

SUBWAY RUNNERS



SUBWAY RUNNERS

GIG-ECONOMY METRO WORKERS CLEANING A SUBWAY WHOSE TUNNELS DUG TOO DEEP

Another Adventuresome Gem Room Games Instant Classic

Designed, Written, Illustrated, and Laid Out By Dan Phipps
Programmed, Written, Photoshopepd, and Edited by Kali Lawrie

Digital tools provided by [Perchance.org](https://perchance.org)



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Subway Runners was



Blades in the Dark™ is a trademark of One Seven Design.
The Forged in the Dark Logo is © One Seven Design, and is
used with permission

THE BASICS	6
The Pitch	6
The Players	6
The Subway Runners	6
The GM	7
Judgement Calls	7
Rolling Dice	8
Setting Up to Play	9
Tone & Player Safety	9
 THE RUNNER'S FILE	 12
Contractor Bio	12
Contractor Proficiencies	12
Actions	12
Action Definitions	13
Special Ability	14
Contractor Health	15
Stress	15
Resisting Consequences:	15
Pushing Yourself	15
Assist your Fellow Runner	15
Trauma	16
Wounds	16
Minor Wounds	16
Moderate Wounds	16
Severe Wounds	17
Healing Wounds	17
Contractor Personal Effects	17
Domain & Magic Dice	17
	3

Weapon & Fightin' Dice	18
Armor & Resistance Dice	18
Accessories	18
Pack Inventory & Coin	19
Contractor Profile	19
Promotions	19
Promotion Activities	20
THE GIG & THE METRO INFORMATION KIOSK	22
The Gig	22
The Metro Information Kiosk	23
Stations	23
Folks	24
Rumors	24
Tunnels	25
Critters	25
Monsters	25
Some Consequences	26
Magical Mishaps	27
A Day Above Ground	27
Left Field Complications	28
Trauma	28
Promotions	28
Fixing the Line	28
Ending the Game	29
Winning the Game	29
SUBWAY RUNNERS RULES REFERENCE	31

**THE
BASICS**

THE BASICS

The Pitch

Life is tough for the cash-strapped in Pociopolis. Ever since the secret to immortality was discovered, nobody retires anymore! With all the steady jobs taken and no sign of any new ones opening up, there's only one sure way to make some quick cash: sign up as a Subway Runner and work for the Metro Authority to hunt monsters and repair subway lines below the city.

The Players

This game has two kinds of players: Subway Runners and a GM. While each of them has slightly different roles and responsibilities, both are here to have a good time and everyone is responsible for their fellow player's enjoyment of the game.

The Subway Runners

Each player creates a Subway Runner and works with the other players to create the crew to which their characters belong. Each player strives to bring to life an interesting, daring character who reaches boldly beyond their current safety and means.

The players work together with the GM to establish the tone and style of the game by making judgment calls about the mechanics, dice, and consequences of actions. The players take responsibility as co-authors of the game with the GM.

The GM

The GM establishes the dynamic world around the characters. The GM plays all the non-player characters (NPCs) in the world by giving each one a concrete desire and preferred method of action.

The GM helps organize the conversation of the game so it is pointed toward interesting elements of play. The GM isn't in charge of the story and doesn't have to plan events ahead of time. They present interesting opportunities to the players, then follow the chain of action and consequences wherever they lead.

Judgement Calls

When you play *Subway Runners*, you'll make several key judgment calls. Everyone contributes, but either the players or the GM gets final say for each:

- Which actions are reasonable as a solution to a problem? Can this person be brainwashed? Must we get out the tools and tinker with this old rusty lock, or could it also be quietly finessed? The players have final say.
- How dangerous and how effective is a given action in this circumstance? How risky is this? Can this person be brainwashed very little or a whole lot? The GM has final say.
- Which consequences are inflicted to manifest the dangers in a given circumstance? Does this fall from the platform sprain your ankle? Do your rival runners merely become suspicious or do they already have you trapped? The GM has final say.

- Which events in the story match the promotion activities for your subway runner? Did you express your runner's love language, goals, or vibe? You tell us. The players have final say.

Rolling Dice

Subway Runners uses six-sided dice. You roll several at once and read the single highest result.

