b>	PHY	Advanced	Sea vehicles allows the steering and basic maintenance of all sea-based vehicles like row boats, motor yachts, submarines, sailing ships, etc.
<b>Security</b>	PHY	Basic	This skill covers disarming traps, overcoming security systems, picking locks, etc.
<b>Sleight of Hand</b>	PHY	Basic	Sleight of Hand covers pick pocketing, palming objects, card tricks and similar feats.
<b>Space Vehicles</b>	PHY	Advanced	Space vehicles allows the piloting and basic maintenance of all space-based vehicles like shuttles, star ships etc.
<b>Stealth</b>	PHY	Basic	The stealth skill allows sneaking and hiding.
<b>Fast Talk</b>	CHA	Basic	Fast Talk allows to talk the character out of trouble and use bluffs to overcome obstacles. The skill can also be used to haggle.
<b>Leadership</b>	CHA	Basic	The Leadership skill covers command of troops, giving rousing speeches, etc.
<b>Persuasion</b>	CHA	Basic	The persuasion skill allows to persuade a character by arguments and rhetorics.
<b>Seduction</b>	CHA	Basic	Seduction allows you to have it your way with the other gender.
<b>Athletics</b>	PHY	Basic	The Athletics skill covers most athletic endeavors like climbing, jumping, swimming etc.
<b>Academics</b>	INT	Adv.	The Academics skill is not one skill, but a skill group. The character must choose which academic field it represents (like Archeology, Religion, Philosophy, History, Law etc.). The skill can be bought several times but each time a different field of study must chosen.
<b>Computer</b>	INT	(see Description)	Computers allows the use of computers and similar equipment. The skill covers basic use, programming, hacking, repair and maintenance. In settings, where computers are rare, this is an Advanced skill. It's a basic skill on 21st century's Earth.
<b>First Aid</b>	INT	Basic	The first aid skill allows to treat a character after combat and stabilize him.
<b>Languages</b>	INT	Advanced	Languages grants the ability to speak, understand, read and write in one specified language. As will other group skills, the skill can be bought several times. Each character can speak his mother's language at Master level. In certain settings reading and writing is not automatically included!
<b>Medicine</b>	INT	Advanced	The medicine skill gives a character deeper insight into human anatomy, the diagnose and treatment of diseases and injuries

			and allows the use of medical equipment.
<b>Navigation</b>	INT	Basic	The navigation skill covers navigation by land marks or the stars, reading of charts and even use of sophisticated navigational equipment.
<b>Occult</b>	INT	Advanced	The Occult skill grants the character knowledge of the occult.
<b>Profession</b>	INT	Advanced	The Profession skill is not one skill, but a skill group. The character must choose which profession it represents (like Accountant, Blacksmith, Carpenter etc.). The skill can be bought several times but each time a different profession must chosen. GM and players may come up with all kinds of profession, but must make sure that a profession does not replace an existing skill. For example you can't replace Medicine by Profession (Physician).
<b>Repair</b>	INT	Basic	The repair skill covers mechanical and electrical repair.
<b>Science</b>	INT	Advanced	The Science skill is not one skill, but a skill group. The character must choose which science it represents (like Physics, Biology, Geology, etc.). The skill can be bought several times but each time a different field of study must chosen.
<b>Sorcery</b>	INT	Advanced	The sorcery skill covers the knowledge and skill needed to cast spells and magic rituals.
<b>Survival</b>	INT	Basic	The survival skill allows living off the land, tracking and is a measure of a character's knowledge of the wilds.

## Combat Skills

The following table lists all combat skills available in Gears.

Skill name	Trait	Bas/Adv	Description
<b>Archery</b>	PHY	Basic	The Archery skill allows use of bows, crossbows, slings and similar weapons.
<b>Blades</b>	PHY	Basic	Blades covers the use of all bladed weapons from daggers and knives to two-handed swords.
<b>Firearms</b>	PHY	Basic	The firearms skill covers use of all firearms and energy weapons aside from heavy weapons and vehicle-mounted weapons
<b>Gunnery</b>	PHY	Basic	The gunnery skill allows use of heavy and vehicle-mounted weapons like grenade launchers, cannons, weapon turrets, etc.
<b>Staves</b>	PHY	Basic	The staves skill is used when fighting with staves.
<b>Throwing</b>	PHY	Basic	With this skill a character can throw weapons, rocks, grenades, etc.
<b>Axes</b>	PHY	Basic	The axes skill covers the use of all axe-like weapons.
<b>Brawling</b>	PHY	Basic	The Brawling skill is used for unarmed combat and combat using improvised weapons (like broken bottles, chairs etc.).
<b>Maces</b>	PHY	Basic	The maces skill is used for combat with blunt weapons (including maces, clubs, hammers)

## Basic Equipment

The basic list of equipment included in this book is far from extensive. But it should give you enough stuff to equip your character in most genres, including fantasy, modern games and sci-fi. Future expansions and campaign settings will include expanded equipment lists.

