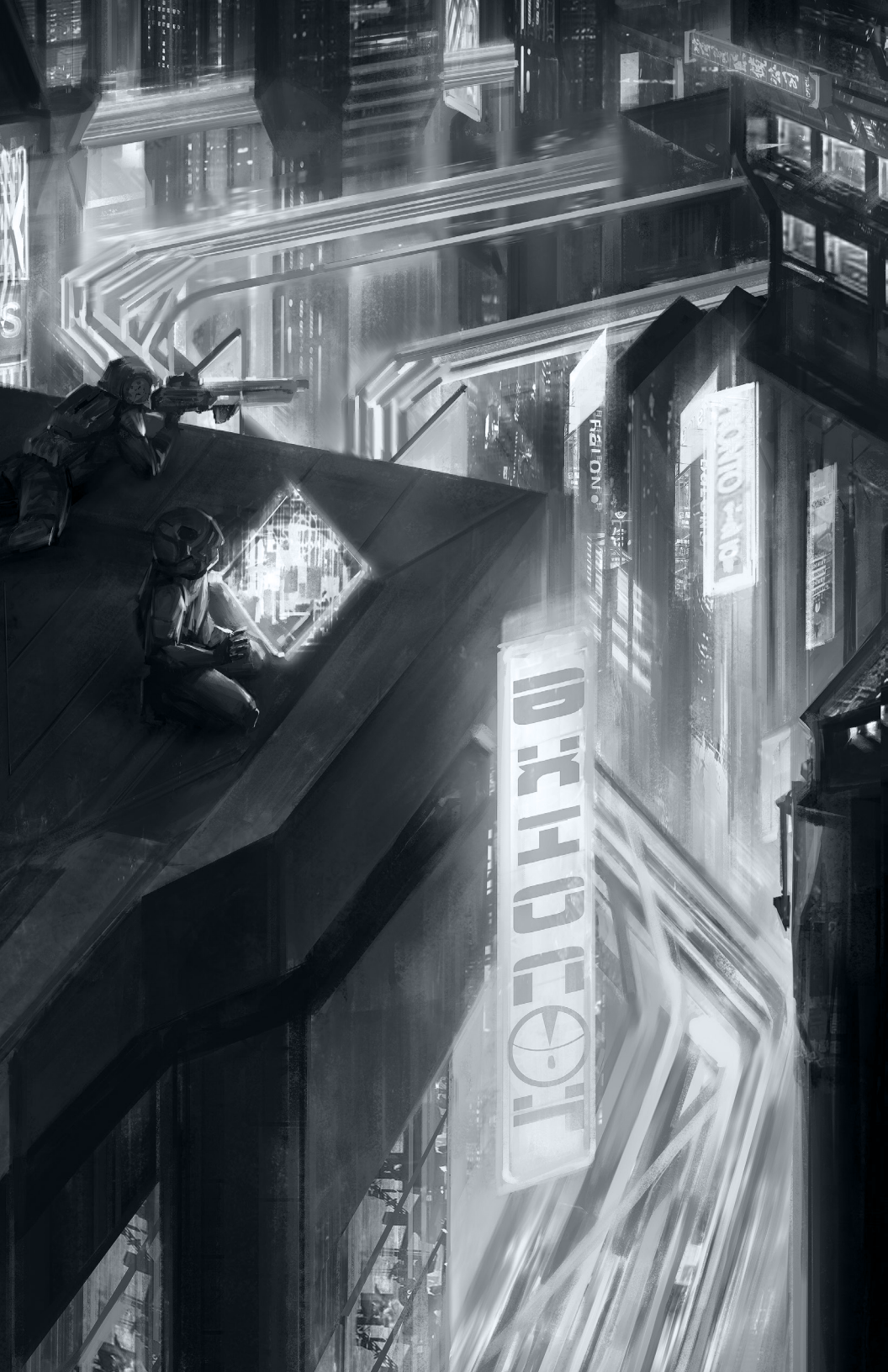




THE SPRAWL

HAMISH CAMERON



ARDENS LUDERE



POWERED BY THE
APOCALYPSE

The Sprawl v1.0

Writing and Design // Hamish Cameron

Editing // Gerald Cameron

Layout, Graphic Design & Interior Art // Aaron Brown

Cover Art // Toma Feizo Gas

Chapter Fiction // Lillian Cohen-Moore

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"The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel."

Neuromancer, William Gibson.

The future. Dark. Dirty. Dangerous. You're loners, punks and criminals, marginalised by society through birth, choice or violence. Parasites, living symbiotic existences in the shadows cast by the arcologies, feeding from the scraps dangled by the megacorporations and then scurrying back to the shadows to avoid their dismissive, destructive gaze. Those vast multinational corporations – "Zaibatsus", some call them – squat over everything, pulling the strings, controlling the flow of money, information, goods, and people. Governments scamper around their feet, begging for scraps. Hydrophilic lubricious polymers and automated cleaners keep their arcologies shining amidst the grey-brown urban sprawl which surrounds them. Corporate financial muscle pushes people around the city like blood. The megacorporations. Humanity's most successful artificial organism.

Technology keeps changing, shifting, mutating -- it's adapt or die. There's a sticky film of information smeared over everything, a networked datasphere in service to the megacorps. Buy this. Obey that. *Buy more.*

See, the corps aren't satisfied with having it all. They want more, and the only way they can get it is by eating their own. For the megacorporations, espionage, theft, kidnapping and murder are just file folders in the system architecture of success. For you though, they're rungs on the slippery ladder out of the caustic industrial air the rest of us breathe. Play your cards right and you'll be set: reputation, money, *credibility*. Everything you want. Freedom. But one false step and they'll take away everything. The corps don't need *you*. They need people *like you*. Screw up and you'll be replaced by the next mouthy punk with too much raw talent and bloody ambition and not enough smarts. Tread carefully. There's plenty more like you out there in *The Sprawl*.

The Sprawl is a game of mission-based action in a gritty neon-and-chrome Cyberpunk future. You are the extended assets of vast multinational corporations, operating in the criminal underground, and performing the tasks that those multinationals can't do -- or can't be seen to do. You are deniable, professional and -- ultimately -- disposable.

This game contains adult themes and adult language.

You're still here, punk? You want to play with the pros? Hit the heavy bag? Get some cred?

You'll need more smarts than the last guy.

Welcome to the future...

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"Cinderella?"

She rolled her eyes under her hood at the hesitance in Clarence's voice, not letting her urge to mock the man slow down the fast moving arc of her fingertips across her deck. "You're almost there. You hired a competent team. Stay out of our way, make sure your sweetums knows we're friendly, and we'll have you both smuggled out of there in no time."

It could have been a note of empathy in her voice, but the hacker's default alto was so thick with sarcasm the few times he'd spoken to her that he couldn't be sure. Waving a hand impatiently, she swept a screen out of her way, moving the three blue dots of Clarence, Salome and Fitch out of her way. Secret Boyfriend had spent the money on a decent soldier and an infiltrator who'd decided to slum for this job because it was "for love." She attempted to find it in herself to respect two people trying to have a healthy relationship in an unhealthy place and turned her attention back to the security read outs, expanding them to fill her view. Since it was a movie gala and not, say, a consulate, the security hadn't been so bad. If Cinderella had ever been inclined to feel guilt over a job going easy, she was too professional to remember it now.

Nerves. She took one hand off the deck to take a swig of antacids. Just because she hadn't found anything she couldn't take care of with her own skills didn't mean there wasn't something out there she hadn't anticipated. Maybe they dumped extra physical security in the mix, or just sent a fucking bodyguard to follow Clarence's boyfriend every time he had to take a piss. She'd tried to make it clear to Clarence that Peter Wallace needed to be more afraid of his entertainment media corporate masters. Austria wasn't exactly forgiving of homosexuality these days, and she doubted Wallace's studio would let their handsome lead man slink off with his boyfriend. Wallace had to be the luckiest guy in the world, with a boyfriend bumbling around trying to find a hacker in Vienna. You couldn't swing a deck in Vienna without finding a hacker. Now, as for their quality...

Red dots appeared in her view that shouldn't have been there.

"Fitch, you've got three headed your way. Whatever they're carrying, I can't pick it up right now, and you've got about four minutes to sort it out before the security system notices I've got it by the nose."

Silence was all that answered her.

PLAYING IN THE SPRAWL

PLAYING IN THE SPRAWL

The Sprawl is a game of cyberpunk stories for 3-5 players. Most of you will play the roles of hardbitten but desperate cyberpunk professionals and one of you will be the Master of Ceremonies (MC for short). Playing the game is a conversation among the people at the table and the MC is the facilitator. Through this shared conversation you will create a fictional world filled with action, intrigue, and cybertechnology and coloured with neon, chrome, and excess. Your conversations will populate that fictional world with interesting characters and tense situations. The rules in this book will help you have this conversation. From time to time, the story will reach a point where a random element is desired. The dice add tension and a random element which changes the fictional state of the world and those changes spark the conversation anew. When there's doubt about whose turn it is to speak, or what to talk about, the MC is the one who decides. Oh, and the MC? They control everything else. Your contacts, the corporations, the hit squads the corporations send to mess up your contacts, your other enemies, the team of pros who come to shoot up your team, and the blind cyber-assassin who loops the monofilament wire around your neck while you're waiting in line for your vat-meat burger. The MC has their own set of rules, which will be described in the later chapters.

- » Play *The Sprawl* if you want to play to find out what happens in a neon and chrome cyberpunk future
- » Play *The Sprawl* if you want to create a story about badass professionals living outside the law
- » Play *The Sprawl* if you want to struggle against The Man
- » Play *The Sprawl* if you want to win sometimes, lose sometimes and be double-crossed a lot



To play *The Sprawl*, there are a few things you'll need:

- » Two regular six-sided dice
- » A copy of each of the playbooks
- » A copy of a the Mission sheet and the MC moves
- » A copy of this book for reference

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The rest of this chapter introduces the basic concepts of *The Sprawl*. It discusses characters and how they interact with the rules. Those interactions are governed by Moves, one of the core concepts of the game which are also explained below. It also gives an overview of the rules the MC follows when guiding and facilitating the overall conversation of the game.

How you read this book might depend on whether you will play one of the cyberpunk professionals who are the protagonists in your shared story or whether you will take the role of MC and control the story's antagonists, including corporations and the world in general.

If you're an experienced player or MC of Powered by the Apocalypse games, you probably have a checklist of things you look for in new PbtA games. Here's my list of signposts in the order I look for them:

- » The MC Agenda, Principles and Moves are in [Chapter 10](#)
- » The Basic Moves are in [Chapter 2](#)
- » Playbooks are in [Chapter 4](#)

If you will be a protagonist:

- » Start with [Chapter 1](#) to get an overview of the rules
- » Read [Chapter 2](#) to get a sense of the kinds of things your character will be doing in *The Sprawl*
- » Scan [Chapter 4](#) to see the kind of characters that are available in *The Sprawl*
- » Read [Chapter 3](#) to find out how characters are made
- » Read [Chapter 4](#) in detail
- » Read [Chapters 5](#) and [6](#) to see the full range of cyberware and gear
- » Read [Chapter 7](#) to find out how your character gets better
- » Aspiring hackers should read about the Matrix in [Chapter 8](#)

If you will be the MC:

- » Start with [Chapter 1](#) to get an overview of the rules
- » Read [Chapter 2](#) to get a sense of the kinds of things the characters will be doing in *The Sprawl*
- » Read [Chapter 9](#) to find out what you will be doing in *The Sprawl*
- » Read [Chapter 10](#) to find out how to run the first session
- » Read [Chapter 3](#) to find out how to facilitate character creation
- » Scan [Chapter 4](#), [5](#) and [6](#) to see the full range of playbooks, cyberware and gear
- » Read [Chapter 8](#) to see how the Matrix works

CHARACTERS

The protagonists are a crew of characters within the fictional cyberpunk world that you will create together. Each player other than the MC will make and portray one of the crew. As a player in *The Sprawl*, your job is to play your character as if they were a real person – a badass professional in a cyberpunk future, but a real person nonetheless.

You start creating your character by choosing a playbook – a set of actions and options based around a certain theme. These playbooks are designed to bring major cyberpunk tropes to life as seen through the lens of mission roles. For example, you would create Turner from William Gibson's *Count Zero* as a Soldier and Cowboy from Walter Jon Williams' *Hardwired* as a Driver. As your character gains experience, they may grow beyond the confines of their initial playbook, just as Molly Millions develops from a Killer into a Fixer over the course of William Gibson's *Sprawl* trilogy. The playbooks can be found in [Chapter 4: Playbooks](#).

The MC plays many characters, called non-player characters (NPCs) to set them apart from the protagonists (the so-called player characters, or PCs).

STATS

Every character has six Stats which represent their raw ability at a particular style of action:

You'll use:

COOL to remain calm and focused in stressful situations

EDGE to draw on your street-smarts and experience or give the impression that you are a badass

MEAT to use your physical talents without the aid of cyberware to overcome a problem

MIND to think your way out of a problem through logic, instinct, creativity or any other mental process

STYLE to handle a situation with charisma, presence or nerve

SYNTH to interface seamlessly with technology

Each of these stats has a rating between -1 and +2 to indicate how well the character acts in that sphere. The higher the rating the more competent the character is in that area.

CORE MECHANICS

Two core mechanics lie at the heart of *The Sprawl*: Moves and Rolling Dice. These are the basis for most of your interactions with the rules.

ROLLING DICE

Often when you do something in *The Sprawl* you will be asked to roll a stat – for example, “roll Cool”. When this happens, roll two six-sided dice, add together the two numbers you roll, then add the value of the named stat (or other defined number). If your total is 7 or greater, that’s called a hit, while a result of 6 or less is considered a miss. A total of:

- » **10 or above** (abbreviated as **10+**) is a strong hit; you get what you want
- » **6 or lower** (abbreviated as **6-**) is a miss; something goes wrong. You might get what you want anyway, but it’ll definitely have strings attached. The MC will make a move which will complicate the situation and make your lives more difficult
- » **between 7 and 9** (abbreviated as **7-9**): is a weak hit; you mostly get what you wanted. Maybe you only get part of what you wanted, or maybe you got what you want but there is an unforeseen complication as well

MAKING MOVES

The second core mechanic is the idea of “moves”. A move is an action within the fiction that triggers a decision or uncertainty. Although they work a little differently, MCs and the other players both use moves. The Killer tries to shoot the corp security

guard in the face? That's a move. The Hacker tries to crack open a secure system? That's a move. A rocket blows out the apron on the Driver's hover-limo? That's a move.

As a player, a move happens when you say you're doing something that corresponds to the fictional trigger on the move while the MC makes a move when the players present you with an opportunity like inaction or rolling a miss. For now we will focus on player moves but more information on MC moves can be found in the next section and in [Chapter 9: Running The Sprawl](#).

Let's say you're the Hunter and you're narrating how you're across the street from an apartment building scoping out the security. There's a move for that:

Assess (Edge)

When you closely study a person, place or situation, or you quickly size up an opponent or a charged situation, roll Edge.

10+: gain 3 hold

7-9: gain 1 hold

In the ensuing action, you may spend 1 hold at any time to ask the MC a question from the list below if your examination could have revealed the answer. The MC may ask you questions to clarify your intent. Take +1 forward when acting on the answers.

- What potential complication do I need to be wary of?
- What do I notice despite an effort to conceal it?
- How is _____ vulnerable to me?
- How can I avoid trouble or hide here?
- What is my best way in/way out/way past?
- Where can I gain the most advantage?
- Who or what is my biggest threat in this situation?
- Who or what is in control here?

After the name, the first part is the fictional trigger – in this case, "When you **closely study a person, place or situation**." Any time your character takes an action which fits the trigger, you, the player, do what the move says afterwards. In this case you would roll Edge (as explained previously in Rolling Dice, roll two dice and add your character's Edge stat), then look at what the move tells you happens as a result. Because most moves involve making a roll, they will list what happens on a strong hit, a weak hit and a miss much like **assess** above: On a 10+ something happens, on a 7-9 something different happens and on a 6- the MC gets to make a move, although there may be predefined consequences as well. There are moves like **reveal information** which do not require a roll. Instead, you follow the procedure they contain each time your character performs its fictional trigger.

MC: You walk carefully down the service tunnel towards the rushing hum of the ventilation fans. The service tunnel opens into a wider space dominated by two large fans, blades chopping at the air behind monofilament grills, hubs emblazoned with the distinctive Sanskrit logo of Maangalika Agrotech. It's just like Hazer described, except for the automated sentry gun mounted on the ceiling. It's facing away from you at the moment, but it's turning in your direction. What do you do?

Nebula: Is the control panel on the near wall like Hazer said?

MC: Yes, just a few metres down the wall.

Nebula: I make a dash for it and punch in Hazer's backdoor code before the gun detects me.

MC: That's **act under pressure**; roll Cool.

At this point there are three possible outcomes as far as the system is concerned. In the event of a total success (10+) for **act under pressure** "you do it, no problem". That would look something like:

Nebula: I rolled a 10!

MC: You punch in the code, and after what seems like an age, the left fan starts to slow and the turret stops moving.

Nebula: Phew! I start unscrewing the monofilament grill while I wait for the fan to stop.

For partial success (7-9) the result reads "you stumble, hesitate, or flinch: the MC will offer you a worse outcomes, hard bargain or ugly choice." That could play out as:

Nebula: Oops, I only rolled an 8.

MC: You punch in the code, and after what seems like an age, the left fan starts to slow... but that turret is still tracking towards you. What do you do?

Act under pressure doesn't say what happens on a miss (6-) so the MC gets to make a move. Here the MC decides to **put someone in a spot** (here the someone is Nebula):

Nebula: Ah... a 5!

MC: You punch in the code, and after what seems like an age... nothing. With a sudden jerk of servos the turret swings round and you're looking straight down the quad-barrel arrangement of a disturbingly large calibre Maangalika Scythe-78 that's about to smear you all over the tunnel wall. What do you do?

Some moves tell you what happens on a 7+, rather than a 7-9 and 10+. It might also say that something happens on a 7+ and on a 7-9, in which case you follow both instructions. For example, **research** tells you what happens on a 7+ and a 10+. If you roll an 8, follow the 7+ instruction, but if you roll an 11, do both. **Mix it up** tells you what happens on a 7+ and on a 7-9: if you roll an 8, do both, if you roll an 11, only follow the 7+ instruction.

If your character performs the fictional trigger, make the move. If you want to make the move, you must describe how your character performs the fictional trigger. Because of this, it's important to resolve the process in this order: conversation in the fiction, trigger, move mechanics, and then back to the fiction. It can be easy to focus on the move list at the expense of the fiction, but remember that you're playing the game for the fiction, so don't skimp on the description in a rush to get to the dice.

MC: Smiler tells you that he sees Ms Kenobi at the Neon Dragon every night.

Sarah (playing Zero): I want to **assess** the Neon Dragon and see what she's doing. *Sarah picks up her dice.*

MC: Wait a second, tell us what Zero is actually doing to **assess** in this case.

Sarah: Yeah... okay... Zero waits until evening – after dark, but before the club really gets going. She sneaks into the adjacent warehouse, shoots a grapple line across to the Neon Dragon and zips across. Then she pops open a venting duct and slips inside, hanging in the shadowy recesses of the club's high ceiling and scanning the growing crowd with her thermo-graphic cybereyes.

MC: Awesome! Roll Edge.

When you're thinking about what your character does in a situation, focus on what they do in the fiction. Don't get bogged down examining the move list. The MC will help you translate your fictional description into the mechanics.

Allen (playing Alif): Alif gets out of the van, adjusting his tie as he strides across the courtyard towards the main doors. When the guard at the doors challenges him he lets the duffel bag fall away revealing the Titan Pacifier auto-shotgun. With a flourish, he points the gun at the guard's face as he keeps walking impassively, daring the guard to make a move and start something.

MC: You're going to pull the trigger if he does.

Allen: Sure am!

MC: You're **playing hardball** then. Roll Edge!

Sometimes the MC might tell you to make a move that doesn't seem to make sense with what you described. This usually happens when the MC has misinterpreted what your character wants to do. If so, clarify your intent. Be specific about what your character is doing, how they're doing it and what they are hoping to achieve; it helps everyone picture the scene in the same way and makes the fiction flow well.

MC: Hoot bursts out of the doorway and sprints across the plaza, scattering shiny white plastic chairs as she runs. Right on her tail come the security team, matte black armoured jackets emblazoned with the blue MDI logo, MDI Firehawk machine pistols chattering and turning the plaza's furnishings into plastic fragments.

Alif: Oh hell no! I flick my OmniDynamics Ravager to full auto and shoot up those fools!

MC: Okay! Roll Meat to **mix it up**.

Alif: **Mix it up?** No, I'm laying down suppressing fire to cover Hoot's escape.

MC: Great! Well let's see what Hoot is doing, then you can roll your Links with Hoot to **help**. So Hoot, the MDI security goons are trying to blast you into fragments. What do you do?

Some moves – called **Basic Moves** -- are available to everyone in *The Sprawl* and are used frequently (see [Chapter 2: Basic Moves](#)). Because they happen so often, Basic Moves set the fundamental tone for the game. They are what *The Sprawl* is about.

Other moves are only available to certain playbooks so they are called **Playbook Moves**. Playbook Moves define the role of that playbook in the game. For example, Hackers are the masters of computer network infiltration, and most Hacker Playbook Moves focus on that role – **jack in, console cowboy, ICE breaker, neural scars**. Playbooks and the moves associated with them are described in [Chapter 4: Playbooks](#).

Sometimes fictional circumstances might call for a **Custom Move** to cover a situation that the basic moves don't cover. Custom moves can be as simple as a stat substitution. For example, if a Hacker is attempting to get information from an AI, it might make more sense to roll Synth instead of Style to **hit the street**. [Chapter 12: Hacking The Sprawl](#) discusses more complex examples of custom moves.

Regardless of the kind of move it is, all the rules above apply.

TERMINOLOGY

There are a few other terms relating to moves and equipment (discussed below) which we should note at this point.

Some moves will grant you a bonus **Forward** ("take +1 forward"); in this case add one to the next move roll you make. Some moves tell you to take +1 forward to a particular move or type of roll (such as "take +1 forward to **mix it up**" or "take +1 forward when acting on the answers") so you only add one to a roll if it occurs under the conditions described. If you don't use your +1 forward immediately, write it down, including any restrictions on its use.

Some moves will grant you an **Ongoing** bonus ("take +1 ongoing until..."); add one to each relevant roll as long as the condition applies. This bonus may also be limited to a move or fictional situation (such as "takes +1 ongoing while you act on an assigned task" or "take +1 ongoing to **fast talk**"). If you get a +1 ongoing, write it down, including any restrictions on its use and when it ends.

Other moves will grant you **hold**, a currency which you can spend later for various effects described the move which gives it to you. When you gain hold, note down how much you have and where it comes from. For example a Hacker who rolls her **console cowboy** move might write down "Console Cowboy, 3 hold". Don't forget to mark it off as you use it.

MC MOVES

In *The Sprawl*, everyone makes moves, even the MC. The MC's moves work a little differently, though. Rather than a small bundle of rules that the players process when an appropriate event happens in the fiction, MC moves are in-fiction responses to opportunities the players present to him. The MC gets to make a move when:

- » a player misses a move
- » the players are waiting for something to happen
- » the fiction demands it

Moves can be **soft** – giving the players a chance to avoid bad consequences – or **hard** – imposing immediate consequences on the players. Hard and soft is not a binary. Instead, MC moves fall on a continuum with hard and soft as the end points.

Sarah (playing Zero): Oops, I rolled a 5 to **assess** the Neon Dragon looking for Ms Kenobi.

MC: Ah, that's a miss.

Sarah: Yeah...

MC: *Deciding to make their lives complicated now and speaking according to the MC principle make your move but never speak its name (MC principles will be covered shortly).* As you scan the growing crowd, you see Ms Kenobi enter the club, say a couple of words to the bouncers and move to the bar. Just as she starts to order a drink, a pair of men come in. They're looking around intently and their suits are way too corporate for this crowd. One of them makes for Ms Kenobi and the other starts scanning the room... and the ceiling. The coloured lights from the dance floor reflect off his chrome eyes for a second as his gaze moves closer to you. What do you do?

A full list of MC moves can be found in [Chapter 9: Running The Sprawl](#), but the ones you'll use most include:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| » Show them the barrel of the gun | » Offer an opportunity, with or without a cost |
| » Make their lives complicated now | » Tell them the requirements or consequences and ask |
| » Put someone in a spot | » Use a Corporation, Mission, or Threat move |
| » Inflict harm | |
| » Use up their resources | |

When the MC has an opportunity to make a move, they will choose one that follows from the events of the fiction and introduces a new twist into the story. This might involve events in the scene at hand – like *putting someone in a spot* – or it could happen behind the scenes – *show them the barrel of the gun*, for instance. This is discussed in greater detail in [Chapter 9: Running The Sprawl](#).

AGENDA AND PRINCIPLES

The MC's Agenda are the "things that must be done"; they are the golden rules of running *The Sprawl*. How does the MC know what move they should make? They look to their Agenda and Principles for guidance. As the MC, your Agenda are:

- » Make *The Sprawl* dirty, high-tech and excessive
- » Fill the character's lives with action, intrigue and complication
- » Entangle the characters in *The Sprawl*
- » Play to find out what happens

These are rules the same as moves and dice rolls. They lie at the heart of the MC's role. By following these rules you will establish the tone of the game.

Note that the MC's agenda is *not* to kill the characters. You are not competing with the players. You should fill their lives with action, intrigue and complications, not death and failure. If the characters struggle through an action-packed game of corporate tricks and double-crosses, then you have succeeded as MC. The MC's Agenda are discussed in detail in [Chapter 9: Running The Sprawl](#).

Principles are the specific tools you use to fulfil your Agenda. They are best practices for using your Moves to achieve your Agenda. These are the MC principles:

- » Chrome everything, then make it dirty
- » Name everyone
- » Begin and end with the fiction
- » Make everything Corporate
- » Address the characters, not the players
- » Make everything personal; complicate everything
- » Make your move, but misdirect
- » Treat your NPCs like disposable assets
- » Ask questions and incorporate the answers
- » Think offscreen
- » Be a fan of the characters

MC principles are maxims to consider when contributing to the fiction of the game either by preparing missions between games, during the conversation at the table, and through the moves you make when the opportunity presents itself. These principles are discussed fully in [Chapter 9: Running The Sprawl](#).

EQUIPMENT

There are two types of equipment in *The Sprawl*: cyberware and everything else. Cyberware refers to machine implants that interface within the central nervous system of the human body. Some cybernetic implants augment the body's natural abilities (like muscle grafts or targeting suites), and others act as prosthetic replacements for limbs or organs (like cyberarms or cybereyes). You can read more about cyberware in [Chapter 5: Cyberware](#). For the rest of the gear you might need to complete your missions – weapons, armour, vehicles, cyberdecks, and so on – see [Chapter 6: Assets](#).

TAGS

A tag is a word which describes a significant fictional characteristic of something in *The Sprawl*. Many things in *The Sprawl* have tags: characters are often **+hunted**, cyberware can be **+substandard**, weapons can be **+messy**, gangs might be **+loyal**, vehicles **+flashy**, drones **+fragile**, and so on. Tags are fictional cues which provide opportunities or constraints for the actions of the characters or the MC.

Tags are descriptive elements which suggest how the tagged object might affect the fiction. If a gang is **+loyal**, then you can expect that they won't betray you. If the drone is **+fragile**, it might get knocked out by stray gunfire or inclement weather. If the vehicle is **+flashy**, people will notice it. As a player, you can use the positive

aspects of these tags to your advantage. They should inspire action and suggest uses to players. As an MC, you can use the negative aspects of these tags when you add a complication to the story. They should invite and inspire MC moves. As fictional cues, tags should integrate naturally into the flow of the story.

Tags should inspire action and suggest uses to the players. Tags should invite and inspire MC moves when its time to introduce complications. The MC doesn't have to incorporate the negative aspects of tags into a given move (the *+fragile* drone won't always break, the *+flashy* car won't always be noticed, and the *+substandard* cyberware won't always perform poorly) but those are there as options if they suit the story.

Zero needs to take control of a room filled with corporate security guards. She chooses to mix it up with her monofilament whip (4-harm *+hand* *+messy* *+area* *+dangerous*) because the squad is all close to her (*+hand* range) and a hit with an *+area* weapon could take out a lot of people. A hit without an *+area* weapon could still achieve her objective, but leave fewer casualties. That means Zero might decide not to use a weapon with the *+dangerous* tag if the guards were holding an important scientist captive, since that tag is a giant invitation to the MC to make a hard move if she misses.

Hub misses a roll and the MC wants to cause trouble with his security crew (*backup*). If the crew were employees, they might come to Hub aggressively and in his face, demanding payment, but they're *+loyal*, so they come to Hub as worried but loyal associates, requesting help.

The MC is planning a mission. She looks over the character's tags and sees that Core is *+owned* by MDI and Oakley is *+hunted* by VirtuaTech. She decides that Core's handler at MDI will call her and demand that she clean up an MDI mess. She makes a note that if the Legwork Clock gets too high, she'll throw in a VirtuaTech strike team aimed at capturing Oakley and his team.

The fictional effect of a tag is the most important. Whenever a tag impacts the fiction of the game, the MC should incorporate it into their part of the conversation. If you don't know what the mechanical effect for a tag is, don't waste time searching for a rule; go with what is appropriate to the fiction. Some tags like *+loud* or *+messy* make this easy because you can incorporate the tag right into the description of the action (*+loud* draws unwanted attention, *+messy* leaves evidence behind that takes time to obscure). Other tags might be more difficult; a *+flashy* car could be an advantage when dealing with a particular gang and a disadvantage when trying to escape notice. At any rate, if the characters want to investigate a strike team that tried to ice them all, they probably should start with their accumulated *+hunted* tags. As disposable assets, that may not be a short list...

Some tags have an impact on game mechanics as well as on the fiction. For example, using weapons at a range for which they do not have the correct range tags incurs a -1 penalty and having the **+autofire** tag allows the character to activate other tags. In particular, cyberware and weapon tags tend to have mechanical effects which are described in the tag lists in the respective chapters. The same applies for a few tags found in Playbook Moves.

More information on specific kinds of tags can be found in the appropriate rules chapter.

Cyberware Tags (page 123)

Vehicle Tags (page 131-132)

Gear Tags (page 134-135)

THE MISSION: LEGWORK AND ACTION PHASES

The basic unit of play in *The Sprawl* is the Mission. A mission will usually last 2-4 hours, maybe longer or shorter depending on your group's style. For most groups this will be a single session of play.

This is the basic narrative structure of a mission:

- » **Get the job** (a basic move)
- » Legwork Phase
- » Action Phase
- » **Get Paid** (a basic move)

Once the group is more experienced with the game and its mechanics, the MC may vary this structure, much like a film director playing around with time and the sequence of events, but these basic elements will usually be there in some form. Most of your time and the fiction will be dedicated to the Legwork and Action phases.

In the Legwork Phase the characters prepare for the mission. They investigate the people, places, actions and objects involved in the job in order to plan how they will carry out the mission.

In the Action Phase the characters use the information they have accumulated to execute their plan.

The characters don't need to know everything about the elements of the mission, nor does their plan need to be worked out in detail. Characters in *The Sprawl* are professionals. They may not always act like it, but they prepare like it and they have the experience you'd expect from professionals. You as a player, on the other hand, are probably not a professional shadow operative. The Playbooks and the Basic Moves feature several moves which help the characters adapt to the situation as it unfolds.

One tool which helps players bridge this gap are two special types of **hold** ([intel] and [gear]). In the course of investigating and planning in the Legwork phase, the

characters accumulate these currencies and then, during the Action Phase, the players can spend [intel] and [gear], to retroactively narrate that professionalism and planning when it becomes relevant. This helps you all get to the action rather than spending hours of game time planning every contingency. When you get [intel] or [gear], write it down. Sometimes a move will specify that the [intel] or [gear] that it provides be used in a particular way (such as the Hunter's **on the trail**). If so, make a note of that.

Do some legwork; find out the story; get some [intel] and [gear]. During the Action phase, the players spend [intel] and [gear] to act boldly and complete the mission.

For more on how missions are structured see [Chapter 11: Missions](#).

COUNTDOWN CLOCKS

There's one more important mechanic in *The Sprawl*: Countdown Clocks; they look like this:



As the name suggests, Countdown Clocks are a timing mechanism; a countdown to "midnight". When certain events happen in the story, the MC will "advance" the Countdown Clock - fill in the leftmost unfilled box on the track. When you read a Countdown Clock, the leftmost filled box is the clock's value; so if the first two boxes are filled in, the clock is at 1800. As the clock advances to certain values, it might trigger certain effects in the story and when it reaches 0000 something important is certain to happen. There are three types of Countdown Clock that merit special attention: Harm Clocks, Mission Clocks and Corporate Clocks.

HARM CLOCKS

Every character has their own Harm Clock that tells you how messed up the character is. If a character's Harm Clock is at 1500, 1800 or 2100, they're battered, bruised and bloody, but mostly okay. Wounds at this level can be treated by someone with a basic knowledge of first aid. If they're at 2200 or 2300 they need the attention of a trained medical professional, and if they're at 0000 they need an ambulance, right *fucking* now.

When the characters get into dangerous situations they will take harm and inflict harm, usually with weapons (see [Chapter 6: Assets](#)). Weapons have a harm rating indicated by 4-harm, 2-harm, 0-harm, s-harm and the like. The number or letter in the rating tells you how much harm, or what kind of harm the weapon inflicts. If the harm rating has a number, that indicates how many segments of the Harm Clock are filled in when that weapon hits. Weapons with 0-harm or s-harm (stun damage) might not alter the character's Harm Clock, but they still force the victim to make the **Harm** move ([Chapter 2: Basic Moves](#)) which may alter the Harm Clock.

MISSION CLOCKS

There are two types of Mission Clock. The Legwork Clock tracks the amount of noise the team has generated in their investigation and preparation for the mission. The Action Clock tracks how alert the opposition is during the mission itself. If the Legwork Clock reaches 0000, the target of the mission knows everything the characters are planning. If the Action Clock reaches 0000, the target deploys overwhelming force or completely vanishes; the mission ends in failure. The Mission Clocks are described in detail in [Chapter 11: Missions](#).

CORPORATE CLOCKS

At the start of a game of *The Sprawl*, all of the players, including the MC, will establish a number of corporations that will play a part in the story. The MC will start a Corporate Clock for each of these corporations. These clocks tell the MC how much each corporation knows about the characters and how much they care about the team's disruptive activities. As a Corporate Clock advances, that corporation will begin to block the characters actions and even take action against them and their associates. The corporations are like sleeping lions. You don't want to poke them; they'll take your arm off. *The Sprawl* is about poking those lions.



DIRECTIVES & ADVANCEMENT

As the characters attempt missions against the corporations, they will discover more about the world and get better at what they do best. This is handled using the advancement system which is driven by your character's Directives.

When you create a character in *The Sprawl*, you'll select two Directives that your character follows. Choosing a Directive tells the MC that you want to see elements in the fiction that play on, towards and against that Directive. For example, if I choose the Compassionate Directive (see [Chapter 7: Advancement](#)), I'm saying that I want the game to include people in trouble so that I can find out in which situations my character will choose to help them and in which situations he will not. In addition to these Personal Directives, every mission will include Mission Directives. These are signposts for the actions the mission requires, and reward you for taking concrete action toward completing the Mission.

As you act towards your personal directives and towards completing the mission, you will mark experience. Each time you mark ten experience, you'll choose a new advance for your character. The advances you can choose are listed in your character's Playbook and include options like increasing one of your stats or choosing another Playbook Move. After you've gained five **basic advances**, you'll be able to choose advances from an additional list of **major advances**, which have an even larger impact on the direction your character takes. Some of these additional options have additional requirements or costs that must be met before they can be selected, however.

FICTIONAL POSITIONING

Not all the rules in *The Sprawl* have a direct effect on the dice or move mechanics. Some moves will give characters *fictional positioning*. That is, they give a character an option to undertake certain kinds of action. For example, *The Sprawl* does not have rules that directly cover climbing sheer surfaces. Whether a character can make a difficult climb is up to the fiction established by the table. If the character concept was a mountain climber or parkour specialist, perhaps they can. If they are an ex-corporate wage-slave, they probably can't... but when they strap on the climbing harness and jack-in that *Hosaka CyberSports Everest 101* skillchip, up they'll go.

Rules that give a character fictional positioning are as important as rules that give a dice modifier – more important, in fact. The fiction is where the story happens, the dice are there to add a random element to that story to make it more engaging for everyone.

This applies to the MC as well. If a character is **+hunted**, you have a fictional justification (actually a responsibility!) to have her pursuers appear in your story hot on her trail. If a character has **+substandard** cyberware, and the player rolls a miss, you have fictional positioning to have it glitch (among the many other moves you could make). When the player chooses these options, they're saying that this is an interesting complication for my character. This is called a flag.

FLAGS

A flag is a signal that a player gives to the MC that they are particularly interested in an aspect of the setting or their character. Some will be explicit byproducts of a discussion of what about *The Sprawl* interests everyone, but most will be implicit and on the character sheet.

The Sprawl assumes that everything the players choose on their playbooks is an indication of interest. This is a social contract that requires two things:

- » That players only make choices they're interested in
- » That MCs incorporate the elements that the players have chosen into the game

The MC's Agenda encodes this as "Entangle the characters in *The Sprawl*". The MC must think about each character's flags during play and between sessions, and incorporate them regularly into the fiction. As MC, you must put your bloody fingers all over them as well, using them as leverage to present complications and difficult choices to the player.

Some common flags you will find on the playbooks:

- » Directives tell you which complications the player wants to see come up during play
- » The playbook each player chooses tells you the kinds of missions that player is interested in
- » The answers to the cyberware questions tell you about the character's relationships with corporations, about issues of control, with technology, and with their role in the team. These questions are in [Chapter 3: Preparing to Play](#)
- » Move, cyberware and gear choices tell you what tools the player wants to use to complete missions.

The MC should use this information to make her life easier. If in doubt when planning missions and making moves during missions, incorporate the players' flags into what you are doing. Better yet, aim at them.

Remember to be a fan of the characters: if a player chooses to be awesome at something, give them opportunities to be awesome at that thing! Your friend picked the Killer because they want to solve problems with violence. Give them that opportunity! Present them with problems that can only be solved using a players' favourite piece of cyberware. Let them strike a blow against the enemy that is hunting them, so long as you don't let them off the hook!

Sometimes you will want to play to a character's weaknesses, but more often you want to play to their strengths. Set up those moments of weakness and challenge on a firm foundation of badass.

Rachid had told Elle he'd come get her. He didn't tell her that the pass he was using to get into the 7th arrondissement was forged, and that it would only give him 45 minutes to get in, find her, get her, and get back out. The petite Parisian woman barely restrained herself from throwing herself into his car, slamming the passenger door shut with shaking hands.

"Thank you." Her breaths were unsteady as he pulled away from the curb, the glittering lights of the Eiffel Tower looming from blocks away. She was trying to breathe slowly, but her breaths still lurched towards hyperventilation.

He knew the hesitant noises she was making were emotional, upset. He kept his eye on his rearview mirror, waiting for her to sort herself out.

"I shouldn't have asked you to come."

"It wasn't a problem, Elle."

"But it's your night off."

Back tracking, he tried to remember when he'd told her that. It was a lie, of course, but losing track of one's lies had a nasty tendency to make those lies painful traps that could kill you later. It must have been at the bar, when she'd drunkenly confided all kinds of things about her job that corporate security said not to talk about. As far as she knew, he worked there.

He flashed her a smile, one that lit up his thin face. "Can't say no to a friend, can I?" The smile he got in return was hesitant, but some small degree of tension left her shoulders.

Nodding to her briefcase when they came to a traffic light, he sighed. "You should stop holding it like that. Some camera's going to pick it up and think it looks like you're holding a bomb." Scrambling to put the briefcase away, Elle was still tense as they pulled into the thick of traffic, She was either too upset or too new to paranoia to notice what he had: the car following them.

He could take rue de Presbourg or rue de Tilsitt or he could make the next ten minutes of the other driver's life a living Hell. Elle flung her hand out and swore as she slapped a hand onto the bar over the front passenger door as Rachid proved his car was much, much faster than was considered legal, lurching into the nightmare of traffic contained within the L'Etoile roundabout.

BASIC MOVES



LOADING...

ACT UNDER PRESSURE (COOL)

10+: you do it, no problem

7-9: you stumble, hesitate, or flinch: the MC will offer you a worse outcome, hard bargain, or ugly choice

If you want to do something on a mission that isn't covered by the other moves, it probably involves danger or time pressure. **Act under pressure** involves instinctive reaction and sheer nerve which makes it a solid choice when you know a character has made a move but the action doesn't seem to fit any other move. **Act under pressure** to immediately find a hiding spot, run across a plaza under the noses of a security team, or cut through the vault door before the security office notices the cameras are down. **Assess** and several Playbook Moves allow you to spend hold to take actions that might otherwise require you to **act under pressure**. In those cases, advanced planning, careful positioning, or clever manoeuvring allow you to defuse the element that would otherwise cause you trouble.





MC: *Thumbalina's* engines whine as she powers into the alley. The Acumen response team flinches into the cover of the waste bins as the armoured hovercraft appears.

Nebula: While they take cover, I reach down and grab Spectre and I pull her into the hovercraft before the response team recovers.

MC: **Act under pressure** to see if you can get her inside *Thumbalina* before they gather themselves and can start causing trouble.

Nebula rolls a 7 and adds his Cool of 1, an 8.

MC: You reach down, grab Spectre by the arm, and start pulling her into the hovercraft. In your peripheral vision, you see an Acumen agent lean out and start bringing a barrel to bear on the two of you. If you concentrate on pulling Spectre into the cabin right now, you'll get her in, but the agent will get a shot off. What do you do?

APPLY FIRST AID (COOL)

When you treat someone's wounds using appropriate medical equipment, roll Cool.

10+: if their Harm Clock is at 2100 or less, reduce their harm by two segments. If their Harm Clock is at more than 2100, reduce their harm by one segment

7-9: reduce their harm by one segment. If their Harm Clock is still at more than 2100, they take -1 ongoing until they receive proper medical attention

Once a character has been given first aid, more first aid will not heal them further until they suffer harm again. First aid cannot heal missing body parts or damaged cyberware. To fix those problems, you'll need to make a deal with someone.

Trauma Derms are appropriate medical equipment for wounds at 2100 or less, more serious wounds require an EMT kit.

Rook's van gets hit and rolls, throwing Hazer around the cabin like a sack of vat meat. When Alif gets to him, Hazer is unconsciousness and his Harm Clock is at 2200; SECURITECH Bulls are closing in like nori around a Seattle roll. Alif grabs an EMT kit from the side of the van and goes to work. She rolls an 8. Hazer recovers 1 segment of harm, going to 2100, low enough not to incur the -1 ongoing penalty. Hazer is hopped up on stims and feeling okay for now.

ASSESS (EDGE)

When you closely study a person, place or situation, or when you quickly size up an opponent or a charged situation, roll Edge.

10+: gain 3 hold

7-9: gain 1 hold

In the ensuing action, you may spend 1 hold at any time to ask the MC a question from the list below if your examination could have revealed the answer. The MC may ask you questions to clarify your intent. Take +1 forward when acting on the answers.

- 🔌 What potential complication do I need to be wary of?
- 🔌 What do I notice despite an effort to conceal it?
- 🔌 How is _____ vulnerable to me?
- 🔌 How can I avoid trouble or hide here?
- 🔌 What is my best way in/way out/way past?
- 🔌 Where can I gain the most advantage?
- 🔌 Who or what is my biggest threat in this situation?
- 🔌 Who or what is in control here?

Assess is the move for examining a person, place or situation for useful information. Use it to gather information in the Legwork Phase, and to gain tactical advantage in tense situations. Although it has a restricted list of questions, it is more versatile than it seems.

As MC, be generous with your answers to **assess**. Paint a detailed picture of the scene so the players can accurately imagine and describe their characters actions within it. Remember, you are the players' window into the fiction. Because all the moves start and end in the fiction, you must provide enough detail for the game to run smoothly so they need to know what the space looks like, who is in it, where

the important actors are, where their characters are and what immediate threats are there. Exactly how much information you need to give will vary depending on the situation in the game and on your players, but scene descriptions are a great opportunity for you to chrome *The Sprawl*, smear it in dirt, and bathe it in neon, as your agenda and principles require. If there is anything hidden in the scene that you want the players to discover, you will have to give them clues, perhaps obvious clues; **assess** is your best excuse to do so. Give them information, then see what they do with it.

As players, remember to write down when **assess** gives you +1 forward.

Seamus Riley is checking out an abandoned warehouse on a tip when he comes across a suspiciously secure and well-maintained door. As he starts to investigate the door, he hears the sound of boots on concrete in the main storage area of the warehouse, cutting him off from the exit.

Seamus: Oh no. Okay, I look around and work out what I can do about this.

MC: Roll Edge to **assess**.

Seamus rolls a 10 and adds his edge of 2, for a 12: Easy! I hold three... How can I hide here?

MC: The ceiling is quite high here and there are several exposed girders you could climb up to.

Seamus: Great! Who is in control here?

MC: As you listen to the sound of the approaching boots, you dial up your cybercom and catch some radio traffic in Italian. It's probably those goons from the coffee shop again.

Seamus: Okay... I'll climb up into the rafters, pull out my monofilament line and wait. I'll save my last hold until they arrive.

PLAY HARBALL (EDGE)

When you get in someone's face threatening violence and you intend to carry through, roll Edge.

10+: NPCs do what you want. PCs choose: do what you want, or suffer the established consequences

7-9: For NPCs, the MC chooses 1:

- 🔌 they attempt to remove you as a threat, but not before suffering the established consequences
- 🔌 they do it, but they want payback. Add them as a Threat
- 🔌 they do it, but tell someone all about it. Advance the appropriate Mission Clock

PCs choose: do what you want, or suffer the established consequences. They gain +1 forward to act against you.

Kennedy: I lean in close. A line of reflected neon plays over the sweat beading on Traina's forehead. Kennedy presses her razor spurs into the manager's neck. "Don't fuck me around Traina. Where's the chip?"

MC: Are you bluffing?

Kennedy: Hell no! I'm **playing hardball**. She rolls and adds her Edge, 9. The MC chooses that Traina will do it, but wants payback.

MC: Traina blinks the sweat out of his eyes. "It's in the back. Be- be- behind the HelixTec crates."

Kennedy: "Check it, Hazer."

MC: It's there. Packed with memory foam in a beaten up old plastic box stuffed behind a surplus biostorage crate.

Kennedy: I stand up, running my razors down his chest. "Next time just give it to me when I ask." We leave.

MC: After you leave, Traina sits limply on the floor for a while, breathing heavily then a resolute look passes over his face. He gets up, locks the door, and pulls out a phone.

The MC writes down that Traina is a threat. She'll go back to flesh out the details later.

Play hardball is the move for threatening people until they do what you want. Once you start down the path of violence, turning back will completely undermine your position, though, so you have to follow through. If you're threatening to break the security guard's fingers, but you're trying to scare him, you're blustering; that's **fast talk**. If you have your gun to the head of the VP and you're going to redecorate his

office with his brains if he doesn't give you the codes, you're **playing hardball**. In *The Sprawl*, violence will get you what you want in the short term, but it will make enemies.

Threats of violence work equally well whether you're getting information about the job in the Legwork Phase or completing mission objectives in the Action Phase, but it's a risk. If everything goes well, it can be a quiet method of getting what you want, but when it goes poorly it can escalate quickly and blow the mission all over the news tickers.

ACQUIRE AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY (MEAT)

When you hit 0000 on your Harm Clock, roll Meat.

10+: you survive until the medics arrive

7-9: you survive at a cost. Pick one: +*owned*, substandard treatment (-1 to a stat), cyberware damage (give one piece of cyberware a negative tag)

6-: you bleed out on the street

Sooner or later, your character's number will come up, and that number will be 0000. Depending on the circumstances, that may mean death, but it may also mean EMTs and hospitalisation. At that point it comes down to your character's relationship to the corporation who owns that medical facility or the local street doc. For the MC, this is an opportunity to introduce complications. Tie the character's treatment into an established corporation or faction or introduce a new player. Hook the injured character with contracts, threats, cybernetic implants, addictive drugs, or antidotes. Corporations care about leverage, not legality or morality.

MC: "You wouldn't fucking--" BOOM! The retort of Li's shotgun cuts off Gant's reply. Gant takes 4-harm.

Gant: That puts my clock at 0000. "Shit."

MC: The world swims as you look down at the bloody mess of your chest. The alley flips upside down and everything goes black. Roll Meat.

Gant: Oooo boy... I get a 6... plus 1! 7!

MC: Close! The camera zooms up away from Gant's body and the soundtrack goes silent. The camera spins around for a while, then we see an ambulance brake heavily at the end of the alley. Two heavily armoured security guards jump out and take up covering positions as the EMTs run towards Gant's body. So, pick one of the options under **acquire agricultural property**, Gant. While you're doing that, let's go back to AntiK-Tera in the maintenance crawlspace.

MIX IT UP (MEAT)

When you use violence against an armed force to seize control of an objective, state that objective and roll Meat.

7+: you achieve your objective

7-9: choose 2:

- 🔌 you make too much noise. Advance the relevant Mission Clock
- 🔌 you take harm as established by the fiction
- 🔌 an ally takes harm as established by the fiction
- 🔌 something of value breaks

Mix it up is the basic move for taking out enemies violently. Your objective when you **mix it up** should seldom be “kill everyone”. You’re professionals on a mission, not sociopaths. “Take control of the server room and make sure the security team doesn’t escape,” “escape the ambush,” and “buy the team enough time to get out of the lab” are more suitable objectives. This move is about using physical violence to impose your will upon your enemies. Dealing damage is a side effect.