- If the highest die is a 6, it's a full success—things go well. If you roll more than one 6, it's a critical success—you gain some additional advantage.
- If the highest die is a 4 or 5, that's a partial success—you do what you were trying to do, but there are consequences: trouble, harm, reduced effect, etc.
- If the highest die is 1-3, it's a bad outcome. Things go poorly. You probably don't achieve your goal and you suffer complications too.

If you ever need to roll but you have 0 (or negative) dice, roll 2 dice and take the single lowest result. You can't roll a critical when you have 0 dice.

All the dice systems in this game are expressions of this basic format. When you're first learning the game, you can always "collapse" back down to a simple roll to judge how things go. Look up the exact rule later when you have time.

To create a dice pool for a roll, you'll use a trait (like your Annihilate action or your Fightin' Dice) and take dice equal to its rating. You'll

usually end up with 1 to 4 dice. Even 1 die is pretty good in this game—a 50% chance of success. The most common traits you'll use are the action ratings of the player characters. A player might roll dice for their Rig action rating when they fix a line, for example.

Setting Up to Play

Subway Runners is designed to be played online, and each player will need a computer, tablet, or phone to access their needed resources. Players can play in the same physical space, so long as they maintain a healthy social distance of 6 feet or more per CDC guidelines when practicing social distancing.

Subway Runners uses randomizers generated through perchance.org to generate characters and adventures. Everything will be lost as soon as the page is closed or reloaded. If you or any other player would like to save any materials for re-use or posterity, be sure to take a screenshot or use the “PRINT FILE” button at the bottom of the page! If you use the “PRINT FILE” button we recommend printing to pdf to save ink.

Tone & Player Safety

Subway Runners is a game designed to be played by working together to interpret dice rolls and randomly generated story elements without much preparation, whether in the same room or miles apart. It can be difficult to take the temperature of the room when your fellow players are all in different ones. All of this can potentially create an uncomfortable or distressing environment when characters are imperiled or the subject matter gets too real.

Players are strongly encouraged to use safety tools in addition to the rules provided in this document. People smarter than us have put a lot of thought into creating ways to give players a safe and comfortable play environment. We recommend reading the safety tools overview provided at <http://goldenlassogames.com/tools>

**THE
RUNNER'S FILE**

THE RUNNER'S FILE

Everything you need to know about a subway runner can be found in their file. Before taking on a gig, you should review your file at www.perchance.org/subwayrunners.

Before proceeding, review the file and consider how it makes you feel. If the file doesn't spark joy, press the button at the bottom of the page to automatically bring up a more accurate file. Repeat until content, and be sure to screenshot or print to pdf the file that feels right in case the tab is closed or refreshed.

Contractor Bio

The Bio section of your file contains a brief description of the subway runner's physical characteristics, behaviors, and esoteric qualities.

Contractor Proficiencies

The Proficiencies section of your file describes your aptitudes and abilities that are relevant to the tasks important to completing the work of a Subway Runner.

Actions

Your file has nine actions which are the primary ways your subway runner interacts with the world, especially when they do something where the outcome is uncertain. Each action has a rating from 0 to 4 that tells you how many dice to roll when you perform that action. Your action ratings may improve if you receive a promotion.

You choose which action to perform to overcome an obstacle and describe what your character does. Actions that are poorly suited to the situation may be less effective and may put the character in more danger, but they can still be attempted.

When attempting something dangerous or with an uncertain outcome, your group does the following:

1. The player states their goal and shares which action they are using, with what equipment, and describes their approach.
2. The GM describes how risky and effective this approach will be. Riskier approaches incur worse consequences if you roll poorly.
3. The player rolls the dice and we judge the result.

You can perform actions if you have a rating of 0. In these instances, roll 2 dice and take the lesser result. You may want to push yourself or turn to your fellow runners for assistance when performing these actions.

Action Definitions

You may encounter any of the following actions in your file.