## Melee Weapons

Weapon Type	Skill	DMG	S	M	L	Ammo	Notes
<b>Unarmed</b>	Brawling	1D6+DB	/	/	/	/	Does fatigue damage
<b>Spiked Gauntlet</b>	Brawling	1D6+DB	/	/	/	/	Can't be disarmed
<b>Knife/Dagger</b>	Blades	1D6+DB	2	3	5	/	Can be thrown using the Throwing skill
<b>Sword</b>	Blades	2D6+DB	/	/	/	/	
<b>Axe</b>	Axes	2D6+DB	4	6	10	/	Can be thrown using the Throwing skill
<b>Mace</b>	Maces	2D6+DB	/	/	/	/	
<b>Quarterstaff</b>	Staves	1D6+DB	/	/	/	/	Grants +2 DE
<b>Greatsword</b>	Blades	3D6+DB	/	/	/	/	
<b>Katana</b>	Blades	2D6+DB+3	/	/	/	/	
<b>Chainsaw</b>	Blades	3D6+5	/	/	/	/	Unwieldy (+2 modifier on attack rolls)
<b>Monosword</b>	Blades	2D6+DB	/	/	/	/	Ignores armor and does double damage against unarmored targets
<b>Powersledge</b>	Maces	4D6+DB	/	/	/	/	
<b>Plasma Sword</b>	Blades	4D6	/	/	/	/	

## Ranged Weapons

Weapon Type	Skill	DMG	S	M	L	Ammo	Notes
<b>Bow</b>	Archery	1D6	15	30	60	1	
<b>Longbow</b>	Archery	2D6	30	60	120	1	
<b>Crossbow</b>	Archery	2D6+5	20	40	80	1	Reloading is a full action
<b>Spear / Javelin</b>	Throwing	2D6	5	10	15	/	
<b>Flintlock pistol</b>	Firearms	3D6	7	15	30	1	Reloading is a full action
<b>Musket rifle</b>	Firearms	3D6	12	25	50	1	Reloading is a full action
<b>Revolver</b>	Firearms	3D6	7	15	30	6	
<b>Semi-automatic pistol</b>	Firearms	3D6+2	10	20	40	12	
<b>Hunting Rifle</b>	Firearms	4D6	30	60	120	2	
<b>Shotgun</b>	Firearms	3D6	7	15	/	*	The shotgun does damage in a 3 m wide cone and may hit several opponent. There are variants with 1,2 or 12 ammo capacity.
<b>Submachine gun</b>	Firearms	3D6	10	20	40	20	Fires single shots or three-round bursts. A burst adds an attack modifier of -2 and increases damage by 1D6
<b>Assault rifle</b>	Firearms	4D6	40	80	160	20	Fires single shots or three-round bursts. A burst adds an attack modifier of -2 and increases damage by 1D6
<b>Sniper rifle</b>	Firearms	5D6	80	160	320	6	
<b>Laser pistol</b>	Firearms	5D6	10	20	40	20	
<b>Laser rifle</b>	Firearms	5D6	40	80	160	20	Fires single shots or three-round bursts. A burst adds an attack modifier of -2 and increases damage by 1D6
<b>Plasma gun</b>	Firearms	6D6	30	60	120	6	The plasma charge can be overcharged (which takes a full action). The damage is increased by 1D6 for the next shot.

## Heavy Weapons

Weapon Type	Skill	DMG	S	M	L	Ammo	Notes

## Armor

Armor Type	AR	Bulk modifier*	Notes
<b>Cloth armor</b>	0	0	Normal clothing
<b>Padded cloth</b>	2	0	
<b>Leather armor</b>	4	+1	
<b>Scale/Mail armor</b>	6	+2	
<b>Plate armor</b>	8	+4	Must be fitted to the wearer
<b>Combat vest</b>	10	+3	
<b>Light battle armor</b>	15	+2	Armor is fully encased an includes full life support for 2 hours
<b>Heavy battle armor</b>	30	+3	Armor is fully encased an includes full life support for 6 hours
<b>Energy shield</b>	20	+0	Can be added to existing armor, armor rating does not degrade when damage exceeds AR

The bulk modifier is added to all attack rolls, and skill checks where the bulk of the armor may hinder its wearer.