You can’t tailor your objective so that you avoid the consequences of your choice on a 7-9 result. If doing something “quietly” is an explicit part of the objective you might succeed in acting quietly (choosing *You achieve your objective*) but if you do not choose *You make little noise* you will be discovered after or during the action for some other reason. If doing something quietly is that important to you, choose that option.

MC: “Freeze slumscum!” A quadruped security drone steps between you and the entrance to the loading bay.

Kennedy: There’s no talking our way out of this one! Kennedy activates the neural switch to her synth nerves and with a series of smooth motions sprints forward, dives and rolls under the drone, draws both Solar Arms Exforcer 55Gs and unloads into the underside of the drone. I’ve got to clear a way out for the team.

MC: That sounds like your objective then, roll Meat.

Kennedy: 9, plus 2, 11.

MC: The drone tries to step out of your path, but it’s too slow and your high calibre rounds tear into circuitry and servos. It sparks and stops moving. The rest of the security team briefly open fire, but using the immobilised drone as cover you suppress them all while your team runs past into the loading bay.

RESEARCH (MIND)

When you investigate a person, place, object, or service using a library, dossier or database (or combination of them), ask a question from the list below and roll Mind.

10+: take [intel]; the MC will answer your question and answer a follow-up question from this list as well:

- 🔌 Where would I find _____?
- 🔌 How secure is _____?
- 🔌 Who or what is related to _____?
- 🔌 Who owned or employed _____?
- 🔌 Who or what is _____ most valuable to?
- 🔌 What is the relationship between _____ and _____?

7-9: take [intel]; the MC will answer your question

6-: the MC will answer your question... and make a move

Research is the move for examining a collection of data for helpful information. Although it has a restricted list of questions, it is still quite versatile.

AntiK-Tera is preparing to infiltrate a container ship, Golden Spiral.

AntiK-Tera: I hack into the Port Authority's matrix system and find the nightly patrol schedules.

MC: Their system looks like it's a prefab, straight out of the box, and sure enough, breaks just like one out of the box. You're in, make the **research** move.

AntiK-Tera: How secure is the physical security around the *Golden Spiral*? I roll a 9, +2 Mind, so 11! I take [intel] because I rolled a hit. *He writes that down for Later.*

MC: So I answer that question and you get a follow up. *He Looks at his notes on port security.* You find the nightly patrol schedules. Port Authority security is pretty weak overall by the look of it, hourly pairs of non-cybered rent-a-cops, but there are extra patrols around the *Golden Spiral*. There's a note about private security contractors with drone support as well: a company called GDT.

AntiK-Tera: Interesting! My follow up: what's the relationship between the *Golden Spiral* and GDT.

MC: How will you find that out from the Port Authority's files?

AntiK-Tera: I look up the ship's docking paperwork... are the security authorisation or financial records for GDT in here?

MC: That sounds like a good plan. *The ship is owned and guarded by HelixTec, the corporation the mission is against.* You look up both sets of records, and a few general matrix searches show up that both the ship and GDT are owned by a holding company in the Helixtec group.

AntiK-Tera: Ah!

As MC, be generous with your answers to **research**, especially on a 10+. Help the players feel comfortable planning and executing their mission when they succeed in their **research**. At the same time, take the opportunity to chrome-plate, dirt-smear, and neon-bathe the information and the world, as your agenda and principles require. You can be more cagey with information about the protagonists' employers, corporate motives, potential twists, and other complications, but if they ask about something and roll a hit, give them good intel! You want the characters to discover those devious corporate plots and they're good at their jobs, so give them the dirt, then see what they do with it. Be a fan of the players.

As players, remember to write down when **research** gives you [intel].

FAST TALK (STYLE)

When you try to convince someone to do what you want with promises, lies or bluster, roll Style.

10+: NPCs do what you want. PCs choose whether to do it or not. If they do, they mark experience. If they don't, they must **act under pressure** to go against your stated wishes.

7-9: NPCs do it, but someone will find out: the MC will advance the appropriate Countdown Clock. For PCs choose one:

- 🔌 If they do what you want, they mark experience
- 🔌 If they don't do it, they must **act under pressure** to go against your stated wishes

Then its up to them.

Fast talk is the move for convincing people to do things that might not be in their best interests. **Playing hardball** relies on the threat of violence and the promise of unpleasant consequences in the immediate future; **fast talking** relies on the power of your words. You can threaten violence with **fast talk**, but those threats are only words at this point. Once those words become violent actions, you're **playing hardball**.

Note the difference between the 10+ and 7-9 results when you use **Fast Talk** on a PC. On a 7-9, the **Fast Talking** player chooses one of the carrot (mark experience) or the stick (**act under pressure**). On a 10+, both the carrot and the stick apply.

Hoot: I shadow Dr Everett through the crowd waiting for an opportunity to have a quiet conversation.

MC: He circulates amongst the champagne flutes and hors d'oeuvres for a while before he steps out into cool night air and takes a seat at the edge of the rooftop garden and starts checking his phone.

Hoot: I slip out the door after him and make my way over to his seat. "Dr Everett, a word?"

MC: He looks up from his phone, "Of course."

Hoot: I hand him the tablet with the doctored surveillance photos. "We know what you're doing at the Richmond laboratory, Dr Everett. We also know that Empire have your family in the Twin Cities complex. We have a team in place ready to extract your family if you give us the laboratory access codes right now." I flip through the tablet to the video stream that AntiK-Tera put together.

MC: Dr Everett goes pale and starts to shake. Roll style to **fast talk** him.

Hoot: I roll an 8.

MC: Dr Everett remains fixated on the screen for what seems like minutes before reaching into his jacket and pulling out a datachip. He hands it to you silently.

Hoot: I take the chip and the tablet, move back past the pool to the party and head for the rendezvous with Rook.

MC: As the elevator closes you think you see Dr Everett lit by the underwater pool lighting as he talks to a pair of building security guards.

HIT THE STREET (STYLE)

When you go to a Contact for help, roll Style.

7+: You get what you want.

10+: You get a little something extra (*choose either* [intel] or [gear]).

7-9: choose 2 from the list below:

- 🔌 Your request is going to cost you extra
- 🔌 Your request is going to take some time to put together
- 🔌 Your request is going to attract unwanted attention, complications or consequences
- 🔌 Your contact needs you to help them out with something. If you turn them down take -1 ongoing to this move till you make it right

While investigating, preparing and undertaking missions, your team will often need help from specialists, need a particular piece of gear or cyberware, or require a key piece of information about a target. **Hit the street** is the move for dealing with your contacts to get any of those things. You must have a relevant Contact to use **hit the street**, so declare a contact who is such a specialist or go to an existing contact to find out if they know of one. In particular, use **hit the street** to acquire cyberware and a street doc to install it with **go under the knife**. Both are discussed in Chapter 5: Cyberware.

Your contacts aren't running charities. They'll charge for their services, and for any gear you need from them. Fair prices for gear are listed in Chapter 6: Assets. Their services may also take time to organise and alert curious or unfriendly attention which can complicate the mission. Their own personal and professional issues can also cause trouble. If you choose any of these options, the MC will make an appropriate move to introduce these complications.

Nebula: I'm going to ask Boris, my contact in Little Moscow, if anyone has seen the missing girl.

MC: How do you usually meet Boris?

Nebula: Sometimes I call him, but I usually just turn up at his restaurant for a meal. That's what I do this time.

MC: Great. So as you're finishing your meal, Boris comes out of the back and joins you at your table. "How can I help you Nebula?"

Nebula: "I need some information, Boris." I show him the security camera picture. "Have you seen this girl?" I roll a 9 to **hit the street**.

MC: So you have to pick three of those options.

Nebula: Yeah... We have some time pressure, so I don't want it to take long. I'll choose the other three options: It costs extra, it attracts attention or complication, and Boris has a problem.

MC: Boris looks at the girl quickly and sits back. "Yes, I have seen her. This is bad news. Bad news is expensive."

Nebula: I sigh. "What will it cost me, Boris." I pull out my wad of the old paper money he likes.

MC: He watches you flip bills until you've put down 2 Cred then reaches over and slides the pile towards himself. The waiter brings him a ballpoint pen and a neat square of paper. He writes an address and slides it back to you. "Go to this address and tell Andre I sent you. Also..." he clicks his fingers and the waiter returns with a plastic parcel. "Give him this."

Nebula: "Am I playing errand boy for you now, Boris."

MC: "For this information? Yes."

The MC has decided that the complication will be corporate surveillance of the address that Boris gave Nebula.

DECLARE A CONTACT

When you need to call in a favour from a new contact, name and describe the Contact, then say why the Contact owes you a favour or why you owe them a favour. The MC will ask you some questions about the Contact and your relationship. Add the Contact to your list.

You can only **declare a contact** once per mission, although certain Playbook Moves may allow you to gain more contacts in similar ways.

Declaring contacts is an important part of *The Sprawl*. Not only does it introduce helpful NPCs into the fiction and expand your options for **hit the street**, it allows you to make statements about the world. Your Contacts are people with problems and you're a problem solver, so sooner or later their problems will be your problems. Your fence is involved with the Mafia? The Mafia are part of your game now. Your merc buddy from the Beanstalk Wars in Ecuador has a malfunctioning cyberarm? You added to *The Sprawl*'s backstory and signalled that malfunctioning cyberware is a story element you'd like to see.

Don't be shy about **declaring a contact** with a specialised skillset. It might be a large advantage now, but broad Contacts are likely more valuable in the long run. Of course, when you know a slick VTOL pilot, every mission looks like an aerial assault. And why not! If you want to run missions in a certain way, choose a focused contact and use them as often as possible.

Hazer has checked out the VirtuaTech Arcology server and suspects Black ICE.

Hazer: I have a friend who used to be a counter-hacker for VirtuaTech. Her name is Djinn. She got sick of the corporate life, zeroed her record and now she's retired. I helped her scrub her record, so she owes me.

MC: So if she's off the grid now, how do you contact her?

Hazer: I post encoded messages to a series of home and garden forums and wait for her to call. She has a botnet that scans the forums and alerts her. It's usually pretty quick.

MC: You only have to wait half an hour before your comm flashes with an incoming secure link. It's Djinn's avatar in a virtual environment. What does her avatar look like.

Hazer: She looks like a black-robed Bedouin warrior on a white horse.

MC: Her virtual environment is an urban wasteland. There's a burning gas-station behind her. The atmospheric effects are pretty cool. The dust eddies and smoke seem to waft into the faint shape of Arabic characters but then they vanish before your eyes. "Hey Hazer. How ya rezzin'?"

PRODUCE EQUIPMENT

When you produce the equipment you need at the right time, describe how and why your professionalism and forethought told you to bring this equipment on the mission and spend [gear]. You must spend [gear] to **produce equipment**.

Produce equipment is the move for converting equipment you've acquired during the legwork phase into a concrete advantage, either later in the Legwork phase or, more likely, during the Mission phase. When you make this move, the MC will ask questions about the equipment and how you obtained it. The answers must be appropriate to the mission, the fiction, and the tone of the game as established by the your table. You can only **produce equipment** that you could reasonably have in your possession or could obtain relatively easily.

MC: Bang! The door shakes with the impact of a heavy body, but your temporary reinforcing rods hold as you retract your datacord into your modded VirtuaTech Sabre-7. You hear the muffled sounds of instructions through the wall. I guess they didn't like you messing with their system. Now they have the apartment's only exit blocked off. What are you going to do?

Hazer: Dammit... How far is it to the next building?

MC: It's across an alley. You could try to jump...

Hazer: Can I spend a [gear] for a grappling line?

MC: Of course! How did you pick that up?

Hazer: Bees-Lee threw it in with the bag of guns I got for Gant. I pull it out of the duffel bag. "Bees, you fucking prophet." I aim it into a window across the alley and fire.

REVEAL KNOWLEDGE

When you reveal your knowledge of the opposition's preparations, dispositions or environment, describe how you discovered that information and spend [intel]. You must spend [intel] to **reveal knowledge**. Take +1 forward to exploit the opportunity offered by that information.

Reveal Knowledge is the move for converting the information you dug up during the legwork phase into a concrete advantage, either later in the Legwork phase or, more likely, during the Mission phase. When you make this move, the MC will ask questions about the knowledge and how you obtained it. The answers must be appropriate to the mission, the fiction, and to tone of the game as established by the your table.

Hoot is deep inside Zhuangzi's Sydney arcology when she finds the way blocked by an unanticipated security team.

Hoot: I'd like to spend [intel] from our earlier investigations and reveal knowledge of the ventilation system in this part of the arcology.

MC: How did you find that information?

Hoot: When Mack sent me the security schedule for the loading dock area, he included some miscellaneous facility maintenance information, including a plan of the ventilation system. I bring it up on my goggles and route my way past the security team.

HELP OR INTERFERE (LINKS)

When you help or hinder another character, roll Links with them.

7+: On a hit they take +1 or -2 forward, your choice

7-9: you are implicated in the results of the other character's move and may expose yourself to danger, retribution, or cost

Help or interfere is one of the most versatile moves in *The Sprawl*. Any time a character wants to **help or interfere** with another taking action they use this move. Helping the Killer take out the security team, covering the Infiltrator's dash across a parking lot, using online security plans to guide the Soldier to an exit route with the extracted scientist are all **helping**. It's a gamble, though. On a weak hit (7-9), the **helping** character is implicated in the failure of the acting character. If the acting character succeeds with a 10+, no problem, but on a weak hit or a miss, the **helping** character will be in trouble too and the MC will make a move against the **helping** player. The flip side is that +1 can make all the difference to the mission's success.

Interfering works similarly. If the **interfering** character rolls a 10+, they're free and clear. If they miss, then the MC will make a move as normal. If the **interfering** character rolls a 7-9, then they're implicated in the acting player's action. If the acting player still hits (7+) despite the -2, the MC will make a move against the **interfering** player that gives the acting player an advantage over the **interfering** player. Maybe the acting player has the **interfering** character at her mercy. Maybe the **interfering** character attempts to get away and runs into worse trouble.

If you plan on **helping and interfering** a lot, consider taking a playbook move that substitutes a stat for Links.

MC: Hoot, you burst out of the doorway and sprint across the plaza, scattering shiny white plastic chairs as you run. The MDI security team is right on your tail, MDI Firehawk machine pistols chattering and turning the plaza's furnishings into plastic fragments. What do you do?

Hoot: I'm sprinting across the plaza, my Omni BearStopper up and blasting a hole in the reinforced glass and diving into the street.

MC: You'll need to **act under pressure** to get out of here safely.

Alif: Can I help?

MC: What are you doing?

Alif: I flick my OmniDynamics Ravager to full auto and lay down suppressing fire from the van!

MC: Perfect! Roll your Links with Hoot to **help**.

Alif: I get a 9.

MC: So Hoot, you get +1 to your roll to **act under pressure** but if you mess up, Alif might be in trouble too. Roll Cool!

GO UNDER THE KNIFE (CRED)

When you have new cyberware installed by a street doctor, roll Cred spent (max +2).

10+: the operation was a complete success

7-9: the cyberware doesn't work as well as advertised, choose one: *+unreliable*, *+substandard*, *+hardware decay*, *+damaging*.

+damaging: sometimes it hurts like hell and eventually it will do permanent nerve damage

+hardware decay: it works *now*, but it's just a matter of time...

+substandard: it works, but not as well as it should

+unreliable: sometimes it doesn't work

6-: there have been... complications

When you have new cyberware installed in accordance with a corporate contract, ignore all of that bad stuff. You're *+owned*. Your cyberware works exactly the way *they* intend it.

If you want to have cyberware installed after the start of the game, use **hit the street** to acquire the hardware and the medical professional to install it, then use **go under the knife** to have it installed. Any time you have a doctor with a casual

approach to legality operate on you in a seedy back alley surgery, you're taking a risk. Wouldn't it be easier to sign that corporate contract?

Using **go under the knife** and **hit the street** to acquire cyberware is discussed in Chapter 5: Cyberware. Fair prices for gear (including cyberware) are listed in Chapter 6: Assets.

When the Kinshasa job went south, Seamus' arm got blown all to hell; he wants a new one... with an implant weapon. He doesn't want to get in bed with a corp, so he finds a street doc - Nikolai the Razor - through his contacts, and gets a good deal with hit the street.

MC: Nikolai's nurse preps you for the operation in a small, dark room buzzing with the sounds of the tattoo guns in the next room. He wheels you down a grimy corridor into a reassuringly clean and well lit room surrounded by matte plastic machines, glowing display consoles and gleaming robot arms. Nikolai's magnification goggles give him the look of a mechanical owl as you fall backwards into the soft warmth of an anaesthetic cloud. How much Cred did you spend on this?

Seamus: I don't have much to spare after that last mission, so I'm only spending 1 Cred.

MC: Okay. Roll and add 1.

Seamus (rolling a 3): Damn... only a 4.

MC (making an MC move): Your vision swims and coalesces into two suited figures. "Finally, Mr. Riley join us. We have job for you." He taps your new arm and his mouth twists into a grin. "You do job, or... arm go boom."

GET THE JOB (EDGE)

When you negotiate the terms of a job, roll Edge.

10+: choose 3 from the list below

7-9: choose 1 from the list below

- 🔌 the employer provides useful information [intel]
- 🔌 the employer provides useful assets [gear]
- 🔌 the job pays well
- 🔌 the meeting doesn't attract attention
- 🔌 the employer is identifiable

At the start of every mission, someone will **get the job**. Usually, the MC will describe how the employer contacts one of you or the whole crew to set up a meeting, where the meeting takes place, and what the employer or their representative looks like.

That representative will outline the basic idea of the job (the type of mission and perhaps the target). At the point in the conversation when the characters start negotiating payment terms or asking for detailed information, whoever is taking the lead in negotiating or questioning makes this move.

The first three options all give the characters advantages on the mission to come ([gear] or [intel]) or greater reward after the mission (Cred). The last option (*The employer is identifiable*), is potential insurance against betrayal. If *the meeting attracts attention*, that's an invitation for the MC to throw a complication into the mix or advance a Countdown Clock. Remember that the MC's agenda includes filling the characters lives with action, complication and intrigue! Chapter 11: Missions has more on **getting the job**.

Missing (6-) this move means either that the employer remains in control of the flow of knowledge and payment, or when they slip and give away additional information it reveals additional complications for the characters.

The MC decides that this job will come through Gant's contacts with Blackwater-Verizon. Gant has already established that potential employers contact him through an anonymous mailbox which he checks every morning...

MC: Gant, when you wake up in the morning and check your messages, you see a fixer at BV wants to meet at the Seahorse Club about a job.

Gant: BV, eh? I look into the Seahorse Club.

MC: You've never been there before, but you've heard of it. It's an exclusive private restaurant in a government-owned tower in Cumballa Hill called Mumbai One. Corporate executives often use it for inter-corporate business lunches and - because it has impeccable security - shady, arms-length, deals.

Gant: I call Kennedy.

Kennedy: "What's up Gant?"

Gant: "Job offer. Feel like dressing up?"

Kennedy: "Turtleneck or tux?"

Gant: "Tux. I'll pick you up at 8."

Kennedy: "Roger that."

[PRESS ANY KEY TO CONTINUE]

[CONTINUED]

MC: The service at Mumbai One is excellent. The valet parks your battered Omni without so much as a sniff. You are ushered politely and efficiently through the tower to the sweeping Arabian Sea views of the Seahorse Club. Your contact greets you, Gant. Who is this guy?

Gant: My contact at Blackwater-Verizon is Abbud Brahmbhat. We had the same handler when we worked for HelixTec. He went corporate, I stayed freelance. We kept in touch.

MC: Abbud greets you enthusiastically. "Gant! It's been too long! I've been wanting to work with you again since Vladivostok!" He waves you and Kennedy into his booth and pushes the privacy button on the table, surrounding you in a curtain of white noise.

Gant: "I hope this job is as good as that one, Abbud."

MC: "It should be, friend! It's a simple extraction." He flicks his eyes up, signalling his data-glasses, and a screen blinks to life in the table in front of you. It shows the face of an Asian businessman. "This is Thomas Li. He's done with HelixTec and wants out. I thought you might like the chance to get one over the old firm."

Gant: "I'm interested. Lets talk terms."

MC: Roll edge to get the job.

Gant: I roll 6, plus 2 is 8. Only a weak hit, so I can only choose one of those options. I want some extra [intel]. "Sounds good, Abbud. What can you tell me about Mr. Li?"

The MC describes the details of the extraction and the target. As the scene ends, the MC shows them the barrel of the gun and advances the Legwork Clock.

MC: As you walk across the Seahorse Club to leave, you notice a bearded man in a dark crimson suit seems to pay particular attention to the two of you.

GETTING PAID (LEGWORK)

When you go to a meet to **get paid** by your employer, roll and add the number of unfilled segments on the Legwork Clock.

10+: choose 3 from the list below

7-9: choose 1 from the list below

- 🔌 it's not a set-up or an ambush
- 🔌 you are paid in full
- 🔌 the meeting doesn't attract the attention of outside parties
- 🔌 the employer is identifiable
- 🔌 you learned something from the mission; everyone marks experience

At the end of every successful mission, someone will probably try to **get paid**. The location, timing, and style of the meet may be set by the characters or their employer, depending on the preferences and leverage of each party and by the success of the mission. The employer will usually try to dictate terms, but, if the characters have something or someone the employer wants they'll have to be flexible. Once those details are agreed upon, the characters should describe their approach (in whatever level of detail they like). Play out the scene as you would any other. Once the action is in motion, someone will make the move. Chapter 11: Missions has more on **getting paid**.

The MC's agenda includes filling the characters lives with action, complication and intrigue and a final betrayal at the end is part of that. The options here allow the players to set parameters on how that betrayal might play out. The options you don't choose are inspiration and invitation for the MC to throw a final set of complications into this job or set up complications for a future job. If you choose that the meet is *not a set up or ambush*, then the employer is not planning to eliminate the team. If you choose to be *paid in full*, the employer doesn't try to skim on payment. If you choose that the meeting *doesn't attract the attention of outside parties*, then the meet is between the team, the employer, and any assets each brings with them. If you choose that the *employer is identifiable*, then some clue gives away who the employer was. This may help with broader investigations or plot elements. If you choose to *learn something*, then everyone marks experience.

These choices give the MC opportunities for action. They do not guarantee that these things will happen. Similarly, these things may happen off screen, and result in the movement of a corporate Countdown Clock.

MC: Kennedy climbs into the van after Gant and the exec's daughter, lets off a few rounds in the direction of the remaining memetic zombies. Rook guns the engine and roars through the streets of *The Sprawl*. What do you do now?

Nebula: I call Mr. Dhoni and tell him we have his daughter. Let's get paid.

MC: Mr. Dhoni tells you to come directly to an address in the industrial district. He says he'll meet you there in an hour.

Nebula: How far from the meet are we now?

MC: You could be there in 25 minutes. That'll be about 1am.

Kennedy: Let's go straight there and check it out first. Drop me off nearby and I'll double round on foot.

Nebula: Can you get a drone there ahead of us, Rook?

Rook: Absolutely. I send up my Eagle Eye and start a search pattern on the site.

Gant: I'll analyse the data as it comes in.

MC: Okay, everything looks normal from the air. The address is a small office building, one the islands in this parking lot ocean of an industrial park. You pull over a couple of blocks away and Kennedy jogs off into the darkness. Someone roll to get paid. You didn't make much noise until you had to gun down the Church's memetic zombies. Three legwork segments were unfilled.

Nebula: I'll roll. 7... plus 3. 10.

MC: Great, choose three!

Nebula: I think we already know who our employer is, so not that one... We want to be *paid in full*, it's *not a set-up or an ambush*, and... do we want experience or no outside trouble?

Kennedy: I'm really close to an advance...

Nebula: Me too... we all mark experience.

MC: So you don't find out more about your employer and the meeting attracts outside attention... *The MC consults her clocks and threats. She decides that there's a Helixtec operative there collecting dirt on Mr. Dhoni. If the team don't find and neutralise the operative, the Helixtec clock will increase.* Kennedy, you move off into the darkness near the meet site. There are a couple of lights on in the buildings, but otherwise the complex looks quiet and deserted at this time of night. What are you going to do?

HARM

It's a dangerous world out there, especially in your line of work. When you suffer harm (even 0-harm or s-harm) lower the harm suffered by the level of your armour (if any), fill in a number of segments on your Harm Clock equal to the remaining harm, and roll harm suffered.

10+: choose 1:

- 🔌 You're out of action: unconscious, trapped, incoherent or panicked
- 🔌 Take the full harm of the attack, before it was reduced by armour; if you already took the full harm of the attack, take +1-harm
- 🔌 Lose the use of a piece of cyberware until you can get it repaired
- 🔌 Lose a body part (arm, leg, eye)

7-9: the MC will choose 1:

- 🔌 You lose your footing
- 🔌 You lose your grip on whatever you're holding
- 🔌 You lose track of someone or something you're attending to
- 🔌 Someone gets the drop on you

The full harm rules are in Chapter 9: Running *The Sprawl*.

Note that the dice results for **harm** are reversed; low is successful and high is complicated. Some of the results of the **harm** move may look pretty brutal – lost body parts and broken cyberware! – but remember that these can be replaced and repaired.

Does the character get a simple prosthetic replacement, a cybernetic enhancement, or adapt to and accept the loss? In *The Sprawl*, prosthetic replacements are as functional as the parts they replaced; they don't count as cyberware for these moves. Cosmetic cyberware is free.

There are no rules in *The Sprawl* for time or cost of recovery of harm between sessions. Unless the fiction demands, or it's interesting to everyone, the next mission should start with everyone's Harm Clock empty.



MC: *Lucifer* bucks and screams as the RPG splinters her bodywork, cracks the rear window and blows a chunk out of her back left tire. *Lucifer's* velocity tears her spoiler free and sends it spinning up and into the night as you struggle to correct for the impact. Your control display shows a heat spike near the fuel tank, then BOOM! *Lucifer* flips end over end, tossing you around the cabin like a trussed up crash dummy until she comes to a rest on her roof on the sidewalk. Take 3-harm and make the harm move.

Rook: I want low right? I get a 7... plus 3. 10... Ugh.

MC: The Blackwater-Verizon van screeches to a halt a hundred meters away and you see boots emerge and fan out. Which one of those options do you choose?

Rook: I'm gonna regret this... I'm choosing the cyberware option. The electricity fed back into my Control Systems during the crash and shorted the CPU.

MC: Ouch. It feels like your head is on fire as you force yourself to focus on the approaching kill team. What do you do?

Had it been any other naked man to barrel through the door of her pawn shop, Gina would have simply shot him. But it was Carlos, whose clothing was making an appearance somewhere else without him. She holstered her gun as Carlos stepped through the door, raising her eyebrows as she looked him up and down. "Carlos, if you're looking for a woman to get naked with, you have the wrong end of the neighborhood."

Holding his hands up as he tried to make a retort, Carlos merely shrugged his shoulders. "Sadly, I'm not in the market for feminine companionship, such as the delightful entrepreneurs of South Lake Union can provide." Walking away from the door to the center of the room, he stayed put while Gina keyed in the remote locks on the door he'd just come through. He eyed the glass case she stood behind as she tried to discretely pull up a muted local feed under the countertop. He'd decided the pistol he'd started to eye would be a reasonable replacement for the one that was out of bullets in a service tunnel underneath a certain corporate holding facility nearby. Pointing his finger at the case, he interrupted Gina's search for information. "That one. Obviously," he gestured at himself, "I'll have to come back to pay for it." He watched her lean on the eyebrows, canting her pierced eyebrow upward.

"You walk into my place naked, and then you say you want a gun, and that you'll come back later."

Carlos gave her a bright smile, though it was tight around the eyes. How long did he have before a door to door got the response team to here? "Gina. You're a business woman. You know I'm good for it, and I won't even yell about getting charged triple, to compensate you for having to lock up this early in the day. I'd advise you to lock up for the rest of the day, actually, considering they're not flooding the feeds with my photo." He saw the flash of uncertainty in her expression. You didn't fuck around with corporate security when you had something to lose, not in Seattle.

Not when what you had to lose was legal.

PREPARING TO PLAY

////REPORT.SUMMARY/////

PREPARING TO PLAY

An important part – the first part – of playing *The Sprawl* is developing the world you will play in together. When you get together to play for the first time, your first act as a group is defining the corporations which will be the main recurrent opposition in your game. When that's finished, the players pick playbooks and use the instructions on them to create their characters. During these steps, the MC and players will ask each other questions which begin to establish the world and the place of these corporations and characters within it. Chapter 10: The First Session explains how the MC plays their unique role during this process.

Every group will bring different desires and questions to the table, but there are a few that come up regularly. There is no set time in the set up procedure to ask these questions, so ask them as they come up naturally.

When is *The Sprawl* set? That's up to you! That said, *The Sprawl* works best as a believable extrapolation of current 21st century trends toward increasing corporate control, increasing commodification of human existence and effort, increasing division between rich and poor and increasing ubiquity of technology. Discuss among the group when it feels right to you to set your world.

What level of technology are we talking about? This is a tricky one. *The Sprawl* explicitly draws on the tropes of 80s and 90s Cyberpunk novels, games and movies, which pre-date the growth of ubiquitous wireless communications. Much of the technology in *The Sprawl* is kept deliberately vague so you can decide for yourselves whether you imagine cyberpunk as gritty 1980s punks connecting cables between their headware jacks and grimy back alley phone boxes or 21st century hackers exploiting security vulnerabilities in wireless networks using implanted or handheld wireless devices. As a group, discuss your ideas of what cyberpunk is and decide what imagery you want to see at the table.

Are the characters friends? Probably not. At the beginning of a game of *The Sprawl*, the characters all know each other professionally (the game creation process establishes these professional links in Step 9: Links). If friendships develop, great.



////REPORT.SUMMARY/////

[CONT'D]

HARDCOPY: [DESTROYED]

WITNESSES: [DETAINED]

If they stay as professional acquaintances tied together by common employment history, that's fine too. Play to find out!

Are the playbooks unique? This is explicitly not the case on *The Sprawl*. You're disposable. If you fuck up, another Hacker will step up to take your jobs, your contacts and your deck... actually no, he'll laugh at your out-dated deck and get the latest model.

Does that mean two players can use the same playbook? Most missions in *The Sprawl* require a small group with a variety of skills, so I would recommend not, at least initially. If two players want to use the same playbook, make sure everyone's cool with it. Then talk about why this team has two Hunters, two Reporters, or two Killers. It's an unusual situation that may have a considerable influence on the kind of missions the team is offered, and thus on the direction of the game as a whole.

Who are we as a team? What kind of jobs do you do? This may be conditioned by the mix of playbooks you choose. Your corporate employers want to hire competent operatives. The kind of jobs they offer will depend on what skills the team has. There's no need to "optimise" your playbook choices collectively; any group of 2-4 playbooks will work. However, different combinations will work in different ways. You may even consider whether your team has a collective identity or a brand that they sell to the corporate fixers.

Setting up *The Sprawl* involves 10 steps. You don't have to follow the order in which they are presented strictly. For example, your playbook move choices (Step 5: Choose Playbook Moves) may change how you want to assign your stats (Step 3: Assign Stats).

Sarah, Takumi, Aanya, John and Norah have gathered to play *The Sprawl*. They have discussed their understanding of what cyberpunk is and what kind of flavour they want to see in terms of technology. As MC, Norah has asked some of the questions in Chapter 9 and everyone has a sense of what aspects of society and technology they're all interested in. They've decided to set their game in a sprawling future version of their home city, and discussed what that Sprawl might look like.

STEP 0: DEFINE THE CORPORATIONS

Imagine an alien, Fox once said, who's come here to identify the planet's dominant form of intelligence. The alien has a look, then chooses. What do you think he picks? I probably shrugged.

The zaibatsus, Fox said, the multinationals. The blood of a zaibatsu is information, not people. The structure is independent of the individual lives that comprise it. Corporation as life form.

New Rose Hotel, William Gibson

Each player (including the MC) names and briefly describes a megacorporation (or an entity of similar scope like an organised crime syndicate or a government). The level of detail of the description may vary depending on the taste of the group, the taste of the player and the type of game. For a one-off or con game, a major sphere of interest for each corporation is enough. For an ongoing game, you might describe organisational goals and important corporate divisions, iconic locations or secret facilities. Draw inspiration from cyberpunk and near future media, or from contemporary corporate news stories. Combine currently active corporations into hybrid megaconglomerates.

There are examples of corporate names and types of business drawn from all of these sources of inspiration in Appendix 1: Names.

The corporations that you define are the major players in your story so create corporations that focus on aspects of a cyber-dystopia that you want to see in your game. Don't get too attached to the corporation you define, though. Sooner or later they'll try to kill you.

Norah (MC): Okay, Step 0 is to define the corporations that are going to be the major players in our game. I'll start... I want the idea of corporate military forces to be important in our Sprawl, so I'm going to start our list with Shanghai Security, an Anglo-Chinese military-industrial megacorporation who have active defense contracts with half the world's governments and are actively attempting to undermine the other half through covert operations or outright warfare.

She writes "Shanghai Security: military and heavy industry" on a piece of paper and places it in the middle of the table.

John: Nice! Well, I'd like to see biologic and cybernetic research play a part in the game, so I'm going to add HelixTec to the list. They got their start with genetic sequencing and have expanded to sit at the bleeding edge of cybernetics research. Their elite special paramilitary units have the best cyberware around and they regularly test their new models in covert operations in those regions where Shanghai is destabilising non-compliant governments.

He writes "HelixTec: genetics, cybernetics, military enhancements" under Shanghai Security on the list.

Takumi: Well I want to see some cyberpunk missions in space, so I'll add Solar Investments in here. They're a financial conglomerate who operate exclusive orbital habitats both for data security and as exclusive communities for the ultra-wealthy.

He adds "Solar Investments: financial operations and exclusive residences" to the list.

Sarah: I like that idea too, Takumi. I think Solar's big rival is Ecuadine Petrochem, an oil and mining conglomerate who are in the process of building a space elevator as part of their expansion into asteroid mining, and in the process, threaten Solar's domination of near-earth transport and habitat construction.

Takumi: Great!

Sarah writes "Ecuadine Petrochem: oil, mining, heavy industries, expanding upwards".

Aanya: Okay, so it's just me left... I want a megacorporation that's focused on cyberspace... oh, and media... Existence Entertainment. "It's better than real life!"

She writes down "Existence Entertainment: virtual media and simsense".

[PRESS ANY KEY TO CONTINUE]

[CONTINUED]

Sarah: What's simsense?

Aanya: It's when people with full-on sensory recording cyberware record everything they do for a while, then they or someone else sells those sensory experiences so other people can experience those things. Want to know what it's like to do a HALO drop or be a Formula One driver? Or to rob a bank or be in a firefight?

Sarah: Ooo, that sounds creepy!

Aanya: Yeah! Turn on, plug in, and switch off forever!

Norah: That looks great! We have a military corp, a cybernetics corp, an orbital finance corp, big oil, and virtual media conglomerate. I can already see some missions in there!

STEP 1: CHOOSE A PLAYBOOK

There are ten basic roles in *The Sprawl*. Everyone chooses one and takes that playbook.

The **DRIVER** plugs her car into her brain and roars off in a cloud of fumes and drones

The **FIXER** hooks people up with gear, jobs, friends, and trouble

The **HACKER** glides through computer networks taking what the job requires, and more

The **HUNTER** searches the streets for whatever or whoever needs finding

The **INFILTRATOR** is a master of getting into secure places and doing bad things there

The **KILLER** uses bleeding edge technology to commit violence

The **PUSHER** wants to change the world, one mind at a time

The **REPORTER** uncovers the truth and exposes the guilty

The **SOLDIER** plans and executes missions in the corporate wars

The **TECH** is the master of gear: building it, fixing it, and breaking it

The playbooks and everything on them are flags created by the players which give the MC information about what the players want to see in the game. Playbooks can't be flags unless the players have a clear idea of what each playbooks does, so the MC must describe the playbooks in enough detail that the players know the kind of character they are choosing.

Norah (MC): Now that we have our corporations, you can choose playbooks and make the characters who will be the protagonists in our story.

She introduces the playbooks one by one, reading out the brief descriptions in Chapter 3, says a little about what kind of thing each playbook focuses on, and puts the playbooks in the middle of the table for the players to look at.

Sarah: I want to play an Infiltrator! Is that cool with everyone?

John: I was thinking Infiltrator or Killer, so if you take the Infiltrator, I'll take the Killer.

Aanya: I'm grabbing a Hacker...

Takumi: Perfect, I like the sound of a Driver.

STEP 2: NAME & DESCRIBE YOUR CHARACTER

Choose a handle or street name for your character and describe their look. Each character has a number of options to choose from for each of eyes, face, body, skin and wear. These lists help establish the tone of *The Sprawl* and the individual playbooks, but are intended to be inspirational, not exhaustive. Players should feel free to create their own name, riff on the names provided, or select from the list provided as they wish. The same applies to the lists of looks and backgrounds.

Give your character an affectation; an aspect of personal style that sets you apart from all the other badasses with hard eyes and a nondescript face. Do you have distinctive tattoos, synth skin or hair, or a cosmetic implant? Do you wear a uniform or particular piece of clothing? Perhaps your gear is covered with corporate logos? Are you always chewing on bullets? Do your cybereyes display an external sports ticker?

Norah: Okay, so start at the top of the playbook by picking a name and look. Those lists are there for your inspiration, they're not restrictive.

The players start reading the playbooks and making selections.

Takumi: Actually, I think I want to play someone a bit more social than a Driver, can I have the Fixer instead?

Norah: Sure!

John chooses the name Oakley for his Killer. Oakley has artificial eyes, a scarred face, muscular body, decorated white skin and wears punk clothing.

[PRESS ANY KEY TO CONTINUE]

[CONTINUED]

John: Oakley is a rough looking guy with dark stubble that accentuates the long blade scar that cuts down his temple to his jawline courtesy of a jungle knife-fight. His eyeballs are totally black, vat-grown replacements necessitated by exposure to flashbangs defending a corporate facility from a covert raid. His arms are covered in an eclectic mix of tattoos as souvenirs from his tours. He wears a deliberately punked up version of corporate military wear; corporate logos turned into anti-corporate slogans, torn and frayed edges on still perfectly functional fatigues.

Takumi chooses the name Hub for his Fixer. Hub has trustworthy eyes and a friendly face, a thin body, brown skin and corporate wear.

Takumi: If you were to see Hub on the street, you'd think he was just a well-dressed corporate drone. He dresses to impress people in the corporate world; he wants their respect and their money. His skin is light brown, of indeterminate ethnicity. He has a face that makes people trust him, with a friendly disarming smile.

Sarah gives her Infiltrator the name Zero. She gives her a non-descript face, restless eyes, a lithe body, asian and indigenous skin, and street wear.

Sarah: Zero dresses to blend in. She has an extensive wardrobe and is always changing her clothes. There's nothing remarkable about her face, except that her eyes are always flicking back and forth taking in information and calculating entry and exit routes. Her complexion reflects her mixed Japanese and indigenous-Peruvian heritage. She moves with a cat-like grace and when she's sneaking in somewhere, her clothing is always matched with the terrain.

Aanya decides her Hacker is named Core. Core has smug eyes, a smooth face, a small body, black skin and worn clothes.

Aanya: Core is a young girl, about 16, top of the hacking game and she knows it. She's always looking for ways to embarrass her rivals and if you're not a class-A hacker, she doesn't think you're worth talking to. She doesn't give a shit about physical appearance, but her matrix avatar is a giant flaming demon with six arms and huge bat wings.

STEP 3: ASSIGN STATS

Assign the following numbers to the six stats (Style, Edge, Cool, Mind, Meat and Synth): +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, -1. Each playbook has one or two stats that are more important because they are used for certain basic and playbook moves that are central to that playbook. These stats are indicated on the playbooks. You'll probably want to assign a +2 or +1 to those stats, especially for your first time in *The Sprawl*.

Unlike the rest of the stats, Synth isn't used for any of the basic moves. Characters with cybernetic enhancements often have the option of substituting Synth for one of the other stats while performing certain actions. For example, a character with low Edge, high Synth and cybereyes may rely on their cybernetic optics and associated firmware to pick out details in a scene rather than their natural ability to read a situation. In *The Sprawl*, chrome and circuitry can replace any biological weakness.

Norah: Once you've all given your character a name and description, its time to assign stats.

Norah explains the six stats, which moves they correspond to, and how dice rolls work.

Norah: You can change your stats later on in character creation if you want. If you decide that you want to choose a playbook option that uses a different stat than the one you thought you wanted, that's cool.

John looks at the Killer playbook. It says that he should assign positive numbers to Oakley's Meat or Synth. John wants to play around with a lot of cyberware, so decides that Oakley will have Synth +2. He still wants Oakley to be tough without cyberware, and badass as well, so he sets Edge and Meat to +1. He doesn't care so much about Cool and Mind, so they get +0, and he's like to see Oakley get into trouble in social situations, so Style -1.

The Fixer playbook says that Hub should have a Style of +2 or +1, so Takumi assigns his +2 there. He looks at the Fixer moves and sees a couple of moves that use Edge, so he makes that +1. Hub is a Lover, not a fighter, so he puts the -1 into Meat and the +1 into Cool, leaving Mind and Synth at +0.

Sarah has played The Sprawl before and knows that Infiltrators need to stay cool in crazy situations, so she puts the +2 straight into Cool. Sarah wants Zero to be good during the Legwork Phase, so she puts her +1s in Edge and Style so she can assess and hit the street to find out as much as she can about places before she sneaks in. She plans on avoiding fights, but doesn't want to be a liability when they happen, so Meat gets a +0, as does Mind. Synth gets the -1; she'll look for cyberware that's good without having to substitute Synth for another stat.

Aanya sees that Hackers need Edge, Synth and Mind. She looks at the moves and sees that Synth is used for logging in and manipulating physical building functions, Mind is used for messing with matrix security and research, while Edge is used for taking down ICE. Core's gotta be an ICE-smashing badass, so Edge gets the +2. Synth and Mind get the +1s. Aanya wants to play up the young kid angle, so puts the -1 in Meat. Style and Cool get the +0s.

STEP 4: CHOOSE CYBERWARE

In *The Sprawl*, everyone's got chrome, but replacing human tissue with metal and plastic isn't a trivial exercise. Choose one piece of Cyberware from the options on your playbook. Think about how and why you got into this business. The MC will ask you two questions:

1. Why did you get part of your body cut out and replaced with electronics?

Choose one: prosthetic, forced, loyalty, enthusiasm, necessity, junkie, genetics, career, ideology, memory, military.

2. How did you afford to have someone cut out part of your body and replace it with electronics?

Choose one:

- 🔌 You scrimped and saved to buy it yourself. Choose one tag to apply to that piece of cyberware: *+unreliable*, *+substandard*, *+hardware decay*, *+damaging*.
- 🔌 Someone else paid for it; now you owe them. You're *owned*. Choose who owns you.
- 🔌 You fucked someone over to get it. You're *hunted*. Describe who you double-crossed.

The MC will make a note of who owns you, who's hunting you, the gear you have installed in your body, and any technical problems it might have. Be sure to choose an option that will be fun for you; your choice tells the MC which complication you find most interesting for your character and the MC will incorporate it into play regularly.

If you take moves that grant you additional pieces of cyberware you're not restricted to the options listed in your playbook. Instead, choose from the full list in Chapter 5: Cyberware. However, you must describe who paid for it, as above. Sometimes the cyberware listed in your playbook will differ from that in Chapter 5: Cyberware or in another playbook; use the rules on your own playbook.

Norah: Next, look at the cyberware options on the playbook. While you do that, think about the two questions I'm going to ask you. The first is "why did you decide to get part of your body cut out and replaced with chrome and circuitry?" and the second is "how did you afford to have that done?" The first one's open-ended and there's a list of options to use as inspiration: prosthetic, forced, loyalty, enthusiasm, necessity, junkie, genetics, career, ideology, memory, military. The second question has three choices: Did you scrimp and save and buy it yourself, in which case it's not very good and there are a list of options to choose from there. Did someone else pay for it, and now they own you? Or did someone else pay for it, but you've skipped out on whatever deal you had and now you're hunted? If you're owned or hunted, choose which corporation owns or hunts you.

John (playing Oakley): I chose synthetic nerves and a neural interface with targeting suite for Oakley. He knew that if he wanted to be more than an expendable security grunt, he had to get some mods, so he signed a lifetime contract with... *he looks at the list of Corporations established in Step 0...* Shanghai Security.

Norah (MC): So do you still work for them or are they after you now?

John: Oh, yeah, I skipped out on my contract after two years doing covert ops in Central Asia, went AWOL and now I'm hunted.

Norah writes down that Oakley is hunted by Shanghai Security on her MC sheet.

Norah: How about Hub, what cyberware does he have?

Takumi (playing Hub): Hub is always plugged in; he has a cyber-com unit with the *+encrypted* and *+jamming* tags. He got burned real bad on a job in Peru and his whole team got killed by a Shanghai Security response team because their pointman lost his radio down a ravine. He vowed never to be separated from the global communications net again. He was working for HelixTec at the time, and they paid for it. He's owned.

Norah writes down that Hub is owned by HelixTec.

Sarah (playing Zero): I'll go next! Zero has skillwires. Her nervous system got messed up by a toxic contamination event when she was a teenager. Ecuadine Petrochem compensated the victims, but the medical care either tied them into a debt spiral to pay for the proprietary medicine, or forced them into what amounted to indentured servitude to pay off the skillwires that gave them back full motor control. Zero always hated Ecuadine and as soon as she could she slipped under the radar and out of their grasp.

Norah: So she's hunted?

Sarah: Yup!

Norah writes down that Zero is hunted by Ecuadine Petrochem.

Aanya (playing Core): Okay, lucky last... Core has a neural interface with data storage. She has a row of interface jacks down her left temple, and a series of memory card slots down her right. She designed and built it all herself and had a friend install it.

Norah: Core's friend performed brain surgery on her?

Aanya: Yeah, she's a black clinic cybersurgeon.

Norah: Sounds like a good person to know! Since you paid for it yourself you have to pick a negative tag. Is it *+unreliable*, *+substandard*, *+damaging* or does it suffer from *+hardware decay*?

Aanya: It runs too hot and is slowly frying her brain. Damaging.

Norah: Nasty!

Norah writes down that Core's neural interface is damaging.

STEP 5: CHOOSE PLAYBOOK MOVES

Each playbook gives you one or two starting moves. Some may require you to choose mechanical or fictional details about that move. Make those choices now.

Each playbook also gives you a number of options for additional starting moves. Choose which of those moves your character has now as well.

If any of your moves allow you to choose more cyberware, go back to step 4 and answer those questions for your new hardware. The same people can own you multiple times, but pick a new enemy each time you fuck someone over. The MC will note your new problems.

Norah (MC): The next step is pick your playbook moves. Each playbook has one or two moves that you get automatically, then some you choose one or two of. Your playbook tells you how many moves to choose. Some moves might have some options to choose from that'll help define how that move works for your character. Make those choices now too.

*Takumi reads the moves on the Fixer playbook and sees that Hub gets two moves automatically: **hustling** and **I know a guy who knows a guy**. Takumi wants Hub to be the kind of Fixer whose side jobs support his shadow work, so looks over the options for **hustling** and chooses **Surveillance** and **Technical Work** as his two jobs. He writes down that he has 2-crew. Hub gets one more playbook move; Takumi chooses **smooth** (which substitutes **Style** for **Links** when helping) because he wants to be able to support the rest of his team well, regardless of his personal history with them.*

*Aanya sees that Hackers get **jack in** and **console cowboy** automatically. Neither require any additional choices. She looks over the rest of the moves and is faced with a hard choice. Aanya wants Core to be an ICE smashing badass, but she also wants her to have a little notoriety. She decides that Core will start off skilled, but not known: the confident and talented young gun with a chip on her shoulder about the lack of recognition. Rep can come later. For her first optional move, Aanya chooses **ICE breaker** to give Core an edge against all types of ICE.*

*Infiltrators get **covert entry** automatically. Sarah sees Zero as more of a sneaky type than a face, so she chooses **cat burglar**. Sarah already gave Zero a good Edge score, so she decides to double down on legwork and take **case the joint**. That extra [gear] (from **cat burglar**) and [intel] (from **case the joint**) will give her lots of options to get out of trouble during jobs.*

[PRESS ANY KEY TO CONTINUE]

[CONTINUED]

John looks at the Killer's moves and sees that he has several choices to make. His set move is custom weapon. John decides to build a big grenade-lugging gun. He chooses shotgun as his base and adds the options +automatic, +hi-powered, and +ridiculous payload. He names it The Shanghai Special (4 damage close/near loud messy autofire breach dangerous).

*Finally, John considers his move choices. Oakley is already pretty tough in a combat situation, so John decides to give him a non-combat option. He is attracted to **serious badass** which uses **Style** and **emotionless** which would allow him to substitute **Synth** for **Edge** when **playing hardball**. Oakley already has +1 **Edge**, so **emotionless** isn't much of an improvement and John does want Oakley's **Low Style** to cause trouble, so he chooses **serious badass**.*

STEP 6: CHOOSE GEAR

Each playbook has a set of gear options. Choose from the items as instructed. If there are particular items of gear you want or something your character should have, bring that up now. Discuss what kind of things you can assume you have automatically.