- ❖ Analyze - Scientifically evaluate a subject
- ❖ Consider - Reflect upon the nature of a subject
- ❖ Investigate - Carry out a formal probe to discover the truth
- ❖ Spy - Watch over time without being detected
- ❖ Observe - Perceive the whole of a subject's significance
- ❖ Scan - Systematically review the component parts of a subject
- ❖ Engineer - Build something properly

- ❖ Experiment - Scientifically adjust reality
- ❖ Rig - Build something improperly
- ❖ Pilot - To guide or steer a vehicle
- ❖ Finesse - Do something in a subtle and delicate manner
- ❖ Operate - Control the function of a machine
- ❖ Disguise - To make one thing look like a different thing
- ❖ Skulk - To travel without being detected
- ❖ Sprint - To move at great speed
- ❖ Dissect - To systematically break something apart
- ❖ Annihilate - To completely destroy something
- ❖ Sabotage - To subtly damage a critical part of something
- ❖ Brainwash - Completely overwhelm someone with your desires
- ❖ Threaten - Get what you want through implied harm
- ❖ Challenge - Invite someone to do something by daring them
- ❖ Carouse - Make friends by partying hearty
- ❖ Befriend - Make friends by being supportive and kind
- ❖ Perform - Act with the intent of impressing others
- ❖ Inspire - Fill others with the urge to act
- ❖ Negotiate - Work to achieve a beneficial arrangement
- ❖ Deceive - Give others a mistaken impression

Special Ability

Your unique talents or upbringing grant you a special ability. You may receive additional special abilities if you receive a promotion.

Special abilities have no assigned dice rating. To use a special ability choose a related action and roll its action rating when you do your special ability.

Contractor Health

Use this section of your file to track your runner's stress, trauma, and any wounds they may incur as a result of their work. Be aware that as contractors, subway runners do not qualify for workers' compensation.

Stress

Subway running is stressful work. You can only take so much before you need to come back up for fresh air (guaranteed to relieve stress). Taking on stress has a lot of uses. For each point of stress you take on, mark a stress box in your runner's file.

Resisting Consequences:

If you take an action and suffer a consequence you don't like you may risk your stress levels to mitigate or remove the consequence entirely. Roll your Resistance Dice and suffer 6 stress, minus the highest result of the resistance roll.

Pushing Yourself

You may take 2 stress to do the following:

- ❖ Add 1 die to a roll
- ❖ Improve the GM-assigned effectiveness of your approach.
- ❖ Take an action that a wound would normally make impossible.

Assist your Fellow Runner

You may take 1 stress to assist an ally with their action. Describe how you are able to help them with their action and give them 1 additional die to roll.

Trauma

When you mark your last stress box your personality is permanently affected. Inform the GM and they will tell you what trauma to add to your runner's file. This condition is permanent.

When you suffer trauma you are taken out of the action until you can get some fresh air and sunlight. Get to a subway station and spend some time in the city above to get your head on straight.

When you have suffered 4 traumas you must retire as a subway runner.

Wounds

Subway running is dangerous work and the consequence of dangerous work is taking the occasional wound.

Wounds come in three types: Minor, Moderate, and Severe.

Minor Wounds

Minor wounds typically don't affect your performance much. They're mostly distracting or tiring. You can suffer two minor wounds, but your third minor wound is instantly elevated to a moderate wound.

Moderate Wounds

Moderate wounds are more serious. You may need to push yourself to perform actions that would be affected by a moderate wound. Your character can suffer two moderate wounds, but your third moderate wound is instantly elevated to a severe wound.

Severe Wounds

Severe wounds are very, very bad. If you have suffered a severe wound you should expect to have to push yourself to perform most actions. You can only suffer one severe wound. If you suffer a second severe wound the result is catastrophic, permanent, and usually fatal.

Healing Wounds

Every station has a clinic where you can patch up your wounds. If you do so, each wound is downgraded one step, and minor wounds are removed completely.

Contractor Personal Effects

This section of your file tracks your personal magic domain, registered weapon, armor, and the rest of your inventory. Should you receive additional personal effects as a result of promotion or as a reward for completing a gig, you should expect a prompt delivery to your current location by drone and can update your file immediately.

Domain & Magic Dice

The subways under the city follow the magical ley lines through which all arcane power flows. Your subway runner has the ability to tap into their personal magical domain to cast spells.

You can cast a magic spell in the same manner as any other action, but instead of rolling based on an action rating you roll your Magic Dice. The spell you cast must be tied to your magic domain. Bear in mind that by its very nature, magic tears at the fabric of reality and as such the

consequences of magic spells gone wrong tend to be much, much more exciting than those of mundane actions.