For example, I generally assume everyone has access to at least one smartphone or equivalent portable device for communications and online research; as many sets of regular, style appropriate clothes as they might need; and enough currency to buy food and public transport as required. Remember that the characters are professionals who have the ability do their jobs properly. The Killer can maintain his weapons, the Reporter can record conversations with sources, the Infiltrator need never want for balaclavas and black turtlenecks.

During play, and in particular as you plan how you will complete missions, you will need to pay money for goods and services. For that, *The Sprawl* uses **Cred**, an abstract representation of both pure economic purchasing power and reputation. You may be naked and on the run from a corporate holding facility when you try to buy a pistol from a pawn shop, but are you good for it? **Cred** is also what you stake on missions and spend on getting out of *The Sprawl* when you realise you're too old for this shit.

Everyone starts with five **Cred**. See [Chapter 6: Assets](#) for more details.

Norah (MC): After you've chosen your playbook moves, look at the gear section of your playbook and follow the instructions there to choose your gear.

Killers get their custom weapon, two other weapons and another item. John gives Oakley a linked silenced machine pistol and a machete as subtle options to balance The Shanghai Special. He chooses an armoured jacket - it's less protection than body armour, but also way less obvious.

Fixers get one weapon and two other items. Takumi chooses a semi-auto pistol, trauma derms and an armoured coat for Hub.

Infiltrators get three weapons and one other item. Sarah chooses a stealth suit, as well as a silenced smg, a hand taser and a sword to give her several quiet options.

Aanya's Hacker gets a deck automatically and chooses a performance deck, naming it Hellblade. She gets three programs to go with it: Lockdown, Sift and Alert to help Core spot and overcome ICE, and make some big scores on the side. Finally, she chooses non-deck gear: a flechette pistol, armoured clothing, and a flashy motorcycle.

Norah (MC): Once you've chosen gear, write down that you have five cred.

STEP 7: CONSIDER BACKGROUND & CONTACTS.

In any other circumstance, having to see a craven bowel-scrounge like Juke Ramirez would be about as high on Koko's to-do list as jamming a tack in her own eye. A slobbering troll with a perilous lack of loyalty, Juke is a former full-time arms dealer who used to indiscriminately sell weaponry to all sides during minor commercial conflicts. A real go-to guy if your syndicate handlers pinched the budget, an enabler with no moral stakes whatsoever.

Koko Takes a Holiday, Kieran Shea

Think about your character's background. Does he come from the streets? Did she grow up in a corporate arcology? Does he move in media circles? Did she serve in a regular military or paramilitary force of some kind? You know some people from your old life who you can still go to for help and whom you'll name and describe during play. For now, write a brief note about the circles these contacts will come from.

Norah (MC): Next think about your character's background. Where did they come from, where did they grow up, who do they hang out with? This will guide the kind of contacts you have, so make a few notes about that.

John (playing Oakley): I already said that Oakley has a military background. He came from a working-class Hispanic family in some sprawling megacity on the eastern coast of the US.

Sarah (playing Zero): Zero lived in a middle-class suburb on the outskirts of the Sprawl. She had a happy and sheltered upbringing before the chemical accident. Then she spent a lot of time in hospitals, both for herself and for her family.

Aanya (playing Core): I'm going to play to the stereotype and say that Core is a spoiled brat who ran away from her cushy life in a corporate arcology. Her mother was an executive and her father was a researcher. They left her alone a lot because they were always travelling.

Takumi (Playing Hub): Hub's childhood was unremarkable, but he had a pretty decent career in corporate media before he decided to pack it in for the excitement and paycheck of a corporate troubleshooting career.

STEP 8: CHOOSE DIRECTIVES

Was I feeling guilty? Me? The man who walked through the world untouched by its corruption and its crude temptations. I was the man without desire, the man without fear. I was a catalyst, a human agent of change. Catalysts caused change, but in the end they remained unchanged themselves. I helped those who needed help and had no other friends. I participated in the action, but was never stung. I observed, but kept my own secrets. That's how I always thought of myself. That's how I set myself up to get hurt.

When Gravity Fails, George Alec Effinger

Each playbook includes four Personal Directives. These are one of the ways that you as a player get to contribute to the tone and direction of the game. Part of the MC's agenda is to make these directives relevant, so make your choices based on tricky situations you want to see your character in. For example, if you want to see your character interacting with powerless people, choose the compassionate directive and the MC will work to introduce situations in which you have to choose whether to help the powerless or not. If you want the game to involve a particular type of group or person, choose a directive that writes that group into the game.

Choose two Personal Directives which reflect your character's motivations. Some contain blank spaces for you to fill in with the name of an individual, group, organisation or even a viewpoint or philosophy which fits the structure of the sentence.

Every time you make a move in service to one of your directives, mark experience. For more on Directives, see [Chapter 7: Advancement](#).

Norah (MC): Now choose two directives from the list on your playbook. In *The Sprawl* your character gets better by "marking experience" when certain conditions are met. The first way you mark experience is with these Personal Directives, so choose two things from your list that you want to play to and get experience from.

Everyone also marks experience when you, as a team, do what the mission requires according to the Mission Directives. Those are different for each mission. Finally, you mark experience when certain moves happen...

Aanya: Like the rep move I thought about choosing for Core: "When your reputation gets you into trouble, mark experience."

Norah: Exactly!

John: Two of the Personal Directives on my playbook have a blank space in them. Can I write in when it applies?

Norah: Yes. You just have to make sure the sentence makes sense. Usually it can be a group or an individual, but sometimes one will fit better than the other.

John: Okay, well Oakley is a Masochist. When he suffers one or more harm, I'll mark experience. He's also Protective. He has a daughter in *The Sprawl*; he looks after her and sends her money.

Norah: Tell us about Oakley's daughter! What's her name? How old is she?

John: Her name is... Robyn. She's ten and lives with a foster family. He sees her every week or so. She thinks he's in the army. Which is kinda true...

Norah: So when Oakley puts his responsibility to Robyn ahead of the mission, you mark experience.

John: Cool!

Takumi: Money is a major motivation for Hub, so I'm going to pick the Financial Directive first: When Hub hinders the mission for a chance at extra profit, he marks experience.

[PRESS ANY KEY TO CONTINUE]

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Norah (looking at her notes): Is that how his team got killed in Peru?

Takumi: ... Oh... yeah, definitely! He got greedy and they got dead.

Aanya: Yikes!

Takumi: And since then he's made a lot of contacts in the shadiest parts of cyberspace, trading sensitive information. When his membership in Darknet hinders the mission, I mark experience.

Norah: That's the Network Directive, right?

Takumi: Yup!

John: How long will it take for Hub to sell us all out?! Wow!

Aanya: Core's not going to sell the team out, but she is going to cause trouble. I'm choosing Illustrious! When your desire for fame draws unwanted attention to the mission, mark experience.

Norah: Perfect! What else?

Aanya: Um... Revealing! I want to know more about Hub's Darknet. When Core discovers more information about Darknet, mark experience.

Takumi: Awesome!

Norah: And last but not least, Sarah.

Sarah: Yeah... I was looking at the full list in the book but I'm just going to choose two from my playbook: Financial and Violent. She has a lot of repressed rage at the corporations, and it often comes out in missions: When she deliberately chooses to use violence to overcome a problem when a non-violent option exists, I mark experience. Financial is the same as Hub has.

Norah: Great, we're almost done, just one step left...

STEP 9: LINKS

"You took Chauvet from IBM for Mitsu," he said, "and they say you took Semenov out of Toms."

"Is that a question?"

"I was security for IBM Marrakech when you blew the hotel."

Turner met the man's eyes. They were blue, calm, very bright. "Is that a problem for you?"

"No fear," Sutcliffe said. "Just to say I've seen you work."

Count Zero, William Gibson

In the final step of the preparation process you will create a series of professional links between the characters.

1. Each player describes and introduces their character to the group.
2. Each player will tell everyone about a job their character did against one of the corporations established in Step 0. Describe your character's role in the job, and name the corporation you ran the job against. The character should play a leading role in the job, either in charge of the entire operation, or providing the critical skill around which the mission was based. This is a chance to show off a little.
3. The MC will start a Countdown Clock for that corporation. If a Countdown Clock already exists, the MC will advance it.
4. The player to your left will tell you how their character was involved in that job. They take +1 links with your character. The MC will advance that corporation's clock.
5. Continuing to the left, each other player will tell you if and how their character was involved too. If their character was involved, they take +1 links with your character. For each character that contributes to the story, the MC will note that character's involvement and advance the corporation's Countdown Clock by one.

Your choices at this point, and in the previous step, have a significant role in determining the starting point and direction of the game. There are n characters and $n+1$ corporations. If you spread out your links missions among the corporations, none of the corps will be particularly bothered by your team – at least initially. On the other hand, if two players choose the same corporation and some other players choose to join in on those missions, that corporation's clock could be filled up to 0000 from the start of play. This is a lever that allows the players to control the initial intensity of the game. Pull this lever as you wish, but do so knowingly.

At the end of this step, each character who was involved in your job, will have +1 Links with you. Having Links with people doesn't mean that you're friends, or even

that you regularly work together (although either or both may be true). It means that you are professionally aware of that person; you know how they operate.

That's it. Get a job!

Norah (MC): In the last step we'll work out how you all know each other. We'll start by going around the table and describing your characters to each other. Then think about a job your character did and which of the five corporations we established in Step 0 they did it against. This should be something that highlights your character's specialised skills, where you were the lynch-pin of the operation. Everyone involved in the mission knew who you were because your role was vital. On the other hand, you may not have known many of the people involved at all. Once you have that in mind, we'll go around the table again, starting with Takumi. You'll each describe your mission, leaving space for other operatives. Then the player to your left will describe their role in the same job. Then the player to their left gets to choose whether they were involved. If they were, they describe how. Then the player to their left does the same. Then we move on to Sarah, and repeat.

If you were involved in someone else's job, you get +1 Links with that character. On the down side, the first time any of you run a job against a corporation, I start a Countdown Clock for that corporation and for every character who joins in a mission against a corporation with an active Countdown Clock, I advance it by one step. If the clock gets above 2100, you've attracted the attention of that corp, and if the clock gets to 0000, they're coming for you. Depending on how you choose the corporations you move against and who participates, you get to control the state of the clocks at the start. So if you want to be chased by a corp from the start, then run a clock up to 0000. If you want a more sedate start to the game, spread your missions around these five corporations.

The players describe their characters.

Takumi: Hub put together a team that pulled an engineer out of a super-luxe Existence Entertainment arcology down in Antarctica. Of course we ended up hiking out, lost a few toes. The new ones are shiny, though.

Sarah: Zero was the lucky one who got to go into the arcology to secure the engineer. It was the most dangerous part, but at least it was warm in there!

Aanya: Core signed on thinking she was going to be able to do the whole job from her usual seaside bar in Greece, but Hub insisted that I freeze my ass off down there with him and hack the system from a ventilation and maintenance outpost.

[INSERT DISK 2 TO CONTINUE]

[CONTINUED]

John: Oakley wasn't on the mission, but he feels like he was because Aanya whines about it so much.

Norah: Great! Zero and Core now have +1 Links with Hub, and the Existence Entertainment clock is at 1800. Sarah, you're next. Tell us about Zero's job.

Sarah: Zero was hired to infiltrate an Ecuadine facility in the Ahmedabad-Vadodara Sprawl and steal the technical files for the lift-brakes of the new space elevator.

Aanya: Core hacked the system to help Zero get in and out.

Sarah: Did Zero have to get Core in?

Aanya: No. Core did the job from a seedy flophouse in Bhavnagar.

Norah: And did Core go looking for anything on the side?

Aanya: No, but she did crash the main server of the facility and left her binary signature in melted hard drives in their server farm.

Norah: Was Oakley involved, John?

John: No. Zero didn't think she needed backup. She was right.

Norah: And Hub?

Takumi: Hub was actually contracted to lead the Plan B extraction team. It was a great holiday.

Norah Okay! Sounds like a smooth mission. Don't get used to it! Hub and Core get +1 Links with Zero, and the Ecuadine Petrochem clock is at 1800. Aanya, have you thought of a mission?

Aanya: Yes! If it's okay with everyone, I'm going to push Existence's clock up a little more. *The table agrees.* Great. Core first found out about the Darknet that Hub's involved with during a job against Existence Entertainment. It was a standard infiltration and hack job, but while she was fishing around in the server for extra paydata she found a suspicious file.

Norah: What was the main job she was hired for?

Aanya: She had to edit all the files of some big deal simsense star. She didn't really know who the guy was, or care; it was just a job with mediocre pay that she was looking to supplement.

John: Oakley was the muscle on the infiltration job. It ended up taking too long and got a bit messy on the way out, but that's what he was there for.

Takumi: Hub wasn't involved with the job itself, but he found out about it later when Aanya started snooping around the Darknet connection and Existence goons smashed down his door.

[INSERT DISK 3 TO CONTINUE]

[CONTINUED]

Norah: That's enough for a Link!

Sarah: Well, there's an obvious connection to Zero if I want it, but the clock was at 1800 and three more advances puts it at 2300. I don't think I want to run it all the way to 0000 before we even start, so Zero wasn't involved.

Norah: Yeah, so the clock is at 2300 and Oakley and Hub have +1 Links with Core. That just leaves Oakley.

John: Back when he still worked for Shanghai Security, Oakley was sent on a mission against a HelixTec-supplied drug lord in the ruins of California. It was a no-frills military op under Oakley's command. Compound assault. It was pretty messy, but within parameters. The sniper rounds didn't penetrate the building's safety glass, so we hit him with an IED as he tried to bug out.

Takumi: Well Hub is *+owned* by HelixTec, He was there in an unofficial capacity, as an "advisor", to monitor HelixTec's investments. They weren't too impressed with his performance.

Sarah: Zero prefers her missions with a little more subtlety, so I'll skip this one.

Aanya: Core was involved. The compound had pretty decent electronic security network, but it was off the grid. They had to get Core close enough to hook into the network to bring it down.

Norah: That means that Core and Hub each have +1 Links with Oakley, and the HelixTec clock is at 1800. Now we're ready to play!

Salome had motioned Fitch and Clarence into an alcove. Fitch was more than happy to maintain radio silence as the woman put her synthetic nerves to work in the sort of lethal series of movements their client had never expected to see outside the movies his boyfriend starred in. This was unfortunately very real, but the low light hid most of the blood. There was the arc of light from the taser, the sound of shuriken cutting through air and into flesh, the soft pop of a silenced pistol. Fitch had covered her from the alcove, but he never had to pull the trigger.

Shaking her head, she purred into her comm. "Cinderella, you didn't tell me we'd be making friends down there."

"You knew there was a chance of physical security that far down! I didn't even SEE them on my pickups till they were practically on top of you."

Aware that the young woman on the end of the comm hated Salome right now, or was furious at herself, she motioned Fitch and a shell-shocked Clarence into motion, taking the lead as she stepped lightly over the corpses of the three corporate security professionals she was leaving as a lesson behind them. "You could always make it up to me later. Say, with dinner?" Salome grinned at the silence on the comm, interrupted by a faint sputtering noise. Smiling to herself, Salome and Fitch fell into step with each other, lovesick Clarence between them. Fitch covered the corner while she crept ahead.

"I don't date coworkers." Cinderella had managed to scrape up some careful dignity, her tone of voice calm, even dismissive. Salome rolled her eyes, tscking softly with her tongue. "When this job is done, we're not coworkers anymore."

>>>>.chptr.>>>>00004>>>>>>

PLAYBOOKS

CONTINUE? [Y/N]

////PRELIMINARY.ASSETMENT////////
EntryPoint:[LOCATED_SECURED]
ExitPoint: [AGENT_RESPONSIBILITY]



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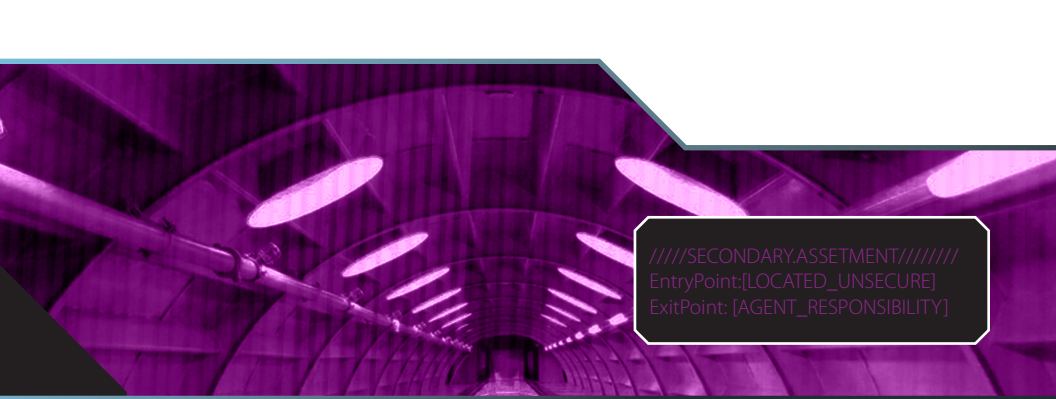
PLAYBOOKS

LOADING...

Each player in *The Sprawl* creates a character using a playbook. A playbook describes what the character does in the fiction, gives instructions for how to create a character that reinforces the tone and theme of *The Sprawl*, and gives special rules for supporting the character's role in a cyberpunk mission framework.

Each playbook begins with a description of the type of character you can play with that playbook and ends with a discussion of how the choices you make for the playbook influence the character's role in *The Sprawl*. Each of the playbooks contains options for names, looks, cyberware, playbook moves, gear, and personal directives. These options are designed to evoke a certain theme and inspire the players' creativity. Even so, players may create their own names and looks; no list can exhaust the reasonable possibilities.

Make sure that everyone at the table is on board with the tone of the characters and the game that you're building together. The MC will watch for this, but maintaining an appropriate tone is everyone's responsibility.



```
//////SECONDARY.ASSETMENT////////  
EntryPoint:[LOCATED_UNSECURE]  
ExitPoint: [AGENT_RESPONSIBILITY]
```

The ten basic playbooks each describe a certain type of mission specialist from cyberpunk narratives:

The **DRIVER** plugs her car into her brain and roars off in a cloud of fumes and drones

The **FIXER** hooks people up with gear, jobs, friends, and trouble

The **HACKER** glides through computer networks taking what the job requires, and more

The **HUNTER** searches the streets for whatever or whoever needs finding

The **INFILTRATOR** is a master of getting into secure places and doing bad things there

The **KILLER** uses bleeding edge technology to commit violence

The **PUSHER** wants to change the world, one mind at a time

The **REPORTER** uncovers the truth and exposes the guilty

The **SOLDIER** plans and executes missions in the corporate wars

The **TECH** is the master of gear: building it, fixing it, and breaking it

Starting cyberware and moves are restricted to those listed on the playbook, although some moves grant additional cyberware, which you can choose from the main list in Chapter 5: Cyberware.

Each playbook contains a limited list of Personal Directives to speed up character creation by placing all the options in the playbook itself, reducing the reading load for new players. If you've played before and if you have time, you can choose from the main list of Personal Directives in [Chapter 7: Advancement](#), or even make up your own.



Neurotransmitters lick with their chemical tongues the metal and crystal in his head, and electrons spit from the chips, racing along the cables to the engine starters, and through a dozen sensors Cowboy feels the bladed turbines reluctantly turn as the starters moan, and then flame torches the walls of the combustion chambers and the blades spin into life with a screaming whine. Cowboy monitors the howling exhaust as it belches fire. On his mental displays... he watches fore and aft and checks the engine displays and sees another set of green lights and knows it's time to move. The howling of the engines beats at his senses... the flaming corn-alcohol throbs through his chest like blood and that the shrieking exhaust flows from his lungs like breath, that his eyes beam radar and his fingers can flick missiles forth like pebbles. Through his sensors he can taste the exhaust and see the sky and the prairie sunset, and part of his mind can feel the throbbing radio energies that are the enemy's search planes...

Hardwired, Walter Jon Williams

Wheelman, transporter, drone jockey. A sleek coupe, a rumbling hog, a drone-rigged panel van or a radar-baffled ex-military whirlybird -- when you **jack in** and feel the wind rushing over your exterior panelling, you are a god and the vehicle is your avatar. When the job goes smooth it's the easiest gig there is -- a Sunday drive with grandma -- but when things turn sour and the team needs a quick exit, well, that's where you earn your Cred.

Name. Aziz, Cartman, Cowboy, Demon, Frank, Furiosa, Luka, Max, Roadkill, Roo, Rook, Squirrel, Tower, an animal name, a violent name, a cocky name

CHOOSE YOUR LOOK:

Eyes: laughing, cool, hard, cold, distant, artificial

Face: blank, covered, attractive, decorated, rugged, thin

Body: toned, lithe, compact, scarred, augmented, flabby, unfit

Wear: flashy, formal, casual, utility, scrounge, vintage, leathers, military, corporate

Skin: artificial, asian or south asian, black, decorated, hispanic/latino, indigenous, middle eastern, white, _____

Stats. Assign each stat one of these numbers: +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, -1; your Cool should be +2 or +1

CYBERWARE

You get:

Neural Interface with Remote Control Module: Allows direct neural control of an appropriately configured external device such as a vehicle, weapon, recording device, or hacked electronic system. The RCM gives the interface wireless broadcast and reception capacity to allow the remote control of vehicles and drones. *Choose two of following tags: +encrypted, +multi-tasking, +inaccessible partition.*

MOVES

You get these two:

- 🔌 **Wheels:** You start with a cyber-linked vehicle. If your vehicle has Power+2, it may start with one mounted weapon system. To build your vehicle:

*Choose a **Frame**:* motorcycle, car, hovercraft, boat, vectored-thrust panzer, fixed-wing aircraft, helicopter, amphibious

*Choose a **Design**:* racing, recreational, passenger transport, cargo, military, luxury, civilian, commercial, courier

*Choose a **Profile**:*

- 🔌 Power+2, Looks+1, Weakness+1; 1-Armour
- 🔌 Power+2, Looks+2, Weakness+1; 0-Armour
- 🔌 Power+1, Looks+2, Weakness+1; 1-Armour
- 🔌 Power+2, Looks+1, Weakness+2; 2-Armour

For each point of Power, choose a strength; For each point of Looks, choose a look; For each point of Weakness, choose a weakness. If your vehicle has Power+2, it may mount one weapon system; Military vehicles may mount an additional weapon system.

- **Strengths:** fast, quiet, rugged, aggressive, huge, off-road, responsive, uncomplaining, capacious, workhorse, easily repaired
- **Looks:** sleek, vintage, pristine, powerful, luxurious, flashy, muscular, quirky, pretty, garish, armoured, armed, nondescript
- **Weaknesses:** slow, fragile, sloppy, lazy, cramped, picky, guzzler, unreliable, loud
- **Weapons:** Machine guns (3-harm near/far area loud messy autofire), grenade launchers (4-harm near/far area loud messy), missile launcher (5-harm far area messy breach), autocannon (4-harm near/far area messy breach)

When you've finished creating your vehicle, name it.

Arrow, Bianca, Christine, Hobbes, Jeeves, Lucifer, Lucky, Mamma, Needle, Ninja, R.H.I.N.O., Shit Box, Silver, The Other Car, Thumbalina, Vanguard, a technical name, a task-oriented name, an anthropomorphic name, a gendered name, an animal name

- ⚡ **Second Skin:** When jacked in through your Neural Interface to a cyber-linked vehicle:
- when you **act under pressure**, roll Cool + your car's power
 - if you **mix it up**, roll Synth (instead of Meat) + your car's power
 - if you **play hardball**, roll Edge + your car's looks
 - if you **help or interfere** with someone, roll Links + your car's power
 - if someone **interferes** with you, add your car's weakness to their roll (in addition to their links)

Choose one more:

- ⚡ **Chromed:** Choose another piece of cyberware at character creation or in downtime. Describe how you got it and paid for it the same as you did for your first piece of cyberware.
- ⚡ **Daredevil:** When you drive straight into danger without hedging your bets, you get +1 armour. If you take one or more harm, mark experience.
- ⚡ **Drone jockey:** You start with two drones. For each:

Choose a motive style: rotor, fixed-wing, quadruped, octoped, tracked, wheeled, aquatic, amphibious, submarine

Choose a frame:

- ⚡ Tiny (insect-sized): **+small**, **+fragile**, **+stealthy**, pick one sensor
- ⚡ Small (rat- to cat-sized): choose one strength, one sensor, one weakness, and one other from any category
- ⚡ Medium (dog-sized): choose one strength, one sensor, one weakness, and two others from any category
- ⚡ Large (bear-sized): **+obvious**, choose two strengths, one sensor, one weakness and two others from any category

Strengths: fast, rugged, off-road, responsive, uncomplaining, easily repaired, stealthy, tight encryption, autonomous, robot arm, armed, satellite relay

Sensors: magnification, thermographic, jamming, image enhancement, analysis software, sonar, medical

Weaknesses: slow, fragile, unreliable, loud, loose encryption, obvious

Armed: a weapon can be mounted on the drone. The size of the weapon is determined by the size of the frame.

- A small drone can mount a gun dealing 2- or s-harm with a range tag of close or less and without the autofire tag
- A medium drone can mount a gun dealing up to 3-harm with a range tag of near or less
- A large drone can mount a gun dealing up to 5-harm

- ⚡ **Eye in the sky:** When helping or interfering while piloting a drone, roll Edge instead of Links.

- 🔌 **Hot shit driver:** When you're driving a cyber-linked vehicle in a high-pressure situation, roll Edge.

10+: gain 3 hold

7-9: gain 1 hold

You may spend 1 hold to do one of the following:

- Avoid one external danger (a rocket, a burst of gunfire, a collision, etc)
- Escape one pursuing vehicle
- Maintain control of the vehicle
- Impress, dismay or frighten someone

Iceman: When you try to **fast talk** someone, roll Cool.

Right tool for the job: You have two additional cyber-linked vehicles (build each using the same method as your custom vehicle).

Sweet ride: When you **hit the street** in your vehicle, roll Style + your vehicle's Looks.

GEAR

Custom cyber-linked vehicle (as described above).

Choose one weapon:

- 🔌 Automatic shotgun (3-harm close/near loud messy autofire)
- 🔌 Heavy pistol (3-harm close/near loud)
- 🔌 Machete (3-harm hand)

Choose one:

- 🔌 Armour jacket (1-armour)
- 🔌 Synth leathers (0-armour, +*discreet*, subtract 1 when rolling the **harm** move)
- 🔌 Trauma Derms (allows you to **apply first aid** to characters at 2100 or less harm)

You start with 5 Cred.

DIRECTIVES

Choose two:

Illustrious: When your desire for fame draws unwanted attention to the mission, mark experience.

Intimate: When you put your friend _____ ahead of the mission, mark experience.

Rejected: When your former membership in _____ hinders the mission, mark experience.

Vengeful: When you harm _____ or their interests, mark experience.

DRIVERS IN THE SPRAWL

Playing a Driver in *The Sprawl* puts a spotlight on movement in the game. With a Driver in play, every mission should involve mobility and the chance for high speed chases, interceptions, and extractions. The Driver is more than a high-pressure taxi service. As the Driver, push the team towards mission strategies that highlight your skills, your vehicles and your drones.

The kind of **Wheels** you choose also pushes the game in a certain direction. A Driver with a powerful racing car might take an approach which favours fast assaults, screaming getaways and explosive chase scenes. A Driver with a rugged cargo helicopter might favour missions which involve movement into rural or wilderness areas or transport between cities. A Driver with a military hovercraft might prefer stealthy amphibious operations or running gun battles on harbours and salt-flats. Talk about your vehicle choices with the other players and the MC; make sure your vehicle choice fits with the kind of game everyone wants to play.

Drone jockey gives the Driver a lot of mission role flexibility. Drones can be configured for stealthy infiltration, high-flying oversight, or combat. All of these roles are useful in both the Legwork and Action phases as the main agent of a scene, or by assisting a player engaging in some mission activity. **Eye in the sky** increases your ability to **help or interfere** with your team remotely.

Iceman and **Sweet ride** give the Driver some muscle in social interactions.

A vehicle or drone's weaknesses give the MC fictional positioning to add problems and complications to the story through his moves: your fragile car will break, the guzzler will run out of gas, the unreliable van will stubbornly refuse to start. These will be problems that you have to deal with during missions, not attacks that will permanently remove an aspect of your character. Choose weaknesses that you think will result in fun problems to deal with, and prepare for them to come up in play.

FIXER

*I fly like paper, get high like planes
If you catch me at the border I got visas in my name
If you come around here, I make 'em all day
I'll get one done in a second if you wait.*

Paper Planes, M.I.A.

No matter what people may want to believe, it's a personal world down here in the shadows. If someone wants something, it's not so important what it is; what matters is who you have to pay to get it and make no mistake, someone's always going to **get paid** one way or another. As a Fixer, you're a matchmaker; you make sure the right people get the merchandise and the right people **get paid**. Sometimes those people live and work in the same shadows as you. You can forge a career among the little people, trying to avoid the gaze and muscle of the megacorps.

More commonly, Fixers try to latch onto the big score, working for the suits who cruise down from their luxury arcologies in armoured limousines looking for professionals – or suckers – to take their high-risk, high-reward jobs. Mega-corporate culture is full of middlemen, and sometimes those middlemen want to deal with a middleman of their own in the shadows. Making the suits feel important is one of the many services you offer.

Name. Gant, Hub, Intrigue, Jacinta, Jinx, Lilliana, Master D, Mr. Johnson, Sally, The Goto, a connected name, a gregarious name, a shadowy name.

CHOOSE YOUR LOOK:

Eyes: trustworthy, focused, artificial, cool

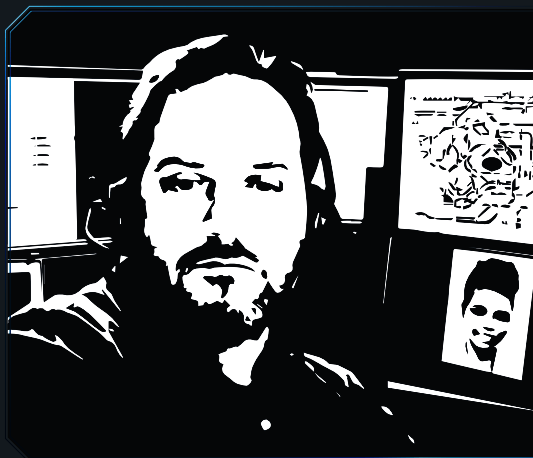
Face: attractive, scarred, hidden, friendly

Body: small, thin, bulky, toned, muscular, fleshy

Wear: corporate, formal, street, military, utility

Skin: artificial, asian or south asian, black, decorated, hispanic/latino, indigenous, middle eastern, white, _____

Stats. Assign each stat one of these numbers: +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, -1; your Style should be +2 or +1



CYBERWARE

Choose one:

- ⚡ **Cybereyes:** When you have cybereyes installed, choose three of following tags: *+thermographic*, *+light amplification*, *+magnification*, *+flare compensation*, *+recording*, *+encrypted*, *+inaccessible partition*. When your enhanced sight helps, you may roll Synth for **assess**.
- ⚡ **Cybercoms:** When you have cybercoms installed, choose two of following tags: *+encrypted*, *+jamming*, *+recording*, *+satellite relay*, *+inaccessible partition*. When monitoring communications or giving orders in a tactical environment, you may roll Synth for **assess**.
- ⚡ **Neural Interface with Data Storage:** When you use **research** to search internally or externally stored data, gain an extra [intel] on a hit. Choose two of following tags: *+inaccessible partition*, *+encrypted*, *+high capacity*, *+high speed*.

MOVES

You get these two:

- ⚡ **Hustling:** You have people who work for you in various ways. You start with 2-crew and two jobs from the list below. Between missions, choose a number of those jobs equal to or less than your current crew, describe what each job is, and roll Edge.

10+: you profit from each of your jobs

7-9: one of them is a Disaster and you Profit from the rest

6-: everything's FUBAR. The MC will make a move based on the Disaster for each job

Choose two:

- ⚡ **Surveillance:** You have a small network of informants who report on events; you then sell that information
 - Profit: gain [intel]
 - Disaster: someone acts on bad info
- ⚡ **Debt collection:** You have a few burly looking fuckers who collect outstanding debts
 - Profit: gain [gear]
 - Disaster: someone's out of pocket
- ⚡ **Petty theft:** You have a small crew who perform minor local robberies
 - Profit: gain [gear]
 - Disaster: they robbed the wrong guy

- ⚡ **Deliveries:** People hire you to transport things and you have a driver who takes care of that
 - Profit: gain 1 Cred
 - Disaster: the delivery never arrives
- ⚡ **Brokering deals:** You arrange for the right people to meet each other
 - Profit: gain 1 Cred
 - Disaster: the deal that you arranged goes wrong
- ⚡ **Technical work:** You have a couple of techs whom you supply with work
 - Profit: gain [gear]
 - Disaster: something bad happens to someone else's property
- ⚡ **Pimping:** You manage a small stable of physical or virtual sex workers
 - Profit: gain [intel]
 - Disaster: something goes wrong with a customer
- ⚡ **Addictive substances:** You manage a small lab producing either drugs or simstim chips
 - Profit: gain [intel]
 - Disaster: something goes wrong for a user or for the lab itself

⚡ **I know people:** Once per mission you may introduce a new Contact. Name the contact, say what they do, then roll Style.

10+: you've worked with the contact before; they have talent. Write them down as a Contact

7-9: you've never met them before, they're an unknown quantity

6-: you know them all right. Tell the MC why they dislike you

After you've rolled, describe how you contact them; the MC will ask some questions.

Choose one more:

- ⚡ **Backup:** You have a group of "associates" who provide security. This is a small gang of 5-10 hired thugs (2-harm +*small* +*employees* 1-armour). Pick 2:
 - Your associates are well armed: add 1 harm
 - Your associates are well armoured: add 1 armour and +*obvious*
 - Your associates are ex-military: add +*disciplined*
 - Your associates are more than muscle to you: replace +*employees* with +*loyal*
 - Your associates have bikes or a couple of other vehicles: add +*mobile*
 - You have a large group of associates (15-30): replace +*small* with +*medium*

Gain the following job, and +1 crew:

- ⚡ **Protection:** Your associates have your back
 - Disaster: Your associates have pissed off the wrong people

- 🔌 **Balls in the air:** +1 crew and choose a new job.
- 🔌 **Chromed:** Choose another piece of cyberware at character creation or in downtime. Describe how you got it and paid for it the same as you did your first piece of cyberware.
- 🔌 **Deal of a lifetime:** Deal of a lifetime: When you **hit the street** to sell something and roll a 7-9, choose one fewer result.
- 🔌 **Facetime:** When you engage someone in face to face conversation without intervening technology, take +1 forward to **fast talk** them.
- 🔌 **Hard to find:** You keep a low profile and actively avoid the people you owe. When you **hit the street** and roll a 7-9, choose one fewer result.
- 🔌 **Reputation:** When you meet someone of consequence who might have heard of you, roll Edge. On a hit, say what they know about you. On a 10+, take +1 forward with them. On a miss, the MC will decide what they've heard about you, if anything. Either you or the MC can say whether someone is "of consequence", but once you've made the reputation move on someone, they're "of consequence" and will be a recurring part of the story.
- 🔌 **Sales engineer:** You've demonstrated the use of just about every piece of gear available on the street. When you **produce equipment**, take +1 forward with that piece of gear if you use it immediately.
- 🔌 **Smooth:** When you **help or interfere** with someone, roll Style instead of Links.
- 🔌 **Street kingpin:** +1 crew and choose a new job.
- 🔌 **Word on the street:** When you **research** by listening to or recalling street level gossip, take an additional [intel], even on a miss.

GEAR

Choose one weapon:

- Holdout pistol (2-harm hand/close discreet quick reload loud)
- Semi-auto pistol (2-harm close/near loud quick)

Choose two:

- Armoured coat (1-armour)
- Armoured clothing (0-armour, +discreet, subtract 1 when rolling the harm move)
- *Flashy ride* (choose one: motorcycle, sports car, speed boat, regardless of your choice, give it +flashy)
- Trauma Derms (allows you to **apply first aid** to characters at 2100 or less harm)
- *Encrypted communications gear*

You start with 5 Cred.

DIRECTIVES

Choose two:

Deceptive: When your lies about your identity or your past put the mission at risk, mark experience.

Financial: When you hinder the mission for a chance at extra profit, mark experience.

Network: When your membership in _____ hinders the mission, mark experience.

Protective: When you put your responsibility to _____ ahead of the mission, mark experience.

FIXERS IN THE SPRAWL

Fixers are well-connected to the rest of *The Sprawl*. Fixers have contacts, allies and enemies in the layer of criminal sediment that surrounds and coats the corporations. Play a Fixer if you want to be the interface between the team and the rest of the world.

Fixers are excellent at legwork, especially gathering information through social interaction. They can introduce two new Contacts every mission (using **declare a contact** and **I know people**) and they have the social skills to leverage those Contacts to their advantage. Even if you've never met someone, your **reputation** may have preceded you.

Hustling is one of the only moves in *The Sprawl* that gives Cred, so the Fixer is likely to be the wealthiest member of the team. Use that wealth to **hit the street** for information and equipment. All those people who you owe favours to can become a real source of danger for you and your crew, though... you'd better be **hard to find**! Juggling the requirements of the mission and the requirements of your own street kingdom is the essence of the Fixer.

During the mission itself, use social moves and **facetime** to gain entry to places and to avoid trouble, and use all that [gear] and [intel] you rustled up through **hustling** and your Contacts to further the mission. Take **sales engineer** if you want to be an expert at using gear (as well as acquiring it).

As well as being a resource, **hustling** will cause you problems. Look at the disasters and think about the themes of the game. Choose jobs that suggest fun problems to deal with and suggest themes you want in the game. Talk about these with the rest of the players, especially *pimping* and *addictive substances*. Don't choose a job if it will negatively impact someone else's game experience.

HACKER

Cyberspace. A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts... A graphic representation of data abstracted from banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding...

Neuromancer, William Gibson



Console Cowboy, Netrunner, Decker; they're just words. Who gives a shit about words? Numbers are what matter now. Zeros and ones, baby, and when it comes to paydata, the more zeros the better. You're the shadow in the networks of cyberspace, going where you please and taking what you want. No mega-corporate system is safe from your icebreakers. Black ICE? Well, that makes it fun.

Name. Case, Core, Crowley, Dead Rob, Djinn, Frozz, Gaius Lupo, Hazer, Johnny, Nezumi, Patch, Wyldstyle, a sneaky name, a techy name, a mystical name

Choose your Look:

Eyes: impatient, twitching, smug, young, mocking, cool

Face: scarred, sneering, smooth, decorated, hidden

Body: small, thin, awkward, flabby, young

Wear: worn, corporate, punk, street, scrounged

Skin: artificial, asian or south asian, black, decorated, hispanic/latino, indigenous, middle eastern, white, _____

Stats. Assign each stat one of these numbers: +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, -1; your Synth and Mind should be +2 or +1

CYBERWARE

You get:

- 🔌 **Neural Interface** with **Data Storage**: The interface that allows you to **jack in** to the matrix. When you use **research** to search internally or externally stored data, gain an extra [intel] on a hit. Choose two of following tags: *+inaccessible partition, +encrypted, +high capacity, +high speed*.

MOVES

You get these two:

- 🔌 **Jack in**: When you're jacked into the matrix, you have access to the matrix moves in Chapter 8: The Matrix.

- 🔌 **Console cowboy**: When you connect to a secure system, roll Mind.

10+: gain 3 hold

7-9: gain 1 hold

While in that system, you may spend 1 hold for any of the following effects:

- Prevent a construct from triggering an alert
- Avoid an ICE routine executed against you, your deck, or your programs
- Increase your hold over compromised security or manipulated systems by 1

Choose one more:

- 🔌 **Black ICE vet**: When Black ICE executes a routine against you, the MC only chooses two options.

- 🔌 **Chromed**: Choose another piece of cyberware at character creation or in downtime. Describe how you got it and paid for it the same as you did your first piece of cyberware.

- 🔌 **ICE breaker**: You know how to disable ICE quickly and quietly. Once per Matrix run you may cancel a routine executed against you, your deck, or your programs.

- 🔌 **Neural scars**: you have 1-armour against Black ICE.

- 🔌 **Programming on the fly**: You can adapt your programs to the specific weaknesses of matrix constructs as you encounter them. When you successfully **compromise security** or **manipulate systems**, hold +1.

- 🔌 **Rep**: When you appear in the Matrix with a recognisable avatar, roll Synth instead of Style for **fast talk** and instead of Edge for **play hardball**. When your reputation gets you into trouble, mark experience.

- 🔌 **Search optimisation**: When you **research** a topic in the Matrix, you may always ask a follow up question. On a 10+, take an additional [intel].

- 🔌 **Tech support**: When you **help** a team member while jacked into the matrix, roll Mind instead of Links.

- 🔌 **Zeroed**: Your identity is a mystery which you closely guard. Your deck has +2 Stealth.

GEAR

Choose and name one cyberdeck:

- 🔌 Defensive deck (Hardening 2, Firewall 2, Processor 1, Stealth 1) *and two programs from the list below*
- 🔌 Performance deck (Hardening 1, Firewall 1, Processor 2, Stealth 2) *and three programs from the list below*

Programs:

- 🔌 Lockdown (When you successfully **compromise security**, hold +1)
- 🔌 Defend (+2 Firewall)
- 🔌 Efficiency Routines (+2 Processor)
- 🔌 Sift (Take +1 ongoing to **research** or **search for paydata** in a secure database)
- 🔌 Manipulate (When you successfully **manipulate systems**, hold +1)
- 🔌 Alert (When you successfully **assess** in the matrix, choose one extra option)
- 🔌 Identity Protection (+2 Stealth)
- 🔌 Eject (+1 forward to **jack out**)

Choose one weapon:

- 🔌 Flechette pistol (3-harm close/near quick flechette)
- 🔌 Machine pistol (2-harm close/near loud autofire)

Choose two:

- 🔌 Armoured coat (1-armour)
- 🔌 Armoured clothing (0-armour, +discreet, subtract 1 when rolling the harm move)
- 🔌 Armoured fridge (3-armour, immobile)
- 🔌 Microtronics workstation (you may perform field repairs on electronics and cyberware)
- 🔌 Flashy motorcycle

You start with 5 Cred.

DIRECTIVES

Choose two:

Deceptive: When your lies about your identity or your past put the mission at risk, mark experience.

Illustrious: When your desire for fame draws unwanted attention to the mission, mark experience.

Network: When your membership in _____ hinders the mission, mark experience.

Revealing: When you discover more information about _____, mark experience.

HACKERS IN THE SPRAWL

Technology is ubiquitous in *The Sprawl*. It protects the corporations and it hides their secrets. Most missions will involve penetrating corporate security and many will involve stealing corporate secrets. As the only playbook optimised for digital infiltration and manipulation, The Hacker plays an important role in any team.

The Hacker's strength lies inside the Matrix, so make matrix runs as often as possible. Make quick runs against minor targets in the legwork phase to get information about the main target, your employer, and what's going on. In *The Sprawl*, everything is controlled by Matrix systems, from corporate arcologies and military research labs to traffic lights and the automatic doors on the local convenience store. If you can't spot an opportunity, ask the MC what you're missing.

Hackers usually have high Mind, which will make them good at **research**. While planning missions, push the team toward solutions that involve infiltration of locations with digital defences that you can penetrate and pillage. Once inside a corporate system, you can disable security cameras, open locked doors, control air conditioning and fire suppression systems, control light levels and wreak havoc on a site's defences, facilitating the progress of your team. Seize control of the computer system and use it to **help or interfere** with people; **tech support** is particularly good for this.

Of course, these systems aren't defenceless. **Console Cowboy** gives you a good general ability to avoid trouble and several other moves increase your resilience when faced with ICE, particularly the Black ICE that guards the most dangerous (and lucrative) corporate servers. There are many levers and knobs for the Hacker to manipulate which will customise their matrix experience. Consider the balance of attack, defense, and utility that your cyberdeck, programs and moves offer. Are you a gung-ho firebrand with a hard drive full of firepower blasting your way through servers with abandon (**ICE breaker, rep**, performance deck loaded with sift, eject and tactician), an armoured truck bursting through the login gates and ram-raiding the main database while ICE bounce off (**neural scars**, defensive deck loaded with defend), a black-clad ninja the corps didn't notice until the money was all spent (**ICE breaker, zeroed**, performance deck loaded with lockdown, identity protection and manipulate), or somewhere in between?

And if those corporate ninjas find you and zip an RPG through your window? That's what the armoured fridge is for. Well, that and keeping the StimCoke frosty.

HUNTER

One: you lock the target

Two: you bait the line

Three: you slowly spread the net

And four: you catch the man

Headhunter, Front 242

There are millions of people in this sprawl, and millions of secrets. An immense cloak of glass, ferrocrete, plasteel and flesh; it's the perfect place to hide. Your contacts, skills, and experience give you a firm grip on that cloak, letting you ease it back and find out what's hidden underneath. What happens then, well, that depends how much they're paying, doesn't it?

Name. Archer, Boone, Deckard, Frost, Marîd, Markham, Mr. Black, Python, Quade, Richards, Ritter, Seamus Riley, Taylor, a real name, an anonymising name, a predatory name



Choose your Look:

Eyes: searching, restless, artificial, penetrating, resigned, jaded, obscured

Face: scarred, impassive, friendly, nondescript, weathered

Body: muscular, lithe, augmented, wiry, compact, overweight

Wear: worn, faded, corporate, casual, street, scrounged

Skin: artificial, asian or south asian, black, decorated, hispanic/latino, indigenous, middle eastern, white, _____

Stats. Assign each stat one of these numbers: +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, -1; your Edge should be +2 or +1

CYBERWARE

Choose one:

- 🔌 **Cybereyes:** When you have cybereyes installed, choose three of following tags: *+thermographic*, *+light amplification*, *+magnification*, *+flare compensation*, *+recording*, *+encrypted*, *+inaccessible partition*. When your enhanced sight helps, you may roll Synth for **assess**.
- 🔌 **Cyberears:** When you have cyberears installed, choose two of following tags: *+dampening*, *+wide frequency*, *+recording*, *+encrypted*, *+inaccessible partition*. When your enhanced hearing helps, you may roll Synth for **assess**.
- 🔌 **Skillwires:** You may slot chips to grant certain skills. While slotted, chips give +1 ongoing to moves assisted by the programmed skill. Skillwires come with two slots and you may have one chip active in each slot. If you start with Skillwires, you also start with one chip per slot. You can acquire more skillchips in play like any other gear. Example skillchips: martial arts, breaking and entering, rock climbing, skydiving, scuba diving, planning and logistics, firefight combat, extreme driving, parkour, first aid, military history and tactics.
- 🔌 **Tactical Computer:** When you **assess** in a tactical situation, hold +1, even on a miss.

MOVES

You get these two:

- 🔌 **Ear to the ground:** You have a knack for loosening lips and picking up information. When you circulate among a neighbourhood or a group of people, you may **research** to gather information.
- 🔌 **It all fits together!** You're a master of making connections between seemingly unrelated events. At the start of a mission, roll Edge.

10+: gain 3 hold

7-9: gain 1 hold

As you put everything together during the mission, spend 1 hold at any time to ask a question from the **research** list.

Choose two more:

- 🔌 **Big game hunter:** When you spring a trap for a target you have investigated, roll Edge.
 - 7+:** you have them trapped, the only way out is through you
 - 10+:** they are at your mercy; if the target attempts to escape, roll Edge instead of Meat to **mix it up**

- 🔌 **Chromed:** Choose another piece of cyberware at character creation or in downtime. Describe how you got it and paid for it the same as you did your first piece of cyberware.
- 🔌 **Deadbeat:** Everyone knows you only help your friends out when it's convenient for you. When you **hit the street**, you never take the -1 penalty when you avoid your contacts' problems. You may still select the option that your contact has a problem, and if you do that choice may have fictional effects.
- 🔌 **Enhance:** When you examine your gathered evidence, gain [intel] and roll **research** with Edge instead of Mind.
- 🔌 **Eye for detail:** You are a master at tailing people and staking out locations. When you perform surveillance on a person or a place, gain [intel] and roll **assess**.
- 🔌 **Human terrain:** When you investigate a group and spend [intel], name that group as your target. You gain +1 ongoing while acting against or in pursuit of that group. You may only target one group at a time.
- 🔌 **On the trail:** When you want to find someone or something, name your target. When you gain [intel], you may note that it concerns your target. When you spend three such [intel], the MC will describe where your target is; you say how the clues led you to that knowledge and how you have your target or its defenses at a disadvantage.
- 🔌 **See the angles:** At the start of the Action Phase, gain [intel] and [gear].
- 🔌 **Sniper:** When you set up a covered and concealed place to hide, roll Cool.

10+: choose 3

7-9: choose 2

- Your site is well hidden
- Your site has excellent cover
- Your site has an excellent field of view
- You have a similarly covered and concealed backup location
- Your spot is well secured

Then describe your hide site.

GEAR

Choose two weapons:

- 🔌 Heavy revolver (3-harm close/near reload loud)
- 🔌 Holdout pistol (2-harm hand/close discreet quick reload loud)
- 🔌 Flechette pistol (3-harm close/near quick flechette)
- 🔌 Hand taser (s-harm hand reload)
- 🔌 Sniper rifle (3-harm far/extreme loud)

Choose two:

- 🔌 Armoured coat (1-armour)
- 🔌 Armoured clothing (0-armour, +*discreet*, subtract 1 when rolling the **harm** move)
- 🔌 *Nondescript* sedan
- 🔌 Trauma Derms (allows you to **apply first aid** to characters at 2100 or less harm)
- 🔌 Glasses or goggles (Choose one: +*light amplification*, +*magnification*, +*recording*)

You start with 5 Cred.

DIRECTIVES

Choose two:

Behavioural: Describe your ethical code. When adhering to your code hinders the mission, mark experience.

Compassionate: When you put aiding the powerless ahead of the mission, mark experience.

Filial: When you put the advice of _____ ahead of the mission, mark experience.

Vengeful: When you harm _____ or their interests, mark experience.

HUNTERS IN THE SPRAWL

The Hunter knows a lot of people, similar to The Fixer. Where the Fixer is part of a social community, though, the Hunter is an outsider. He's a **barfly**, and often a **deadbeat** that can't be relied upon.

In the legwork phase, a Hunter is good at shaking down contacts (**play hardball**), staking out locations (**eye for detail**), and putting the pieces together (**enhance**). They come into their own when they can find that one key player who has the information that can reveal everything they need to know. As the hunter, push legwork in the direction of individuals and get **on their trail**.

During the action phase, Hunters use all that [intel] to **reveal knowledge** and profile their target. MCs should design missions with important individuals which the Hunter can track down and perhaps trap with **big game hunter**. Even if there are no important individuals, hunters can use their analytical abilities and survival instincts to **reveal knowledge** and **produce gear** at the right times, and their observational skills to act as a **sniper** in certain situations.

Play a Hunter if you want to drive play in the legwork phase and support the primary actors in the action phase.

INFILTRATOR

I can swallow it down / Keep it all inside

I define myself / By how well I hide

I feel it coming apart / Well, at least I tried

I can win this war / By knowing not to fight

Me, I'm Not, Nine Inch Nails



The Sprawl is a network of walls and enclosures; keeping people out, keeping people in. Your job is getting past those walls – quietly. You are a master of slipping past the barriers everyone thinks will protect them, keeping your presence a secret and, when you must be seen, keeping your identity unknown. You hide in the shadows, blend in with the crowd, avoid detection and get things done smoothly. Whether you're a black-clad techno-ninja or a suave face, an Infiltrator is a key member of any team.

Name. Bertrand, Blue, Kit, Loe Qi, Max, Nef, Smoke, Spectre, Zero, a sneaky name, a cool name, an efficient name

Choose your Look:

Eyes: dark, focused, black, artificial, cunning, restless

Face: hidden, ambiguous, nondescript, sneering, calm, weathered

Body: lithe, augmented, wiry, athletic, slim

Wear: utility, military, corporate, street, scrounged

Skin: artificial, asian or south asian, black, decorated, hispanic/latino, indigenous, middle eastern, white, _____

Stats. Assign each stat one of these numbers: +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, -1; your Cool and Edge should be +2 or +1

CYBERWARE

Choose one:

- 🔌 **Cybereyes:** When you have cybereyes installed, choose three of following tags: *+thermographic*, *+light amplification*, *+magnification*, *+flare compensation*, *+recording*, *+encrypted*, *+inaccessible partition*. When your enhanced sight helps, you may roll Synth for **assess**.
- 🔌 **Cyberears:** When you have cyberears installed, choose two of following tags: *+dampening*, *+wide frequency*, *+recording*, *+encrypted*, *+inaccessible partition*. When your enhanced hearing helps, you may roll Synth for **assess**.
- 🔌 **Neural Interface with Data Storage:** When you use **research** to search internally or externally stored data, gain an extra [intel] on a hit. Choose two of following tags: *+inaccessible partition*, *+encrypted*, *+high capacity*, *+high speed*. You get the Hacker move **jack in**: When you're jacked into the matrix, add the relevant stat to your rolls when you perform the matrix moves.
- 🔌 **Skillwires:** You may slot chips to grant certain skills. While slotted, chips give +1 ongoing to moves assisted by the the programmed skill. Standard skillwires comes with two slots and you may have one chip active in each slot. If you start with Skillwires, you also start with one chip per slot. You can acquire more skillchips in play like any other gear. Example skillchips: martial arts, breaking and entering, rock climbing, skydiving, scuba diving, planning and logistics, firefight combat, extreme driving, parkour, first aid, military history and tactics.
- 🔌 **Synthetic Nerves:** You react so quickly that you can almost dodge bullets. If none of your enemies have synth nerves, take +1 forward to **mix it up**. In situations where reaction time is critical, take +1 forward to **act under pressure**.

MOVES

You get this move:

- 🔌 **Covert entry:** When you attempt to infiltrate a secure area alone, roll Cool.

10+: gain 3 hold

7-9: gain 1 hold

As the MC describes the infiltration and the security measures you must overcome, you may spend 1 hold to describe how you overcome the obstacle and:

- Bypass a security system or guard.
- Disable a security system you have bypassed.
- Disable a guard.
- Escape notice.

Choose one of these:

- 🔌 **Cat burglar:** You specialise in infiltrating by unconventional access points and manoeuvring through locations by unconventional routes. During your infiltration, you will have opportunity to steal incidental portable items that might be useful later. After you have spent all your **covert entry** hold infiltrating a secure area through stealth and dexterity, gain [gear].
- 🔌 **Face:** You specialise in infiltrating by appearing to belong in places you do not, hiding in plain sight. During your infiltration, you will have opportunity to see or overhear information which might be relevant later. After you have spent all your **covert entry** hold infiltrating a secure area through charm and social graces, gain [intel].

Choose one more:

- 🔌 **Assassin:** When you attack unexpectedly, ask one question from the **assess** list for free.
- 🔌 **Case the joint:** When you take time to examine a location for security weaknesses you can exploit, roll Edge.
10+: gain three [intel]
7-9: gain [intel]
You may spend this [intel] in the normal way, or you can spend one point of this [intel] to ask questions from the **assess** or **research** lists.
- 🔌 **Chromed:** Choose another piece of cyberware at character creation or in downtime. Describe how you got it and paid for it the same as you did your first piece of cyberware.
- 🔌 **Jack in:** When you're jacked into the matrix, you have access to the matrix moves in [Chapter 8: The Matrix](#).
Note: You need a neural interface and a cyberdeck to make the most of this move.
- 🔌 **Master of disguise:** You can sell a persona so well that you set security forces at ease. While you are in disguise and your cover has not been blown, when you roll a 12+ to **fast talk** you may lower the Action Clock by one segment.
- 🔌 **Mother duck:** When you infiltrate a location you can get your team in as well. When you spend hold to *bypass a security system or guard* or *escape notice*, your team may accompany you.
- 🔌 **Plan B:** When shit hits the fan and you have to get out, name your escape route and roll Cool.

10+: sweet, you're gone

7-9: you can go or stay, but if you go it costs you: leave something behind, or take something with you; in either case, the MC will tell you what

6-: you're caught in a vulnerable position, half in and half out. The MC will make a move

- 🔌 **Psychological warfare:** When you attempt to influence the morale of your enemies by leaving evidence of violence while remaining undetected, roll Edge.

7+: your enemies are impressed and overly cautious, scared and demoralised, or angry and careless (MC's choice)

10+: you choose

- 🔌 **Stealth operative:** You have an intuitive sense of how to blend in with the rhythms of a secure area and can take actions that make its security forces feel at ease. When you **assess** while undetected and roll a 12+, you may spend one hold to lower the Action Clock by one segment.

GEAR

Choose three weapons:

- 🔌 Sniper rifle (3-harm far/ex loud)
- 🔌 Machine pistol (2-harm close/near loud autofire)
- 🔌 Hand taser (s-harm hand reload)
- 🔌 Silenced SMG (2-harm close/near autofire)
- 🔌 Silenced semi-auto pistol (2-harm close quick)
- 🔌 Monofilament whip (4-harm hand messy area dangerous)
- 🔌 Sword (3-harm hand messy)
- 🔌 Shuriken or Throwing Knives (2-harm close infinite)

Choose one:

- 🔌 Stealth suit (+1 ongoing to avoid being detected while alone and hidden)
- 🔌 Disguise kit (+1 ongoing to avoid being detected while successfully maintaining a fake persona)
- 🔌 Recording equipment
- 🔌 Trauma Derms (allows you to **apply first aid** to characters at 2100 or less harm)
- 🔌 Infiltration deck (Hardening 1, Firewall 1, Processor 1, Stealth 2) and three programs: Identity Protection (+2 Stealth), Lockdown (when you successfully **compromise security**, hold +1) and Manipulate (when you successfully **manipulate systems**, hold +1).

You start with 5 Cred.

DIRECTIVES

Choose two:

Financial: When you hinder the mission for a chance at extra profit, mark experience.

Intimate: When you put your friend _____ ahead of the mission, mark experience.

Network: When your membership in _____ hinders the mission, mark experience.

Violent: When you deliberately choose to use violence to overcome a problem when a non-violent option exists, mark experience.

INFILTRATORS IN THE SPRAWL

Most missions in *The Sprawl* involve getting into some place the corps don't want you, which makes getting into them the most natural application of the Infiltrator skills. Use **covert entry** to get in, use **mother duck** to get your team in, use **plan B** to get out, hope you roll well enough to take everything you want with you. **Covert entry** will let you bypass security and get deep inside the facility before you have to make any rolls. What you do on the inside will depend on the mission, but Infiltrators have several moves that expand their options including **assassin**, **psychological warfare** and **jack in** for wetwork, general distraction, and information retrieval respectively.

Your first choice as an Infiltrator is whether you are a black-clad **cat burglar** or a silver-tongued **Face**. Both moves allow you to pick up helpful assets during your infiltration. **Master of disguise** and **stealth operative** help you remain undetected for longer during the Action phase, giving you more time to complete your mission. The Infiltrator is one of the few playbooks that can interfere with the Action Clock.

The Infiltrator's role in the Mission Phase will often be clear, but they are also useful in the Legwork phase. The Infiltrator should push toward avenues of investigation which emphasise subterfuge and infiltration. Sneak into branch offices to conduct **research** against the main target; **case the joint** where the mission objective is located; use your high Edge to **assess** individuals and places of interest.

KILLER

The purist, non-conformist, jaded subhuman terrorist

From flesh to steel & blood to blade, I fight to exist

A rival of justice, extreme rush of hatred

Survival in a twisted world where nothing is sacred

Edgecrusher, Fear Factory

Eyes by Kikuyu Optics, arm by Nkembe Robotics, muscles by Helixtec, synthetic nerves by some bleeding-edge black clinic in Chiba. You're more machine than meat and more deadly than either. Some jobs require a soft touch, some a strong hand, others a dozen mags of caseless flechette rounds and twelve inches of retractable plastisteel inserted at high velocity into various reluctant organs. Those are the jobs you like. After all, you paid a lot for those mods, it'd be a shame not to use 'em.



Name. Angelo, Dead Eyes, John, LouLou, Kennedy, Knock, Mé Moi, Molly, Oakley, Sarah, Sleeper, an ironic name, a cool name, a deadly name

Choose your Look:

Eyes: hard, dead, mirrored, artificial, cunning, manic, unhinged, wild

Face: scarred, impassive, friendly, nondescript, weathered, decorated

Body: muscular, lithe, augmented, wiry, compact

Wear: military, corporate, punk, street, scrounged

Skin: artificial, asian or south asian, black, decorated, hispanic/latino, indigenous, middle eastern, white, _____

Stats. Assign each stat one of these numbers: +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, -1; your Meat or Synth should be +2 or +1

CYBERWARE

Choose two:

- ⚡ **Cyberarm:** Choose one of the following options. Additional choices can be added to the cyberarm later in the same way as adding a new piece of cyberware.
Augmented Strength: +2-harm when using a melee weapon that relies on physical strength.
Implant Weaponry: Either: retractable blades (2-harm hand, messy, implant), holdout firearm (2-harm close, loud, implant), or a monofilament whip (4-harm hand messy area dangerous).
- ⚡ **Cybereyes:** When you have cybereyes installed, choose three of following tags: *+thermographic*, *+light amplification*, *+magnification*, *+flare compensation*, *+recording*, *+encrypted*, *+inaccessible partition*. When your enhanced sight helps, you may roll Synth for **assess**.
- ⚡ **Dermal Plating:** When you make the harm move, subtract 2 from your roll. Subtract 3 from your roll if the harm came from a weapon with the *+flechette* tag.
- ⚡ **Implant Weaponry:** Either:
 - retractable blades (2-harm hand implant)
 - a holdout firearm (2-harm close loud implant)
 - a monofilament whip (4-harm hand messy area dangerous implant)
 - internal assassination implant (4-harm intimate slow implant)
- ⚡ **Muscle Grafts:** When you **mix it up** with a melee weapon, you may roll Synth instead of Meat and may also inflict +1 harm.
- ⚡ **Synthetic Nerves:** You react so quickly that you can almost dodge bullets. If none of your enemies have synth nerves, take +1 forward to **mix it up**. In situations where reaction time is critical, take +1 forward to **act under pressure**.
- ⚡ **Neural Interface with Targeting Suite:** When you fire a weapon you are *+linked* to, you may inflict additional harm equal to your Synth. You may also roll Synth instead of Meat to **mix it up**. You may precisely define the area of effect for weapons with the *+autofire* tag to exclude or include potential targets from weapon damage.

MOVES

You get this:

- 🔌 **Custom weapon:** Choose a base and two options. You may customise an implanted weapon; use the stats of the weapon as the base and add two appropriate options.

Base (choose 1, any firearm can be *+linked*):

- handgun(s) (2 damage close/near loud quick)
- shotgun (3 damage close/near loud messy)
- rifle (3 damage near/far/ex loud)
- blade (2 damage hand)
- chain or wire (1 damage close area)

Options (choose 2):

- ornate (*+valuable*)
- antique (*+valuable +reload*)
- automatic (*+autofire*)
- silenced (*-loud*)
- hi-powered or weighted (*+1 damage*)
- big or dangerous (*+1 damage*)
- versatile (may inflict s-harm)
- ridiculous payload (*+breach, +dangerous*)
- subtle (*+discreet, +reload*)
- *+numerous* (small weapons only)

When you've finished creating your weapon, name it.

Choose one more:

- 🔌 **Emotionless:** When you **play hardball**, roll Synth.
- 🔌 **Hard:** When you make the harm move, subtract your Meat from your roll.
- 🔌 **Loaded for bear:** choose another custom weapon.
- 🔌 **More machine than meat:** Choose another piece of cyberware at character creation or in downtime. Describe how you got it and paid for it the same as you did your first piece of cyberware.
- 🔌 **Corporate secrets:** You used to be a Company Man. When you **research** a corporation, you may always ask a follow up question. On a 10+, take an additional [intel].
- 🔌 **Military background:** You still have contacts in the military. When you **hit the street** for military gear and roll a 7-9, choose one fewer result.
- 🔌 **Mil specs:** When you **mix it up**, you count as a small gang.

🔌 **Serious badass:** when you enter a charged situation, roll Style.

10+: gain 2 hold

7-9: gain 1 hold

Spend 1 hold to make eye contact with an NPC present, who freezes or flinches and can't act until you break it off.

6-: your enemies identify you immediately as their foremost threat

🔌 **Trained eye:** When you evaluate a person, vehicle, drone or gang, roll Cool.

7+: ask the target "How are you vulnerable to me?" Take +1 forward when acting on the answer

10+: gain +1 ongoing when acting against that target

GEAR

Custom Weapon (as described above).

Choose two more weapons (any firearm can be +linked):

- 🔌 Silenced machine pistol (2-harm close/near autofire)
- 🔌 Automatic shotgun (3-harm close/near loud messy autofire)
- 🔌 Heavy revolver (3-harm close/near reload loud)
- 🔌 Assault rifle (3-harm near/far loud autofire)
- 🔌 Sword (3-harm hand messy)
- 🔌 Machete (3-harm hand)

Choose one:

- 🔌 Body armour (2-armour)
- 🔌 Armoured jacket (1-armour)
- 🔌 Trauma Derms (allows you to **apply first aid** to characters at 2100 or less harm)
- 🔌 *Aggressive motorcycle*

You start with 5 Cred.

DIRECTIVES

Choose two:

Proselytising: Describe your belief system. When you persuade others to act according to your beliefs, mark experience.

Masochistic: When you suffer one or more harm, mark experience.

Network: When your membership in _____ hinders the mission, mark experience.

Protective: When you put your responsibility to _____ ahead of the mission, mark experience.

KILLERS IN THE SPRAWL

Killers are most obviously useful in the Action phase, but this has as much to do with **custom weapons**, common cyberware choices, and basic moves like **mix it up**, as it does the playbook moves themselves. Many of the Killer's playbook moves are focused on Legwork. A Killer's past may provide access to **corporate secrets** or the benefits of a **military background**. An **emotionless** demeanour can be influential in extracting information from those unwilling to part with it.

Killers have greater access to cyberware through moves than the other playbooks which must rely on corporate deals, **hitting the street** and **going under the knife** for additional enhancements. Remember that cyberware is flexible. Don't forget to consider augmentations with Legwork applications (cybereyes, cybercoms, and so on) rather than the more straightforward combat enhancements. When you assign your stats, consider which cyberware you are interested in and whether you want to focus on meat or synth. You might also consider whether you see your killer as an impervious, robotic, brute or a quick, mercurial, weapon-master. In short, are you a Terminator or a cyber-ninja.

Custom weapons and ample cyberware do lend themselves to combat, however, and as much as the team may try to avoid it, missions in *The Sprawl* are often littered with bodies, especially when the Killer is around.

PUSHER

You will not be able to stay home, brother.

You will not be able to plug in, turn on and cop out.

You will not be able to lose yourself on skag and skip,

Skip out for beer during commercials,

Because the revolution will not be televised.

The Revolution Will Not Be Televised, Gil Scott-Heron.



Ideology is everywhere. If you don't see it and try to control it, you're a puppet of those who do. You believe in something bigger than the daily grind of life in *The Sprawl*. You have a cause, a vision, or a mission... Perhaps it's a higher ideal: political change, social justice, revolution! Maybe it's simply to be the top dog in the junkyard. Whatever it is, when you start talking, people listen.

Name. Apostle, Chalice, Dancer, Dillon Vicara, Eleven, Ice Smooth, Lola Chrome, Magnetic, Nebula, Nigell, Prophet9, Relay, Sennheiser, Shard, a media name, a social name, a real name

Choose your Look:

Eyes: shining, vulnerable, driven, passionate, intense, trustworthy, artificial

Face: attractive, friendly, striking, alluring, serene, sculpted

Body: toned, muscular, relaxed, slim, augmented, soft, pudgy

Wear: corporate, high fashion, avant-garde, street, flashy, punk

Skin: artificial, asian or south asian, black, decorated, hispanic/latino, indigenous, middle eastern, white, _____

Stats. Assign each stat one of these numbers: +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, -1; your Style and Edge should be +2 or +1

CYBERWARE

Choose one:

- 🔌 **Cybereyes:** When you have cybereyes installed, choose three of following tags: *+thermographic*, *+light amplification*, *+magnification*, *+flare compensation*, *+recording*, *+encrypted*, *+inaccessible partition*. When your enhanced sight helps, you may roll Synth for **assess**.
- 🔌 **Cybercoms:** When you have cybercoms installed, choose two of following tags: *+encrypted*, *+jamming*, *+recording*, *+satellite relay*, *+inaccessible partition*. When monitoring communications or giving orders in a tactical environment, you may roll Synth for **assess**.
- 🔌 **Neural Interface:** Allows direct neural control of an appropriately configured external device such as a vehicle, weapon, recording device, or hacked electronic system.
- 🔌 **Implant Weaponry:** Either:
 - retractable blades (2-harm hand implant)
 - a holdout firearm (2-harm close loud implant)
 - a monofilament whip (4-harm hand messy area dangerous implant)
 - internal assassination implant (4-harm intimate slow implant)

MOVES

You get these two:

- 🔌 **Driven:** When you begin a mission that furthers your vision, roll Edge.
10+: gain 3 hold
7-9: gain 1 hold

You may spend 1 hold before rolling any other move to take +1 or -2 forward to the move.
- 🔌 **Vision thing:** When you have time and space for an emotional connection with someone and you passionately advocate for your vision, roll Style.
10+: gain 2 hold
7-9: gain 1 hold

Spend 1 hold to have the targeted NPCs:
 - give you something you want
 - do something you ask
 - fight to protect you or your cause
 - disobey an order given by someone with authority or leverage over them

When you use this move on a PC, spend your hold to help or interfere as if you had rolled a 10+ (i.e. give them +1 or -2). If you miss against a PC, they gain 2 hold against you which they can use in the same way.

Example Vision Soundbites: Smash the global corporate complex! Synthrock will free the people! Open source or die! Only I can lead the world to a better future! Jesus he knows me, and he knows I'm right! The Singularity is coming; destroy it before it destroys us! The Singularity is coming; all hail the machines! Bow down before the one you serve!

Choose one more:

- 🔌 **Believers:** You are part of a gang, tribe, band, corporation or similar group. You can go to them for aid, for resources or to hide out until the heat dies down. As a group, they're pretty trustworthy, but they will make demands on you in return (your gang counts as a Contact). By default this group has a core of about 20 people as well as various associates and groupies

What kind of gang is it? Choose one: Street, Corporate, Entertainment/Media, Military, Political

How big is your gang? Choose a size and choose two tags:

- 🔌 Small: 10 or fewer (loyal, mobile, well-armed, specialists)
- 🔌 Medium: 20-40 (mobile, well-armed, specialists)
- 🔌 Large: 50-100 (well-connected, resources, self-sufficient)
- 🔌 Huge: 200+ (well-connected, resources, spread out, self-sufficient)

Define your gang's territory. Do they control a few blocks of the streets? Do they operate out of a compound or an arcology?

Choose one:

- poor, wanted, hard to find, unreliable, violent, hated

Who leads your gang? If your gang is small, you may be the leader. Otherwise, choose one:

- immoral, demanding, grasping, a real fucker, useless, absent

What are your gang's main gigs? Choose two:

- commerce, crime, parties, muscle, deliveries, entertainment, infiltration, scavenging, activism, politics

- 🔌 **Bring it on home:** Whenever you ask someone a question with **one million points of light**, you may ask a follow up question from the list. When you succeed at **vision thing**, gain 1 extra hold.

- 🔌 **Chromed:** Choose another piece of cyberware at character creation or in downtime. Describe how you got it and paid for it the same as you did your first piece of cyberware.

- 🔌 **Famous:** Your face is well known beyond the narrow scope of your people. Unless you disguise yourself, you will be recognised by many people you meet. If someone recognises you, you take +1 forward against them, but people will find out that you met them. Both you and the MC can declare that someone recognises you.

- 🔌 **Inner circle:** You have a group of loyal confidantes within your larger circle of believers. This is a small gang of 5-10 believers (2-harm small loyal 1-armour). Pick 2:
 - Your confidantes are well armed: add +1 harm
 - Your confidantes are well armoured: +1 armour and +*obvious*
 - Your confidantes are ex-military: add +*disciplined*
 - Your confidantes have bikes or a couple of other vehicles: add +*mobile*
- 🔌 **One thousand points of light:** When you successfully advocate for your vision with **vision thing**, ask one of the following questions. You may spend 1 hold to ask one of the following questions:
 - What do you wish I'd do?
 - How are you vulnerable?
 - Are you telling the truth?
 - What do you intend to do?
 - How are you connected to the current events?
 - What do you most desire?
- 🔌 **Opportunistic:** When you **help** or **interfere** with someone, roll Edge.
- 🔌 **People person:** When you **hit the street** among people who share your vision and roll a 7-9, choose one fewer result.
- 🔌 **Rabble rouser:** You may use **vision thing** to sway a potentially sympathetic crowd.
- 🔌 **Silver tongue:** When you **fast talk** someone and roll 7+, you get a little something extra. Take [intel].

GEAR

Choose one weapon:

- 🔌 Holdout pistol (2-harm hand/close discreet quick reload loud)
- 🔌 Flechette pistol (3-harm close/near quick flechette)
- 🔌 Semi-auto pistol (2-harm close/near loud quick)

Choose two:

- 🔌 Synth leathers or armoured clothing (0-armour, +*discreet*, subtract 1 when rolling the **harm** move)
- 🔌 *Sleek ride (choose one: motorcycle, car, helicopter)*
- 🔌 Simsense recording equipment
- 🔌 Musical instruments
- 🔌 *Encrypted communications relay*
- 🔌 Trauma Dermal (allows you to **apply first aid** to characters at 2100 or less harm)

You start with 5 Cred.

DIRECTIVES

Choose two:

Financial: When you hinder the mission for a chance at extra profit, mark experience.

Hierarchic: When you improve your standing or impair a rival's among _____, mark experience.

Rejected: When your former membership in _____ hinders the mission, mark experience.

Violent: When you deliberately choose to use violence to overcome a problem when a non-violent option exists, mark experience.

PUSHERS IN *THE SPRAWL*

Pushers are gang members, revolutionaries, activists, synth stars, rockers, religious leaders, conspiracy theorists, politicians, or corporate climbers. Pushers use charm and social skills to achieve success. Their intense devotion to a cause will push your game of *The Sprawl* in a thematic direction. In particular, **driven** and **vision thing** both work best if the mission as a whole is focused on the Pusher's ideological goals, although they can often be worked into play creatively even if this is not the case. When creating your Pusher, discuss your vision with the other players and make sure it fits with everyone's conception of *The Sprawl*. Don't go tongue-in-cheek when the table wants gritty.

High Style and Edge make them good at **hitting the street** and **observing** during the legwork phase. A large group of **believers** offers a large number of potential contacts to turn to for specific assistance while a small group may provide more specialised help, especially if you're a **people person**. Read more about gangs in Chapter 6: Assets.

Pusher moves suggest a focus on legwork, but there are many moves with applications in the Action phase as well. **Believers** are particularly flexible in this regard – a large group of people can make quite a loud distraction. An **opportunistic** Pusher can be a great help to their team, while **silver tongues** and **playing hardball** can get things done in the action phase, especially before the bullets start flying. In a one-on-one situation, being **famous** is always useful... except when it's not.

REPORTER

Edison: Security Systems has its tendrils into every element of our society - the government, our homes, the police, the courts - I'm not gonna spike this story just because it deals with dollar amounts beyond your comprehension! It's too important!

Murray: ...cerebral...

Theora: Murray, we're trying to play this takeover as a threat to our average viewer. Nobody knows who's doing it. I mean, we all deal with SS every day - what if some really dangerous people got control of it?

Murray: Who do you think controls it now?

Max Headroom, "Security Systems" (S1E4)

There's dirty business going down all over this city. I'm not talking about sex scandals and drunken escapades. That's what they want you to focus on. Leave the tabloid stuff for the hacks. It's the real secrets you want: rights are being trampled; families are being separated; lives are being destroyed. You hear about the building collapse on seventh the other day? Seventy-two people died. Word is, that wasn't an accident. Right now people's lives – peoples' *fucking lives* – are being traded for market share, profit margin and fucking competitive advantage. Sure, you hang out with a bunch of criminals and break all sorts of laws to get the story, and some people might get hurt, but the people need to know what's happening behind those wood-panelled boardroom doors. The ends justify the means, right?



Name. Conduit, Farouk Dakins, Glass, Grant Access, Edison, Hoot, Madison Brookes-Watanabe, Parisa Zahed, Scoop, Spider, Witness, a media name, an inquiring name, an incisive name

Choose your Look:

Eyes: penetrating, intense, dejected, empathetic, calm, determined, sad,

Face: attractive, friendly, serious, grim, composed, worn, weathered

Body: toned, slim, augmented, tense, animated, flabby, tired

Wear: corporate, street, punk, flashy, outdated, messy, worn

Skin: artificial, asian or south asian, black, decorated, hispanic/latino, indigenous, middle eastern, white, _____

Stats. Assign each stat one of these numbers: +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, -1; your Edge and Mind should be +2 or +1.

CYBERWARE

Choose one:

- 🔌 **Cybereyes:** When you have cybereyes installed, choose three of following tags: *+thermographic*, *+light amplification*, *+magnification*, *+flare compensation*, *+recording*, *+encrypted*, *+inaccessible partition*. When your enhanced sight helps, you may roll Synth for **assess**.
- 🔌 **Cyberears:** When you have cyberears installed, choose two of following tags: *+dampening*, *+wide frequency*, *+recording*, *+encrypted*, *+inaccessible partition*. When your enhanced hearing helps, you may roll Synth for **assess**.
- 🔌 **Cybercoms:** When you have cybercoms installed, choose two of following tags: *+encrypted*, *+jamming*, *+recording*, *+satellite relay*, *+inaccessible partition*. When monitoring communications or giving orders in a tactical environment, you may roll Synth for **assess**.
- 🔌 **Neural Interface with Data Storage:** When you use **research** to search internally or externally stored data, gain an extra [intel] on a hit. Choose two of following tags: *+inaccessible partition*, *+encrypted*, *+high capacity*, *+high speed*. You may take the Hacker move **jack in** as an advance.

MOVES

You get these three:

- 🔌 **Live and on the air:** When you go live from the scene and broadcast a stream to avoid harm and expose your target, roll Edge.
7+: you get the shot you want and are “escorted” to a position of safety
7-9: choose one:
 - Your story irritates your target (The MC will advance a relevant Threat Clock)
 - Someone on your team gets hurt off camera
 - Your story angers your employer
 - Your rushed narrative is misinterpreted by the public with unintended consequences
- 🔌 **Nose for a story:** At the start of a mission, roll Edge.
10+: gain 3 hold
7-9: gain 1 hold
During the mission, spend 1 hold to invoke one of the following effects:
 - Ask one question from the **research** list
 - Take +1 forward when **monsterring**
 - Find a piece of evidence that links this mission to a current story; start a Story Clock and a linked Noise Clock or roll to **gather evidence**

🕒 **Gather evidence:** When you gather evidence to break a story, roll Mind.

10+: you get the evidence you need, advance that Story Clock

7-9: you get the evidence, but tip your hand to someone implicated in your story; tell the MC which clock to advance: a relevant Corporate Clock, the linked Noise Clock or the relevant Mission Clock (Legwork or Action, depending on which phase of the current mission you're in)

6-: the MC will advance the Noise Clock *and* make a move

If the Story Clock reaches 0000 before the Noise Clock, the Reporter has broken the story before the implicated parties could cover up the evidence, or stop the investigation. The exact implications of this for the game will vary based on the story, but it should have a major impact on the implicated parties and will affect at least one Corporate Clock.

If the Noise Clock reaches 0000 before the Story Clock, the implicated parties have tied up all the loose ends and the story is dead. Now that damage control is complete, they can deal with the Reporter permanently. Advance any relevant Corporate or Threat Clocks.

Choose one more:

🕒 **24/7 live feeds:** When you scan the feeds to **research** a topic, you may always ask a follow up question. On a 10+, take an additional [intel].

🕒 **Chromed:** Choose another piece of cyberware at character creation or in downtime. Describe how you got it and paid for it the same as you did your first piece of cyberware.

🕒 **Filthy assistants:** When you spend [intel] and give mission advice based on your **research**, your team takes +1 forward to follow that advice and you mark experience.

🕒 **Monsterring:** When you corner someone and hound them with questions to get to the bottom of a story, roll Edge.

10+: they tell you the truth, regardless of the consequences

7-9: they give you enough to get you off their back, then when they're safe, they choose one:

- they respond with fear
- they respond with anger
- they respond with clinical calm

🕒 **Press pass:** If you reveal your public persona to **fast talk** your way in, do not roll the dice, you count as rolling a 10+. Take [intel] and advance the Legwork Clock.

🕒 **Reliable sources:** When you call your regular sources to **research** a topic, roll Style instead of Mind.

🕒 **War correspondent:** When **acting under pressure** while in physical danger, roll Edge instead of Cool.

GEAR

Choose one weapon:

- 🔌 Holdout pistol (2-harm hand/close discreet quick reload loud)
- 🔌 Flechette pistol (3-harm close/near quick flechette)
- 🔌 Hand taser (s-harm hand reload)

Choose two:

- 🔌 Armoured clothing (0-armour, +discreet, subtract 1 when rolling the harm move)
- 🔌 Encrypted communications equipment
- 🔌 Recording equipment
- 🔌 Glasses (choose 2: +light amplification, +magnification, +recording)
- 🔌 Trauma Derms (allows you to **apply first aid** to characters at 2100 or less harm)

You start with 5 Cred.

DIRECTIVES

Choose two:

Compassionate: When you put your compassion for the powerless ahead of the mission, mark experience.

Network: When your membership in _____ hinders the mission, mark experience.

Revealing: When you discover more information about _____, mark experience.

Vengeful: When you harm _____ or their interests, mark experience.

REPORTERS IN THE SPRAWL

Reporters care about stories and pull their team toward the news and the danger and publicity that brings. They have a **nose for a story** that can shake things up at a mega-corporate level. If you want a playbook that can alter *The Sprawl* itself, play a Reporter.

In the Action phase **press pass** can often get you into places. Experience as a **war correspondent** can keep you alive. Then when the heat gets too much, start broadcasting; corporate PR training will usually keep you safe from overt violence while you're **live and on the air**.

With **24/7 live feeds** and **reliable sources**, Reporters are valuable in the Legwork phase. If your mission is related to your story, **monstering** a source can provide valuable information on both. A **press pass** can get you into secure areas to gather information on primary targets, or to gain access to someone to **monster**.

Your **nose for a story** can give you your own clock and your own overarching mission. **Gather evidence** and think creatively to link as many of your jobs as you can to your story, play havoc with the Corporate Clocks and then start looking for another story to do it all again. For more on Clocks, see [Chapter 9: Running The Sprawl](#).

SOLDIER

"Turner had been a soldier in his own right for most of his adult life, although he'd never worn a uniform. A mercenary, his employers vast corporations warring covertly for the control of entire economies. He was a specialist in the extraction of top executives and research people. The multinationals he worked for would never admit that men like Turner existed..."

Count Zero, William Gibson

Some people think being a Soldier in the corporate shadow wars is all about toting guns and kicking in doors. That ain't it at all. In this business, planning and preparation is what separates the professionals from the corpses. There are plenty of successful teams in your line of work, but those that live long enough to spend their money are led by people like you. The one who minutely studies the corporate dossier on the target until he knows his every move before he makes it. The one who watches surveillance footage for two days straight to find the weakness in the security pattern. The one who pores over the archaic paper maps of the utility tunnels under the facility. It's a thankless job, but it pays well. You get to live.



Name. Alif, Armitage, Connomarah, Cortez, Grit, Mac, Sly, Turnus, Turner, a professional name, a determined name, a strange name

Choose your Look:

Eyes: hard, jaded, weary, penetrating, searching, artificial, cunning, haunted	Face: rugged, scarred, weathered, tired, thin, calm, decorated	Body: muscular, toned, unfit, graceful, wiry, tanned	Style: casual, worn utility, vintage, military, corporate
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Skin: artificial, asian or south asian, black, decorated, hispanic/latino, indigenous, middle eastern, white, _____

Stats. Assign each stat one of these numbers: +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, -1; your Edge should be +2 or +1.

CYBERWARE

Choose one:

- ⚡ **Cybereyes:** When you have cybereyes installed, choose three of following tags: *+thermographic*, *+light amplification*, *+magnification*, *+flare compensation*, *+recording*, *+encrypted*, *+inaccessible partition*. When your enhanced sight helps, you may roll Synth for **assess**.
- ⚡ **Cybercoms:** When you have cybercoms installed, choose two of following tags: *+encrypted*, *+jamming*, *+recording*, *+satellite relay*, *+inaccessible partition*. When monitoring communications or giving orders in a tactical environment, you may roll Synth for **assess**.
- ⚡ **Skillwires:** You may slot chips to grant certain skills. While slotted, chips give +1 ongoing to moves assisted by the the programmed skill. Standard skillwires comes with two slots and you may have one chip active in each slot. If you start with Skillwires, you also start with one chip per slot. You can acquire more skillchips in play like any other gear. Example skillchips: martial arts, breaking and entering, rock climbing, skydiving, scuba diving, planning and logistics, firefight combat, extreme driving, parkour, first aid, military history and tactics.
- ⚡ **Tactical Computer:** When you **assess** in a tactical situation, hold +1, even on a miss.
- ⚡ **Neural Interface with Targeting Suite:** When you fire a weapon you are *+linked* to, you may inflict additional harm equal to your Synth. You may also roll Synth instead of Meat to **mix it up**. You may precisely define the area of effect for weapons with the *+autofire* tag to exclude or include potential targets from weapon damage.

MOVES

You get these two:

- ⚡ **Here's the plan:** When you plan a Mission, everyone to whom you assign a task takes +1 ongoing while they act on that task according to the plan. Anyone who rolls a miss or goes off the plan loses their bonus for that mission. If you **get paid**, mark experience.
- ⚡ **I love it when a plan comes together:** At the start of a mission, roll Edge.

10+: gain 3 hold

7-9: gain 1 hold

During the mission, spend 1 hold for one of the following effects:

- You have that piece of gear that you need, *right now*
- You appear in a scene where you are needed, *right now*

6-: gain 1 hold anyway, but your opponent has predicted your every move; the MC will advance the Legwork Clock

Choose one more:

- 🔌 **Aura of professionalism:** When you **get the job** and try to **get paid**, choose one extra option, even on a miss.
- 🔌 **Chromed:** Choose another piece of cyberware at character creation or in downtime. Describe how you got it and paid for it the same as you did your first piece of cyberware.
- 🔌 **Corporate knowledge:** You used to be a Company Man. When you **research** a corporation, you may always ask a follow up question. On a 10+, take an additional [intel].
- 🔌 **Exit strategy:** You always have an escape plan prepared. When shit hits the fan and you decide to bail out, roll Mind.

7+: You escape the situation

10+: choose one thing to leave behind

7-9: choose two things

- Your team
- A mission objective
- Identifiable evidence
- Your staked Cred

- 🔌 **Hands-on management:** When you **mix it up** while directing a mission from the front, roll Mind instead of Meat.

- 🔌 **Recruiter:** When you attempt to recruit a specialist or a team of specialists to directly assist with your mission, roll Edge.

10+: choose 2

7-9: choose 1

- Reliable professional(s)
- A small team (up to 5)
- As competent as required

- 🔌 **Slippery:** At the end of a mission during which you planted or hid evidence to shift blame away from you and your team, name who you threw under the corporate bus and roll Edge.

7+: the MC will not increase Corporate Clocks in the retaliation phase

10+: the MC will reduce a Corporate Clock by one

6-: create or increase the Threat Clock of whoever you threw under the bus

- 🔌 **Steady presence:** When you give someone a pep talk while in a stressful situation, you **help** them as if you had rolled 10+.

- 🔌 **Tactical operations:** When you **assess** while leading a mission from the front, hold +1, even if you miss.

GEAR

Choose two weapons (any firearm can be +linked):

- 🔌 Heavy pistol (3-harm close/near loud)
- 🔌 Assault rifle (3-harm near/far loud autofire)
- 🔌 Fragmentation Grenades (4-harm near area reload loud messy)
- 🔌 Flashbangs (s-harm near area loud reload)

Choose two:

- 🔌 Armoured vest (1-armour)
- 🔌 Armoured clothing (0-armour, +discreet, subtract 1 when rolling the harm move)
- 🔌 Communications relay (Choose +encrypted or +jamming)
- 🔌 Goggles (Choose two: +thermographic, +light amplification, +magnification, +flare compensation)
- 🔌 Trauma Derms (allows you to **apply first aid** to characters at 2100 or less harm)

You start with 5 Cred.

DIRECTIVES

Choose two:

Behavioural: Describe your ethical code. When adhering to your code hinders the mission, mark experience.

Filial: When you put the advice of _____ ahead of the mission, mark experience.

Financial: When you hinder the mission for a chance at extra profit, mark experience.

Prudent: When you resolve a charged situation without violence, mark experience.

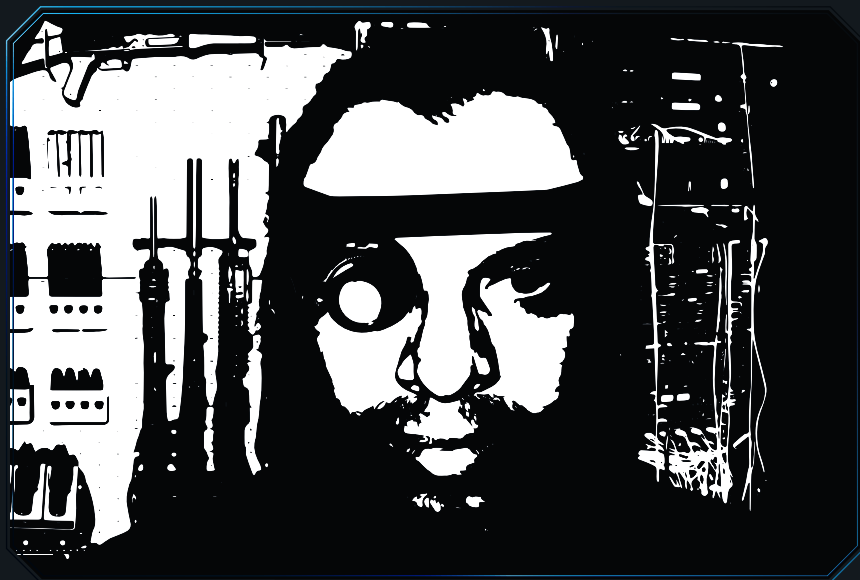
SOLDIERS IN THE SPRAWL

Soldiers are the team leaders and mission planners of *The Sprawl*. Most of their moves focus on preparing for a mission (**here's the plan, corporate knowledge, recruiter**) and supporting the rest of the team during the mission (**I love it when a plan comes together, steady presence, tactical operations**). Their **aura of professionalism** helps the team get better jobs, and get away with performing them. High Mind makes them great at **researching** their options, especially if they also have **corporate knowledge**. If their plan requires outside specialists, they can act as the team's **recruiter**.

During the mission, they can **assess** to assist the specialist activities of their teammates. Some Soldiers lead from the front with their expertise in **tactical operations** and **hands-on management**. Others make use of cybercoms and **helping** remotely to manage the mission from a safe and undistracted position. But either way, if the mission looks like it's failing, they often have an **exit strategy** to save themselves, and hopefully salvage the team and the mission as well.

"We are nature. Our every tinkering is nature, our every biological striving. We are what we are, and the world is ours. We are its gods. Your only difficulty is your unwillingness to unleash your potential fully upon it."

The Windup Girl, Paolo Bacigalupi



Hackers get all the glory, but you're the one who actually gets things done. Cyber-deck took a couple of pellets from that security team? Call the Tech. Need a bus wired to blow? Call the Tech. Need to lay twenty-two klicks of hardline from the grid to your desert hide? Call the effin' Tech. At least the jobs pay better than crawling around ductwork in a Sprawl tenement.

Name. Angel.1.3, AntiK-Tera, Bobby, Cathode, Eleni Larabee, Houwayyek, Mr. Wizard, Spanner, Transitivity, a weird name, a normal name, an technofetishising name

Choose your Look:

Eyes: focused, excited, artificial, squinty, impatient, calm, appraising

Face: plain, friendly, nonde-script, weathered, expressive

Body: muscular, wiry, compact, thin, flabby, fatty

Style: utility, military, corporate, street, scrounged

Skin: artificial, asian or south asian, black, decorated, hispanic/latino, indigenous, middle eastern, white, _____

Stats. Assign each stat one of these numbers: +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, -1; your Cool and Mind should be +2 or +1

CYBERWARE

Choose one:

- 🔌 **Cybercoms:** When you have cybercoms installed, choose two of following tags: *+encrypted, +jamming, +recording, +satellite relay, +inaccessible partition*. When monitoring communications or giving orders in a tactical environment, you may roll Synth for **assess**.
- 🔌 **Cybereyes:** When you have cybereyes installed, choose three of following tags: *+thermographic, +light amplification, +magnification, +flare compensation, +recording, +encrypted, +inaccessible partition*. When your enhanced sight helps, you may roll Synth for **assess**.
- 🔌 **Cyberarm with Implant Tools:** When you have time and space to interface with a device you are attempting to fix, **bypass**, or tamper with, take +1 forward. You may add additional options to your cyberarm during play in the normal way. See [Chapter 5: Cyberware](#).
- 🔌 **Neural Interface** Allows direct neural control of an appropriately configured external device such as a vehicle, weapon, recording device, or hacked electronic system. *Choose one:*
 - 🔌 **Remote Control Module:** Adds wireless broadcast and reception capacity to allow the remote control of vehicles and drones. Choose two of following tags: *+encrypted, +multi-tasking, +satellite relay, +inaccessible partition*. *You may take the Driver move **second skin** as an advance.*
 - 🔌 **Data Storage:** When you use **research** to search internally or externally stored data, gain an extra [intel] on a hit. Choose two of following tags: *+inaccessible partition, +encrypted, +high capacity, +high speed*. *You may take the Hacker move **jack in** as an advance.*

MOVES

You get these three:

- 🔌 **Expert:** Choose one area of expertise:
 - **Mechanic:** you are an **expert** in the construction, maintenance and operation of vehicles & drones; you have two drones created according to the Driver move **drone jockey**
 - **Splicer:** you are an **expert** in cybernetics and biomodification; you may begin with one extra piece of cyberware; describe how you implanted this in yourself, but you need not describe how you paid for it
 - **Breadboarder:** you are an **expert** in computers and electronics; you have a cyberdeck with 5 points of ratings (no rating may be higher than 2) and a number of programs equal to its Processor rating+1
 - **Gunsmith:** you are an **expert** in armaments; you begin with the Killer move **custom weapon**
 - **Medic:** you are an **expert** in medicine and pharmaceuticals; when you **apply first aid**, you heal one additional harm segment, even on a miss

- **Pyrotechnician:** you are an **expert** in chemistry and explosives; ignore the +*dangerous* tag for explosives

You start with workshops appropriate to your areas of expertise (e.g. surgery, electronics workshop, garage).

- 🔧 **Storage:** After receiving a job you may look through your accumulated parts and supplies for equipment that might help with the current mission. Roll Mind.

10+: gain 3 [gear] relevant to your chosen area(s) of expertise.

7-9: gain 1 [gear] relevant to your chosen area(s) of expertise.

- 🔧 **Customiser:** You can identify and examine new or complicated technology related to your area of expertise, and modify technology with which you are familiar. When you try to modify a piece of tech, tell the MC what you want to do and discuss what tags or game effect that modification will have. The MC will tell you the requirements in terms of:

- time
- parts
- more research
- tools
- help from contacts

Choose one more:

- 🔧 **Analytic:** When you **assess**, roll Mind instead of Edge.
- 🔧 **Blend in:** When you're about to be caught somewhere you shouldn't be, but look and act like you belong there, roll Cool.

10+: no one thinks twice about your presence until you do something to attract attention

7-9: you'll be fine as long as you leave right now, but if you do anything else, your presence will arouse suspicion
- 🔧 **Bypass:** When you attempt to subvert security measures (bypassing a locked door, disabling an alarm, camera or motion detector, etc), roll Cool.

7+: you successfully bypass the system without leaving a trace

10+: you gain some valuable insight into the facility's security, gain [intel]
- 🔧 **Chromed:** Choose another piece of cyberware at character creation or in downtime. Describe how you got it and paid for it the same as you did your first piece of cyberware.
- 🔧 **Diverse interests:** Choose one more area of expertise.
- 🔧 **Jack of all trades:** Choose one more area of expertise.
- 🔧 **Obsessive:** When you shut yourself away with a problem or piece of cutting edge tech, make a **research** move. You may use one question to ask any question about the object of your contemplation and study.

- 🔌 **On it:** When your areas of expertise are central to helping or interfering with a teammate, roll Cool instead of Links.
- 🔌 **Renaissance man:** Choose one more area of expertise.

GEAR

- 🔌 Toolkit and gear appropriate to your area(s) of expertise

Choose two weapons:

- 🔌 Holdout pistol (2-harm hand/close discreet quick reload loud)
- 🔌 Assault rifle (3-harm near/far loud autofire)
- 🔌 Fragmentation Grenades (4-harm near area reload loud messy)
- 🔌 Gas Grenades (s-harm near area reload gas)

Choose three:

- 🔌 Armoured jacket (1-armour)
- 🔌 Armoured clothing (0-armour, +discreet, subtract 1 when rolling the harm move)
- 🔌 Goggles (Choose two: +*thermographic*, +*light amplification*, +*magnification*, +*flare compensation*, +*recording*)
- 🔌 Truck or van (Choose one strength: +*rugged*, +*off-road*, +*huge*, +*workhorse*; and one weakness: +*slow*, +*cramped*, +*loud*)
- 🔌 Trauma Derms (allows you to **apply first aid** to characters at 2100 or less harm)
- 🔌 *Encrypted jamming* communications relay

You start with 5 Cred.

DIRECTIVES

Choose two:

Proselytising: Describe your belief system. When you persuade others to act according to your beliefs, mark experience.

Network: When your membership in _____ hinders the mission, mark experience.

Protective: When you put your responsibility to _____ ahead of the mission, mark experience.

Revealing: When you discover more information about _____, mark experience.

TECHS IN THE SPRAWL

Techs supply the specialist technical knowledge, support and expertise that many missions in *The Sprawl* require. The most important decision to make is your area of expertise (**expert**). Find out what the rest of the team is playing and consider how your expertise will fit with the rest of the team and what kind of role you will have in missions. Techs can make this choice to support an existing team member (a *Mechanic* with a Driver, a *Breadboarder* with a Hacker, or a *Gunsmith* with a Killer), they can fill those gaps in the team by choosing appropriate moves, or they can adopt a role that no other playbook can (*Splicer*, *Medic*, or *Pyrotechnician*). While Techs are particularly specialised, with a little creativity they can have broad supporting powers. Play a Tech if you want to bring a narrow area of expertise to bear on a broad range of problems.