Weapon & Fightin' Dice

You can use your weapon to fight in the same manner as any other action, but instead of rolling based on an action rating you roll your Fightin' Dice. Your weapon is typically the instrument of your combat, but you can use anything your subway runner has on hand. Your choice of weapon determines a great deal of how risky the fight will be for you and how effective you are as a warrior.

Armor & Resistance Dice

Subway runners tend to come to harm as a result of taking risky actions and trifling with monsters. As discussed on page 13, you may use your resistance dice to mitigate wounds like any other consequence. Using your Resistance Dice may cause stress.

Typically, when a runner resists a moderate or severe wound it is only downgraded to a minor or moderate wound. If a subway runner is wearing armor appropriate to the incoming wound, their resistance will completely negate the wound instead.

Accessories

In addition to your weapon and armor, your subway runner typically has a magical accessory that they can bring to bear without rummaging through their pack. Typically this is a piece of jewelry or attire that has been imbued with arcane energies or is otherwise unique. You can only gain the benefits of one accessory at a time, because magic items get jealous.

Pack Inventory & Coin

The various tools, valuables, and other materials your subway runner has on hand are stored in your pack. This can be a backpack, fanny pack, messenger bag, purse, or series of large pockets. Generally you have access to anything you have in your pack inventory but it may take a minute to dig it out in a time-critical moment.

You also begin play with a handful of coin, the official currency of Pociopolis. For the purposes of playing the game, a coin is worth about 5 US dollars or Euro, 20 Malasian Ringgit, 25 Brazilian Real, 30 Turkish Lira, 500 yen, or 6000 won. Price the goods and services one can acquire in a subway station accordingly.

Try not to worry too much about how much your runner could carry. By and large, if you can lift it you can carry it in your pack.

Contractor Profile

The contractor profile section of your file is the result of an exhaustive battery of personality tests conducted as part of the subway runner selection process, as well as information gleaned about your runner on the job.

Promotions

Subway Runners who embody the spirit of the Pociopolis Metro Authority may receive promotions to their file, recognizing their improved performance and abilities. When you receive a promotion, update the text box in the corresponding location on your file.

Promotion Activities

A Subway Runner qualifies for an immediate promotion after the first time they perform any promotion activity or restore line service to complete their assigned gig.

**THE GIG
&
THE METRO
INFORMATION KIOSK**

THE GIG & THE METRO INFORMATION KIOSK

Subway Runners does not require the GM to prepare before sitting down to play. They have two important resources to assist in their ability to run the game: a summary of the Gig and a Metro Information Kiosk.

To begin play, read the pitch if you haven't already:

Life is tough for the cash-strapped in Pociopolis. Ever since the secret to immortality was discovered, nobody retires anymore! With all the steady jobs taken and no sign of any new ones opening up, there's only one sure way to make some quick cash. Sign up as a Subway Runner and work for the Pociopolis Metro Authority to hunt monsters and repair lines below the city.

Send each player a link to perchance.org/subwayrunners so they can find their file. Encourage anyone who seems dissatisfied to reload the page until they are content. Before players introduce their characters encourage them to take note of their promotion triggers - an opportunity for promotion might be waiting in another character's file!

The Gig

The Gig is intended to convey some useful information to get the subway runners started on their journey. Once the runners have been

THE GIG & THE METRO INFORMATION KIOSK

introduced, go to www.perchance.org/subwayrunnersgig and begin reading.

Tell them that they have a few notifications from the Pociopolis Metro Authority about gigs in the immediate proximity to their crew. Recite the gig, and reload if they want a new one. They should reject any they don't like until they find one that sounds good to them. If they give the confirmation code, proceed to www.perchance.org/runsubwayrunners.

Consider sharing screenshots of the gig with players for their reference (just the first 3 paragraphs if you want to keep the element of surprise).

The Metro Information Kiosk

The Metro Information Kiosk contains a number of gameplay elements which a subway runner would reasonably expect to encounter. You should feel free to reload this page as many times as you want. If you think that a location, character, monster, or other element may come up again, be sure to take a screenshot of that portion of the page.

Stations

Stations dot the subway tunnels, providing intermittent train service below Pociopolis. Most stations have some shops and places to tend to your wounds, as well as access to the city above ground. Stations are frequently built around strange discoveries unearthed when the subway was first being built that were too difficult to clear out.