In the legwork phase, Techs should push the team's plans in the direction of their specialist skills. Their high Mind lends itself to **research** and, if sufficiently **analytic**, to **observation**. Once the team knows what's going on, Techs can customise equipment to solve technical problems; particularly tricky problems may require an **obsessive** Tech.

In the mission phase, Techs **bypass** problematic security measures, use gear from their **storage** to solve problems on the fly, and **blend in** to perform all manner of mission tasks right under the noses of corporate security. Look for opportunities to be **on it** in helping a teammate with your particular skills. You may wish to develop **diverse interests** or become a **jack of all trades** to expand your opportunities to support your team.

"Xilin?"

She snapped her head up at the sound of her name. She forced a happy smile for the girl she was staring at – why could she never remember the American's name – and gave her a happy little wave. "You made it!" Xilin's attention caused the heads nearest her to turn, and soon the American – Karen, that was her name – was absorbed into the crowd of people sitting closest to Xilin. She kept her friendly smile on her face as the girl looked around herself, excited and nervous. Karen was nineteen, impressionable, and naive.

No match for her new friend. Xilin patted the empty spot on the blanket next to her, allowing the girl to take the seat. Offering her a pair of moldable ear plugs, she laughed at Karen's confusion. "The music will be loud. You can thank me later."

Dutifully doing as bidden, the younger woman twisted the plugs a few times, before gently inserting them into her ears. The bribes that went into a night like this were worth it. Out in the always-abandoned Thames Town, the kind of crunchy guitar that would shriek into the night wouldn't play in Shanghai proper, not under the watchful eye of the police and the Pop Machine that dominated modern music. This was music that was difficult to listen to, politically inflammatory when it even had lyrics. It wasn't sold in stores, and the Great ICE Wall had a habit of zeroing in on download sites, with server owners turning up dead or worse. It was music to be traded via dead drops, on portable drives. Experienced as shared danger by showing up to shows in person, events orchestrated by the most ruthlessly efficient music ideologues in the country. Xilin was one of them, and tonight, as Karen sat raptly watching the kind of music her father would have forbidden her to listen to because of the politics it came with, she told Karen about what it was like to fight for music and freedom of expression. For privacy and for a country safer from its shadowy police.

Karen could help her, if she wanted.

She just needed to do Xilin a favor.

CYBERWARE

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CYBERWARE

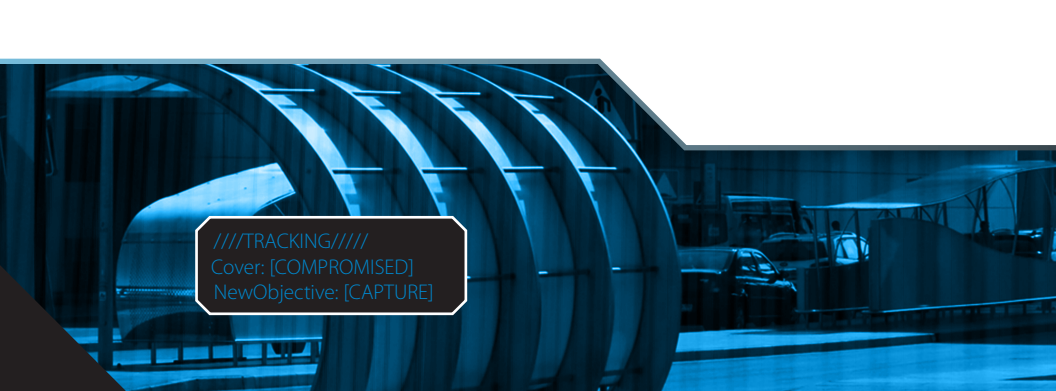
LOADING...

"The Japanese had already forgotten more neurosurgery than the Chinese had ever known. The black clinics of Chiba were the cutting edge, whole bodies of technique supplanted monthly, and still they couldn't repair the damage he'd suffered in that Memphis hotel."

Neuromancer, William Gibson.

Cybernetic implants – popularly known as cyberware – are pieces of electronic machinery which interface with the central nervous system of the human body and replace some portion of the user's natural body. Some cyberware augments human skills and abilities by improving physical strength or speed or by allowing firmware algorithms to circumvent biological neural responses in the completion of some predetermined task. This commonly grants users of cyberware exceptional reaction time in physical or digital space. Other cyberware acts as prosthetic replacements for limbs or organs removed by accident or choice, granting regular human abilities to victims of accidents, violence or disease or exceptional abilities to those who elect to replace healthy body parts.

Cyberware is a sub-category of Assets (Chapter 6: Assets), but is included first as a separate chapter because of its centrality to the setting. In *The Sprawl*, every protagonist has cyberware.



////TRACKING////

Cover: [COMPROMISED]

NewObjective: [CAPTURE]

GETTING CHROME

Getting new cyberware is a two-step process. First you have to find the hardware you want, then find someone to cut you open and splice your nervous system into the electronics. Both are significant undertakings.

When you try to find new cyberware, use **hit the street**. It's expensive stuff so even a "fair" price will be high, especially if you want 'ware without nasty side effects. On a miss you might owe someone, you might get shafted, or you might get a little more than you paid for.

Street operatives need the edge that cyberware provides and unscrupulous Corporations are known to exploit that need to force tracking devices, firmware backdoors, and implanted explosives like cortex bombs onto disposable operatives to maintain compliance. It only takes a tiny amount of explosives to make you a vegetable, making the required investment quite small for the return it yields.

Once you have the hardware itself, you'll need to have it installed. For that you **go under the knife**. Once again, you have the choice between the street or the corporations. Would you rather have a hidden back door operation by a friend of a friend of a "friend", or would you rather cut a deal with a corp to have your nervous system operated on in a pristine corporate facility. The aftercare is much better, but the payment plan can be a real killer.

If your cyberware is damaged in the course of a mission, it may be possible for a Tech to repair it without surgery, but more extensive damage, or damage to fully internal cybernetics, may require that you **go under the knife** again.

If you choose a playbook move that gives you extra cyberware during play, choose how you paid for it (and take the appropriate tag) just as you did when you chose your starting cyberware. You will avoid some hassle, but it will cost an advance and use one of your "gain a move" slots.

Both **hit the street** and **go under the knife** are described in Chapter 2: Basic Moves.

CYBERWARE LIST

CYBEREYES: Replacement eyes that grant super-human or extra-human visual capabilities. Aesthetic considerations are also important to many buyers.

When you have cybereyes installed, choose two of following tags: *+thermographic, +light amplification, +magnification, +flare compensation, +recording, +encrypted, +inaccessible partition.*

- » When your enhanced sight helps, you may roll Synth for **assess**.

CYBEREARS: Replacement ears that grant super-human or extra-human aural capabilities.

When you have cyberears installed, choose two of following tags: *+dampening, +wide frequency, +recording, +encrypted, +inaccessible partition.*

- » When your enhanced hearing helps, you may roll Synth for **assess**.

CYBERCOMS: An internal headware communications suite which allows silent, thought-activated communications.

When you have cybercoms installed, choose two of following tags: *+encrypted, +jamming, +recording, +satellite relay, +inaccessible partition.*

- » When monitoring communications or giving orders in a tactical environment, you may roll Synth for **assess**.

CYBERARM: Replacements arms can be prosthetic replacements or elective enhancements. The former replace standard human abilities, while the latter supplement particular abilities or incorporate tools into the human body, often enhancing precision through neuro-mechanical control. Cyberarms are available in a variety of aesthetic presentations, ranging from overtly synthetic or mechanical to visually indistinguishable from human.

Choose one of the following options. Additional choices can be added to the cyberarm later in the same way as adding a new piece of cyberware.

- ⚡ **Augmented Strength:** +2 harm when using a melee weapon that relies on physical strength.
- ⚡ **Implant Tools:** When you have time and space to interface with a device you are attempting to fix, **bypass**, or tamper with, take +1 forward.
- ⚡ **Implant Weaponry:** Either: retractable blades (2-harm hand messy implant), a holdout firearm (2 harm close loud implant), or a monofilament whip (4-harm hand messy area dangerous implant).

CYBERLEGS: Replacements legs can be prosthetic replacements or elective enhancements. Elective models allow super-human athletic abilities, especially running speed and jumping distance.

- » When your enhanced athleticism could help you **act under pressure**, take +1 forward. If you roll a 12+ when **acting under pressure**, gain 1 hold which you can spend as described in the move **assess**.

DERMAL PLATING: Sub-dermal plates of synthetic armour placed over critical internal organs.

- » When you make the harm move, subtract 2 from your roll. Subtract 3 from your roll if the harm came from a weapon with the *+flechette* tag.

IMPLANT WEAPONRY: Retractable or internally concealed weapons can be mounted directly into the human body with appropriate structural anchoring and heat dissipation mechanisms. These include both regular weapons optimised for internal use or storage blades as well as specialised weapons like the chest-stored, orally-deployed, "cybersnakes" favoured by certain corporate honey-trap assassins.

Either:

- 🔌 retractable blades (2-harm hand messy implant)
- 🔌 a holdout firearm (2-harm close loud implant)
- 🔌 a monofilament whip (4-harm hand messy area dangerous implant)
- 🔌 internal assassination implant (4-harm intimate slow implant)

MUSCLE GRAFTS: Synthetic fibres are grafted into human muscle to increase muscular strength, flexibility, and resilience.

- » When you **mix it up** with a melee weapon, you may roll Synth instead of Meat and may also inflict +1 harm.

NEURAL INTERFACE: A headware interface that translates the brain's neural signals into machine control impulses. This allows a user to control an appropriately configured external device such as a vehicle, mounted weapon, recording device, or hacked electronic system at instinctive neural speeds.

- » You may take the Driver move **second skin** as an advance.
- » You may take the Hacker move **jack in** as an advance.

Choose one of the following options. Additional choices can be added to the headware system later in the same way as adding a new piece of cyberware.

- 🔌 **Data Storage:** A neural interface that allows speed-of-thought communication between the user's brain and a Matrix-capable computer system. These systems usually include a useful quantity of headware storage capacity.

When you use **research** to search internally or externally stored data, gain an extra [intel] on a hit. Choose two of following tags: *+inaccessible partition*, *+encrypted*, *+high capacity*, *+high speed*.

- 🔌 **Remote Control Module:** An interface which includes wireless broadcast and reception capacity allowing remote control of vehicles and drones.

When you have a remote control module installed, choose two of following tags: *+encrypted*, *+multi-tasking*, *+inaccessible partition*.

- 🔌 **Targeting Suite:** Uses a direct neural link between a hand-held gun and user to project targeting information into the user's vision.

When you fire a weapon you are *+linked* to, you may inflict additional harm equal to your Synth. You may also roll Synth instead of Meat to **mix it up**. You may precisely define the area of effect for weapons with the *+autofire* tag to exclude or include potential targets from weapon damage.

SYNTHETIC NERVES: The replacement of significant parts of the nervous system can drastically increase reaction time. Users react so quickly that they can almost dodge bullets.

- » If none of your enemies have synth nerves, take +1 forward to **mix it up**. In situations where reaction time is critical, take +1 forward to **act under pressure**.

SKILLWIRES: A headware expert system linked to the brain's muscle control centres that triggers specific muscular reactions which simulate the instincts and actions of an expert practitioner. The system contains a number of external slots into which skillchips can be slotted granting a small number of skills in parallel. Skillchips often include a knowledge database covering non-physical aspects of the programmed skill.

- » When your slotted skillchip is appropriate to a move you are making, take +1 ongoing if your relevant stat is +1 or less. Standard skillwires comes with two slots and you may have one chip active in each slot.

If you start with Skillwires, you also start with one chip per slot. You can acquire more skillchips in play like any other gear.

Example skillchips: martial arts, breaking and entering, rock climbing, skydiving, scuba diving, planning and logistics, firefight combat, extreme driving, parkour, first aid, military history and tactics.

TACTICAL COMPUTER: An expert system core calculates distance, environment and movement factors and provides a suite of tactical tools to enhance the user's understanding of and operation within a tactical environment.

- » When you **assess** in a tactical situation, hold +1, even on a miss.

CYBERWARE TAGS

How tags function in *The Sprawl* is discussed in Chapter 6: Assets.

- +*damaging*: sometimes it hurts like hell and eventually it will do permanent nerve damage.
- +*dampening*: protects against sonic Stun effects.
- +*encrypted*: it's resistant to hacking. The MC must make a move to subvert the encryption before making a move to hack this cybernetic device.
- +*flare compensation*: protects against visual Stun effects.
- +*high capacity*: greatly increases the storage capacity of the device. This is useful for storing, uploading and transporting large quantities of complex data. You will be able to loot more paydirt from corporate archives and locally store more recorded data.
- +*hardware decay*: it works now, but it's just a matter of time...
- +*high speed*: allows you to stream and access data much faster.
- +*implant*: implant weapons can have the +*discreet* tag and cannot be taken away without causing harm.
- +*inaccessible partition*: it has a courier mode in which the implantee can't access the data being recorded, stored or transmitted.
- +*jamming*: permits the jamming of any communications that lack the +*encrypted* tag.
- +*light amplification*: allows you to see well even with weak light sources.
- +*magnification*: allows you to see to much greater ranges. This does not affect weapon accuracy.
- +*multi-tasking*: you can control multiple vehicles or drones simultaneously.
- +*recording*: you can record the data processed by the device. Large quantities of data may require +*high capacity* storage.
- +*satellite relay*: the cyberware can be controlled remotely by someone else. This tag is often installed as a back door by micromanaging corporations.
- +*substandard*: it works, but not as well as it should.
- +*thermographic*: allows you to see heat patterns in the infrared spectrum.
- +*unreliable*: sometimes it doesn't work.
- +*wide frequency*: allows you to hear sounds beyond the normal range of human hearing.

He had to slot a chip to have enough Spanish to find her. The site where she'd gone to ground was impossible to get to by anything with wheels, so he accepted the hike with the same slow, methodical pace he used in the city. The same pace he used everywhere, really.

It didn't do to be impatient when tracking your quarry.

The place had been used by tourists for more than eighty years. The dried out riverbed still held few permanent structures, and the travelers there were now more likely to be people looking to get lost than people looking to find themselves. The locals accepted their presence when they came down to the village, and the travelers by and large kept to themselves during the winter. People claimed there was no comms signal there, no tech, no way to get to the outside world but your own two feet. That it was the perfect escape from the world.

People who said those things didn't know the woman he was looking for. This place had to be the ninth circle of Hell for her.

Aileen Kelly slept, ate, and breathed communication as a journalist. If the damn woman had been able to merge body and soul into a comms relay and never come back, she would have. With that bit of technologic magic beyond her, she'd been forced to run far from Dublin after turning the economy beat into the stuff of thrilling drama.

Surprised to find himself smiling, he shook off the evidence of humor as he began to make his way into the riverbed. Aileen had run to avoid being gunned down in the street for what she'd convinced her editors to dare put in the news, but there was one thing even she couldn't outrun. The men who wanted her dead couldn't rival the weight on her, the one thing that was going to bring her back to Dublin and continue to make their lives a continued living hell, corruption exposed for all to see.

Aileen Kelly's publisher had paid for him to find her, and bring her back -kicking and screaming, most assuredly-to Dublin. Because Jesus Christ help her, Aileen Kelly still had two years left on her contract to the paper, and no one got out of a contract with Ida McMullen.

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ASSETS

CONTINUE? [Y/N]

ASSETS

Cowboy can't use the radio in his panzer because the police will be listening for him. He can't use a squirt transmission from a directional microwave antenna because there's no receiver set up within line of sight. And he can't use a wireless telephone because they're completely unsafe-- someone within range of the phone is bound to be listening, ready to dissect the signal for hints as to the owner's identity and business. If you're lucky, they'll only steal your wireless account-- and if you're unlucky, they'll get your identity and the keys to your portfolio and bank account. The only way to beat them is to use the latest military-grade encryption, and only the Orbitals have that. And on top of that, the phone signal is going to be bounced off some satellite or other, a satellite owned by one or another of the Orbitals, and they're almost guaranteed to be listening.

What Cowboy needs is a ground line. Not that ground lines can't be monitored, but someone actually has to attach a tap to the line, or monitor traffic from a phone supplier control room, and that means a human being has to be involved somehow, not an automated system listening to wireless traffic.

00126/00250 COMPLETE



THE SPRAWL



////EXCHANGE/////

Vehicle(Aquadio): ZHUANGZI SHAYU

CredBal: 44.238.437,77

ETA: 04:23:00

This chapter covers all the other assets you might need to complete your missions. Both the tools of the trade – guns and armour, vehicles and drones, cyberdecks and programs – as well as the human assets you will call on – contacts and gangs. How do you get all of these? You’ve gotta have Cred, my friend.

CRED

Cred is the currency of *The Sprawl*. Cred is both your reputation on the street and your ability to trade on that reputation for goods, services and favours.

Everyone starts with five Cred.

EARNING CRED

Every time you accept a mission, you put your reputation on the line. If you succeed, your value increases, if you fail, you slip a little.

After someone has **got the job** (see [Chapter 2: Basic Moves](#) and [Chapter 11: Missions](#)), everyone stakes one, two or three points of Cred on the success of the mission. Cross that Cred off your playbook; it’s gone. If you complete the mission and **get paid** in full, you get back twice the amount that you staked. If a result of **getting the job** was that “The job pays well”, you get back three-times what you staked. If the job is particularly high profile or the employer wants it done quickly, the multiplier may increase. Staking three Cred on a job raises the stakes, draws attention, and therefore increases the risk of the job. For every player that stakes three Cred on a job, the Legwork or Action Clock advances: advance the Action Clock by one first, then the Legwork Clock, and continue to alternate.

If you get hosed and the mission fails, you’ve lost your stake. If you ever run out of Cred, you’re begging for scraps at the mercy of any employers desperate enough to take a chance on you. You’ll probably die in a gutter.

Zero, Oakley, Core and Hub have accepted their first job; each has 5 Cred. The meet went down quickly and quietly (*the meeting doesn't attract attention*) and the team walked away with *useful information* ([intel]) and *assets* ([gear]); however, it doesn't pay well, so the team will only multiply their staked Cred by two if they succeed.

Oakley and Hub are happy with that and stake 2 Cred each. Zero wants some new cyberware and Core wants to upgrade her deck, so they both stake one extra Cred for a total of 3 each. The MC raises the Action Clock by one and the Legwork Clock by one.

During the mission, Oakley and Hub now each have 3 Cred available to spend; Zero and Core have 2 each. Oakley buys a box of airburst rounds for 1 Cred and Zero pays off one of her contacts for 2 Cred.

If the mission is successful despite these raised Mission Clocks, Oakley and Hub will each get back 4 Cred while Zero and Core will each score 6. After they get paid, Oakley will have 6 Cred (5 before the mission, -2 for his stake, -1 for the airburst rounds, +4 for completing the job successfully), Hub will have 7 (5-2+4), Zero will have 6 (5-3-2 to pay her contact+6) and Core will have 8 (5-3+6).

FAIR PRICES

In most cases, characters will need to **hit the street** to find the gear they want. If the *price is fair*, use the prices below. If they choose *your request is going to cost you extra*, double the cost or add a condition ("Sure Loulou, I'll give you a good price on the TWC-9... if you lean on Max and bring back the money he owes me.")

Spending 1 Cred will get you:

- » useful information from a contact
- » basic restricted gear from a fixer (sidearms, hunting weapons, ammo)
- » replacement parts for a cyberdeck
- » unreliable gang members for muscle
- » a chauffeur

Spending 2 Cred will get you:

- » a getaway driver for a mission
- » a hacker for a matrix run (but at this price he'll be poking around for pay-data on the side)
- » professional muscle (a dangerous individual or a competent gang)
- » a street doctor for gunshot wounds
- » more complex, restricted gear from a fixer (grenades, assault weapons, legal drones, basic hacking programs)

Spending 4 Cred will get you:

- » a hacker with a sense of professional integrity
- » discreet medical services for life-threatening wounds
- » expensive or illegal gear from a fixer (vehicles, security drones, heavy weapons, cutting edge Russian attack software, basic cheap cyberware)

Spending 8 cred will get you:

- » cutting-edge, military or extortionately expensive gear from a fixer (cyber-decks, military vehicles, most cyberware)

GEAR

Most of a character's gear will have no mechanical effect, but it will always have a fictional effect. If you have a smartphone, you can bring up maps, access global data networks and call your contacts. You don't need to keep track of everything your character owns. If it seems reasonable to everyone at the table that your character would have something (like a smartphone), then you can assume you have it.

You should keep track of the items of gear that are important to your character, especially those which will have a fictional or mechanical effect on the outcome of missions. Some of these are listed below.

OBTAINING GEAR

Each playbook has a number of gear options to choose from during character creation. Once play begins, characters can obtain additional gear by **hitting the street** to acquire it from contacts during the Legwork Phase or by **producing gear** during the mission itself.

You should give brand names to all of your gear – it's not just a heavy pistol, it's a Tianxia Fire Dragon 15. As much as possible, use the names of the corporations you described during character creation as it will increase their sense of omnipresence.

If a move that usually comes with gear (such as the Killer move **custom weapon**) is gained during the campaign, the gear it provides must be acquired in a fictionally appropriate manner, usually through a contact.

WEAPONS AND ARMOUR

Weapons are a cyberpunk staple, both for their effect and their aesthetic. When coming up with the brand name for your weapon, consider its look and make sure the brand name suits its image, like a real brand name would.

All weapons have a harm rating and a range tag; most have additional tags which are described under **Weapon Tags** below.

Firearms

Any firearm can be *+linked* at no additional cost.

- » Holdout pistol (2-harm hand/close discreet quick reload loud)
- » Flechette pistol (3-harm close/near quick flechette)
- » Revolver (2-harm close/near reload loud quick)
- » Semi-auto pistol (2-harm close/near loud quick)
- » Heavy revolver (3-harm close/near reload loud)
- » Heavy pistol (3-harm close/near loud)
- » Shotgun (3-harm close/near loud messy reload)
- » Automatic shotgun (3-harm close/near loud messy autofire)
- » Assault rifle (3-harm near/far loud autofire)
- » Machine pistol (2-harm close/near loud autofire)
- » SMG (2-harm close/near loud autofire)
- » LMG (3-harm near/far loud messy autofire clumsy)
- » Hunting rifle (2-harm far/ex loud)
- » Crossbow or hunting bow (2-harm close/near/far reload)
- » Sniper rifle (3-harm far/ex loud clumsy)
- » Anti-materiel rifle (3-harm far/ex loud messy breach clumsy)
- » Grenade launcher (4-harm near/far area loud messy clumsy)
- » Grenade tube (4-harm near area reload loud messy)
- » Assault cannon (4-harm near/far area messy breach clumsy)
- » Missile launcher (5-harm far area messy breach clumsy)

Grenades

At ranges intimate/hand/close, grenades are *+dangerous*.

- » Fragmentation grenades (4-harm near area reload loud messy)
- » Flashbangs (s-harm near area loud reload)
- » Gas grenades (s-harm near area reload gas)

Hand weapons

- » Knife (2-harm hand)
- » Club (2-harm hand)
- » Sword (3-harm hand messy)
- » Hand taser (s-harm hand reload)
- » Monofilament whip (4-harm hand messy area dangerous)
- » Shuriken or throwing knives (2-harm close infinite)

Armour

- » Armoured clothing or synth leathers (0-armour, +*discreet*, subtract 1 when rolling the harm move)
- » Armoured vest, jacket or coat (1-armour)
- » Body Armour (2-armour)
- » Military hardsuit (3-armour, clumsy)

Ammunition

The Sprawl doesn't require you to count bullets, but some missions might require different kinds of ammo. Most of these simply add a tag to the weapon they're loaded into.

- » AP rounds penetrate armour more easily – a weapon loaded with AP rounds adds the +*AP* tag
- » Airburst rounds explode in the air near a target either by proximity or as controlled by a targeting suite – a weapon loaded with airburst rounds adds the +*area* and +*messy* tags
- » Explosive rounds explode on impact with a target – a weapon loaded with explosive rounds adds +1 harm and cannot be silenced
- » Flechette rounds are a tightly packed bundle of synthetic plastic shards which tear through flesh, but are easily stopped by armour – a weapon loaded with flechette rounds adds +1 harm, but the target's armour value is doubled. Weapons with the +*flechette* tag already include the +1 harm
- » Gel rounds are designed to be less lethal – a weapon loaded with gel rounds inflicts s-harm instead of its listed harm value; targets harmed by gel rounds add the original harm value (minus armour) to their roll when making the harm move

WEAPON TAGS

Range Tags: Intimate/Hand/Close/Near/Far/Ex

These indicate the optimum range for the weapon. In good conditions you may be able to use the weapon at longer (or shorter) ranges, but take a -1 to do so.

- » Intimate is close enough to kiss
- » Hand is close enough to touch
- » Close is within a few steps
- » Near is within a couple of dozen metres
- » Far is within a block
- » Ex (Extreme) is several hundred metres away

Other Tags:

- +AP:** The target of AP(armour-piercing) rounds subtracts 2 from their armour value.
- +area:** The weapon harms everyone in the area of effect.
- +autofire:** The user can opt to temporarily give the weapon **+area** and **+reload**. If the weapon is belt-fed, the user can opt to temporarily give the weapon **+area** only.
- +breach:** These weapons make big holes in hard targets like walls and tanks. They are **+AP** and **+loud** and cannot be silenced.
- +clumsy:** This weapon or armour is large and unwieldy. It can be difficult to move quickly, quietly, or in tight spaces while carrying this. Weapons with the **+clumsy** tag usually require a braced or prone firing position, or some sort of gyroscopic exoskeleton.
- +dangerous:** On a miss, the user suffers harm.
- +discreet:** The weapon is easy to hide and will often be overlooked.
- +flechette:** The target's armour value is doubled.
- +linked:** The weapon can interface with a neural interface (and a targeting suite, see [Chapter 5: Cyberware](#)).
- +loud:** The sound is unmistakable, everyone nearby hears it, and, if the circumstances allow, they'll be able to identify where it came from as well.
- +messy:** Fire effect is inconsistent throughout the area of effect, but it makes a mess of people and things that it hits. If a messy weapon is **+loud**, it cannot be silenced.
- +numerous:** These are easy to hide (**+discreet**) and there are always more around when needed.
- +reload:** After firing, the user must spend a brief time reloading.
- +quick:** If speed matters, quick weapons go first.

OTHER EQUIPMENT

- » Climbing/Rappelling rig
- » Communications equipment (optional tags: *+encrypted*, *+jamming*, *+satellite relay*, *+recording*)
- » Disguise kit (+1 ongoing to avoid being detected while successfully maintaining a fake persona)
- » EMT kit (allows you to **apply first aid** to characters at any level of harm)
- » Explosives (spray explosives for breaching doors, small portable plastic explosives for destroying vehicles and weakening structures, or industrial-grade demolitions equipment. All are *+AP*, *+dangerous*, *+messy*, *+loud*, *+breach*)
- » Gyroscopic exoskeleton (provides a mobile brace point for weapons which require precise stabilisation or recoil absorption)
- » Microtronics workstation (you may perform field repairs on electronics and cyberware)
- » Musical instruments (optional tags: *+recording*, *+satellite relay*, *+simsense*)
- » Recording equipment (*+audio*, *+video*, optional tags: *+simsense*, *+discreet*, *+encrypted*)
- » Scuba equipment
- » Silencer or sound suppressor: A weapon equipped with a silencer or sound suppressor removes the loud tag. A *+messy* or *+breach* weapon cannot be silenced
- » Stealth suit (+1 ongoing to avoid being detected while hidden and alone)
- » Surgery or portable operating room (allows treatment of life-threatening injuries and implantation of cyberware)
- » Specialist toolkits, survival kits, and the like. Can be used 3 times. Each use grants +1 forward to a move relevant to the specialisation of the toolkit
- » Trauma derms (allows you to **apply first aid** to characters at 2100 or less harm)
- » Vision enhancing devices (glasses, goggles, scopes). Basic models have one or two tags, more advanced (and expensive) models can have more. Available tags: *+thermographic*, *+light amplification*, *+magnification*, *+recording*, *+flare compensation*. The feed from vision enhancers can be sent to a remote or local display through communications gear
- » Wingsuit, microlite, or other lightweight single-occupant aircraft

VEHICLES

Most vehicles don't need specific rules or a detailed profile: pick a frame and design, maybe a strength, look or weakness, and give it a corporate name and model. If a vehicle is wired for cybernetic control systems (cyber-linked), and a character with the Driver move **second skin** jacks in with Control Systems, you may need to assign a profile.

Choose a **Frame**:

motorcycle, car, hovercraft, boat, vectored thrust panzer, fixed-wing aircraft, helicopter

Choose an appropriate **Design**:

racing, recreational, transportation, cargo, military, luxury, civilian, commercial, courier

Choose a **Profile**:

⚡ Power+2, Looks+1, Weakness+1; 1-Armour

⚡ Power+2, Looks+2, Weakness+1; 0-Armour

⚡ Power+1, Looks+2, Weakness+1; 1-Armour

⚡ Power+2, Looks+1, Weakness+2; 2-Armour

For each point of Power, choose a strength; For each point of Looks, choose a look; For each point of Weakness, choose a weakness.

Strengths: Fast, quiet, rugged, aggressive, huge, off-road, responsive, uncomplaining, capacious, workhorse, easily repaired

Looks: Sleek, vintage, pristine, powerful, luxurious, flashy, muscular, quirky, pretty, garish, armoured, armed, nondescript

Weaknesses: Slow, fragile, unresponsive, lazy, cramped, picky, guzzler, unreliable, loud

If your vehicle has Power+2, it may mount one weapon system; Military vehicles may mount an additional weapon system.

Weapons: Machine guns (3-harm near/far area loud messy autofire), grenade launchers (4-harm near/far area loud messy), missile launcher (5-harm far area messy breach), autocannon (4-harm near/far area messy breach)

Sample Vehicles

Zhuangzi She (+flashy sports car)

Omni Familia (+nondescript sedan)

Nkembe-Harley Thunderbolt
(+aggressive motorcycle)

Zhuangzi Jian (+sleek motorcycle)

Omni Mula (+cramped, +rugged van)

Empire-Lear Arma Heliou (+luxurious helicopter)

Titan Colossus III (+loud, +armoured panzer)

Zhuangzi Shayu (+quiet, +responsive speedboat)

Titan Standard Vanguard Personal
Armoured Vehicle (PAV) (+*rugged*,
+*armoured coupé*)

DRONES

The same general advice for vehicles applies to drones. Most drones only need a frame, a motive style and a role in the story. Only make a profile if you need to. Give it a corporate name though.

Choose a **Motive Style**:

rotor, fixed-wing, quadruped, octoped, tracked, wheeled, aquatic, submarine

Choose a **Frame**:

- 🔌 Tiny (insect-sized): +*tiny*, +*fragile*, +*stealthy*, pick one sensor
- 🔌 Small (rat- to cat-sized): choose one strength, one sensor, one weakness, and one other from any category
- 🔌 Medium (human-sized): choose one strength, one sensors, one weakness, and two others from any category
- 🔌 Large (bear-sized): +*obvious*, choose two strengths, one sensor, one weakness and two others from any category

Strengths: fast, rugged, off-road, responsive, uncomplaining, easily repaired, stealthy, tight encryption, autonomous, robot arm, armed*

Sensors: magnification, thermographic, jamming, image enhancement, analysis software, sonar

Weaknesses: Slow, fragile, unreliable, loud, loose encryption, obvious

Machine guns (3-harm close/far area messy), grenade launchers (4-harm close area messy), and personal firearms can be installed in drones

Armed: a weapon can be mounted on the drone. The size of the weapon is determined by the size of the frame

- » A small drone can mount a gun dealing 2- or s-harm with a range tag of close or less and without the autofire tag
- » A medium drone can mount a gun dealing up to 3-harm with a range tag of near or less
- » A large drone can mount a gun dealing up to 4-harm

Sample Drones

Kikuyu Animatronics Spy Fly infiltration drone (tiny rotor fragile stealthy magnification)

MDI Night Creeper infiltration and interdiction drone (small octoped stealthy jamming thermographic fragile)

Shanghai Mobile Eagle Eye infiltration drone (small fixed-wing autonomous magnification thermographic slow)

Shanghai Mobile Packmate assault drone (medium wheeled rugged off-road armed:assault rifle (3-harm near loud autofire) thermographic)

Kikuyu Animatronics Razor Fin assault drone (medium submarine fast stealthy armed:teeth (3-harm hand messy) sonar fragile)

MDI Kodiak assault drone (large tracked rugged off-road uncomplaining armed:assault cannon (4-harm near/far area messy breach) magnification obvious loud)

Titan Blast Turtle bomb disposal drone (large tracked slow obvious responsive robot-arm jamming)

CYBERDECKS

He'd used decks in school, toys that shuttled you through the infinite reaches of that space that wasn't space, mankind's unthinkably complex consensual hallucination, the matrix, cyberspace, where the great corporate hotcores burned like neon novas, data so dense you suffered sensory overload if you tried to apprehend more than the merest outline.

Count Zero, William Gibson

Using a cyberdeck gives you further options and defenses while hacking. Cyberdecks have four ratings – Hardening, Firewall, Processor, and Stealth – and can run programs.

- » **Hardening** protects the circuitry of the cyberdeck from harm. Spend a point of Hardening to prevent an ICE attack from damaging your deck.
- » **Firewall** protects the deck's software from harm. Spend a point of Firewall to prevent an ICE attack from damaging your programs.
- » **Processor** determines how many programs the deck can run. Each point of Processor allows a deck to run one program.
- » **Stealth** prevents a secure system's ICE from locating your login point. As long as your Stealth exceeds the system's Trace, ICE cannot *Identify an Intruder or Sever a Connection*.

A basic cyberdeck divides 5 points among these, with no rating lower than 0 or higher than 2. More advanced models may divide 6 or more points, with no rating higher than 3.

Choose a number of programs equal to your deck's processing. You start with that many programs. You cannot run multiple copies of the same program at once.

- 🔌 Alert (When you successfully **assess** in the matrix, choose one extra option)
- 🔌 Defend (+2 Firewall)

- ⏻ Efficiency Routines (+2 Processor)
 - ⏻ Eject (+1 forward to **jack out**)
 - ⏻ Identity Protection (+2 Stealth)
 - ⏻ Lockdown (When you successfully **compromise security**, hold +1)
 - ⏻ Manipulate (When you successfully **manipulate systems**, hold +1)
 - ⏻ Sift (Take +1 ongoing to **research** or **search for paydata** in a secure database)
 - ⏻ Safety Cutout (Cuts power to all deck systems on a successful Black ICE attack: take no harm from the attack, the connection is severed, the deck can't be used until repaired)

Cyberdeck Programs in *The Sprawl* are not simply software that can be duplicated at will. They have firmware and chip-based hardware elements which require technical skill to produce and duplicate.

Maintaining Cyberdecks

At the end of a tough matrix run, a Hacker's deck might be pretty beaten up. To recover spent points of Hardening and Firewall, and damaged ratings in Stealth and Processor, you'll need some time and some Cred.

A character with the Tech move **Expert: Breadboarder** can spend a few hours and one Cred worth of parts to restore a deck to the ratings it had at the start of the last run, minus one. The last point will cost an additional Cred and a few more hours.

Burned programs can't be repaired. That's fine. New is always better.

CONTACTS

Roo made a phone call. "Hey, Elvin! It's Roo."

A moment on the other side. "Prudence?"

Roo made a face. He wasn't sure if Elvin had refused to use his nickname to keep needling him, or out of a strange sense of formality. He'd last sat on the deck of the Spitfire with Elvin a few years back when he'd sailed around St. Vincent a bit. Helped Elvin fix a broken 3-D printer.

He kept in touch because Elvin worked private security gigs up and down the islands. The kind of person you wanted to know, because Elvin knew who was up to what in terms of larger corporations. It was an old habit, because Roo wasn't in the game anymore. But he couldn't help himself when it came to collecting contacts like Elvin.

And now ... it came in handy.

Hurricane Fever, Tobias S. Buckell

You can't do it all alone in *The Sprawl*. As well as the other specialists who make up your team, you'll most likely need the help of various people with various skills and various backgrounds. The players bring one of these supporting characters into play by **declaring a Contact**, then the MC takes over and brings them to life in play. In part, the MC does that by putting them in trouble and having them dump that trouble on your doorstep. This can be the result of an MC move, or the **hit the street** move.

You can **declare a Contact** once per session, although Fixers and Hunters have additional moves that can introduce more new Contacts.

Your Contacts might have major problems that make a significant impact on the mission at hand, or they might have problems that are a minor inconvenience to you. Either way, your Contacts are potential plot hooks for the MC to make *The Sprawl* feel real... and real complicated.

GANGS

Sometimes the asset you need is a collection of people with a certain set of skills. If you don't have access to such a group (such as the Pusher's **believers** or the Fixer's **backup**), perhaps you can pay one to help you out.

If a gang is not already present in your story, specify the kind of group you're looking for and how you intend to make contact and the MC will fill in the details as appropriate. **Declaring a contact** to be a gang member or leader would give you an in, marching into a gang's territory and demanding to talk to someone important is also an option. The questions and lists below are intended as inspiration for both potential employers of a gang and for the MC to create one; create new tags and add new descriptions as required.

Creating a Gang

By default a gang comprises a core of about 20 people as well as various associates and groupies.

What kind of gang is it? Choose one: Street, Corporate, Media, Military, Political, Cyber

How big is the gang? *Choose a size and two tags from those listed:*

- 🔦 **Small:** 10 or fewer (loyal, mobile, well-armed, well-trained)
- 🔦 **Medium:** 20-40 (mobile, well-armed, well-trained, well-connected, resources)
- 🔦 **Large:** 50-100 (mobile, well-connected, resources, self-sufficient)
- 🔦 **Huge:** 200+ (well-connected, resources, spread out, self-sufficient)

Does the gang have territory? Do they control a few blocks of the streets? Do they operate out of a compound or an arcology? Perhaps they control a network of activities (transportation, hacking, or drug sales to corporate parties, for example) rather than an area of the city.

What is the character of the gang? Tags include: poor, wanted, hard to find, unreliable, violent, hated

Who leads the gang? What are they like? Tags include: immoral, demanding, grasping, a real fucker, useless, absent

What are the gang's main gigs? Tags include: commerce, crime, parties, muscle, deliveries, infiltration, scavenging, activism, politics

Using Gangs

Gangs can be a source of information and illegal equipment, in which case treat them as you would any other Contact.

Gangs can be tough, well-armed and brutal, but they're seldom seasoned professionals like the characters. If you **mix it up** with a gang, with a gang at your back, or if two gangs fight, they inflict and suffer harm like characters. The larger gang inflicts +1 harm and suffers -1 harm for each size step difference between the two gangs; a handful of people are a step below a small gang. So if a large gang fights a Fixer and his small gang, that's a difference of two size steps: the large gang inflicts +2 harm and suffers -2 harm. For more on inflicting harm, see [Chapter 9: Running The Sprawl](#).

MC: The multichromatic crowd of flexi-sceen dresses and gauzy recepti-slik scarves melt away into reinforced glass storefronts and down steamy alleys leaving a loose circle of blue-clad Wire Dancers. A gangly man with chrome teeth and a white implant light scanning back and forth across his forehead in reference to some old show flicks his hand, extending a weighted monofilament wire from a finger compartment. "Hey corp-fucker! He's with us!"

Kennedy: I let the bloody body fall from my hand and face the guy with the forehead light. "Yeah? Well he wasn't very helpful. Maybe you'll spill hotter intel..." I click open my razor spurs. How many of them are there?

MC: About a dozen. "The only thing spilling around here are gonna be your fluids, corpf--"

Kennedy: "Stop calling me that!" I flick the synth nerves into hot mode and launch myself into light-face.

MC: What's your objective here?

Kennedy: I want to control the space. I want that guy dead, but I want at least one of them able to talk.

MC: Roll to **mix it up** as normal. Because this is a small gang, you'll inflict one less harm on them and they'll inflict one more harm on you.

Kennedy: Lets see if these Wire Dancers live up to their name...

Fitch had been bringing up the rear when one of the Existence Entertainment security teams rounded a corner Salome and Clarence had just walked past. He shot on the first one to draw on him, but the man's partner was just a kid. You had to be 18 to work security in Austria, but 18 left you without being prepared for staring down the barrel of Fitch's gun. He kept an eye on the kid, hand slowly inching towards a pocket on the front of his jacket. "I've got a spray in here. Knock you out. Feel like you stuck your head inside the new Pummerin bell, but it beats being dead." He kept his eyes on the kid, finally reached his pocket, gun still pointed at a kid just old enough to be one of his own.

He tried not to snort as his hand closed around the canister. Getting sentimental in your old age, Fitch. Never having children is no reason to blow this.

When he brought the canister out, the kid finally went for his gun, but he had a face full of knock-out before he even got the gun out of the holster. Kid might get fired after this, but looking for a new security gig in as xenophobic and paranoid a country as Austria wasn't exactly going to be a hardship. Walking away before the kid even finished hitting the floor, he resisted growling into the comm. Cinderella was not someone to growl at. You do not growl at your valuable specialists.

"Cinderella, you got any idea why we've run across a second team down here? Please tell me there isn't a siege of Turks at the end of this entrance."

"Weeell....," she exhaled. "Okay. I don't know who--yet--but it looks like the security isn't for us. There's some kind of VIP in there tonight that's really afraid of the whole dying concept. Since I am continuing to keep the system from realizing we're playing house in its head, I have no idea what might be at the end of the hall now. I can tell you that due to your and Salome's delays, you're down to 10 minutes inside, assuming there's no more surprises."

She sounded irritated and angry, both of them familiar features in their conversations. He shook his head, smiling as he caught up to Salome and Clarence. "Got it. See you on the other side, sis."



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ADVANCEMENT

CONTINUE? [Y/N]

/////EXTRACTION/////

CarNum: 14

RowNum: 8

SeatAlpha: F

ADVANCEMENT

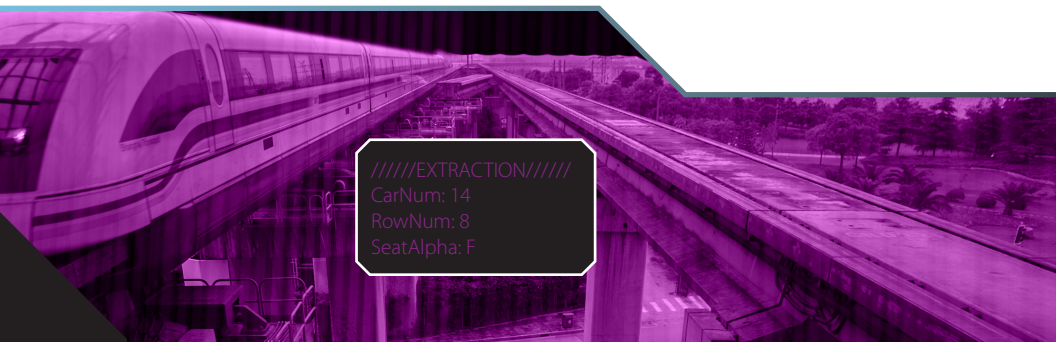
As the characters attempt missions against the corporations, they will discover more about the world and get better at their chosen speciality. This is handled by the advancement system.

When you create a character in *The Sprawl*, you'll select two Personal Directives from the list on your playbook or from the full list in this chapter. Some Directives describe exactly when they apply and others require you to fill in some blanks. Selecting Directives, especially those with blanks, is also one of the tools the players have to control the direction and content of the game. Choosing a Directive tells the MC that you want to see elements during sessions that play on, toward and against that Directive. For example, if I choose the Compassionate Directive, I'm saying that I want the game to include people in trouble so that I can choose to find out when my character will help them and when he won't.

In addition to these Personal Directives, every mission will include a set of Mission Directives. These give you signposts for what the characters must accomplish to complete a mission, and reward you for taking concrete action towards success. The MC will set broad Mission Directives that will allow for many different ways to complete the mission (see [Chapter 11: Missions](#) for more detail). As you act toward completing the mission by completing the Mission Directives, you will mark experience.

Each time you mark ten experience, you'll choose a new advance from the list on your character's playbook. After your fifth advance, you'll be able to choose advances from an additional list of advanced options. Some of these additional options have additional requirements or costs beyond accumulating 10 experience that must be met before they can be selected.

It's important to remember that in *The Sprawl* planning doesn't advance your character or the story. Advancement requires action! Be bold!



/////EXTRACTION/////

CarNum: 14

RowNum: 8

SeatAlpha: F

PERSONAL DIRECTIVES

If life was only missions, it would be pretty easy, but in *The Sprawl*, there's always life beyond the mission. Personal Directives are the motivations, problems, connections, duties, and loyalties that throw you curve balls, pull your focus off the task at hand, and generally complicate your shadowy, illegal career. Personal Directives split a character's focus between the mission and their personal life. Sometimes they align, and sometimes they conflict. Personal directives add depth to your character and to the game as a whole. Completing missions is all well and good, but when a your characters have to make compelling personal decisions while doing so, *The Sprawl* is a much more satisfying experience.

Here are some examples:

- Behavioural:** Describe your ethical code. When adhering to your code hinders the mission, mark experience.
- Compassionate:** When you put your compassion for the powerless ahead of the mission, mark experience.
- Deceptive:** When your lies about your identity or your past put the mission at risk, mark experience.
- Filial:** When you put the advice of _____ ahead of the mission, mark experience.
- Financial:** When you hinder the mission for a chance at extra profit, mark experience.
- Hierarchic:** When you improve your standing or impair a rival's standing among _____, mark experience.
- Proselytising:** Describe your belief system. When you persuade others to act according to your beliefs, mark experience.

Illustrious:	When your desire for fame draws unwanted attention to the mission, mark experience.
Intimate:	When you put your friend _____ ahead of the mission, mark experience.
Masochistic:	When you suffer one or more harm, mark experience.
Network:	When your membership in _____ hinders the mission, mark experience.
Protective:	When you put your responsibility to _____ ahead of the mission, mark experience.
Prudent:	When you resolve a charged situation without violence, mark experience.
Rejected:	When your former membership in _____ hinders the mission, mark experience.
Revealing:	When you discover more information about _____, mark experience.
Vengeful:	When you harm _____ or their interests, mark experience.
Violent:	When you deliberately choose to use violence to overcome a problem when a non-violent option exists, mark experience.

Fill in the blanks with names that fit both the sentence and the name of the directive. Names can often be people or groups, but sometimes only an individual or a collective will make sense. Use people or groups who have previously been defined in the game, or make up new ones. Discuss your thoughts and options with the whole table. Take inspiration from your fellow players and their contributions.

INCORPORATING DIRECTIVES

Directives are guides for the players to indicate the kind of scenes they want to see in the game as well as prompts for the MC to ask questions.

It is the responsibility of the players to choose Directives that illuminate their characters in interesting ways and give the MC direction about how they want the game to play out. When you name a group or a person in a Directive, you are telling the MC that you want to see that group or person in play, and you want your relationship to that group or person to complicate your character's life.

It is the responsibility of the MC to incorporate the character's Directives into the game. Look over the team's Personal Directives when you create missions and prepare NPCs and situations that relate to those keys. Aim to include at least one scene in each mission for each character which gives that character a choice about one of their Directives. Does the character let this relationship hinder the mission? These scenes shouldn't always relate directly to the mission. They can arise from the characters' interaction with their contacts or other connections to *The Sprawl* as well.

Some missions might be built around the Personal Directives of one or more characters. Organisations or people named in Personal Directives can provide employers, targets or major players in missions. Motivations expressed as Personal Directives can form the thematic core of mission (a rescue mission for a compassionate character, for example). A mission might be designed to challenge or question a character's important belief (how far will Zero go in service of her Financial Directive?). One easy way to make sure a character's Personal Directive is an important part of the mission is to create an NPC whose purpose is to target or embody the Directive during this mission. The character's Personal Directives are flags to guide the game in particular directions; the MC and the players should both use them as such.

CHANGING PERSONAL DIRECTIVES

Sometimes fictional circumstances in the game will suggest that a Personal Directive is no longer relevant to your character. Perhaps you achieve the vengeance you seek, you uncover an unwelcome truth about your Network, or your ethical code drives you to do something you later regret. If, at the end of a mission, you think a Personal Directive is no longer relevant you may cross it off your playbook and choose a new, fictionally appropriate Personal Directive. You may not choose a Directive which you have previously used with this character.

Talk about this decision with the group. Sometimes it can be interesting to keep the Directive and change the specific details. Does satisfying your specific urge for vengeance stop you from being a vengeful person? Perhaps you will simply find a new target for your vengeance. You might choose to remain a member of a network you now despise or distrust to bring it down or change it from within. The motivations to change a character's Personal Directive can come from the player side or the character side. If you're tired of playing your character in a certain way, talk about bringing a particular character aspect to an end. Personal Directives can often serve as individual character arcs. Sometimes they're better when they have a clear ending.

MISSION DIRECTIVES

The other primary way to gain experience in *The Sprawl* is by undertaking missions. When you accept a mission, the MC will show you the directives for it. The first directive is always "When you accept the mission, mark experience." Here's an example:

When you accept the mission, mark experience.

When you decide when and where to take Kurosawa, mark experience.

When you complete the extraction, mark experience.

When the mission ends, mark two experience.

When the team collectively fulfils one of the mission directives for the first time, everyone on the team marks experience according to the directive. The last directive always takes the form "When the mission ends..." This usually occurs after the team attempts to **get paid** and any resulting complication are resolved. However, it occurs whether the mission is successful or not, so if the Mission Clock hits 0000 and the team disperses in failure, never to contact their employer again, the mission is still

over and the directive is fulfilled. Succeeding in completing the mission objective gives you Cred and experience. Failing still gives you experience.