Every station has a medical center for subway employees and contractors. If the subway runners make use of the medical center

each of their wounds is downgraded one step and minor wounds are removed completely.

Not every station has had good interactions with subway runners, and past crews may have affected their attitude toward this gang of newcomers.

Begin the story in a subway station and give runners an opportunity to trade or spend coin on supplies and ask folks about rumors. If the station they begin at doesn't include the line associated with their gig, tell them about a maintenance tunnel nearby. As the subway runners explore tunnels they should occasionally encounter a new station. It's a good idea to have one pop up around every real-world hour or so to let the players take a break.

Folks

Plenty of folks can be found in the subway. Most of them are commuters or work for the metro or businesses in the stations. Some are explorers from the various magical pockets the railways intersect with. Most folks know something useful about the area, have a way to protect themselves, and carry something of value on their person.

The GM sheet provides a way to embody a generated NPC to make them stand out to the players. This is optional, but can make them pop.

Rumors

If the subway runners ask folks what's going on, they'll be told one or more of the generated rumors. If you want to know if the rumor is true, roll a 6-sided die. If it meets or beats the corresponding number

then that's a fact, Jack. It's up to you whether or not the subway runners already know the truth behind the rumor or if they need to explore to discover it.

Tunnels

Tunnels intersect the various stations of the subway. If service is down or the subway runners are impatient, they'll need to walk.

Tunnels may be infested with some manner of hazard – critters, monsters, or just poor conditions. It's up to the subway runners to determine how they want to navigate these hazards.

If the line is down but can be repaired, the subway runners can call it in to Metro Authority and see if there's a reward for bringing it back online. It's entirely up to them if they want to bother getting it patched up.

Critters

Animals who spend too long in the subway exposed to the arcane energies can be affected in strange ways. These Critters can be docile or dangerous, and may affect service to the subway. The critter description is organized to give the GM an idea of how the critter behaves and the consequences for angering it. Be sure not to read the descriptions in the same order every time!

If a player asks you what the critter's name is, ask them if their subway runner has ever seen one before. If they have, they can tell the crew what it's called.

Monsters

While critters are animals with some magical features, Monsters are magic with some animalistic features. They tend to be destructive and difficult to control. They present a danger to the subway and its passengers, and Metro Authority will always reward subway runners for driving a monster out of this dimension or otherwise getting the line running through the infested area.

Like critters, the monster's description is broken up to give the GM an idea of its behavior and guide the consequences of engaging with it.

Monsters are one-of-a-kind creatures and do not have names. If they see the same (or similar) monster pop up in multiple places, it's probably just tenacious and keeps trying to muck with the subway. The subway runners may name the monsters they encounter if they like.

Some Consequences

Subway running is dangerous work, and the actions of subway runners are often risky. When a subway runner takes an action, it's the GM's responsibility to describe how Risky and Effective they think the approach is. If you don't have enough information to make a determination, press the group for more details or roll a die to decide.

The consequences should ideally tie directly to the context of the story but sometimes it can be hard to come up with something appropriate. The Metro Information Kiosk generates a broadly applicable consequence for a low risk, moderate risk, and severe risk action. These

THE GIG & THE METRO INFORMATION KIOSK

are general benchmarks – you don't need to define the player's actions into these three categories if you don't want to.

If the player rolls a 1-3 or 4-5 as their highest result, you can use these consequences for inspiration. Remind them that they can use stress to resist a consequence they don't like.

When a player is willing to take on stress to resist a consequence, typically it should go away. If the consequence takes the form of a moderate, severe, or instantly fatal wound, resisting should downgrade it by one or two steps. If the runner's armor is appropriate to protect them from that particularly nasty wound it should mitigate it entirely.

Magical Mishaps

Using magic is dangerous, and the consequences of using magic are unpredictable. The more powerful and impactful the magic spell, the more perilous the consequences.

The Metro Information Kiosk generates some consequences unique to magic to represent the esoteric effects of spells going awry. As with other risky actions, these consequences come into play on a roll of 1-3 or 4-5. Characters can use stress to resist these consequences also. If they resist you are encouraged to de-escalate the consequence, but still leave some mark on the world to represent their meddling.

A Day Above Ground

Over time the subway runners will get stressed out. They can choose to spend a few hours in the city above to decompress and return their

stress to 0. You can ask the players some questions about how they spend their day, but let them run the story.