LINKS

At the end of a mission, each player chooses another character who, as a result of the mission, has a better idea about how your character operates. Explain what happened and what they now know about your character. That character increases their Links with you by 1.

If that new piece of knowledge would increase their Links with your character to +4, explain why that new knowledge changes the relationship. The players of these characters will then frame a short downtime scene between the two characters, focused on the new knowledge. After the scene, they mark experience and reset their Links with your character to 0.

Which character aspects you choose to highlight and how you conduct these downtime scenes will depend on the group preferences, and the themes and tone of the game.

You can choose scenes and moments that highlight parts of the character that you want to emphasise: the Killer might always give character insights through scenes of violence to underscore that aspect of his character (think of *The Raid* (2011)) or through peaceful moments to contrast with that aspect (as in *Léon* (aka *The Professional*) (1994)). These sort of thematic options are not restricted to Links scenes, of course, but can inform your character's actions in any aspect of play.

You can choose scenes and moments that address the themes of the game: a game about cybernetics, body modification and what it means to be human might highlight the human element by setting all of these character scenes in *human* settings like graveyards, bars, crowds, and family occasions. That same group might instead choose to highlight the theme by putting it in contrast to the technological machine elements of *The Sprawl* and set those scenes in sterile laboratories, server farms, and the Matrix.

ADVANCING

Every time you mark ten experience, choose any advancement from the list of **basic advances**:

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| ⏻ choose another move from your playbook | ⏻ +1 Style (Max +2) |
| ⏻ choose another move from your playbook | ⏻ +1 Edge (Max +2) |
| ⏻ choose another move from your playbook | ⏻ +1 Cool (Max +2) |
| ⏻ choose another move from your playbook | ⏻ +1 Mind (Max +2) |
| ⏻ choose another move from your playbook | ⏻ +1 Meat (Max +2) |
| ⏻ choose a move from another playbook | ⏻ +1 Synth (Max +2) |
| ⏻ choose a move from another playbook | |

You can only choose each option once. You don't have to choose these in order. If a move or cyberware says that you may take another move as an advance, doing so counts as an advance on the basic list, but does not remove any of the 10 options above.

After you have chosen five advances from the basic list, you may select from this list of **major advances**:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ⏻ +1 to any stat (Max +3) | ⏻ rewind a corporate Countdown Clock to 1800 [COST: 10 Cred] |
| ⏻ buy off <i>enemy</i> or <i>owned</i> | ⏻ retire your character to safety and create a new character [REQUIRES: 20 Cred] |
| ⏻ make a second character | |
| ⏻ change your character to a new playbook | |

For all advances, and especially **major advances**, the character must take appropriate fictional action to select these options. For example, you can't simply buy off an enemy, you must take action in the fiction that explains and justifies why you are able to remove that threat. You must kill an enemy or erase the corporate data files to rewind a clock. By the same token, you have to take the advance to gain the permanent benefit of those actions. If you kill your enemy but don't buy off the threat, someone else will take up that role: a newly-promoted second in command out for revenge, a jealous rival who wanted to kill that enemy themselves, perhaps even the police detective seeking to put you behind bars for murder. Of course, in a world of cybernetic minds and vat-grown body parts, "dead" can be a subjective term, too.

If you change your character to a new playbook, keep the old playbook for reference. The character keeps those things from the old playbook which are intrinsic to the character (including cyberware) and loses access to those things which were part of their former life. Decide with the MC which things from the old playbook fall into each category. Choose a new name and look if appropriate, keep the same cyberware – if your new playbook requires new cyberware, use **go under the knife** – and choose moves and gear as if you were making a new character. Change your Personal Directives if appropriate.

Gant is a Fixer who is tired of his life as a middleman and has become inspired to dig up dirt on the corps as a Reporter. He gives up **hustling** and **backup** as the parts of his fixing career that he leaves behind – depending on the fictional circumstances, he might keep his **hustling** crew and **backup** as contacts or they might become enemies. He keeps **I know a guy who knows a guy** – he still knows all those people – and his **reputation** – although he might try to hide that during play. He picks up the basic Reporter moves (**live and on the air** and **nose for a story**) and chooses one more from the Reporter list.

Aileen didn't need a cameraman, but Sam was one more armed person on the side of the news out on the street beside her, and she didn't have to carry as much equipment. You didn't need the heavier stuff to do the job, but people liked that. Equipment they figured they'd never understand, run by people fighting the good fight for them. She hadn't even been back from Spain long enough for the tan to fade, before she'd been given a box full of drive data and a directive to go back to work.

She might as well make a splash.

With her cameraman trotting beside her and to the right, Aileen put on a burst of speed. Whoever her anonymous tipster was, they said if she forced her hand this morning with Jordan White she was going to take a bullet to the head, unless she had someone with her. Her tipster may have had her last tangle with an executive from Weyland-Hughes in mind. That car crash would have been an ugly way to die. As would a bullet.

You're not safe going alone. Bring a friend. Bring lots of friends.

Live stream it was, then. Bring lots of friends? She'd bring the whole damn world. Aileen thrust a microphone that was really rather unnecessary into White's face the second she could, bringing out the flash of rage she'd been hoping for. He thought she'd come after him alone, after all the shit she'd been through.

"Mr. White, I'm Aileen Kelly with the Dublin Bulletin. What do you have to say about the charges of fiscal impropriety and corruption being filed against your corporation in court...", she made a show of checking her watch, raising her eyebrows, "why, I believe they're being filed *right now*."

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THE MATRIX

CONTINUE? [Y/N]

///STRAIGHT_UP_ROBBERY///
 Creds: [ACQUIRED]
 SkillChips: [ACQUIRED]
 FucksGiven: [NULL]

>>>>.chptr.>>>>00008>>>>>>>>

THE MATRIX

CONTINUE? [Y/N]

///STRAIGHT_UP_ROBBERY///
Creds: [AQUIRED]
SkillChips: [AQUIRED]
FucksGiven: [NULL]

>>>>.chptr.>>>>00008>>>>>

THE MATRIX

CONTINUE? [Y/N]

///STRAIGHT_UP_ROBBERY///
 Creds: [ACQUIRED]
 SkillChips: [ACQUIRED]
 FucksGiven: [NULL]

>>>>.chptr.>>>>00008>>>>>>>>

THE MATRIX

CONTINUE? [Y/N]

///STRAIGHT_UP_ROBBERY///
Creds: [AQUIRED]
SkillChips: [AQUIRED]
FucksGiven: [NULL]

>>>>.chptr.>>>>00008>>>>>>>>

THE MATRIX

CONTINUE? [Y/N]

///STRAIGHT_UP_ROBBERY///
Creds: [AQUIRED]
SkillChips: [AQUIRED]
FucksGiven: [NULL]

>>>>.chptr.>>>>00008>>>>>>>>

THE MATRIX

CONTINUE? [Y/N]

///STRAIGHT_UP_ROBBERY///
Creds: [AQUIRED]
SkillChips: [AQUIRED]
FucksGiven: [NULL]

>>>>.chptr.>>>>00008>>>>>>>>

THE MATRIX

CONTINUE? [Y/N]

///STRAIGHT_UP_ROBBERY///
Creds: [AQUIRED]
SkillChips: [AQUIRED]
FucksGiven: [NULL]

THE MATRIX

LOADING...

The matrix is an abstract representation of relationships between data systems... Legitimate operators never see the walls of ice they work behind, the walls of shadow that screen their operations from others, from industrial-espionage artists and hustlers... Monochrome nonspace where the only stars are dense concentrations of information, and high above it all burn corporate galaxies and the cold spiral arms of military systems.

Burning Chrome, William Gibson

The Matrix, also known as cyberspace, is a global virtual reality network connecting every significant computer system. This digital world contains representations of every computer system connected to it, from the login instance of grandma's antique desktop computer to the giant corporate systems that dominate the virtual skyline of cyberspace. Systems and representational constructs reflect every aspect of human existence: you can work, vote, buy and sell goods and services, visit all manner of cultural spaces, watch physical and digital sports, listen to and make music, meet people and make friends, with the right hardware, you can even have sex and do drugs in cyberspace. Understanding of the physiology and biochemistry of the human brain have advanced to a point where sensory experiences can be sent directly to the appropriate neural pathways by data interface devices and specific emotional responses can be triggered by advanced software.

The Matrix is accessed at the most basic level through various kinds of visual terminals: desktop or wall-mounted screens, portable communication devices, glasses equipped with heads up displays and eye-tracking technology. At the basic professional level, wearable neural headsets allow anyone to access and experience the full range of virtual sensations available in the Matrix at a perfectly functional level. At the top end, power-users deploy cybernetic data interface devices to stream data directly to specific neural clusters, granting those users unprecedented processing speed and reflexive capabilities. This is the cutting edge of user-interface



```
///STRAIGHT_UP_ROBBERY///  
Creds: [AQUIRED]  
SkillChips: [AQUIRED]  
FucksGiven: [None]
```

technology, but it is not without risk. As hackers adapted this new technology to their own ends, revelling in the speed and processing synergy of the neural-electronic interface, the corporations developed elaborate defensive software to exploit these direct neural links.

Intrusion Countermeasure Electronics, more commonly known as ICE, comes in three broad categories: Blue, Red and Black. Blue is the most benign, simply raising alarms, tracing connections, and alerting human security personnel. Red is the most common in corporate servers. As well as performing the same basic functions to a more effective degree, Red ICE contains powerful viral algorithms which can corrupt software and damage hardware. The last kind, Black ICE, operates at the bleeding edge of technology, and of the law. It can directly attack the firmware of the cybernetic data interface connecting the user to the Matrix and cause lethal neural feedback. Almost as bad, perhaps even worse, Black ICE can run powerful psychotropic simulations which confuse and disorientate the user, inducing hallucinations, memory loss, and permanent psychological damage. How is that worse than lethal neural feedback, you ask? It can trap your mind in the virtual world and keep your body alive and in place until a corporate extraction team arrives, that's how.

MATRIX GEOGRAPHY

What does the Matrix look like? Anything its designers want. The Matrix is a mélange of different design styles, colour palates, and symbology. If you were to remove the accretions and access the baseline system, you would see a featureless grid gently curving off towards a horizon and mirroring the geographic plane in which its hardware operates. On top of that grid, the virtual constructs representing different computer systems cluster together in local networks operated by various telecommunications organisations. The megacorporate virtual environments tower above those of minor corporations, governments and other private organisations; a digital reflection of the physical reality of *The Sprawl*. The main difference is that the appearance of virtual constructs is not limited by physical laws. One corporation's head office is represented by an impossibly tall fairy-tale castle, another by a radiant

sphere of glowing gas, yet another is built with crystal walls within which representations of happy and productive workers smile at and salute passers-by.

OTHER DANGERS IN THE MATRIX

The Matrix is as dynamic an environment as the real world and the iconic threat of ICE is not the only danger at the MCs disposal. Corporations will often employ counter-hackers to patrol systems looking for intruders skilled enough to evade their automated security systems. Even more frustrating, the human element – or the creative thinking of advanced expert systems or AI – will find ways to anticipate and subvert the activities of cyber-criminals.

Counter-hackers may try to distract and divert intruders to assist ICE or buy time for a Trace to run. If they directly attack the deck and programs of an intruder, they can be treated like ICE and dispatched with **melt ICE**. If you want to make duelling cyberjockey's a major component of *The Sprawl*, you might make your own move for hacker on hacker cyber-combat.

Because hackers connect their mind to a hostile computer network through a cybernetic connection, opportunities may arise for counter-hackers to reverse the game and hack the cyberware of an intruder, although cyberware that is *+encrypted* would require the MC to make a move to subvert that encryption first. Hacking someone's cyberware could have many effects: disabling, malfunctions, gathering and transmitting data, tracking. Think of anything hostile viruses, spyware or malware can do today, and extrapolate.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The secretive existence of self-aware computer systems (Artificial Intelligences or AI) is a staple of the cyberpunk genre. They are usually unique or rare, and carefully hidden within corporate systems, either as official R&D projects, or unintended by-products of the systems' complexity. Accordingly, there are no special rules for AIs in *The Sprawl*. MCs are invited to introduce them into the story in their own unique and story-specific ways. Perhaps you will treat them as sentient Black ICE, or as a regular NPC or Threat. Your group might decide that you want AI to be an important part of the setting, either as a plot point, a theme to explore, or as a relatively commonly encountered type of character. You may even have AIs as playable characters. This might be a cosmetic matter, such as a Killer AI in a fully cybernetic body, or it might be something more complex, like a Hacker AI with a purely digital existence and limited access to certain moves.

CORPORATE SYSTEMS

Corporate systems are large, complex, secure and self-contained computer systems. They contain a large number of smaller systems which control various physical aspects of a building or compound as well as all the components of the virtual environment used on a daily basis by the corporation's legitimate users. A few common types of sub-system are described below.

The interior of a corporate system usually continues the motif established by its exterior design, especially in publicly accessible areas. Within the system,

representations of operational systems, production controls, databases, and security measures are monitored and manipulated by users, represented by virtual representations (called avatars) which usually conform to a policy of corporate uniformity in coherence with the system's overall motif. Because digital camouflage is all that matters, hackers often adopt striking avatars which draw on as wide a variety of styles and themes as the corporate structures they infiltrate. Wider, in fact, since corporate PR usually adopts a more conservative approach to cultural mores than the criminals who infiltrate their systems.

Corporate systems vary in security, both in terms of the quantity and quality of their ICE, and of the connectivity of their system to the wider Matrix. Corporate systems may also be mostly or entirely offline and accessible only for brief periods or by physically infiltrating the facility. Matrix constructs can be manipulated by legitimate operators at a legitimate console, or by illegitimate operators hacking through a cyberdeck using the **compromise security** or **manipulate systems** move. ICE must be disabled by brute force attacks or software loops with the **melt ICE** move.

SUB-SYSTEMS, ROUTINES AND SECURITY MEASURES

Sub-systems within a corporate system have routines and security measures which can be manually operated by legitimate system operators or by hackers who have gained control over the system. Routines and security measures are moves which the MC can use to represent the actions of sysops and counter-hackers acting against a virtual intruder. Hackers can use **compromise security** to activate security measures or **manipulate systems** to activate routines. Sometime activating a routine or security measure will trigger a different move, such as **searching for paydata** in a database.

Users can generally move freely and nearly instantaneously between matrix sub-systems within a virtual environment that they have access to, although they may have to use **login** to penetrate extremely secure areas nested within larger systems. Below are a few types of sub-system which are commonly found within a corporate system. A corporate system might have all of these or only some. It might have multiples of certain sub-systems and none of others, depending on the purpose of the facility.

Login Gates govern entry into a Matrix system. By definition, all secure systems have a login gate. This is where authorised users provide their credentials and unauthorised users fake those credentials with **login**.

Security Measures:

- 🔌 Admit or deny a login
- 🔌 Trigger or cancel an alert
- 🔌 Activate or deactivate ICE

Building Security Nodes monitor physical security systems. Most secure systems monitor similarly secure physical sites with a full array of cameras, sensors, and cutting edge security devices. Sometimes the easiest way to get inside is to cut through matrix security and turn off all those physical defences.

Routines:

- ⏻ Activate, deactivate, monitor, record, subvert or loop a camera network
- ⏻ Activate or deactivate a physical alarm
- ⏻ Activate or deactivate an electronically locked door
- ⏻ Activate, deactivate, override or modify the targeting priorities of automated weapon systems
- ⏻ Activate or cancel a lockdown of the entire physical facility
- ⏻ Activate or deactivate an electronically controlled trap

Security Measures:

- ⏻ Trigger or cancel an alert
- ⏻ Activate or deactivate ICE

Building Services Nodes control the various mundane operations of the physical building or compound. Most facilities have some sort of automated systems controlling lights, air conditioning, power supplies, and the like.

Routines:

- ⏻ Activate, deactivate, monitor or reprogram a building system (such as air conditioning, lights, power; note that security or life support systems will often have independent backup power controlled from a separate Matrix system)

Security Measures:

- ⏻ Trigger or cancel an alert
- ⏻ Activate or deactivate ICE

Production Control Systems control the things that the facility makes. Large corporate facilities (such as the virtual environment of a giant arcology) may have many different kinds of production control system each controlling different labs, warehouses and factories. The routines that these systems control differ widely depending on the goods being manufactured: the seed germination facility of an agricorp system will have quite different routines than the testing range of a weapons division.

Example routines:

- ⏻ Start or stop a production line
- ⏻ Initiate a production run or delivery
- ⏻ Activate or deactivate part of a production line
- ⏻ Reprogram part of a production line

Security Measures:

- ⏻ Trigger or cancel an alert
- ⏻ Activate or deactivate ICE

R&D Control Systems control laboratories and databases where cutting-edge research is performed and stored. As above, the routines that these systems control differ widely depending on the goods being researched and tested: gene-splicing, explosives development, and organ growth all require different controls and systems.

Example Routines:

- 🔌 Seal or unseal a hermetically controlled area
- 🔌 Change test parameters
- 🔌 Initiate or rescind a test process
- 🔌 Issue or rescind an evacuation order
- 🔌 Activate or deactivate emergency protocols

Security Measures:

- 🔌 Trigger or cancel an alert
- 🔌 Activate or deactivate ICE

Databases contain data. These will often be the target of intrusion attempts aiming at discovering or extracting specific data, as well as general paydata fishing attempts. Many hackers consider this a great way to make a bit of extra Cred on the side... but you have to be good at sifting out the hot, tagged or worthless data.

Routines:

- 🔌 Create, edit or delete records
- 🔌 Delete backups
- 🔌 Delete or edit access logs
- 🔌 **Search for paydata** (when you search for paydata in a Database, roll Mind: On a hit you find something hot that you can sell; on a 10+, when you **hit the street** to sell it and roll a 7-9, choose one fewer result)

Security Measures:

- 🔌 Trigger or cancel an alert
- 🔌 Activate or deactivate ICE

Root controls the entire system. This is often the first place a system operator will go to defend the system against an intruder.

Security Measures:

- 🔌 Change user permissions (including removing "restricted" status from **login**)
- 🔌 Isolate or reintegrate a subordinate system
- 🔌 Sever all external logins, sever all internal logins, or both
- 🔌 Shut down or reboot the virtual environment; this will often have major consequences for the operation of physical systems
- 🔌 Trigger or cancel an alert
- 🔌 Activate or deactivate ICE in any subordinate system

ICE

ICE are autonomous programs designed to prevent infiltration of and damage to a matrix system. ICE have routines, like other Matrix systems, but they cannot be **compromised** and must be disabled with **melt ICE**. ICE routines trigger when the MC makes moves and when noted by the Matrix Moves (see below).

Blue ICE locates intruders, raises the alarm, traces their location allowing the system owner to alert physical response teams (either internal corporate teams or the appropriate local police authorities), then attempts to sever the intruder's connection.

When Blue ICE executes a routine, the MC chooses 1:

- 🔌 Trigger an alarm (advance relevant Mission Clock)
- 🔌 Trace an intruder's location (Trace +1)
- 🔌 Identify intruder (advance Corporate Clock)
- 🔌 Sever an intruder's connection
- 🔌 Call for counter-hacker backup

Red ICE locates intruders, raises the alarm, traces their location, then engages them to damage their cyberdeck with feedback algorithms.

When Red ICE executes a routine, the MC chooses 2:

- 🔌 Trigger an alarm (advance relevant Mission Clock)
- 🔌 Trace an intruder's location (Trace +2)
- 🔌 Identify an intruder (advance Corporate Clock)
- 🔌 Sever an intruder's connection
- 🔌 Corrupt an intruder's program (Destroy an active program)
- 🔌 Damage an intruder's cyberdeck (Lower one of the cyberdeck's ratings by 1)

Black ICE locates intruders, raises the alarm, traces their location, then engages them to harm the intruder herself with lethal feedback algorithms. They often use psycho-electronic techniques to prevent the intruder severing the connection themselves, trapping the intruder in the matrix until the Black ICE kills them or physical response teams can reach their location.

When Black ICE executes a routine, the MC chooses 3:

- 🔌 Trigger an alarm (advance relevant Mission Clock)
- 🔌 Trace an intruder's location (Trace +3)
- 🔌 Identify an intruder (advance relevant Mission Clock)
- 🔌 Damage an intruder's cyberdeck (Lower one of the cyberdeck's ratings by 2)
- 🔌 Inflict physical harm to a **jacked in** intruder (1-harm +AP)
- 🔌 Prevent an intruder from jacking out and trap their mind

Specialised ICE

You might develop ICE with specific strategies.

- » **Code Wall:** This Blue ICE dumps an unsuccessful hacker out of the Matrix. The only action it ever tries is sever an intruder's connection, it doesn't even raise an alarm, although it keeps a log that may or may not be checked.
- » **Klaxxon:** This Red ICE simply raises an alarm, then alerts Matrix Security, who can better decide how to deal with the intrusion.
- » **Zombie:** This Black ICE traces the intruder, then attempts to prevent them jacking out before identifying them and summoning a strike team to their location.
- » **Firestarter:** Rather than trying to take the hacker out directly by frying their brain, this Black ICE prevents them from jacking out then repeatedly attacks their cyberdeck until it bursts into flame.

A HACKER'S HARDWARE

Cyberdecks transform the Matrix's signals into neural impulses and vice versa. They also provide the platform from which a hacker runs programs on corporate sub-systems and ICE. The cyberdeck is the interface between the Matrix and the user. Every signal between the user and the Matrix passes through the cyberdeck. If the deck gets fried or destroyed, that communication route is broken and the user is disconnected.

A user can use a cyberdeck on its own, without any cyberware, but typing speed is slow. Users who want to compete with the machine speed of ICE must **jack in** using a neural interface.

Jack in is a Playbook Move available to Hackers and Infiltrators as well as some characters who select Neural Interface as an additional piece of cyberware ([Chapter 4: Playbooks](#)). Characters with this move have the programming and virtual interface skills to manipulate virtual systems in ways that their designers didn't anticipate.

Neural Interface cyberware gives a character the speed and reflexes to use those moves to their full capacity ([Chapter 5: Cyberware](#)). **Jacking in** with neural interface cyberware allows you to access the Matrix at the speed of your thought, rather than the speed of your physical ability to use a manual interface. This is the only way a hacker can hope to compete with the pure electronic reaction time of ICE. If you don't have neural interface cyberware, or elect not to use it to **jack in**, you cannot be physically harmed by ICE, but you roll all the Matrix moves at -1 instead of using the relevant stat.

MATRIX MOVES

You can meet and talk to people in the virtual world of the Matrix in much the same way as you can in the physical world, so many Basic Moves can be used in the Matrix. Information gathering moves can be used in the physical world to find information about the virtual world, and vice versa. Use **research** to investigate secure systems before you attempt to **login**, to locate hidden systems, and to find backdoors to systems. Use **assess** to scout systems for ICE, to examine unencrypted data streams entering and exiting corporate servers, and to look for the signs of a human counter-hacker.

The Matrix Moves cover unauthorised use of secured computer systems. They can only be used by users who are **jacked in** to the Matrix.

Login (Synth)

When you attempt to gain access to a system, roll Synth.

10+: you're in clean

7-9: you're in, but choose one:

- 🔌 Passive trace (+1 trace)
- 🔌 ICE is activated
- 🔌 An alert is triggered (advance the active Mission Clock)
- 🔌 Your access is restricted – take -1 ongoing to matrix moves in this system while your access is restricted

6-: you're in, but the MC chooses two

An unauthorised user's first task is gaining entry to the system itself with login. Think carefully about which option you choose: passive trace does nothing until it reaches a certain level, then the corps come after your physical location; triggering an alert is also harmless when the Mission Clock is low, but gives the whole team less room for error; activating ICE causes you immediate trouble, to a degree dependant on how secure the system is; restricted access will make everything more difficult and probably cause more trouble, but doesn't have any immediate negative effects. All of these can spiral out of control, quickly when ICE is involved. Remember, you can always jack out and cut your losses... up until the Black ICE hits.

If you're a Hacker, remember to use **console cowboy** after you've **logged in** to the system.

MC: You dial in the address of VirtuaTech's Bangkok system and it resolves into a giant black obelisk. A pair of obsidian sphinxes sit beside the main login gate, their eyes flicking over the data streaming in and out of the system.

Hazer: I disguise my avatar as a data packet and join the stream in. I get a 10 to login.

MC: The gaze of the sphinxes flicks over your avatar as you glide past them into the system's core.

Compromise Security (Mind)

When you attempt to compromise a sub-system's security, roll Mind.

10+: gain 3 hold over the sub-system you have compromised

7-9: gain 1 hold

6-: you trigger an alert, which may have additional consequences

You may spend 1 hold to activate a security measure on that sub-system.

As a general rule, if you're trying to mess with the digital system itself (other than ICE), use **compromise security**. Spend hold to activate the security measures on a node. This will almost always let you trigger or cancel an alert or activate or deactivate ICE, but nodes may have other options too. **Compromise security** will most often be useful to prevent or get yourself out of trouble in the Matrix.

MC: The ICE shatters into a rain of glass splinters and disappears into the flicking lights of the personnel database. The whole server is still glowing blue from the alert it triggered though.

AntiK-Tera: I need to shut down these alerts before they trace me. Can I **compromise security** from this database node?

MC: You can shut down the local alerts before they propagate, for sure.

AntiK-Tera: That's good enough for what I need. I roll and add Mind... that's a 10, so I hold 3. I'll spend one right now to cancel that alert and save the rest. Now... where was I...

Manipulate Systems (Synth)

When you attempt to manipulate a digitally-controlled aspect of a facility, roll Synth.

10+: gain 3 hold over the sub-system you are manipulating

7-9: gain 1 hold

You may spend 1 hold to activate routines on that sub-system.

If you're trying to mess with the facility which the digital system controls and protects, use **manipulate systems**. Spend hold to activate routines on the node. Routines activate or deactivate the physical facility's equipment and systems such as door locks, lighting, emergency and HVAC systems or other automated systems. Your options will depend on the node and the facility. **Manipulate systems** will often be useful to achieve mission objectives or to **help** or **interfere** with your allies and enemies.

MC: You scramble under the desk as the guards start fanning out through the cubicles searching for you.

Hazer: It looks like Nebula is in trouble in there. I want to kill the lights in the cube farm.

MC: You'll need to **manipulate systems** then.

Hazer: Cool, That's Synth? I get a 6... plus 2... 8. Only 1 hold. Good enough! I kill the lights.

MC: Okay Nebula, two of the guards are just about on you when all the lights in the office go out. Your cybereyes flick to IR immediately. You have an opportunity while the guards are fumbling with guns and night vision goggles. What do you do?

Melt ICE (Edge)

When you attempt to evade, destroy or disable an activated ICE construct, roll Edge.

7+: you evade, destroy, or temporarily disable the system, your choice

7-9: the system successfully executes a routine before you can disable it

Destroying, disabling or evading ICE is covered by **melt ICE**. Exactly what happens to ICE on a hit depends on the hacker. Hackers unconcerned with leaving a trail of electronic bodies might prefer to destroy ICE. Disabling ICE might allow an intruder to mess around in a node or sub-system for an extended period. Evading ICE might leave the ICE active and a problem for another hostile intruder without passcodes.

On a weak hit, the ICE will execute a routine before the hacker deals with it. The different levels of ICE have different options when they execute a routine. For Blue ICE, the MC will choose one option, for Red ICE, she will choose two options, and for Black ICE, three options. The options available for each level of ICE are more powerful at the higher security levels, so the ICE becomes exponentially more dangerous to an unskilled or unlucky hacker.

MC: The books and scrolls on the shelves start to float toward your Sift program's floating bucket. Alphanumeric code and binary sequences flow from the pages into the bucket when suddenly everything freezes and then goes monochrome. Then the wall shatters into droplets as a humanoid figure clad in matte black plates splashes through the wall, swinging an enormous black sword toward your avatar.

Hazer: That's not good. I pull out my chainsaw Attack program and block the sword.

MC: Roll Edge to **melt ICE**!

Hazer: 5... plus 2... a weak hit.

MC: You're slightly too slow deploying the chainsaw. The blade cuts into your avatar before you rev the engine and thrust it into the knight's arm. It's Red ICE, so I choose two options. The blade cuts through your bucket, corrupting your Sift program, and you see a trail of data streaming out of the hole in your avatar back along your login path. The system increases its Trace on you by two.

Jack Out (Cool)

When you, your programs, or your deck are about to be damaged by ICE, you can try to **jack out**. Roll Cool.

10+: you disconnect yourself from the system before any serious harm occurs

7-9: you jack out, but choose one:

- 🔌 You lose some data
- 🔌 You take some of the established consequences
- 🔌 The owners of the target system trace you to your current location

6-: you take the established consequences... and you're still connected

Most of the time, nothing stops you from jacking out. Use this move when you attempt to sever your own connection to the Matrix as something bad is coming for you. Established consequences may include personal harm or damage to your deck or programs, or something more sinister. Black ICE will often attempt to prevent you from jacking out with quasi-legal psychotropic code routines. If so, it's a matter of who finds your body first in meatspace and what they do with it when they do. Better hope they're friendly!

MC: The code on the main laboratory node seems to be deliberately arcane and inefficient and you can't break it down, but you see a code line activate and the system architecture flickers and switches. You're on a vast and parched plain, cracked under your tripod legs, and above you looms an enormous red dragon. It roars and breathes a white hot stream of psychotropic data at you.

AntiK-Tera: Nope nope nope! Not again. I **jack out**!

MC: You'll have to roll Cool to do that!

AntiK-Tera: Come on dice... I get a 9... my Cool is 0, so just 9. How bad is that...

MC: You have to choose one of those three options.

AntiK-Tera: Hmm... okay... at least I managed to pull the plug this time. Ugh. We really need that data for the mission. I guess I'll take some of the established consequences.

MC: *It was Black ICE, so the MC would have chosen three options if it had executed a full routine on AntiK-Tera. She decides to choose one option.* You pull the plug and you're back in the flop house. It's dark and cool and safe, but there's a nasty chemical smell and a fine wisp of smoke coming from your deck. Take 2 harm to your deck's Processor.

MCING THE MATRIX

From the MC's perspective, describing the Matrix can be difficult because there is an extra representational level within the fiction. What the hacker "sees" in the Matrix is a virtual layer over the actual code while the moves interact with the code directly. These are both fictional layers that the MC must describe in order for the player to visualise the scene and engage with the technical aspect of hacking. One way to do this is to describe the virtual scene, but use technical terms to also refer to the code layer underneath.

MC: The OmniDynamics corporate system resolves into a giant blue crystal, hovering above the plane of the Matrix and connected to it, as if anchored, by streams of glowing blue lightning, twisting and jumping as it crackles in jagged lines. At the base of the crystal, directly on its underside you see the login gate as a dark vortex sucking lines of data from the surrounding Matrix into the interior of the system.

Aanya (playing Core): I glide along the data lines to the vortex and spoof a password.

Once the hacker is inside the system, give a broad overview of the system. You don't need to map it out or anything, the hacker should have a specific goal in mind anyway. If the hacker is supporting an infiltrating team, describe the building security and building services nodes. If the mission is to sabotage some part of the facility, they may want a production or R&D control system node. If their purpose is information or money, they'll want a database. Have a clear vision of the aesthetics of the corporate system and describe the nodes appropriately. Mapping out an entire system involves a lot of prep for you, and encourages you to want to use that material, which slows down the run.

To make sure that the hacker does not bring the game to a halt for the other players while taking care of business in the Matrix, there are two options. The first, which you should use most often, is to cut back and forth between scenes in the virtual and

physical worlds. Think like a movie director. Don't worry about how long something would actually take in real life. This isn't real life; you're constructing an exciting narrative. Have the Hacker **login**, deal with that, then cut to the Infiltrator going up the side of the building, then to the Killer with a bag of guns in a janitor's cart, then back to the Hacker finding the lab control subsystem, then back to the Infiltrator, and so on. Be aware that this is a potential problem, and direct the action accordingly. The second option is to make the run snappy. This applies most often in cases where the Matrix run is secondary or tangential to the main mission, like times when the Hacker is making a run during the Legwork Phase to find information to help with the mission. As a general rule, if the rest of the group is waiting for the hacker to finish, get to the point quickly. Describe the corporate system and have the Hacker **login**, then cut directly to the node they're looking for. Give everyone a taste of cyberpunk colour; give the Hacker a brief chance to show off their skills in the spotlight; then get back to the main action. The issue of spotlight management is discussed further in [Chapter 9: Running The Sprawl](#).

ALERTS AND TRACE

As an unauthorised user manipulates the software within a corporate server, that interference will trigger alerts and trace attempts by the corporate security systems. Alerts are local alarms to let corporate employees and contractors in physical and virtual space know that someone is tampering with the system. Trace represents the attempts of the system to find the hacker's physical location, sever the connection, and kick the hacker offline. Each time a piece of ICE activates a Trace routine, it adds the value of that routine to the Trace held by the system as a whole. As soon as the Trace value accumulated by the corporate system exceeds the intruding deck's Stealth rating, the MC immediately activates the routine *Identify Intruder*. This advances (or perhaps initiates) that corporation's Countdown Clock and allows the MC a variety of move options. ICE can now use the routine *Sever a Connection*. The MC can now use moves to converge corporate security teams on the hacker's real location and deal with the problem in meatspace. Cyberdecks and 1337 skillz provide little protection against grenades, high caliber ammunition, "unexpected apartment complex fires", and cruise missiles.

Hazer is deep in the system of HelixTec's Saigon Arcology. His deck has Stealth 2 and he's running an Identity Protection program (+2 Stealth) for a total Stealth of 4. The system is running a Trace on his location: he tripped the login gate and tangled with the Blue ICE on a facility maintenance node a few minutes ago. The system has Trace 2. In the R&D data node, he triggers a Red ICE which hits him with a Trace routine. The system now has Trace 4. That equals Hazer's Stealth of 4, but doesn't exceed it, so they don't know where he is yet, but they're close.



HARM AND DAMAGE IN THE MATRIX

ICE inflicts damage to intruders using three routines in particular: by corrupting programs, damaging a cyberdeck's processor, and by harming the intruder directly.

When ICE activates the routine *corrupt an intruder's program*, the MC will choose a program to corrupt. That program chip is corrupted and may no longer be used. The hacker is free to load up another program in the newly created space, perhaps even a duplicate. Corrupted programs cannot be repaired, they must be replaced. The intruder can spend a point of Firewall to prevent a routine from damaging their programs.

When ICE activates the routine *damage an intruder's cyberdeck*, the MC will choose a rating on the intruder's cyberdeck and lower it by the amount specified by the ICE routine (1 for Red ICE, 2 for Black ICE). The effect of the lowered rating applies immediately. Lowered Processor might require deactivating one or more programs while lowered Stealth might allow a Trace to succeed. Damaging Hardening or Firewall will hamper the intruder's ability to protect against future attacks. The intruder can spend a point of Hardening to prevent a routine from damaging their cyberdeck.

When Black ICE activates the routine *inflict physical harm to a jacked in intruder* (1-harm +AP), the intruder takes 1 harm, which cannot be reduced by armour. The intruder makes the harm move as usual.

Whenever the MC announces a source of incoming damage, the intruder can try to **jack out**. If successful, this severs the connection and avoids the damage. If partially successful, the intruder might lose some data – data that's important to the mission or paydata – take some of the announced damage, or be successfully traced. If unsuccessful, the intruder takes the incoming damage according to the usual rules, and is still connected while engaged with a class of ICE they'd rather not be engaged with.

She didn't usually take jobs for this cheap, but she had a weakness for a man with a nice baritone. They hadn't been able to pay her much - not nearly what she was worth - but they'd tried to pay her as best they could, and that was really what got her to say yes. That, and Walter's persistence. Mary had met him in a pub, holding court with friends and a fair number of young lovelies. He'd tried to buy her a drink while she talked with the bartender, and thought he was being rebuffed when she said no.

Laughing at him probably hadn't helped that.

But he didn't give up trying to talk to her, and when talking did not turn into trying to immediately get in her pants, those chats had become more frequent. And when they turned into pouring out his heart about not having enough medics at protests, and they'd stayed up till five singing their way through most of the songs they knew, she'd found herself saying she'd come down. For a day. She'd lend a hand for a day. And that was when six months of talking led to a number of hours spent very pleasantly not talking, since mutual grudging respect and a shared sense of obligation to a city as fucked as London was apparently the foundation for affection. Or good sex. Maybe both, if she was being honest.

Mary wasn't some med school dropout, though letting Walter think that certainly helped them both sleep at night. She'd finished school, some time ago, and she'd done some very bad things afterward for some very bad people in utterly fucked corners of the world. It had forced her to come to the conclusion that do no harm needed additional interpretation in her career, that perhaps she should apply that to her patients, and solely to them. They were going to need a doctor like her today, while they sang songs at teams of well-trained men and women from Unified Security. When she'd left London, they were still using Titan, but praise be to lower bidding contractors, or something. If Walter had been able to hear over the voices of his fellow frustrated idealists, he'd have heard her gun going off, well behind him in the sea of protesters.

Killing a few security teams before they cracked some heads open didn't seem as awful as it did when she left London, but that Mary was long gone. Mary had learned a host of terrible things working for Iristech, and putting bullets in the heads of people about to turn innocent kids into her patients felt like the least important thing to worry about.

RUNNING THE SPRAWL



LOADING...

"Aspects of my wealth have become autonomous, by degrees; at times they even war with one another. Rebellion in the fiscal extremities."

Josef Virek, *Count Zero*, William Gibson

Josef Virek, *Count Zero*, William Gibson

AGENDA

There are four important rules to keep in mind when you MC *The Sprawl*: keep them in the back of your mind and filter every move you make through this lens.

- » Make *The Sprawl* dirty, high-tech and excessive
- » Fill the character's lives with action, intrigue and complication
- » Entangle the characters in *The Sprawl*
- » Play to find out what happens

These rules are the internal logic of *The Sprawl* and its safety net. Whenever you are at a loss as to what you should be doing as MC, look at your agenda. These four directives encapsulate a lot of information about your role, tasks and goal as MC. Remember that "agenda" means "things that must be done". These are the golden rules of running *The Sprawl*. There are many things you can change in this book, but if you change the MC's agenda, you're playing a different game.

Make The Sprawl *dirty, high-tech and excessive*

The Sprawl is a contemporary city turned up to eleven. The dangerous parts of town are more dangerous; the affluent parts are dripping with excess and guarded with lethal force; the government is more self-serving, corrupt, and in the pocket of their corporate masters; those corps are more uncaring and arrogant; the technology is shinier and more powerful, but used for dirtier and more perverse ends. Everything is dripping with money, exploitation, power and violence.



```
//////////REROUTE//////////  
ContainerNum: [4542-QIP-99.2]  
TargetContents: [LIBERATED]  
WiredPayment: [IN_PROGRESS]
```

Fill the character's lives with action, intrigue and complication

In *The Sprawl*, missions are filled with opportunities for action and betrayal. Make sites inaccessible and heavily guarded, not to kill the characters but to challenge them to perform daring infiltrations, engage in furious fight scenes, execute exciting heists, escape double-dealing employers and pull off skin of the teeth extractions. Give the characters opportunities to be badass professionals by putting them in positions that demand they act like badass professionals.

Entangle the characters in The Sprawl

Moves and directives name people and organisations that the players want to interact with. Be mindful of these ties that bind the characters to the world around them. Bring those motivations and personal connections into the game as often as possible. A player should normally have a chance to gain at least one experience from each of his or her directives in every session. That means that those lovers and children, current and former organisations, and enemies and mysteries need to appear frequently. Use those people and groups to pull the players in different directions: divide the group, distract them from the mission, threaten loved ones to compel action. Put your bloody fingerprints all over the connections between the characters and *The Sprawl*. Make triangular connections between characters and NPCs. Make the players make hard choices.

Play to find out what happens

Plan starting positions and vectors of action rather than outcomes or storylines. Set up a situation in which several NPCs and groups with conflicting goals come into contact, insert the characters, then have those NPCs and groups take action in pursuit of their goals and in reaction to the characters' interference. That way, you'll be as surprised and entertained by the direction and flow of the game as the players will. Let your players take you on a wild cyberpunk ride! The rules in Chapter 11: Missions give more detail on how to set this up and place it in motion.

ALWAYS SAY

In addition to your agenda, there are also things you should always say:

- » What the principles (below) demand
- » What the mission prep demands
- » What honesty demands
- » What the rules demand

Information keeps the story moving, so when the players make a move, be generous with information. Give them everything the rules for the move demand, everything the principles demand, and everything your prep for the mission demands. Be honest and forthcoming. Give them the details of that megacorporate scheme and see what they do with that information.

When you say what the Principles demand, remember to pass it through the filter of your Agenda. Look at these often while you MC *The Sprawl*. Say things that keep the fiction at the forefront of everyone's imagination and drive the characters towards action, intrigue and complication.

PRINCIPLES

Principles are the specific tools you use to fulfil your Agenda. They are best practices for using your Moves to achieve your Agenda.

- » Chrome everything, then make it dirty
- » Begin and end with the fiction
- » Address the characters, not the players
- » Ask questions and incorporate the answers
- » Name everyone
- » Make everything Corporate
- » Make everything personal; complicate everything
- » Treat your NPCs like disposable assets
- » Think offscreen
- » Be a fan of the characters

Chrome everything, then make it dirty

Keep the colour and tone of cyberpunk in mind at all times. An iconic touchstone of the cyberpunk genre is neon kanji script reflected in mirrored cybereyes. In the cyberpunk future of *The Sprawl*, image is everything, technology is everything, humanity's opportunistic fingerprints are everything. When you describe a person or a scene in *The Sprawl* give them or it a technological enhancement, a layer of shiny chrome, bathe it in neon, then smear it with the refuse of society.

Begin and end with the fiction

When you make your moves, describe them in terms of their effect in the fiction, not in game terms. Always return to the fiction to describe the move before dropping out to describe a mechanical effects. If your move is **inflict harm**, describe what happens to cause the harm, then tell the player the mechanical effect, then return to the fiction with a description of the results of the move, then put it back on the players by asking "What do you do?"

Start with the fiction. Resolve the mechanics. Return to the fiction, incorporating the newly resolved outcome. The shared fiction is where the game is, so only leave it when you have to.

Most problems you might run into with moves and their triggers can usually be resolved by making sure you've established the fictional situation precisely. Don't roll the dice unless you know what you're rolling for. If anyone is in doubt about how any particular roll reflects the fictional situation, ask for more detail.

Address the characters, not the players

One way to reinforce that fiction comes first is to address the characters rather than the players. This helps keeps the focus of the players on their characters and on what their characters are doing in the fiction you're all creating together.

Ask questions and incorporate the answers

Draw the players into the shared world and have them help you describe it by asking them questions during play. Incorporate their answers into the fiction as it happens and reward their assistance and creativity by bringing up those elements they created again in later play.

By giving the players a hand in the creative decision making you draw on the creativity of everyone at the table and increase the players' investment in the game and the setting. This allows you to prepare less material and to share in the surprise at what direction the game and the setting takes.

Everyone, including the MC, shares responsibility for maintaining the tone of *The Sprawl*. If someone answers a question, makes a suggestion, or takes an action that disrupts the tone of the game, speak up. It can be a sign that something isn't working for someone. Discuss what happened and why.

Name everyone

Give names to everyone the characters interact with in *The Sprawl*. Make them feel real and human. Give them motivations and personality. If you aren't good at coming up with names on the fly, prepare a list of names and even quick character sketches to drop in as the need arises.

The internet is your friend here. There are any number of websites devoted to lists of baby names and surnames from a wide variety of global cultures. Vary the gender, cultural background and sexuality of the characters you introduce. *The Sprawl* is a diverse global metropolis. It may be one of many such sprawls forming a global

network of corporate interest and profit from Cape Town to Mumbai to Shanghai to Los Angeles to Rio to Rotterdam. Draw the characters of your sprawl from all those cultures. Corps don't discriminate, they take the best talent and exploit them to the fullest extent.

Make everything Corporate

In *The Sprawl*, marketing is ubiquitous. Your group made a list of corporate names at the start of play; use them indiscriminately! Prepare lists of brand names, model names, corporate slogans and the like. Slap corporate logos and names on everything as much as you point bullets and blades at the PCs.

In the same way that you draw names from a variety of global cultures, also draw corporations, slogans, branding, design styles and anything else you need from a range of sources. Cyberpunk is a bewildering linguistic cacophony of advertising in a crowded street, a barrage of different scripts shining and flashing in neon, a fierce battle between competing technological styles, a thousand marketing departments searching for a minute edge in market share.

Make everything personal; complicate everything

That corporate scheme isn't going to destroy a random section of slum, it's going to destroy the home of someone a character knows and cares about. The characters are useful assets to the corps; that means that the people they know, trust and rely on are leverage. This especially applies to Contacts. Threaten them subtly, threaten them explicitly, level their apartment buildings to get the characters' attention.

Treat your NPCs like disposable assets

Don't protect your NPCs. Your NPCs exist to add drama and complication to the story you and the other players are telling. If there's one thing that my love of Hong Kong cinema has taught me, it's the dramatic and emotional value of a well timed bullet to the head of a beloved supporting character. Get as much story potential from your NPCs as you can, but don't stand in the way of the fictional consequences of their own or the characters' actions. If the corporations are willing to dispose of assets as useful as the characters so readily, how much more easily will they dispose of less useful people to act as leverage against them? As MC, do the same.

That's not to say that no NPC should survive a mission. There is definite value to recurring characters. Give the characters chances to save their friends, contacts, and even enemies! Also, if an antagonist's death is ambiguous (especially given the extent of cybernetic medicine), a well-timed return can be a powerful dramatic tool.

Think offscreen

The characters can only see a small part of *The Sprawl*, make sure the rest of it keeps moving too. In particular, think about the Corporate Clocks; if the characters have pissed off the wrong people, those people aren't going to politely let them conduct their illegal business. Look at the Retaliation section in Chapter 11: Missions. If a Corporate Clock is above 2100, that corp is actively looking for the characters; maybe you should complicate the mission by throwing in a third party? Remember your agenda!

Be a Fan of the Characters

This is an important principle to keep in mind. Run *The Sprawl* because you want to collaborate with the other players to tell a story with the awesome characters you've all created. Remember that, as MC, your questions to the players play a pivotal role in shaping the characters that the group created, so there's a little bit of your input in each of them!

MOVES

The MC gets to make a move:

- » When a player misses a move
- » When the players are waiting passively for something to happen
- » When the fiction demands it

The moves are inspiration for you as MC to take actions that reinforce the themes and tone of *The Sprawl*. Look at the moves, decide what to do and present the fiction of what happens to the players. Make a move that follows consistently from the fictional circumstances of the game, remembering to think about both what the characters just did or what just happened to them, as well as the offscreen actions of any other parties. Remember the status of your various Clocks, especially the Legwork and Mission Clocks. The basic list of MC moves is:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| » Show them the barrel of the gun | » Offer an opportunity, with or without a cost |
| » Make their lives complicated now | » Tell them the requirements or consequences and ask |
| » Put someone in a spot | » Use a Corporation, Mission, or Threat move |
| » Inflict harm | |
| » Use up their resources | |

Follow every move with "what do you do?"

Show them the barrel of the gun

Hint at something that will cause trouble for the characters in the future.

"As you clip the wire, you hear the clunk of the maglock releasing... then see a very small flashing yellow light. You suspect there's a backup system. What do you do?"

"You hear the thudding of heavy feet coming up the stairs. You're almost finished here; what do you do?"

"You scan the facility. It looks clear. Wait, was that a figure you just saw move past that darkened window? You replay your cybereye footage. Yup, an armoured figure, but it's hard to tell any more. What are you going to do?"

Make their lives complicated now

Reveal something that will cause immediate trouble for the characters.

“The door smashes open and a squad of MDI goons burst into the office. What do you do?”

“Spotlights bathe the courtyard in harsh light, tracing search patterns as you huddle behind the terminal. ‘Attention intruders! Surrender immediately!’ What do you do?”

“T-Bird scowls, ‘I’ve had enough of your bullshit excuses. Give me the chip now.’ Out of the corner of your eye, you can see Jimmy slip his finger inside his trigger guard. What do you do?”

Put someone in a spot

Put someone in danger, delay someone, capture someone. Make a player make a hard choice about their character, their contacts or the mission right now.

“The guard grabs Halo around the chest and points his OmniDynamics Ravager 47 at Halo’s head. ‘Put down the rifle and step away from the controls!’ What do you do?”

“There’s a faint whistling as Phoenix explodes into motion, swinging her implant blades up in a wide curve towards Kavi’s head. LouLou, you’re the only one here with synth nerves, what do you do?”

Inflict harm

Inflict harm on a character as established by the circumstances of the fiction. It’s all too easy for inflicting harm to be a boring move, so make sure it’s appropriate and be sure to make it as interesting as you can. See the Inflicting Harm section below for more.

“The limo pulls up to the curb, calmly and smoothly. Vector rolls down the driver’s window and gives the signal. You’re halfway across the street when there’s the splintering sound of multiple bullets entering the windshield in a tight burst formation and the remains of Vector’s head cracks back against his bucket seat. What do you do?”

“You try to kick his legs out from under him, but you can’t get enough leverage and he just grunts as your foot clatters into his shin guards. His black faceplate stares at you impassively as he squeezes the trigger and sends a burst of flechettes into your shoulder for 2 harm. What do you do?”

Use up their resources

Tech can malfunction, tires go flat, drones crash, substandard cyberware is... well... substandard, guns run out of ammo, cyberzombies break things. Inflicting harm is all well and good, but often its more interesting to take away something else and see what they can come up with to get out of the new situation.