Upon their return, their stress level should return to 0. Meanwhile, in the time they spent relaxing something related to their task may have gotten more complicated.

Left Field Complications

You go through tunnels, you fix the line, you celebrate at a station or head aboveground... it can all get a bit samey. Left field complications can be tossed in to spice things up, drive the action forward, and make the story about something bigger than the gig. Toss these into the mix when the spirit moves you, and don't worry about whether or not the crew wants to play with them. If nothing else they'll create the sense that the subway is a strange and magical place.

Trauma

When one of your Subway Runners reports that they've taken 8 stress, tell them to erase it all and inform them of the way that the stress has affected their personalities. Remind them that most runners decide to look for less hazardous employment when they reach 4 traumas.

Promotions

Each subway runner has a list of promotion activities that Metro Authority decided would make for a better, more fun work environment. Each time they perform that action in the fiction or complete a gig they get an immediate promotion. Inform the player how their file has been changed, effective immediately.

Fixing the Line

The subway runners should be able to get to the line associated with the Gig fairly quickly by walking and taking the train. Use the gig's hint, secret, or randomly generated tunnel to describe what's really gone wrong and let the subway runners sort out a way to resolve it. They'll figure something out.

When they do, the Metro Authority will immediately deliver their reward via drone to their location and grant each subway runner in the crew a promotion.

Ending the Game

After the line is fixed, check how long you've been playing and ask if the players are up for another gig. If they're not, ask the players how their subway runner celebrates the job well done and give a brief epilogue for any particularly memorable folk the runners encountered.

Subway Runners isn't designed with a longer campaign in mind but if players would like a memento of their adventures or to continue their runner's story, they should print their file as a pdf with the "PRINT FILE" button or take a screenshot so they will have a copy available next time.

Winning the Game

Every player that goes to gemroomgames.itch.io and rates *Subway Runners* 5 stars is a winner. Thank you for playing!

**RULES
REFERENCE**

SUBWAY RUNNERS RULES REFERENCE

How to roll

Use a number of 6-sided dice matching your action rating or assigned dice pool size (usually 1-4 dice). Report only the highest result. (Ex.: if rolling 3 dice results in 2, 4, 1, report the result of 4.)

If your action rating or dice pool size is 0, roll 2 dice and report the lowest result.

Roll results:

- 1-3: bad outcome! Failure + consequences
- 4-5: partial success! Success + consequences
- 6: success! Things go well
- Multiple 6s: critical success! Success + advantage

Taking actions & using magic/weapons/special abilities

To take an action:

- State your goal, chosen action, and equipment. Describe your approach.
- The GM will then describe its risk & effectiveness.
- Roll the number of dice matching your action rating & see what happens!

To *cast magic spells* or *use a weapon* take the same steps as making an action but roll your magic dice pool or fightin' dice pool.

To *use a special ability* choose a related action and roll its action rating when you do your special ability.

Stress

Mark 1 stress box for each point of stress you take. *Relieve stress* by spending a few hours aboveground. Take on stress by:

- *Resisting consequences.* Take 6 stress minus the highest result of your Resistance Dice to resist a consequence.
- *Pushing yourself.* Take 2 stress to add 1 die to a roll, improve the GM-assigned effectiveness of your approach, or take an action that a wound would normally make impossible.
- *Assisting a runner.* Take 1 stress to help an ally. Describe how you help and give them 1 additional die to roll.

If you fill all of your stress boxes tell the GM and accept a permanent *trauma*. If you take 4 traumas, retire. You must go above ground before rejoining the action after you take a trauma.

Wounds

- Your 3rd minor wound automatically becomes a moderate wound.
- Your 3rd moderate wound automatically becomes a severe wound.
- Your 2nd severe wound automatically becomes fatal.

Wounds are not received in increasing order of severity - you might take a severe wound first. You can resist any wound! Resisting while wearing appropriate armor negates a wound entirely.

Wounds may be healed by 1 degree at Medical Centers located in every station.

How to get promotions

When you *complete a promotion activity* (found at the bottom of your Contractor File) check it off and report it to the GM who will provide an immediate promotion. Promotion activities may be performed as many times as you'd like but will only earn you 1 promotion.

When you *complete a gig* the GM will provide an immediate promotion.