“Gold doubloons balance unrealistically as you ease back the lid of the treasure chest and spin up your sift program. There’s a sharp, deafening boom like a piledriver hitting metal, a piercing pain in your temple and your eyes flick open in meatspace to see a smoking hole in your cyberdeck and a crimson uniformed security team. What do you do?”

“You creep up to the edge of the roof and cautiously extend a sensor probe down to the airvent. There’s a tugging sensation, the camera rolls nauseatingly, briefly resolving on a rapidly descending boot. Looks like they found that drone. What do you do now?”

Offer an opportunity, with or without a cost

Your job as MC isn't all take, sometimes you should give. Usually you'll attach strings to those gifts, but sometimes you won't. The characters are professionals who can assess the costs of dangerous actions, so let the players know what those strings and costs are or might be.

“You see Carter walking briskly towards a service exit on the other side of the mall. He’s some distance away, but you could be right on his tail if you went hell-for-leather through these vatburger patrons. Mall security wouldn’t like it though. It’s up to you.”

“While you’re scanning the system for the R&D lab files you come across a secure database that’s not on the system maps. Want to take a look?”

Tell them the requirements or consequences and ask

Often the players will ask if or how they can do something. Tell them, and tell them what they have to pay or give up or what kind of trouble it might cause if they do it. Then see what they do. This is the essence of the “play to find out” approach. Presenting the players with a hard choice and seeing what they do is lot of fun. There’s a definite skill to finding choices that will be genuinely difficult, and you may need practice to get the hang of it. Don't sweat it if they breeze past a choice you thought was going to be a tricky one. Wait for your next opportunity, and try again.

"You hear the vibrations of the security team coming up the stairs behind you. The only way off the rooftop is by your zipline and it's broad daylight. Someone would definitely see you."

"The orbital lift is about to leave with the emergency technical squad, but they're initiating a lockdown now, so if you take this elevator up you'll have to figure out some way to cancel the lockdown or another way to escape the orbital anchor. Do you get on board?"

"You could drive out to the facility, but it would require almost a full tank to get there and a full tank to get back, so you'll need to find gas on the site or fill up a lot of your extra cargo space with gas tanks. What do you do?"

Use a Corporate, Mission, or Threat move

Sometimes specific groups, situations or locations will have their own particular moves. Generally these moves are more thematically specific examples of these basic MC moves. Examples of these moves are provided in Chapter 11: Missions.

RAISING THE STAKES

Not all moves are created equal. In *The Sprawl* there are "soft" moves and "hard" moves. This terminology refers to the immediacy of the effect on the characters. A soft move sets up future danger and consequences, while a hard move applies that danger directly and immediately. However, this is a continuum, not a binary. In general, you should introduce a situation with soft moves, and then apply gradually harder moves as the situation builds towards a climax. This applies at every scale: individual scenes, linked groups of scenes, missions, and story arcs governed by Countdown Clocks. The following list of moves increases in strength from soft to hard, in this case in a set of scenes:

- » Attempting to bypass security raises an alarm (The MCs move is **show them the barrel of the gun**. This is a soft move because it doesn't require any sort of response from the character.)
- » Gant and Kennedy hear the running feet of security guards on the stairs (Again, **show them the barrel of the gun** (or **deploy permanent assets**), but this time a little harder as the guards will reach them soon.)
- » A squad of security guards burst into the office (The MC **reveals a current complication**. Now the danger is right here and the characters must respond to it.)
- » A corporate bodyguard points a gun at Hazer and tells them to surrender (MC move: **put someone in a spot**. This is a bit harder as there is the threat of immediate consequences.)

- » A razorgirl swings her implant blades at AntiK-Tera. (The MC move is **put someone in a spot** again, but a quite hard move which forces the character to react immediately or else take harm.)
- » A sniper opens fire, hitting Kennedy. (One of the hardest moves, **inflict harm** applied to a character.)

INFLECTING HARM

When the characters get into dangerous situations they will take harm and inflict harm.

Harm can be inflicted as a result of Basic and Playbook Moves, or by the MC moves. If a move says that harm is inflicted “as established by the fiction” then consider the fictional sources of harm in the scene and in the action as described and inflict harm accordingly. This section discusses harm inflicted by weapons, how armour prevents harm, and then gives guidelines for harm from other sources.

Harm is usually inflicted by use of weapons. Weapons have a harm rating comprising a number or letter (4-harm, 2-harm, 0-harm, s-harm) which tells you how much harm, or what kind of harm the weapon inflicts. For the harm ratings of common weapons in *The Sprawl*, see [Chapter 6: Assets](#). If the harm rating has a number, that indicates how many segments of the Harm Clock are filled in when that weapon hits. Weapons with 0-harm or s-harm (stun damage) do not alter the character’s Harm Clock directly, but they still force the victim to make the **harm** move ([Chapter 2: Basic Moves](#)) which may advance the Harm Clock anyway.

Gant **plays hardball** with an MDI security officer and misses. Gant gets angry and shoots the officer with his HelixTec Ravager heavy pistol. A heavy pistol has a harm rating of 3-harm, so the security officer takes three harm.

Kennedy **mixes it up** with an Ecuadine Petrochem response team. She rolls a 10+ and chooses *you are badly hurt*. The MC describes how she is shot by one of their EP-45 Assault Rifles (4-harm). Kennedy takes 4 harm and makes the **harm** move.

If Kennedy had rolled a 7-9 to **mix it up** she might have chosen an *ally is badly hurt*. The MC describes how the response team also shoots Hazer with the same weapons as well. He also takes 4 harm and makes the **harm** move.

If an Ecuadine officer had been pushing his EP-10 Light pistol (2-harm) into Hazer’s back when Kennedy **mixed it up**, the MC might have described how the officer shot Hazer with that weapon. In that case, Hazer would take 2 harm instead of 4.

Armour subtracts from harm inflicted unless the weapon has the +AP tag. Subtract the armour rating from the harm inflicted before you roll for the **harm** move.

Next time Kennedy mixes it up with an Ecuadine Petrochem response team, she is wearing an Armoured Jacket (1-armour) and Hazer is wearing Body Armour (2-armour). She rolls a 7-9 and chooses *you take harm as established* and *an ally takes harm as established*. The MC describes how both Kennedy and Hazer are strafed with fire from the EP-45 Assault Rifles before Kennedy subdues the response team. This time, the MC inflicts 4 harm on them both, but Kennedy subtracts 1 and Hazer subtracts 2. Now Kennedy takes 3 harm and makes the **harm** move and Hazer takes 2 harm and makes the **harm** move.

Harm might come from other sources. Characters might fall off a building, get hit by a car, have their arms trapped in doors, be crushed by falling server racks, and so on. Use the following guidelines for what different levels of harm mean fictionally.

Harm 0: scratches and bruises. Run it off.

Harm 1: these are relatively minor injuries. Serious bruising, minor cuts and sprains, temporary loss of breath. They might hurt, but they probably won't require medical attention.

Harm 2: these injuries require first aid. Skin has probably been broken. If not, bones are bruised or damaged. There's probably a risk of infection.

Harm 3: these are serious injuries. Major cuts, bullet wounds and bone breaks. Normal people will be in shock and waiting for EMTs. Hardened veterans will keep going.

Harm 4: these injuries probably require hospitalisation. They'll give hardened veterans pause.

Harm 5+: this represents the kind of injuries that only the lucky or the exceptional survive.

The Harm rules in *The Sprawl* are intended to produce a certain tone, gritty, but quick-paced. If you find this tone does not match the needs of your game there are some adjustments you can make to the Harm rules to fit other styles. How to do this is discussed in Chapter 12: Hacking the Sprawl.

HARM AND NPCS

Most NPCs in *The Sprawl* are not hardened veterans who sell their skills and their bodies to multinational corporations as disposable operatives. Use the fictional descriptions of the harm levels to judge how much harm it takes to "take out" a given NPC. In general:

- » 1 harm will take out a civilian unused to personal violence
- » 2 harm will take out most security guards

- » 3 harm will take out highly trained guards
- » 4 harm will take out elite non-cybered warriors

Elite, cybered antagonists probably have names, full Harm Clocks, and may even be a fully developed Threat with their own set of MC moves.

As well as carrying weapons, NPCs at all these levels can have armour as well, so while a hit from a light pistol (2-harm) might take out a regular security guard, that same security guard would still be a threat if he was wearing an armoured jacket (1-armour).

A corporate executive takes 2 harm from a knife and faints.

That MDI security guard who took 3 harm from Gant's HelixTec Ravager is incoherent and passed out from the pain.

The Ecuadine Petrochem response team that Kennedy beat up is a small gang of highly trained guards. 3 harm will take them out, but they are wearing body armour (2-armour) and because they are a small gang, they subtract 1 from the harm Kennedy inflicts. Kennedy's automatic shotgun (3-harm) is loaded with AP rounds, so the team's body armour doesn't help. However, their size does: Kennedy inflicts 2 harm on the team. The MC describes how she takes out one of them and the rest retreat to cover. Because she rolled a hit to mix it up, she controls the situation, but the response team are still a threat to be dealt with in the fiction.

COUNTDOWN CLOCKS

Countdown Clocks are a timing mechanism counting down to midnight, to zero, to 0000, to flatlining. When the clock runs out, something bad happens. Countdown Clocks look like this:



ADVANCING COUNTDOWN CLOCKS

Certain events in the story will cause the Countdown Clock to "advance". To advance a Countdown Clock, fill in the leftmost unfilled box on the track. When you read a Countdown Clock, the leftmost filled box is the clock's value; so if 1500 and 1800 are filled in, the clock is at 1800.

Countdown Clocks are descriptive. As they advance they show you the state of whatever that clock represents.

Countdown Clocks are also prescriptive. As the clock advances to certain values, it will trigger certain effects in the story.

When a move offers an option like *someone finds out* or *it attracts attention*, that's an invitation to the MC to advance a Countdown Clock. Time on a Countdown Clock is a scarce resource, so advancing a clock is a hard move. If a hard move isn't called for, the MC might **show them the barrel of the gun** instead, leaving the clocks where they are. Hard and soft moves are discussed above.

WHEN THE CLOCK STRIKES MIDNIGHT

When a Countdown Clock reaches 0000, something happens. Exactly what depends on the kind of clock.

The MC can use Countdown Clocks to track the approach of two kinds of end condition: progress towards a goal, or the proximity of danger. Sometimes the difference between these won't matter, but being clear about which is which can help you shape the fiction appropriately.

The most common kind of Countdown Clock tracks the proximity of danger to a character, or **heat** on the team.

- » The Harm Clock tracks how close a character is to death
- » The Legwork Clock tracks how close the team is to exposure
- » The Action Clock tracks how close the mission is to failure
- » Corporate Clocks track how close the corporation is to noticing the team
- » The Reporter's Noise Clock tracks how close the target of the investigation is to covering it all up

The other kind of Countdown Clock tracks **progress** towards a goal which will have an effect on the story, but might not be directly dangerous to the team.

- » Threat Clocks track how close a Threat is to realising a goal
- » In a mission against a dynamic target, the Action Clock tracks the progress of that target towards accomplishing a goal (although not necessarily their ultimate goal)
- » The Reporter's Story Clock tracks how close the Reporter is to getting the big scoop

Mission Clocks appear on both lists. Sometimes a clock will track progress towards a goal that is dangerous to the team.

When you start a clock, you should be clear what will happen when it reaches 0000. For the most common kinds of clocks (Harm, Legwork, Mission, Corporate), this consequence is clearly spelled out in this book. For clocks that the MC makes to track other parts of the game, write down the 0000 consequence when you make the clock. If you have difficulty thinking of what the 0000 consequence of the clock is, think about whether you have created a **heat** or a **progress** clock.

Also write down some of the intermediate clock levels. Remember, the clocks are prescriptive and descriptive. If a clock is at 1500, and the team does something that triggers the clock level at 2100, the clock advances to 2100!

COUNTDOWN CLOCKS AS STORY ARCS

You can think of Countdown Clocks as story arcs which operate on different scales. At the top level are Corporate Countdown Clocks which span the entire game and take major effort on the part of the characters to change.

Below that are intermediate story arcs, like the Reporter's **nose for a story** move which lasts over several sessions of play. When **nose for a story** resolves, it can have major effects on one or two of the Corporate Countdown Clocks. Threat Clocks will often represent intermediate story arcs as well: your problem with that gang is likely to come to a head and a resolution sooner rather than later. Corporations play the long game. On the street, problems have a much shorter half-life.

The lowest level of story arc is the Mission, which is governed by two Countdown Clocks, the Legwork and Action Clocks. A mission should generally only last for a single session of play. Choices made in the course of the Mission change the Mission Clocks which, upon completion of the Mission, alter the Corporate Clocks.

Each Mission provides new opportunities for the MC to introduce new elements to the game world through the Mission parameters themselves, and gives the players the chance to introduce new elements to the game world through the contact creation moves. These contacts expand the world of *The Sprawl* while helping the characters succeed in their missions. As the characters grow and change through undertaking Missions, so does *The Sprawl*.

TYPES OF COUNTDOWN CLOCK

There are five particular types of Countdown Clock that merit special attention: Harm Clocks, the two types of Mission Clock (Legwork and Action), Corporate Clocks and Threat Clocks.

Harm Clocks

Every character has their own Harm Clock that tells you how messed up the character is. If a character's Harm Clock is at 1500, 1800 or 2100, they're battered, bruised and bloody, but mostly okay; their wounds can be treated by someone with a basic knowledge of first aid. If they're at 2200 or 2300 they need the attention of a trained medical professional, and if they're at 0000 they need an ambulance, right *fucking* now.

See the Inflicting Harm section above.

Mission Clocks

There are two types of Mission Clock, both of which track the degree to which the opposition has been alerted to the team's progress. The Legwork Clock tracks the amount of noise the team has generated in their investigation and preparation for the mission. The Action Clock tracks how alert the opposition is during the mission itself.

The workings of Legwork and Action Clocks are described in Chapter 11: Missions.

Corporate Clocks

A Corporate Clock tells the MC how much that corporation knows about the characters and how much that corporation cares about the team's disruptive activities. As a Corporate Clock advances, that corporation will begin to block the characters actions and eventually take action against them and their associates. The MC will consider the position of the Corporate Clocks when planning missions.

The success and failure of missions against a given corporation changes the state of its Corporate Clock. This takes place mainly in the retaliation phase of the mission (Chapter 11: Missions).

Threat Clocks

Whereas Corporate Clocks are heat clocks, Threat Clocks are progress clocks. A Threat Clock is counting down to an unsavoury future outcome that will occur unless the characters prevent it. See Threats, below.

CORPORATIONS

We ran. Out a service door, into Tokyo traffic, and down into Shinjuku. That was when I understood for the first time the real extent of Hosaka's reach.

Every door was closed. People we'd done business with for two years saw us coming, and I'd see steel shutters slam behind their eyes. We'd get out before they had a chance to reach for the phone. The surface tension of the underworld had been tripled, and everywhere we'd meet that same taut membrane and be thrown back. No chance to sink, to get out of sight.

Hosaka let us run for most of that first day. Then they sent someone to break Fox's back a second time.

New Rose Hotel, William Gibson

At the start of a game of *The Sprawl*, the players, including the MC, establish a number of corporations that will play a part in the story. Corporations can be any large organisation in whose affairs the characters have become involved: megacorporations, governments and their agencies, underworld organisations, powerful political lobby groups, and personal empires of those with considerable power.

Corporation Moves:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| » Send a subtle message | » Buy out smaller operators |
| » Send a violent message | » Make life difficult for someone |
| » Terminate a problem | » Implant a cortex bomb |
| » Throw money at a problem | » Deploy technology (drones, tracers, uploaders) |
| » Hire disposable assets | |
| » Deploy permanent assets | |

Corporations have their own goals and agenda. However, at the street level, these all boil down to three things. When you make a Corporation move, consider the following:

- » Corporations maximise profit and minimise expenses
- » Corporations deny responsibility and suppress dissent
- » Corporations exploit technology and humanity to the limits of both

CREATING A CORPORATION

When a Corporation first enters the story, the MC will start a Corporate Clock for it. Several of these clocks will be created in Step 9 of setting up a game but some might be started during play.

While setting up a game, corporations will usually develop something of a personality in light of the players' descriptions when they create them, and their interactions with the characters throughout the character creation process. The MC may create a couple of custom Corporate moves to represent that corporate personality.

All corporations will have an area of commercial expertise in which they are perceived to be particularly strong. They may have more than one. However, all corporations in *The Sprawl* are thoroughly diversified and are strong in all areas, at least in *The Sprawl* you have created. The MC may create a couple more custom Corporate moves to represent that perceived dominance, and perhaps to hint at greater depths.

Like all Corporate moves, these are simply evocative prompts to help you during play. The MC moves already cover everything that these Corporate moves cover, but it's sometimes more helpful to look down at your Corporate move sheet and see **hire disposable assets** than to see **show them the barrel of the gun**. Creating some custom Corporate moves before play is an efficient and flexible form of preparation.

Norah is pondering the corporations the group made. John's contribution was "*HelixTec: genetics, cybernetics, military enhancements*" and he declared that they engage in bleeding edge cybernetics research and perform field tests in covert corporate wars. She creates two moves based on this corporate personality:

- Perform a field test
- Intervene in a rival's affairs

She then considers HelixTec's corporate strengths - genetics, cybernetics, and military enhancements - and creates two more moves:

- Reveal a bleeding edge cyberthreat
- Deploy genetic engineering or warfare

Don't give your corporations too much personality though. At this level, they are the faceless monolith. To give more personality to a corporation, create some faction within it as a Threat.

THREATS

A Threat is a major antagonist with goals that are independent of any existing clock, which remains active over multiple missions, and which becomes an important part of the story in its own right. A Threat can be any kind of opposition to the characters' activities that is important enough to warrant a significant description, is at least partially independent of a Corporation, and is likely to remain relevant to the characters' lives over multiple missions.

Threats have a type which has associated moves, a Threat Clock with an appropriate 0000 consequence, and perhaps their own custom moves. There are four types of Threat in *The Sprawl*: Groups, Loners, Places, and Headlines. In addition to moves, each type of threat also has a list of suggested types of goals. This section ends with a discussion of creating and describing Threats.

GROUP

A Group is any collection of people acting together for common purposes or goals. A Group may be organised or disorganised, may have a hierarchy under one leader, a distributed or cell structure under multiple leaders, or be entirely leaderless. Groups may be gangs or militias, official government organisations, corporate sub-divisions, terrorist or activist groups, hacktivist collectives, or ephemeral social movements. Describe what kind of Group it is, what it wants, and how it acts.

Group Goals

To possess, to overthrow, to terrorise, to destroy, to dominate.

Group Moves:

- » Attack suddenly, directly, and hard
- » Buy out allies or assets
- » Seize someone or something
- » Claim territory by force or intrigue
- » Destroy someone or something
- » Threaten to expose someone or something
- » Make demands
- » Bide their time and do legwork
- » Probe for weakness
- » Seek corporate patronage

LONERS

A Loner is an individual. Loners may use other people as tools, assets or employees, but those people are independent and disposable and unimportant to the Loner's goals. Loners may be criminal masterminds, politicians, wealthy private

individuals, rogue corporate executives, serial killers, cyberzombies, or rival shadow operatives. Describe what kind of Loner it is, what it wants, and how it acts.

Loner Goals

To corrupt, to manipulate, to misdirect, to steal, to murder.

Loner Moves:

- » Reflect the decay of society and its structures
- » Display the conflict between humanity and technology, meat and chrome
- » Display the excess in *The Sprawl*
- » Make an offer with strings attached
- » Attack from an unexpected angle
- » Attack from the front
- » Threaten someone or something with violence or exposure
- » Steal something or seize someone
- » Stage a loud diversion
- » Insult or offend a person or organisation
- » Seek corporate patronage

PLACES

A Place is a geographic area invested with meaning of some sort, often by the people who live there. Those people probably do not have common goals except for a mutual attachment to the Place they inhabit. Places may be slums or ghettos, arcologies or corporate compounds, wealthy gated communities, industrial zones, underground complexes, isolationist communities, orbital platforms or entertainment districts. Describe what kind of Place it is, who lives and works there, and what it means to its inhabitants.

Place Goals

To trap, to breed, to frustrate, to consume, to isolate.

Place Moves:

- » Keep someone out, keep someone in
- » Demonstrate separation from the surrounding environment
- » Show internal cohesion
- » Show criminal activity in the background
- » Entangle someone in intrigue, violence, or bureaucracy
- » Highlight desperation or kill someone's dream
- » Reveal corporate callousness
- » Spotlight the fracture, breakdown or absence of society
- » Surrender to corporate influence

HEADLINES

A Headline is some threatening circumstance. It may have a human origin, but it has its own agency and momentum and it is not directly controlled by anyone in particular. A Headline may be a viral or memetic agent, an environmental or social problem, a spreading cloud of chemical waste, a mutating pandemic, a grey goo disaster, an urban drug or simsense problem, a sub-sentient computer virus, a decaying space elevator cable, an impending orbital crash. Describe what kind of Headline it is, what impact it will have and who is or will be affected by it.

Headline Goals

To poison, to expose, to explode, to impoverish, to implicate.

Headline Moves:

- » Reveal a conflict in society
- » Reveal neglect in society
- » Reveal corporate callousness
- » Reveal excess in society
- » Force someone to seek help
- » Isolate someone or something
- » Conceal the truth
- » Provoke accusations
- » Force destructive or futile action
- » Prevent action

These moves may represent a reaction to the Headline by a person, group or corporate entity, including a victim or instigator of the Headline.

A Headline might appear out of, or alongside, a Reporter's Story Clock. If the Reporter is investigating a current Headline, the Noise Clock and the Headline's Threat Clock might be the same thing. If the Reporter breaks a story, that might generate a new Headline.

CREATING AND USING THREATS

In *The Sprawl* not everyone is a Threat, but anyone can become a Threat. Dangerous groups, individuals, places or situations could all develop into Threats through character action or inaction. Threats can appear when the characters **play hardball**, when they get cyberware, and when they screw people over in the course of their activities. Once a Threat develops and grows, the MC will make a Threat Clock for it. Threat Clocks show **progress** towards the Threat's goal, so note the 0000 consequence and some intermediate steps.

There is no mechanical relationship between Threats and Corporations. Corporations are the giant faceless entities that swat you like a bug, threats are the sadistic bastards who grind their heels on your neural interfaces. Threats may be affiliated with Corporations, but they have an existence that is in some way separate. If the Head of HelixTec's Security Drone Division is a Threat with a goal to become Chair of the Twin Spiral Arcology, stopping that Threat from manifesting may not have any effect on HelixTec's Corporate Clock.

Because Threats are mechanically independent of Corporations and occupy a space between monolithic megacorps and individuals, you can use them more flexibly to highlight the impact of corporations and individuals on society in *The Sprawl*. Use Threats to explore the place of groups, individuals, places and events in a dystopian cyber-future. How might a group with non-capitalist goals achieve anything from within the shadow of corporate dominance? What sort of person eschews collective action in favour of radical individualism? Does that choice reflect poorly on the dystopian society or on the loner who parts from it (consider the Loner move **reflect the decay of society and its structures**). How do spaces and environments resist or conform to the universalising tendencies of corporate capitalism? How do corporations, groups and individuals create, exploit and resist impersonal events?

Once you have described your Threats and considered their role in the world and the story, you might have a quite complex network of relationships. Draw the relationships among your Threats and Corporations on paper or in drawing software to help you visualise the fictional relationships between them and between different Threats that are affiliated with a single Corporation. You may not find this necessary when you start playing, but as you create and explore Threats will accumulate. Having this relationship map will make tracking relationships easier when you reach this point.

Threat Clocks advance in the same way as Corporate Clocks. If a move says to advance a Corporate Clock, but it would be more fictionally appropriate to advance a Threat Clock, do so. In the Retaliation phase at the end of a mission (see [Chapter 11: Missions](#)), look at your Threat Clocks as well as your Corporate Clocks and advance them as appropriate.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

This might seem like a lot to track, but breaking the MC's role into these tools (Agenda, Principles, Moves) and story elements (Clocks, Corporations, and Threats) makes the running *The Sprawl* easier. Keep the first three lists in front of you while you run *The Sprawl*, and when you need guidance, look to them. Keep your Clocks, Corporations, Threats, and the specific conditions, moves and goals associated with them in front of you as well, and when you need specific inspiration relating to one of those elements, look to them.

Your agenda and your principles are the map to the game. Your agenda is what you should be doing all the time and the principles are tools you use to help you do that. Look at these before every session to remind yourself what you should be doing as MC and how you do it. Soon they will be second nature and you'll be throwing in complications and pointing guns at the players' Personal Directives like a seasoned pro.

MAKING MOVES

The thing you'll be called on to do most often when running *The Sprawl* is making moves. What are you doing when you're making MC moves? At the "big picture" level, you're contributing to the fiction and the conversation. All well and good, but what does that mean in practical terms?

Prompt or force action or player choice

Why should you end every move by asking what the player does?

Your main goal when making an MC move should be to prompt the players to make a choice that advances the game. That can mean one or more of these:

- » Presenting the characters with multiple paths or options with a mix of known and unknown outcomes
- » Presenting characters with an obstacle that they have to overcome or a cost that they have to pay to take a certain path or option
- » Presenting the characters with fictional consequences that they want to avoid
- » Presenting a character with a hard choice, such as two bad alternatives or who gets rewarded with a good result that can't be shared

The MC uses moves to complicate the characters' lives and put them in danger.

The characters use their moves to complete the mission and get themselves out of danger.

Remember, a miss is a complication that makes the characters' lives interesting, not a failure that stops a line of inquiry. Give the players information even when they miss. In fact, that's a perfect opportunity to give them some bad news.

Triangular connections

One way of provoking the characters into action involves creating triangular relationships between player characters and the NPCs and factions of *The Sprawl*. A triangular relationship is one between three characters where each has a relationship with the other two (if drawn, this would form a triangle with a character at each corner), but at least two of those relationships (two of the sides in our drawing) are in tension or opposition to each other. This might be two NPCs who know each other and each have competing demands on a player character, or it might be two PCs who each want something different from an NPC. Once you have established a relationship like this, you can introduce complications that pull on the different characters and their relationships as a way of provoking player action.

Gant is *+owned* by VB Tech and Nebula is *+hunted* by VB Tech. They discover that their employer is a VB Tech fixer. How does Nebula feel about the job now?

Bobby is the guy Hazer goes to when he needs his deck fixed up. Bobby is also AntiK-Tera's main rival in tech circles. How do they each react when Bobby comes to the team for help?

Icicle is a driver who pulled Kennedy out of a tough spot once. However, Seamus thinks Icicle is extremely annoying. Seamus is *+owned* by Shcheglov Industries; what does he do when they want him to send Icicle into a certainly fatal situation?

WHAT IF I GET STUCK?

Usually your understanding of the agenda and your imagination of the situation will guide you as to what should happen. If you get stuck, follow the fiction, look at your lists, and be obvious.

Follow the Fiction

If you (or the players, actually!) can't think of a move to make, chances are the fiction is unclear.

Stop.

Describe the scene again. Describe all the important actors and what they're doing. Describe the area where the scene takes place. Think about what each of your NPCs want. Why are they doing what they're doing?

Once you have a clear idea of the fictional situation and the motivations of any NPCs and you work from that fiction to establish exactly what is going on, a good move will usually grab your attention. Maybe you'll have several good options!

Then make your move by describing what new action, reaction or complication changes the situation you just described and continue the conversation.

Look at your Lists

The move lists are there to inspire you when you need it. Use them! It's okay to ask the players to wait a second while you think of something, but don't get bogged down trying to think of the perfect move. Pick a move that follows logically from the situation and prompts or forces the characters to take action.

As long as you respect the fiction, the agenda and the tone of the game, you shouldn't feel constrained by the move lists.

Sometimes an MC move might draw inspiration from multiple moves. The difference between **making their lives complicated now** and **putting someone in a spot** can be academic and irrelevant at times. MC moves are inspirational guidelines, not rigid categories.

Be Obvious

It's okay to make "obvious" moves. Sometimes the obvious move is obvious for a reason. Besides, what's obvious to you may seem to come out of left-field to the players.

The best move is a move that keeps the conversation (and thus the game) flowing. You don't have to knock every ball out of the park. You'll make mistakes. You'll think of the perfect hard choice hours after the game. You'll forget to drop that perfect colour you'd been dreaming up. That's fine! You'll get it next time! Be kind to yourself.

TAGS AND FICTIONAL POSITIONING

As the MC, look at the character's tags (discussed in Chapter 6: Assets), especially those resulting from cyberware installation (*hunted*, *owned* and the various cyberware tags). Take particular note of the tags that are likely to prompt complications.

Make lists of tags that spell potential trouble for the characters. When you need to make a move and you need inspiration, look at those lists as well as the move lists.

Most tags will provide the players with opportunities to take specific actions in the fiction; the players will bring those up as they wish. You should have a broad idea of the group's capabilities, though, you might need to prompt new players to utilise their fictional options. However, the most important tags to note are those that give you cues to introduce complications into the fictions.



SPOTLIGHT MANAGEMENT

In *The Sprawl*, instantaneous communication between characters allows them to operate towards a goal in a concerted fashion despite physical distance between them, and characters will often separate. This means the MC cannot direct her attention toward what is happening in one location; she must keep several different situations in mind at once and divide her attention between the various groups as evenly as possible in service to the story and to the satisfaction of the players.

Espionage plots often require the MC to carefully manage which characters are in the spotlight at a given time. If the Infiltrator is schmoozing her way into a corporate party, the Killer is waiting near the service entrance with a duffel bag full of big fuck-off guns, the Soldier is calling the shots from the van and the Driver is high above the city, evading police radar in his VTOL while monitoring the interior with observation drones, the MC has four or five different locations to consider. Hackers frequently operate in a virtual world that the other characters may not be able to

perceive. Accordingly, the problem of spotlight management was addressed briefly in Chapter 8: The Matrix.

While the issue of spotlight management is most evident when the characters split up, it also applies when the characters are together. Remember that the game is a conversation. Players don't take fixed, regular turns in *The Sprawl*. The MC should divide her time between the characters as appropriate to the conversation and the fiction. At times the Infiltrator may require a long period where they are the focus while the other characters wait for the predetermined time to act. Always be on the lookout for opportunities to shift the focus, especially in unexpected ways.

Keep as many characters as possible active at once to allow for this spotlight switching. Be careful not to paint yourself into a corner by planning a mission that requires (say) only physical action then only virtual action in strict sequence. If the rest of the team is sitting around waiting while the hacker (or whoever) engages in a lengthy action, cut away to one of the waiting team and introduce a complication.

Switch the conversation between the characters like a movie director cutting back and forth between scenes to raise the tension. Leave scenes on mini-cliffhangers. When you switch away from a character, everyone at the table should want to see what happens to that character next. A miss by one character might **put someone else in a spot**. The Infiltrator misses a move, makes a sound, and the corporate exec on a vid-call with the Soldier gets nervous and moves to shut down the feed; what does the Soldier do? When you **reveal a current complication**, that complication might be immediate for one character and invisible to another. When the Infiltrator hears guards coming, the Killer sees them start to lock down the service entrance; what does the Killer do?

Switching away the spotlight at decision points can give the player time to consider their character's actions. Use this sometimes to let them think, but at other times don't let them think. Stay on them and see what they do under pressure. Tricks like this will often depend on your ability to read the table. Make sure all the players are having fun. If a player struggles with being put on the spot, ask them whether they like to be challenged in that way or not. Don't make the players uncomfortable unless they want to be made uncomfortable.

Remember that you and your friends are playing to create an exciting narrative together. *The Sprawl* is an exploration of certain cyberpunk themes through the lens of an action movie, not a simulation of reality. Remember your Agenda and your Principles.

- » Make *The Sprawl* dirty, high-tech and excessive
- » Fill the character's lives with action, intrigue and complication
- » Be mindful of the characters personal directives and put your bloody fingers all over them
- » Play to find out what happens

Jason liked meeting clients in Melbourne.

It was the food that made it one of his favorite cities. Melbourne had gone indoors and anti-establishment with charming ease decades before his birth, and now that reputation was aggressively maintained. Spoil the pleasantness of Melbourne and you'd likely earn yourself a nasty trip to somewhere. Probably to the middle of Western Australia, where you'd either die on your own, or if you got too close to the mines, shot by security. An ugly, uncivilized way to die. Which kept visitors in line, like his clients. Jason didn't bother with intermediaries. He liked to think he didn't need one.

Sipping his espresso, he nodded at the man who'd slid into the booth opposite of him. To the letter, his new client followed the rules he'd sent him. He ordered himself a drink, and the briefcase didn't open up until it had arrived, been tasted, and the predictable approving look appeared. Sipping his own espresso, Mark Harwood slid the photo over first. Waiting till Jason nodded, the photo was followed by a single slip of paper with an offer number written across it. Jason arched an eyebrow.

"This is an unusual number."

"She's an unusual woman."

Jason simply stared, unblinking, till Harwood shrunk in on himself with fatigue, running a hand through thick, greying hair. "She's an outside auditor working with one of our nonprofits in Paris. No family, no boyfriend, just a tank full of fish. No outstanding debts, no vices to get any traction on."

At Jason's snort, Harwood rolled his eyes. "She likes to sleep in late, and she reads. She likes makeup. Sometimes she buys more shoes than is practical. She drinks wine but never too much. She's a moderate Parisian Girl Next Door."

"And?"

"And she's a genius with numbers. In two decades, no one's cracked that clinic's books, and she did. She hasn't run anything up the chain yet, but we're pretty sure she's trying to compile evidence to get charges laid. She could interrupt several operations, not just the ones in Paris."

The expectant look Jason gave him earned him a disgusted sigh. "Our only parameters are to make it either look like a mugging gone bad, or an accident. Nothing complicated. Nothing that can't get buried in the news cycle."

Ruminating on Harwood's information, Jason deliberated till he finished his espresso, before placing his hands carefully on the offer, and the photo.

"You forgot to tell me her name."

Harwood shrugged. "I figured you'd read the materials they sent over. Elle Bouchard."

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THE FIRST SESSION

CONTINUE? [Y/N]

/////////BIG MAN STATS/////////

CyberEyes: Iristech BLU35

CyberCom: HelixTec CH4TTYC4THY

NeuralInterface: UNKNOWN - ¿NextGen?

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LOADING...

Because much of the setting of *The Sprawl* is up to individual groups, it's important that the group establish that setting together at the beginning of play. It is important that the MC facilitate the conversation among the players, especially by asking questions of the players that define the fiction. Ask a lot of these questions during the first session, or the first part of a one-off game. Start by thinking about the setting broadly, considering the questions at the start of Chapter 3: Preparing to Play to get everyone on the same page, then launch into the steps in that chapter.

Remember to start with the corporations (Step 0: Define the Corporations) then introduce the playbooks, what they do during missions, and what role they play in the team.

Several steps in Chapter 3: Preparing to Play direct the players to make selections from lists. Remember that these are designed to evoke a certain theme and inspire the player's creativity, not hamper it. Players may create their own names and looks. As the MC, though, keep an eye on the tone of their creations and make sure that everyone at the table is on board with the tone of the characters and the game that you're building together.

Cyberware and Moves are intended to be restricted lists, although for moves that grant additional cyberware, that cyberware may be chosen from the main list in Chapter 5: Cyberware. Players may choose Moves from other playbooks when they advance (see [Chapter 7: Advancement](#)).

Personal Directives are more flexible. The list on each playbook is limited to speed up character creation by placing all the options in the playbook itself, and by reducing the number of options players have to read. If time permits, if you have experienced players, or if a player has a particularly strong vision of their character that does not conform to the options on the playbook, the entire list of Personal Directives in Chapter 7: Advancement is available, or players can even make up their own Directives (see [Chapter 12: Hacking the Sprawl](#)).



/////////BIG MAN STATS/////////

Dermal: Acumen SharkWeek 7

Skillwires: Henderson and Henderson All-In

Assesment: AVOID

ASK QUESTIONS

Who are these people? Where are they? What sort of things are they doing?

The Links phase of character generation will answer a lot of these questions for you, and will probably suffice for a one-off game, but there are a few kinds of questions the MC should keep in mind during the process of generating characters. These questions will help flesh out the characters and make them distinct from other characters that use the same playbook or concept:

» **Ask questions about Cyberpunk:**

- What aspects of cyberpunk society and technology interest you? Life on the street, fashions, ubiquitous technology, cyberware, chemical use, corporate power?
- What do different segments of society think of those societal and technological aspects? Wage slaves, corporate executives, people on the street, the hip upper class?

» **Ask questions about the setting:**

- Which urban sprawl does the game take place in?
- What are the important areas of the city?
- Where do they work and hang out?
- Who are the important people in the places they work and hang out?

» **Ask questions about their cyberware:** especially those mentioned in Chapter 3: Preparing to Play (and discussed further in the next section)

» **Ask questions about who owns them**

» **Ask questions about their enemies**

» **Ask questions about their background**

» **Ask questions about their previous jobs**

» **Ask questions about the corporations**

Don't define everything at the start, but ask enough that everyone has a clear picture of how their characters fit in. You'll fill out the rest of *The Sprawl* as you play.

CYBERWARE

The cyberware questions are among the most important. Cyberware is such a central part of the genre that everyone in *The Sprawl* gets it, but it shouldn't be glossed over. Installation of cyberware is an extremely invasive, somewhat experimental elective surgery which probably results in a lifelong debt to a major organisation with aggressive goals and a callous disregard for human life. As the MC, one of your most important jobs during character creation is to make every player think about the two cyberware questions:

- » Why did you get part of your body cut out and replaced with electronics?
- » How did you afford to have someone install your cyberware?

By the time everyone has finished character creation, the MC should have the answers to these two questions written down for each character. The first gives you a hint at the hopes and fears of the character and probably informs their relationships with other people in *The Sprawl*. The second gives you concrete mechanical information about their relationship with at least one corporation.

It can be easy for players to default to the "career" or "edge" answer to the first question. After all, an uncybered Hacker or Killer, is going to find their job much more challenging. However, this only shifts the scope away from the question rather than answering it. Chase the answer. If being a Hacker or Killer requires cyberware, then the question is "Why did you decide to follow a career path that required you to get part of your body cut out and replaced with electronics?"

THE FIRST MISSION

After the group has made their characters and you've started to define *The Sprawl* for your game, it's time for a mission.

Before the MC designs the mission, they should familiarise themselves with the Agenda and Principles (Chapter 9: Running *The Sprawl*) and with how the mission structure of *The Sprawl* works (Chapter 11: Missions).

Start by picking the target of the mission. Give them a mission against one of the corporations for which they established a Corporate Clock but whose clock is relatively low (1500 or 1800). There should be a sense of danger, but it shouldn't result in a Corp trying to squash them like bugs in the second session unless the first mission is a real disaster for the players.

Think about what their employer wants them to do. This should be a simple premise, such as a basic extraction or protection assignment. The point is to introduce the characters and the moves. For ideas about the kind of missions you might run in a cyberpunk game, look at the Mission Packages in Chapter 11: Missions.

Think about who is paying for the mission. If any of the characters are *+owned*, have the job come through the corporation that owns them. Think about the corporate fixer who will actually give them the job. What do they look like? What kind of place

do they choose for the meeting? Is it public? Is it on their own turf? What kind of image do they want to convey to the group? Power? Money? Dangerous? Corporate? Street-smart like them? The scene where the characters **get the job** is often your first chance to set the tone of the game. What are the corporations like in *The Sprawl* and what is their relationship with their illicit operatives? Do they treat the characters as corporate employees or disposable drones? Do they treat them as dangerous but necessary wild cards; potential liabilities who respond only to threats of violence? Do they play nice, wining and dining their assets, holding corporate life as a carrot for the loyal? You might choose to set a tone for the entire game, or for this corporation alone. The scene you start the game with is also the only scene that you can guarantee will take place, so you can think about it in much more specific terms. Think about the employer and the meeting location and make some specific, descriptive notes.

Once you've given them the job, explain the mission structure. In particular, explain the legwork and action phases:

- » which moves are most appropriate for gathering information and setting up the mission
- » how to gain and spend [intel] and [gear]
- » the way the Legwork Clock effects the **Getting Paid** move
- » that they don't need to plan absolutely everything before they start the mission because moves can backfill the planning element

Make sure the employer gives them enough information to go on. The players should be able to formulate a basic mission plan quickly if they want. You have a couple of options to accomplish this. You can plan what's required and have their employer tell them what they have to do, or you can have them discover what they have to do through **research**, checking things out, or **hitting the street** for information. If you take the latter route, give them the information quickly. The game works best when the characters can get to the action. Keep required investigation to a minimum.

If you favour low-prep techniques, you can turn the investigation questions back on the players. If they do **research** on how to get into the corporate facility, you can ask them what they find and roll with that. You might even do that if they miss a **research** roll, but then twist their answer slightly to complicate the situation. Be sure that the answers respect what has already been established about the tone and the facts of the setting, though.

Misses should complicate the story in ways that make the game more interesting. Introduce complications and twists rather than treating misses as failures that shut off avenues of investigation or block attempts to complete the mission. If the Reporter misses an attempt to get the building passcodes from a contact, give her the codes, but her price is going up, or the codes work, but they're old and will trigger an alarm, or hostile parties saw the transaction. Keep the story moving forward.

One complication you might consider throwing into the first mission is an enemy. If any of the PCs are *+hunted*, look for an opportunity to throw their hunter into the works. This will introduce the concept, incorporate an important part of their

character into the game, and might make the first mission a little easier by involving the hunter rather than ramping up the main mission opposition. This will put more pressure on the players in a way that doesn't necessarily put pressure on the Legwork or Action Clocks.

LOOKING FORWARD

After a session of play, the PCs have an expanding selection of contacts, enemies, and corporate threats. Spice up missions with these as obstacles, primary objectives, or tangents. Missions on **hit the street** can introduce their contacts' problems, but you can also introduce these when you design missions, or when you makes moves. As part of your prep, think about the characters' existing contacts and the interesting problems they might have. What happens when a gang cuts off the twitchy hacker's stim supply? The Killer's military pilot buddy has his VTOL impounded? Damn. That corporation is leaning on the Reporter's contact in the Mayor's office. All of these people need help. When that help is necessary will vary, so have some problems up your sleeve to complicate missions as necessary.

Mix up the way you start missions. You might frame the initial scene as a planning scene, then flash back to the meeting with the employer to roll **get the job**. You can even start truly *in medias res* with an action scene of some sort and then flash back to legwork scenes periodically. Any kind of temporal structure you've seen in a movie, book, or TV show, you can replicate in *The Sprawl* – In particular, think of action and espionage movies, and look at the media in Appendix 2: Thanks.... The main thing to consider when experimenting with techniques like these is how the Mission Clocks interact with the temporal arrangement. Remember that the Mission Clocks are there to give the mission structure and put mechanical time pressure on the players. Your temporal structure might trigger or be triggered as the Mission Clocks advance.

As the players introduce contacts, ask questions about those contacts and establish triangular relationships between the players, their contacts, the corporations you established for the game, and any other threats that have come up in play or in questions. (A triangular relationship is one where at least two of the relationships between three characters are in tension or opposition to each other – see of Chapter 9: Running *The Sprawl* for more detail). Have the player who creates the contact give you enough information to use the contact in the game. Ask enough questions that you can imagine the character, how they fit into the world, and what kind of troubles they might have. This will make it easier for you to complicate the character's life later by incorporating some aspect of the contact's personality or history.

Remember that corporations hire the characters with the expectation that they will achieve the corporations' goals. Design missions that play to the group's strengths, but throw them curve balls occasionally. For example, if the group is expert at covert infiltration, but doesn't have a Hacker, have them escort a Hacker into a secure area then get her out.

During missions, push on the players' contacts and have them push on the players. Threaten them, put them in spots, make the characters make choices.



ONE-OFF MISSIONS

Most of these procedures hold for one-off games as well. The MC should still be familiar with the Agenda and Principles and *The Sprawl*'s mission structure. Also, familiarise yourself with the moves and playbooks so you can guide the players through the process of making a character as quickly as possible. I usually allow about an hour to create a group of four characters, but it may take longer if it's your first time playing *The Sprawl*.

Create characters as normal, but be more selective about the questions you ask. You don't need as much information to feed into future missions, so do your best to stay within that 60 minute time limit.

For a one-off, involve the corporation with the Countdown Clock closest to 0000. Is the mission against them? Are they paying for it and intend the characters to fail and be eliminated? Perhaps they are an uninvolved third party to the mission, but seize the opportunity to throw their static into the circuitry.

If you're teaching the game to new players, or if you're new to *The Sprawl* yourself, keep the start of the game simple, as though you were running The First Mission. Once you're comfortable with the game – and if playing around with time won't throw off your players – consider playing around with the temporal structure as if you were Looking Forward. The most important factor here is your own comfort. Your players are probably experienced consumers of narrative media and should be able to handle complex structures.

You may wish to arrange some kind of visual aid to assist; a visible chronological clock to match the visible Mission Clocks. This can be as simple as an index card with the clock numbers on which you cross off visibly as the clocks advance. Keeping the numbers in front of the players will remind them that the mission has a time limit and maintain the pressure to get to the action.

CYBERPUNK DREAMS

By and large, *The Sprawl* requires little prep on the part of the MC. The single most important part of the prep you can do is daydreaming.

Look at cyberpunk images; read cyberpunk books; watch cyberpunk movies; look for art tagged cyberpunk on www.deviantart.com and other websites. There are lists of cyberpunk media in Appendix 2: Thanks... which can help you out. Then, when you come to play, let that imagery pour out into the game.

The point of daydreaming is to generate colour for the world, bringing it alive in your imagination and in the imaginations of the players. Think about cyberpunk. Think of engaging cyberpunk characters. Think about the look and feel of characters from the streets and from the boardroom. Think about their motivations and plots, how they react to cyberware and to the technology that surrounds them.

Think of corporations, their marketing profile, how their buildings, logos, and corporate uniforms look. Think of their goals and strategies and their plans to achieve them. Think of nefarious corporate plots and devious double-crosses.

Think of places in a cyberpunk future: think of chromed, neon-lit, filth-covered bars, alleys, chop shops, ramen stands and noodle bars. Think of interesting corporate facilities to break into. Think of evocative cyberpunk scenes to form a backdrop for your characters' actions. Don't be afraid to recycle old visions of the future. Fashion and narrative constantly borrow from the past. Disguise your sources with neon and chrome, dirt and excess, technology and corporate double-speak.

Plan the start of the mission and prepare what is necessary for the job. Think about the corporate facility and its security measures. Brainstorm some evocative characters and locations that the characters will meet along the way. Keep an open mind about how the mission might be accomplished and be open to surprising ideas from the players. Being surprised by the players keeps the game interesting and fresh for you as MC. Remember your agenda: play to find out.

Aileen still didn't know his name, but the man who'd convinced her to come along willingly and not by force on a return trip to Dublin was in her office. She shrugged when she saw him, shoving a piece of pizza into her mouth, tablet under her arm and a can of soda in her other hand. She thought she detected amusement as she shut the door with a kick, chewing as she took her seat behind her desk.

She didn't rush finishing her piece of pizza, even if she was starving. Hours out in the rain going door to door after a murder would do that to you.

"Since I'm here," she gestured with her crust and unopened soda, arms gesturing at her office, "I thought your job was done."

"That's true. That job is done. Your publisher was very happy to get you home, safe and sound." His tone was dry. "I want to talk to you about a different piece of business."

Eyebrows arched in the global facial gesture of disbelief, Aileen popped her soda open. Taking a few slugs, she rolled her eyes. "Oh, for Christ's sake, out with it. What do you want?"

"I want to help you."

Choking on a swig taken at the worst possible time, he kept his expression calm, instead of laughing at the chorus of coughs and swear words Aileen sputtered out, pounding on her chest.

"Obviously, I must be crazy now. Because you said you want to help me. You're not a journalist. Or law enforcement." She made quotation marks with her fingers to denote her opinion on the law enforcement of Dublin. "I don't even know your bloody name."

"Talbot." His smile was positively serene. "Miss Kelly. There's a man I'm looking for. A predictably awful man who does terrible things, many of which the public is unaware of. I simply think that when it comes to finding him, our interests easily intersect. We'd be helping each other, really."

She shrugged. "Why would I want to help you find him?"

"Because he's the man who tried to kill you."

Speechless, Aileen dropped her soda, their shared silence filled only with the effervescent sound of jostled carbonation, the sticky-sweet caffeinated liquid seeping into the office rug after foaming near her feet. Now quite pale, her pulse pounding, Aileen took a deep breath. "I'm listening."

"You're a part of the community in Dublin. You know people. While you know from experience that I can find people, sometimes it takes more connection to do that. Compassion, shall we say. Something you've got in spades." She wrinkled her nose at him, making a disgusted expression.

"You're a hunter, Miss Kelly, you just do it for the people. We hunt him together, you do the people a service."

"What do you get?"

His smile was sanguine. "Peace of mind."

MISSIONS

MISSIONS

I remember Fox leaning against the padded bar in the dark lounge of some Singapore hotel, Bencoolen Street, his hands describing different spheres of influence, internal rivalries, the arc of a particular career, a point of weakness he had discovered in the armour of some think tank. Fox was point man in the skull wars, a middleman for corporate crossovers. He was a soldier in the secret skirmishes of the zaibatsus, the multinational corporations that controlled entire economies.

I see Fox grinning, talking fast, dismissing my ventures into intercorporate espionage with a shake of his head. The Edge, he said, have to find that Edge. He made you hear the capital E. The Edge was Fox's grail, that essential fraction of sheer human talent, nontransferable, locked in the skulls of the world's hottest research scientists.

You can't put Edge down on paper, Fox said, can't punch Edge into a diskette.

The money was in corporate defectors.

New Rose Hotel, William Gibson

How do you plan a mission when your agenda is "Play to find out what happens"?

CONSIDER THE WORLD

When planning the next mission, consider:

- » What is the state of the Corporate Clocks? Corps with clocks over 1800 are looking for information on the PCs. Corps with clocks over 2100 are gunning for them!



ACCOUNT #: F24271S
DEBT: [NULL]
COLLECTION: [COMPLETE]

- » Are the characters *+hunted*?
- » Are there any loose ends from the last mission?
- » What about NPCs? Did the characters promise anything to a contact that they didn't deliver?

CREATE AN EMPLOYER

The MC should prepare an employer and the outline of the job that he will offer the team. Give the employer an anonymous name (Mr. Smith, Ms. Lee, Mr. Johnson), anonymous dress, but perhaps a distinguishing feature or mannerism. Remember to think cyberpunk: mirrorshades, cyberware, wearable technology, crazy fashion statements.

Think about which Corporation or Threat the employer might represent. You can decide now if you like, or leave it open.

Think about how the employer will approach the group. Do they have an established relationship with the team or one of its members? Does a mutual contact put the two parties together? Is someone in the team *+owned* by the employer's corporation? The initial employment meeting is one of the few scenes that the MC knows will happen, so planning for this scene is more reliable.

Throughout the mission, make everyone appear suspicious. Sow the seeds for double-crosses with foreshadowing and generally suspicious behaviour, but don't worry too much about the exact nature of a double-cross yet. The mission structure below is designed to produce post-mission fuckery for you, so leave your options open.

HOOK THOSE PLAYBOOKS IN!

Think about your group. Which playbooks are they using? Those playbooks represent the team's skillset. Corporate Fixers are looking for teams with experts relevant to the specific jobs; think about the kind of jobs a corp would hire the team for. A team without a Hacker is not going to get a lot of hacking jobs but a team with a Killer will get jobs where mayhem is expected, even if it needs to be hidden.

Perhaps more importantly, playbooks are flags for the players. When the players chose their playbooks, they are telling you what kind of missions they want to play. Someone chose a Driver? Include jobs with a lot of mobility and make driving relevant. Got a Hunter? Someone wants to do a lot of investigation.

CONSIDER THE CORPORATIONS AND THREATS

The MC should consider who the target and the employer are and prepare Countdown Clocks for both when they are a party in a position to seek revenge. They may be corporations for which there are already Corporate Clocks, in which case carry on with those Clocks from their current positions.

Consider whether any Threats are involved. Again, you don't have to finalise this decision until a complication occurs during the mission, but think about which other factions in *The Sprawl* might have an interest in this job in case you need them.

Corporations have agendas, goals, territories and assets, all of which can be trodden on by other corporations and the operatives they hire. Your Threats have clearly designed clocks. How might the activities of this job advance those clocks?

Are any of the characters *+hunted* or *+owned* by any of these factions? What implications could that have for the mission?

OUTLINE THE JOB

The MC should consider what kind of job it is. For example:

- » a threat, show of force, or sending a message
- » transport or interception
- » kidnapping or physical theft
- » data theft or retrieval
- » wetwork or property destruction

Look at the mission packages below for inspiration. You might also consider current events and news reports. Our world is already a cyberpunk world in a number of ways. Most of all, dream cyberpunk dreams.

Pick a target, probably a location or a person. Where is that target, or where might that target be?

MISSION DIRECTIVES

The MC should also decide what the main steps in the mission are and assign experience values to them. These are the Mission Directives (see [Chapter 7: Advancement](#)). The first directive is always "When you accept the mission, mark experience." and the last directive always takes the form "When the mission ends...", but the directives in between will vary according to the type of job it is. When the team collectively fulfils one of the mission directives for the first time, everyone on the team marks experience according to the directive.

As soon as the players **get the job**, the MC will show the players the mission directives. Those directives should give a general shape of how the mission will be conducted, but should only use the information given to them by the employer. Mission Directives should generally provide five experience, but more complicated missions may provide more. The intermediate directives should correspond to the main parts of the mission as the employer describes it.

The mission is the hostile extraction (i.e. kidnapping) of a corporate manager. After the characters **get the job**, the MC reveals the Mission Directives:

When you accept the mission, mark experience.

When you decide when and where to take Kurosawa, mark experience.

When you complete the extraction, mark experience.

When the mission ends, mark two experience.

The characters just **got the job**, so they all mark experience. This is a simple mission. In this case the second step is essentially “when you finish investigating and planning” (i.e. the Legwork Phase) and the third is “when you finish the Mission phase”.

That was a First Session kind of mission; most missions should be more complicated. Here's another example:

The mission is a simple network operation (i.e. assassination/murder) against a corporate vice president. However, the twist is that while the VP's house is easy to find, the VP, suspecting his enemies are plotting to kill him, has hired a body double to impersonate him.

When you accept the mission, mark experience.

When you find the VP, mark experience.

When the VP is dead, mark experience.

When the mission ends, mark two experience.

The Mission Directives don't give away the twist, but, even though they might find out where “the VP” is in the Legwork phase, they probably won't find the VP himself until the mission. In this case, both the second and third steps probably take place during the Action phase. However, if the characters discover the VP's subterfuge during the Legwork phase, all bets are off.

More complications than this are possible. For example, when the players discover the fake VP plot in the last example, the MC might remove the first set of Mission Directives and reveal a different set, like:

When you discover the VP's body double, mark experience.
When you find the real location of the VP, mark experience.
When the VP is dead, mark experience.
When the mission ends, mark two experience.

In a simple mission, make the second directive something that should signal the end of the Legwork phase. For example, in the examples above: "When you decide when and where to take Kurosawa..." and "When you find the VP..."

Make the third directive about completing the assigned task. Also from the examples above: "When you complete the extraction..." and "When the VP is dead..."

In more complicated missions, add directives about completing additional tasks in the action phase. For example, "When you infiltrate the compound...", "When you upload the virus...", "When you escape the compound..." and so on.

The final directive, "When the mission ends..." usually occurs after the team attempts to **get paid** and any resulting complications are resolved. However, remember that it always occurs whether the mission is successful or not, so if the Mission Clock hits 0000 and the team disperses in failure, never to contact their employer again, the mission is still over and the directive is fulfilled. Their reputations and finances suffer when they fail, but they still learn from their mistakes.

The mission directives offer guidance to the players about what steps they should think about to complete the mission but they should not dictate how the characters perform the mission. "When the VP is dead..." is a good directive; "When you shoot the VP..." is too specific. Aim for general and open.

Mission Directives exist to help the players formulate a plan by guiding them towards subsidiary goals. If the players devise a workable plan that avoids even the general and open Mission Directives that you planned, you can adapt your existing Mission Directives or create new Mission Directives on the fly. Remember that it's okay to take a break during a session to think about the implications of the characters' actions.

CREATING NEW ELEMENTS

Consider if there are any people or factions who need to be described. What security forces are protecting the target; how are they armed and equipped? Are there any new Threats or locations to make and describe?

Are there any new cyberware, equipment, programs, or vehicles to consider?

Will this mission require any custom player moves or MC moves? Are there any mission-specific questions that **research** and **assess** rolls might give answers to; write down

any new questions that players can ask on an index card or somewhere the players can access (For more on these processes, see [Chapter 12: Hacking the Sprawl](#)).

Mission Moves

Sometimes a particular place, person or group involved with a mission might suggest certain specialised moves. Write down a few moves and see what part they play in the Mission.

Use variations on these moves to add particular colour to the Missions you design. As with all moves, the Mission Moves you create should complicate the job and force the characters into action. Here are some common examples:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| » Raise the alarm | » Reveal unexpected security measures |
| » Seal the complex | » Reveal a personal complication |
| » Call for backup | » Reveal another player |

If the entity for which you made the moves becomes an important part in *The Sprawl*, you might make them into a fully developed Threat later.

Nora is working on a data theft mission and wants to prepare some Mission Moves. The target is a secret Solar Investments data core in a 102nd floor condo. She thinks up the following moves, modelled on the six examples above:

- Alert the on-call Solar Investments counter-hackers
- Lock down the tower block
- Activate the elite response team on the 100th floor
- Deploy hover-drone swarms
- Slicer confronts Nebula
- Reveal a rival MDI infiltration team

Final Thoughts

The process of designing a mission is reflexive. Decisions you make at the beginning might change when you consider the final elements. It's okay if the mission you present to the players isn't the mission that you started dreaming about when you sat down to think about the game.

By the same token, you might change some aspects of the mission while you're playing. Oh yeah, of course Hazer has a relationship with that important gang! It would be way cooler if a simsense corporation owned this facility. An NPC reporter should definitely be investigating that Headline threat, lets add him in here. Respect your prep, but don't be afraid to follow new inspirations when they appear. Do what will make the game most fun.

Make the mission exciting and challenging. Remember your Agenda, "Fill the character's lives with action, intrigue and complication". You're not trying to kill them, but the corps might be!

RUNNING A MISSION

STRUCTURE OF A MISSION

A mission has up to six parts, as follows:

1. Get the Job
2. The Legwork Phase
3. The Action Phase
4. Getting Paid
5. Retaliation
6. Lie low or fight back?

GETTING THE JOB

Begin the game with the team meeting the anonymous employer. Use this scene to set up the colour and tone of the game, as discussed in the Planning section.

Jobs come to the characters through a couple of avenues: a Fixer or other employment professional, or a contact known to the character. For a one shot, a good method is to begin play by describing the scene where they meet their employer and **get the job**. If you offer the job through a personal contact, be sure to make it clear that the job requires the entire team.

Whoever does most of the talking in the meet will **get the job**. Others will be aiding (or interfering... Remember, if you do it, you do it).

Remember that misses are not failures, they are complications. Rolling a miss means the employer has the knowledge advantage, remains in control of the situation, and isn't forced to concede additional assistance that might cause the mission to stray beyond budget and operational parameters. A miss might also mean that if there is additional information, it signals bad complications for the mission.

Get the job is a basic move which is fully discussed in Chapter 2: Basic Moves. It is repeated here for convenience.

Get the Job (Edge)

When you negotiate the terms of a job, roll Edge

10+: choose 3 from the list below

7-9: choose 1 from the list below

-  The employer provides useful information [intel]
-  The employer provides useful assets [gear]
-  The job pays well
-  The meeting doesn't attract attention
-  The employer is identifiable

The team rolls a miss to **get the job**. As Mr. Smith describes the compound's security, he looks uncomfortable. There's something he's not telling you.

The team rolls a miss to **get the job**. After Ms. Li leaves the meeting, they discover a live bug behind her chair, streaming audio to a secure server.

The employer should give the team enough information that they can quickly make a plan and execute it immediately, or else make it clear to the team that some legwork is required. Of course, if they don't do any legwork anyway, they're likely to get caught with their pants down. That makes for a fun game!

THE LEGWORK PHASE

In the Legwork Phase, the team prepares for running the mission. They **hit the street, research** and use contacting moves to gather information, make a plan and collect appropriate equipment. The longer the team spends on legwork, the more they risk that the corps will find out about their plans and prepare specific defences for them.

The Legwork Clock

During the Legwork phase, the Legwork Clock is active. This is a Countdown Clock which will look something like this:

1200	Everything's cool
1500	The team is making some noise, but nothing serious... yet
1800	The target hears vague rumours
2100	The target hears clear but unconfirmed rumours. Advance the Action Clock
2200	The target has reliable information about the time of the mission. Advance the Action Clock
2300	The target has reliable information about the team. Advance the Action Clock
0000	The team is precisely identified. Advance a relevant Corporate or Threat Clock

The Legwork Clock determines whether investigating the particulars of the mission tips off the corporation. It advances as the players miss legwork rolls and when the fiction dictates. The MC should signal the advance of the clock by **showing them the barrel of the gun** or **making their lives complicated now**, subtly at first, but with increasing directness. Keep the full version of the Legwork Clock secret, but also show its current value where the players can see it. Visibly adjust it when it advances. Ratchet up the tension!

Nebula (Pusher), AntiK-Tera (Tech), Rook (Driver) and Seamus (Hunter) have been hired to find and kidnap a rogue cyberlegger.

AntiK-Tera asks a street doc he knows if he's heard where the cyberlegger has been operating. He hits the street and finds out that the cyberlegger's operating lab is in a certain industrial area, but the request attracts unwanted attention and word gets around that AntiK-Tera was asking questions. The Legwork Clock advances from 1200 to 1500.

Rook and Seamus drive around the area of the lab and identify a likely location (hit on **assess**). They stake out the site, but park in the wrong area and have to leave in a hurry when they aggravate a local street gang (miss on **assess**). The commotion puts the cyberlegger on edge. The MC advances the Legwork Clock from 1500 to 1800.

Nebula tries to smooth things over with the street gang and possibly recruit them for a distraction or muscle, but things go badly and end in violence. The scene involves several misses, but the MC uses them to escalate the scene with the gang and the Legwork Clock stays at 1800.

Rook sends a drone into the building to check out its defences. They have a good look at the floor plan and security layout before someone spots the drone and destroys it. Being discovered poking around the mission site is definitely worth an advance on the Legwork Clock. It goes from 1800 to 2100.

The team decides they have enough information, make a plan and begin the extraction itself. Because the Legwork Clock hit 2100, the target is slightly alert: the Action Clock starts at 1500. If the mission is successful, the team will attempt to **get paid** at +3 for the three unfilled legwork segments.

Conducting Legwork

Characters in *The Sprawl* are specialists with access to many moves that grant bonuses to rolls (including the basic moves **assess**, **research**, and **helping**), so misses shouldn't be too common. Teamwork is also important in *The Sprawl*, so encourage the characters to think creatively about how they can assist each other. Most of the playbooks have a move that helps with this.

Gant is in the back of a helicopter watching live feeds from his team as they infiltrate a compound. He's barking orders over his cybercom and into their earpieces to help his team get the job done. "I see you on Kennedy's scope-cam, Seamus, the camera is moving... run for the door in 3... 2... 1... NOW!"

[PRESS ANY KEY TO CONTINUE]

[CONTINUED]

Hazer is in the matrix watching AntiK-Tera reassemble a matrix cable hardpoint. He's reading out signal bursts that the equipment is sending out to help AntiK-Tera connect the wires in the correct order.

The Legwork phase begins when the characters **get the job**, and ends when they begin doing the job they're been hired for. This might be subjective, especially for investigations, where the job itself is Legwork. In that case, the MC should consider in advance what in the fiction will prompt her to stop using the Legwork Clock and start using the Action Clock. Normally, this point will be marked by a Mission Directive.

When the Legwork phase ends, the MC will note the Legwork Clock's final state (the number of segments unfilled is part of the **getting paid** move) and set up the Action Clock, filling in Action segments as required by the status of the Legwork Clock.

THE ACTION PHASE

Once the PCs are finished investigating and planning, they will begin the mission proper. During the Action phase, the MC makes moves to crank up the action, intrigue and complication.

The Action Clock

As the characters' plans start to unfold and unravel, the MC will have opportunities to advance the Action Clock. When a character misses and the MC has a chance to make a mission move that represents the increasing awareness and alertness of the target (moves like raise the alarm, seal the complex, or call for backup), she will advance the clock. If the Action Clock reaches 0000, the mission has failed and the players have to bug out. The Action Clock will look something like this:

1200 Everything's cool
1500 The target is more alert than usual
1800 The target is on full alert
2100 The target fully deploys internal assets appropriate to the threat
2200 The target calls on external assets and locks down everything over which it still has control
2300 The target deploys external assets
0000 The target deploys overwhelming, excessive force - advance the target's Corporate Clock twice

The closer to 0000 on the Action Clock, the harder the moves the MC makes should be. When the clock is at 2300 most moves will be hard, but remember that you are still a fan of their characters, so make sure you aren't making the crew look incompetent.

When the clock hits 0000, immediately describe the new heightened badness, then have each player give an epilogue describing how they escape the situation, or are killed or captured in the attempt.

As with the Legwork Clock, keep the full version of the Action Clock secret, but maintain a visible version of the clock. Adjust the time on the clock when you advance it, so the players know that time is running out.

Hazer (Hacker), Gant (Fixer), Kennedy (Killer) and Hoot (Reporter) have been hired to break into Solar Investments' offshore arcology to steal the prototype for a new suborbital drive control chip. They did a small amount of Legwork, but the Legwork Clock didn't advance enough to change the Action Clock.

The Driver who Gant hired to pilot them out to the arcology in his submersible did an excellent job. The team arrives safely outside the underwater dock. They don scuba gear, attach themselves to an automated delivery submersible and enter the dock area. Kennedy takes out the guards without attracting attention, Hazer jacks in from the security room, and the rest of the team continues to the R&D area. The Action Clock remains at 1200.

Hazer guides them through the Arcology, unlocking doors and disabling alarms. He has a minor scare with some Red ICE in a Building Services Node which briefly raises an alarm before he clamps it down. Not before it advances the Action Clock to 1500, however.

When they reach the laboratory area, Kennedy takes out the guards, but the fight is loud and Hoot gets shot. The Action Clock advances from 1500 to 1800.

Kennedy patches up Hoot while Hazer guides Gant through the lab's storage area to the prototype. Hazer trips another alarm and more Red ICE, raising the Action Clock to 2100. That triggers an internal response from facility security.

While Hazer is occupied with the ICE, Gant grabs the prototype and heads back to Hoot and Kennedy, but discovers that an Arcology security squad has cut him off from the rest of his team. They coordinate to take down the security squad, but Kennedy is wounded in the process. The fight also causes some collateral damage to the lab, setting off another alarm. The Action Clock advances from 2100 to 2200.

[PRESS ANY KEY TO CONTINUE]

[CONTINUED]

Hazer is back online as the team hurries back through a rapidly locking-down Arcology to the loading dock for extraction. When they get there, they see a heavily armed emergency response squad disembarking from a submersible APC. Hazer asks if he can hack into the dock's airlock and flood the area where the squad is. The MC tells him that he can, but it will take time and alert security. Hazer does it anyway: the Action Clock advances to 2300 and security closes in as the water drains painfully slowly out of the dock area enough for the team to enter and get back into their scuba gear.

As the team swims through the partially drained dock and out into the ocean to meet their submersible, Arcology security bursts into the dock area. Is Hoot's wound bleeding into the water? He rolls a hit to act under pressure (with help from Kennedy because she bandaged him earlier). The Action Clock does not advance and remains at 2300. Time to get paid!

Gear and Intel

During the Action phase, the players spend [intel] or [gear] using **produce equipment** and **reveal knowledge** to narrate fictional advantages and opportunities into the story. When a player makes these moves, the MC will ask questions about the equipment or knowledge, especially how they came to obtain it. The answers must be appropriate to the mission, to the fiction, and to the tone of the game as established by the entire table.

This is particularly relevant for [gear]: you can only **produce equipment** that you could reasonably have in your possession or could have obtained relatively easily. Have them quickly narrate how and why they have it, then get back to the action at hand. Exactly what counts as "reasonably have in your possession" or "obtained relatively easily" will vary based on the game. A game that focuses on low-level street bums in a semi-apocalyptic industrial wasteland and a game where the players are ultra-professional trouble-shooters on retainer to a megacorporate executive will have different definitions of what is readily available. It might also depend on the specific mission. If the entire mission has been spent in a high security orbital environment it might be implausible to have brought in projectile weapons of any sort, but the automated electronics factory they hid out in before the Action Phase might mean that programs and even cyberdecks are readily available. As a rule, anything that cost 1 or 2 Cred, or which might have been easily picked up at or stolen from a location the character visited previously in the story would count. Remember that the player has to narrate how they got the gear. That might include buying it, in which case they should pay for it in Cred or favours as appropriate. It might also include stealing it, which might result in enemies. Gear obtained with **produce equipment** is as permanent as any other gear the characters buy.

When a player spends [intel], they may narrate how a clue they picked up in the Legwork phase presents them with an opportunity which they can now exploit. The character takes +1 forward to exploit that opportunity.

The most important aspect of [intel] and [gear] is that it allows the players to change the fictional situation to give themselves an advantage. In *The Sprawl*, both technology and information have a short shelf life, though. At the end of a mission, any unspent [gear] and [intel] is lost.

Failure

If the Action Clock hit 0000 and the mission failed, the players get to decide if their characters escaped alive, were captured, or died.

- 🕒 If everyone escaped alive, the corporation increases their efforts to dispose of the characters; represented by advancing the Corporate Clock
- 🕒 If any character was killed by one of the corporations, that corporation is momentarily sated; its clock doesn't advance, but if multiple corporations were involved, the other corporations' clocks will still advance
- 🕒 If the objective has been completed, the characters will want to be paid...
- 🕒 If any player was captured by one of the corporations, don't advance that corporation's clock, but if multiple corporations were involved the other corporations' clocks will still advance; instead of advancing the clock of the corporation which captured a player, make a corporate move which gives that corporation leverage over the character and – they hope – the team. What kind of leverage you say? Take a look at the corporate moves now. They're in Chapter 9: Running *The Sprawl*.

You know what I'm talking about.

Cortex bombs. I'm talking about cortex bombs.

Well, sure, there are other options, too.

They're not as much fun, though.

GETTING PAID

When the mission objective has been achieved and the team has extracted itself from immediate danger, it's time to **get paid**.

This is where the team find out where they stand with their current employer and *The Sprawl* at large. Two of the options are simple. If they don't care about the other options and want to mark experience, they can *learn something from the mission*. If they want to avoid the attention of uninvolved parties, they should choose *the meeting doesn't attract attention*. If this option is not selected, the MC has a golden opportunity to advance the clock of a Corporation or Threat that was not involved in the mission.

The rest of the choices allocate fictional positioning for future events. If there was something about the mission that the team didn't like, they can *identify their employer* as a prelude to further action or investigation later. Presumably they want

to be *paid in full*. If they don't choose that, their employer might underpay, attempt to renegotiate by force, or put pressure on an owned character to accept a lesser payment. Not choosing you are *paid in full* or *it's not a set-up or an ambush* is an invitation to the MC to make a move.

If they don't choose *it's not a set-up or ambush*, then it may well be one of those things. Consider the Corporations and Threats at play in the Mission, the state of the Countdown Clocks in general, and whether the meeting attracted attention or not. Choose one of those Threats and make a hard move.

As the MC, consider:

- 🔌 If the Mission Clock was high, the target Corporation might be closing in on them.
- 🔌 If the meeting attracted attention, an uninvolved Threat might interrupt the party.
- 🔌 If the team did not choose *you are paid in full*, their employer might attempt to have them eliminated and keep the money, or pay them in an undesirable currency, like corporate scrip.
- 🔌 If any Corporate Clock is high (2100 or above), that Corporation might intervene with force.
- 🔌 If a character is *hunted*, their enemies might come gunning for them or their employer might try to capture that character in particular.

A personal favourite of mine is to have their employer be a corporation whose Corporate Clock is high, so that the entire mission is an attempt to get one last use from the characters before eliminating the evidence in a final bloody ambush. Or maybe I'm bluffing.

In a one-off game, this is a fine place to end, but in ongoing games the characters' actions have ramifications in *The Sprawl*.

Getting paid is a basic move which is fully discussed in Chapter 2: Basic Moves. It is repeated here for convenience.

Getting Paid (Legwork)

When you go to a meet to **get paid** by your employer, roll and add the number of unfilled legwork segments.

10+: choose 3 from the list below.

7-9: choose 1 from the list below.

- 🔌 It's not a set-up or an ambush
- 🔌 You are paid in full
- 🔌 The meeting doesn't attract the attention of outside parties
- 🔌 The employer is identifiable
- 🔌 You learned something from the mission; everyone marks experience

RETALIATION

They sent a slamhound on Turner's trail in New Delhi, slotted it to his pheromones and the color of his hair. It caught up with him on a street called Chandni Chauk and came scrambling for his rented BMW through a forest of bare brown legs and pedicab tires. Its core was a kilogram of recrystallized hexogene and flaked TNT.

He didn't see it coming. The last he saw of India was the pink stucco facade of a place called the Khush-Oil Hotel.

Count Zero, William Gibson

After the team has been paid (or screwed over), the MC will look at the final state of the Legwork and Action Clocks.

1. If the Legwork Clock is filled, the target corporation(s) found out a lot about the team. Advance the relevant Corporate Clock(s) one segment as indicated by the 0000 entry of the Legwork Clocks.
2. If the Action Clock is filled and every member of the team escaped alive or un-captured, the target corporation(s) are infuriated. Advance the relevant Corporate Clock(s) two segments as indicated by the 0000 entry of the Action Clocks.
3. When a Corporate Clock gets to 1800, the corporation has definitely taken notice of them.
4. When a Corporate Clock gets to 2100, the corporation takes definite action against them.

If any interesting hostilities erupted between characters and other parties (individual NPCs, gangs, and the like) during the mission, define them as Threats and make Threat Clocks for them. Threats are less pressing and dangerous than the Corporations you established at the start of the game, but they may become significant (and deadly) pains in the characters' asses. Remember that in *The Sprawl*, NPCs are not necessarily Threats, but anyone could become a Threat. Threats are described in Chapter 9: Running *The Sprawl*.

Hazer, Gant, Kennedy and Hoot stole a suborbital drive control chip from Solar Investments' offshore arcology. The Legwork Clock was not filled. The Action Clock was not filled. Solar Investments' Corporate Clock does not advance.

In their next mission, Hazer, Gant, Kennedy and Hoot break into an Ecuadine Petrochem office block to find out who had them steal the control chip and why. They fill the Legwork Phase, but the mission goes smoothly. Ecuadine's Corporate Clock advances from 1800 to 2100.

[PRESS ANY KEY TO CONTINUE]

[CONTINUED]

Nebula, AntiK-Tera, Rook and Seamus attempted to kidnap a rogue cyberlegger (a Threat). The Legwork Clock was not filled. However, the raid on the cyberlegger's hideout went badly. Seamus was killed in the attack, and after the Action Clock hit 0000, Nebula decided that she was captured by the cyberlegger. While the Action Clock was filled, not every member of the team escaped, so the cyberlegger's Threat Clock does not advance because of the mission failure. However, Nebula was captured, and the MC makes a move to complicate her life: a hardwired backdoor chip in her cyberlegs. Pretty soon Nebula will be implicated in whatever that Threat Clock is ticking towards!

LIE LOW OR FIGHT BACK?

When the Corporate Clocks are advancing and the heat is getting too high, the characters have a couple of options. They can **lie low** with contacts to reduce the heat. That's a move.

Lie Low: When everyone goes to ground until the heat dies down, each character pays half their cred, or five, whichever is greater. Lower all Corporate Clocks by one.

Laying low is only an option if you have resources: both time and money. You have to have enough money to get out of town, but you also lose reputation over time. *The Sprawl* moves fast. Yesterday's hotshot is tomorrow's granddaddy.

If you don't have the cash, or you value your rep more than your life, you can attempt to fight back against a corporation. The best options are to find out what they know about you and erase or destroy that information, or to attack their balance book and make it too expensive to pursue you. Either way, those are missions. Normally you won't **get paid** for these missions, but **hitting the street** creatively may change that.

Long-Term Healing

There are no rules in *The Sprawl* for time or cost of recovery of harm between sessions. The MC may wish to play out scenes to determine who paid for expensive recovery or cyberware repairs (see [Chapter 5: Cyberware](#) for a discussion of the cyberware installation process), perhaps the MC will make some moves, characters might become *+owned* or *+hunted*. However, unless the fiction demands, or it's interesting to everyone, especially the player of the injured character(s), start the next mission with everyone's Harm Clock empty.

MISSION PACKAGES

This section describes some of the standard types of mission that teams will be paid to complete in *The Sprawl*. Each mission package consists of goals, methods and considerations. These packages have two purposes.

First, they are frameworks around which MCs can conceptualise and design missions. Note that, depending on how difficult the MC wants a mission to be, a full mission may consist of several mission packages strung together – the team could perform an Infiltration on a corporate holding, then Capture some assets, and then need a method for Extraction.

Second, they allow the players to quickly focus on what is needed instead of puzzling through and figuring out an approach to the jobs presented. When a player decides to achieve an objective, and isn't sure how to go about it, show them the mission packages and let them decide which is the closest. To complete a mission package, the players must execute the methods and the level of success of these actions will indicate if they are effective and if they get into trouble. Success can be determined in two ways: by a series of moves in the normal way, or quickly, using a single move called **conduct an operation** which lets the players go directly to the heart of the action.

Conduct an Operation (Edge)

When you lead a planned and coordinated operation, describe your plan and who is carrying it out then roll Edge.

10+: everything goes according to plan; you and your team are in perfect position to carry out the final element of the plan. The MC will describe the scene and present you with the opportunity to act.

7-9: You get your opportunity to act, but it won't go as smoothly as you would like, choose 1:

- 🔌 A preliminary task was not completed on time or accurately; choose a task and the MC will describe how it causes a problem
- 🔌 There's an unexpected complication; choose a consideration and the MC will describe how it causes a problem

6-: the MC will describe the scene and make a move that puts you on the back foot; both problems described under 7-9 apply as well

Conduct an operation can be used for side missions, or any part of the main mission that the players or the MC doesn't want to spend a lot of time on. Use it when failure or complication could be interesting, but the details of the mission and its execution are not.

While investigating a target in the Legwork Phase, the team discovers that a third party has a secure facility which contains information or equipment required for the mission. They **conduct operations** to Infiltrate and Extract the equipment.

The team learns that the facility holding the mission target is in a neighbouring country. They **conduct an operation** to Smuggle themselves across the border.

After a botched **hit the street** roll in the Legwork Phase, a contact demands help protecting his turf from a rival gang. They **conduct an operation** (Destruction) to eliminate the rival.

A mission starts to go badly and the team has to fight their way out of a corporate arcology. They **conduct an operation** to Extract themselves from the arcology.

Make sure everyone is clear on the kind of operation(s) being conducted. If it doesn't fit into the eight categories below, choose one that has appropriate tasks and complications.

DESTRUCTION

When you want to engage and destroy target assets, complete these tasks:

- » Determine location of assets and approach routes
- » Establish matrix overwatch
- » Take positions

It may be complicated by these considerations:

- » Position and status of security teams
- » Location and environmental factors
- » Resilience and mobility of target assets

HUNT

When you want to locate a target, complete these tasks:

- » Determine approach and search pattern
- » Establish matrix overwatch
- » Coordinate multiple agents
- » Enact search to find target

It may be complicated by these considerations:

- » Position and status of security teams
- » Location and environmental factors
- » Ability of target to remain hidden and/or mobile

CAPTURE

When you want to seize control of assets, complete these tasks:

- » Determine location of assets and approach routes
- » Establish matrix overwatch
- » Take positions

It may be complicated by these considerations:

- » Position and status of security teams
- » Location and environmental factors
- » Virtual surveillance
- » Resilience and mobility of target assets

WETWORK

When you want to eliminate a specified target, complete these tasks:

- » Determine location of target and approach routes
- » Establish matrix overwatch
- » Take positions

It may be complicated by these considerations:

- » Position and status of security teams
- » Location and environmental factors
- » Target and bodyguard vigilance and resilience

EXTRACTION

When you want to exit a hostile situation, complete these tasks:

- » Determine extraction point(s)
- » Establish alternate extraction point(s)
- » Manoeuvre to extraction points

It may be complicated by these considerations:

- » Position, status and mobility of response teams
- » Virtual surveillance
- » Location factors

GUARD

When you want to protect target assets, complete these tasks:

- » Determine approach routes and fields of fire
- » Take positions
- » Establish matrix overwatch

It may be complicated by these considerations:

- » Enemy strength and approach vectors
- » Location and environmental factors

INFILTRATION

When you want to manoeuvre without being detected, complete these tasks:

- » Determine entry points
- » Establish matrix overwatch
- » Avoid detection and manoeuvre to objective point

It may be complicated by these considerations:

- » Position and status of security teams
- » Virtual surveillance
- » Vigilance of enemy
- » Location and environmental factors

SMUGGLE/COURIER

When you want to deliver assets between multiple locations, complete these tasks:

- » Determine transport method and route
- » Establish alternate rendezvous
- » Determine potential obstacles, ambush locations and choke points

It may be complicated by these considerations:

- » Resilience and mobility of transportation methods
- » Presence of checkpoints and required credentials
- » Strength and mobility of pursuing forces

THE KUROSAWA EXTRACTION:

A Sample Mission

OVERVIEW

The team are hired by Mr. Smith to extract Mitchell Kurosawa from _____ (Choose a Corporation from the list for your game). Once they have extracted Kurosawa, they are to call Mr. Smith for instructions on where to exchange Kurosawa for their payment.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Mr. Smith is a corporate fixer who works for _____ (A rival corporation from the list). She is in her 30s and dresses in conservative but well-tailored business attire and hides her data interface cyberware under her hair. She will contact the team by phone and arrange a meeting in an up-market street-level restaurant in the business district. She will attend the meeting unarmed, but accompanied by two relatively subtle corporate security agents who will watch the meeting from a table across the restaurant.

Mitchell Kurosawa is a mid-level executive who lives and works in a corporate arcology in *The Sprawl*. He only leaves the arcology to travel, but this happens frequently, usually by corporate jet from the nearest major international airport. Whenever he leaves the arcology, he has a small security detail.

Kurosawa's Security Detail comprises four highly trained corporate operatives. They transport Kurosawa between the arcology and the airport in two armoured limousines, two riding in the front of each limo. Kurosawa rides in the back of one, the other is empty. Each operative wears an armoured vest (1-armour) and carries a sidearm (heavy pistol: 3-harm close/near loud) and each car has a shotgun (3-harm close/near loud messy reload) and an assault rifle (3-harm near/far loud autofire) in a front seat weapon rack. Each operative is lightly cybered, with a mix of sensory and martial cyberware. At least one operative has synthetic nerves.

Kurosawa's Arcology is several miles from the **Airport**. Security is tightest at the arcology and additional corporate muscle is immediately at hand. Security at the airport is also tight, but less so than at the arcology and it will take external corporate assets longer to respond to an attack there. The drive between the arcology and the airport offers ample opportunity for high-speed freeway chases and close-quarters ambushes along surface streets, depending on the resources of the team.

QUESTIONS

Ask the players when they **research** or find out in play:

- » what department does Kurosawa work for?
- » why does he travel so much?
- » how long has Kurosawa worked for his corporation?

- » does Kurosawa engage in any recreational activities which require him to leave the Arcology?
- » does Kurosawa have a family?

LEGWORK CLOCK

- 1200 Everything's cool
- 1500 The team is making some noise, but nothing serious... yet
- 1800 The target hears vague rumours
- 2100 The target hears clear but unconfirmed rumours. The Action Clock starts at 1500
- 2200 The target has reliable information about the time of the run. The Action Clock starts at 1800
- 2300 The target has reliable information about the team; the Action Clock starts at 2100
- 0000 The team is precisely identified; advance the Corporate Clock of Kurosawa's corporation

ACTION CLOCK

- 1200 Everything's cool
- 1500 Kurosawa's security detail is wary and suspicious
- 1800 Kurosawa's security detail are on edge and alerted
- 2100 Kurosawa's security detail is beefed up (six guards with indiscreet armour and sidearms)
- 2200 Additional security is deployed (a team of six with assault rifles and armour jackets) to control the situation
- 2300 Additional security is deployed (air support or another team) to assist with Kurosawa's evacuation
- 0000 Further vehicular support and security teams arrive and evacuate Kurosawa. Advance the Corporate Clock of Kurosawa's corporation twice

MISSION DIRECTIVES

- When you accept the job, mark experience
- When you decide when and where to take Kurosawa, mark experience
- When you complete the extraction, mark experience
- When the mission ends, mark experience

RUNNING THE MISSION

As it stands, this mission is simple. Do some legwork, discover Kurosawa's schedule, ambush him as he drives to the airport. It is open to a variety of different approaches by the team, however. The team could attempt to extract Kurosawa from the arcology or the airport or might try to find some way to lure him out of the arcology, perhaps by threatening his family. A full on infiltration of the arcology might be a good opportunity to use **conduct a mission**. Threatening his family might involve **playing hardball**; how that roll goes might determine what kind of security he brings when he comes out.

This is a perfect mission for a team with a Driver, but it doesn't require one. Hackers will have to think creatively to be useful in a mobile ambush or chase scenario, but there are always traffic control and street light systems to be hacked.

Unless the team go digging for information on Mr. Smith, keep the identity of their employer ambiguous as long as possible to allow for final twists. In an ongoing campaign, this mission is the perfect "too easy" mission which actually conceals a setup. If the team doesn't cover their bases when they **get paid**, it's a perfect opportunity. This also makes this mission a good one for one-off play. If the mission is quicker and simpler than you expected, and you all want to play longer, it can easily be extended with a twist at the end.

HACKING THE MISSION

You may need to adjust the loadout of Kurosawa's Security Detail depending on the capability and style of the team. If the team is focused on violence, make assault rifles the primary armament of the Security Detail. If the team is focused on non-violent approaches, remove the auxiliary longarms and maybe the synth nerves. Of course, if the team focuses on non-violent approaches, those armaments shouldn't matter anyway...

Potential twists to this mission include

- » A rival team attempts to extract Kurosawa
- » A rival team attempts to murder Kurosawa
- » Kurosawa is bait to lure the team into a trap
- » Kurosawa offers the team money, bleeding-edge tech, or corporate secrets not to turn him over to Mr. Smith

Fitch and Salome had helped Clarence steal his boyfriend out from under the nose of Existence Entertainment shortly after someone shot out a chandelier. With Cinderella no closer to finding out the identity of the VIP whose security they ran afoul of, they decided to focus on the mission and get out alive. Interesting mysteries could be solved later, when there wasn't live ammo littering the floor around them. Peter had briefly been swept up in the romance of the moment of being extracted by his own boyfriend from a life he'd come to hate, but the ammo raining down had set the actor on a course of self-preservation more suited to the moment.

The two lovebirds were taking off from one of the natural landings near Vienna, neatly circumventing the need to pay off harbor masters or local government. Fitch and Salome had been the ones to get them to their point of egress from the now unwelcoming embrace of Vienna. Peter shook their hands earnestly and Clarence impulsively hugged the two people he considered co-conspirators and not hired help. It was well past two a.m. before Salome and Fitch's paths would cross again, in the cramped and booby-trapped attic Cinderella called an apartment. Her wide display of screens was flickering with its usual diverse sets of data and news feeds, but the hacker's frenetic packing was unexpected. Salome hung back as Fitch went to approach his baby sister.

"Cindy?"

She shook her head at him, walking past him to grab one of her tool kits. "We have to leave." She jaggedly pointed a finger at the screens. "I found our VIP. We should have gotten the fuck out of here hours ago. If Existence Entertainment picked us up on a single fucking screen, they're going to say we're the ones; we tried to kill her."

[PRESS ANY KEY TO CONTINUE]

As his sister continued to pack, swearing under her breath, Fitch and Salome turned to consider the screens. Salome put the pieces together first, her forceful headshake sending her red hair back over her shoulders. "Fuck. Why the hell is she outside Shanghai?"

Glancing backward at Cinderella, who nearly vibrated with anxiety, Fitch returned his attention to the screens. "You mind telling me what I'm missing?"

Salome tapped one screen's casing, drawing his attention to the petite Chinese woman on it, captured in the frozen moment of a passport photo. "Xilin. She's got her hand in banned music and an assortment of cultural activities censored by the Republic. I've never managed to run into her, but I like to avoid people with unclear ideology and unknown sources of funding."

"And?"

Cinderella sat down a pile of black shirts, turning around to stare at the back of both their heads.

"And that means we don't know why she's doing what she does, or where she wants it to go. She has a gang, but gangs are supported by money. Their money comes from Xilin, but I don't know where her money's from. If she thinks we're behind the attack, I can't evaluate what kind of Hell she's going to send after us. Or what Existence Entertainment is going to send. Or her backer. We are in the middle of a shitstorm of I don't know. Which means we need to leave, and go hide somewhere, and figure things out, before all we are is so many new bodies in the Danube."

HACKING THE SPRAWL

[illegible]

HACKING THE SPRAWL

Every Sprawl is unique. Often colour and flavour – narrative descriptions of people, places and events in your Sprawl – are enough to enable the unique vision that you and your players have.

SPLICING WORLDS

SPLICING WORLDS

You can find other perspectives on the process of remixing your Sprawl by looking at similar chapters in other Apocalypse-powered games.

Start with *Apocalypse World's* 'Advanced Fuckery' chapter (pp. 267-84). You'll find a detailed breakdown on the structure of moves, including several lists of the kinds of things that moves do.

Chapter 19 of *Dungeon World* has a similar discussion: 'Advanced Delving' (pp.346-360).

See also the relevant chapters of *Monster-hearts* ('Utterly Malleable' pp.145-149) and *Monster of the Week* ('Customising Your Game' pp.179-188 of the 1st ed, pp. 295-306 of the rev. ed.).

Readers familiar with the games I list in Appendix 2: will notice similarities between moves in those games and moves in *The Sprawl*. That is because *The Sprawl* began life as exactly the kind of hack I am talking about in this chapter.



In gaming parlance, the process of tweaking, supplementing, modifying, surgically slicing or brutally eviscerating the rules is called 'hacking'. It also falls philosophically within the realm of mashups and remix culture. In this chapter, I will briefly discuss several areas of *The Sprawl* that are particularly ripe for expansion, hacking and remixing to help you get the most from your experience of *The Sprawl*. A chapter like this is inevitably incomplete, but I'll give some guidelines on where you might start hacking, what you might think about while you do so, and what you can accomplish by hacking *The Sprawl*.

CUSTOM MOVES

The easiest place to start making *The Sprawl* your own is with moves. What if the Basic Moves don't handle a situation you want to highlight as well as you'd like? Maybe there's a fictional circumstance or outcome you'd like to see emerge from play and the existing moves don't produce it. For some *Sprawls*, there will be a particular kind of action or activity you'd like to encourage within the fiction. Most of these goals can be achieved by modifying existing moves or adding entirely new moves.

An example of how moves encourage actions from Chapter 8: The Matrix:

Search for Paydata

When you search for paydata in a Database, roll Mind.

7+: you find something hot that you can sell

10+: when you **hit the street** to sell it and roll a 7-9, choose one fewer result

Data theft (often as a side job) is a staple of cyberpunk missions. Search for paydata encourages characters to engage in this staple by presenting an opportunity for the Hacker to score some extra Cred. It also comes with an element of risk (the Hacker could miss the roll and trigger an MC move) which can add interesting complications. This provides a straightforward incentive for engaging in the action while keeping it from dominating the fiction. The complications also keep data theft from being boring when it comes up (keeping it true to the cyberpunk source material).

Some Sprawls will really come alive if you add moves which impart a particular flavour to the game. For example, Kouppi's Lagos setting has a crowded ultra-high rise downtown area with *Blade Runner*-style spinner-cars and near constant three-dimensional traffic jams. Here's the custom move for driving through that mess:

Feel the Flow

When you need to drive through Lagos on a deadline, roll Cool.

10+: the flow remains smooth.

7-9: choose 1, 2 if you're a Driver:

- 🔌 You'll be on time
- 🔌 Your car doesn't attract gangers
- 🔌 There is no traffic cleaner in sight

A move like this gives mechanical weight to the setting by including dangerous complications that add specific colour and life: gang control of the inner city and impersonal road clearing machines.

This example illustrates one of the most important aspects of moves: they should say something intentional about the setting and/or genre.

Another example involves drug use, another staple of cyberpunk fiction. By default, *The Sprawl* doesn't have any moves that address drug use, abuse or addiction, but if you want to change that, here's a custom move suggested by Josh Roby:

When you drop Xstatic into your eye, roll Synth.

7+: you may pick one less option when you **mix it up** at the cost of 1 harm

6-: you suffer from hallucinations that will distract you, allowing the MC to turn any one of your future roll into a miss. You mark xp when this occurs

The effects of Xstatic last for ten to thirty minutes, followed by a crushing low of -1 ongoing for an hour

This move says that drug use has beneficial short-term trade-offs and longer term negative effects. Maybe in your Sprawl, synthetic drugs are so advanced that the only side effects are what you have to pay to get them, or the strings your supplier has on you afterwards. In that case you would keep the framework of the move, but change its negative effects. For example, these moves:

When you are under the influence of Xstatic, choose 1 less option when you **mix it up**.

That's great! Show me the drugs! But wait...

When you try to score a few hits of Xstatic, roll Style.

10+: You get what you need at the regular price

7-9: Choose whether you pay now or pay later: if you pay now, it costs extra, if you pay later, take +*owned* until you do

6-: Something goes very wrong when you acquire or consume this very dangerous, very illegal drug

Now we're talking.

The choice between these two approaches is this: what do you want to emphasise in your *Sprawl*? The chemical and biological side effects of drug use or the social and political side effects. Even a piece of technology that works perfectly every time can present opportunities for drama about how society views and uses it and how people manipulate that technology for their own ends. Think hard about what your game is about, then hack the game in support of that.

When creating new moves, consider whether your custom move is:

- » a basic move, available to everybody in common situations
- » a playbook move, only available to certain types of character
- » a special move only available in certain situations.

How you present the move says a lot about your game. If your basic move list includes several moves about drug use, that tells the players that drug use is an important part of your *Sprawl*. If you include a new playbook that includes a lot of drug-related moves, that puts a different emphasis on the subject. How the move fits into your game is as important as the move itself.

NEW CYBERWARE

Cyberware is a central part of *The Sprawl* and is a great place to expand and customise the rules and the setting to your preferences. One of the easiest and most flexible methods of modifying the kinds of cyberware available in your *Sprawl* is by creating new tags. Here's a list of new tags suggested by David Maple:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| + <i>armoured</i> : | Gives some sort of modifier to harm, like Dermal Plating, but weaker |
| + <i>chromed</i> : | Gives a bonus to Style in some circumstances |
| + <i>colour-changing</i> : | A chameleon effect on visible cyberware, especially dermal plating |
| + <i>concealment</i> : | Contains a colour-changing hidden compartment small enough to hide a small revolver or similar sized object |
| + <i>hardened</i> : | Ignore the effects of EMP weapons, which normally would knock out cybernetic systems |
| + <i>synthskin</i> : | Looks like a meat limb to standard optical systems |

- +*thermal-camo*: Covers dermal plating with a heat dissipating layer that masks the body's thermal signature
- +*intimidating*: When its brutal appearance could intimidate someone, take +1 forward to **play hardball**. It is also oversized and clunky: choose a negative cyberware tag

You can explicitly define the mechanical effect of tags (such as +*intimidating* above), leave them flexible (+*chromed*), or rely on fictional positioning (+*colour-changing*).

Changing or supplementing the cyberware available to players can have a major effect on the tone and themes of *The Sprawl*. This might be as simple as small tweak to modify particular pieces of cyberware in particular situations. For instance, Benjamin K suggested this move that makes opponents with synth nerves more dangerous:

When you attempt to **mix it up** against an opponent with synth nerves and you don't have them yourself, roll Cool.

10+: you get the jump on this motherfucker. Roll your **mix it up** as usual

7-9: he does something before you can fight him

6-: where the hell did he go!

Perhaps you want your Sprawl to emphasise the impact of trauma on the human body and how technology responds to that. You might create a list of additional options like these created by Joe Cirino for his game:

AutoLung: Filters toxins and carries 5 minutes worth of emergency oxygen.

AutoStim: Auto injects Morphine / Atropine when needed. Carries 3 doses of both.

BloodFlow: Supplements the liver and immune system in removing harmful toxins and viral agents from the bloodstream.

Braincage: Replaces the skull with a Cybernetic Braincage, protecting and preserving the brain in the event of penetrating trauma, respiratory arrest, or heart failure.

FlexSpine: Replaces the Spine with FlexSteel and Nano-wired Memory cords, protecting against backbone trauma and allowing weight bearing and contortions beyond normal human possibilities.

EMP Hardening: Installs reactive EMP shielding to your Dermal Plates, protecting your cybernetics from EMP bursts.

HeartLine: Replaces the sinoatrial node with a cybernetic monitor. Measures heart rate and supplies defibrillating shocks in the event of cardiac arrhythmia due to trauma or blood loss.

These options place greater weight on the function and improvement of specific bodily organs. Including these options act as a flag to the players that this Sprawl will

regularly consider things like air and blood purity, localised bodily pain responses, and the specific effect of trauma on the heart, skull and spine.

Joe also created two more cyberenhancements, MagPatch and Rider:

MagPatch: Installs magnetic patches to your Cyberhands or Cyberfeet, allowing you to attach yourself to metal surfaces or objects.

Rider: Installs a wireless cyberhub routing to your brain's sense sectors. Allows someone with the right program and route code to experience everything you do as long as they "ride" you.

You could include enhancements like this in your list of cyberware, or you could add them to the game in the form of cyberware tags. These two capabilities could be modelled by the tags *+magnetic* and *+sensory mount*. Simply add them to the list of options for Cyberarms and Cyberlegs and Neural Interface, respectively.

+magnetic: magnetic patches which allow you to attach yourself to metal surfaces or objects

+sensory mount/rider: A connection to your brain's sense sectors which allows someone with access privileges to experience everything you do as long as they "ride" you.

You can also use cyberware and tags to stretch the boundaries of *The Sprawl* into new territory at the fringes of (or beyond) the cyberpunk genre. Say you've read *The Windup Girl* by Paolo Bacigalupi and you want to play in a spring-powered biopunk world ravaged by climate change and oil depletion. You might consider completely rewriting the cyberware options to reflect the possibilities of genetic engineering and spring-punk technologies.

Cyberarm with Augmented Strength: When you spend an hour winding your kink-spring, hold 3 Potential. Expend Potential 1-for-1 to inflict +2 harm when using a melee weapon that relies on physical strength.

Bioeyes: When you have bioeyes implanted, choose two of following tags: *+thermographic*, *+light amplification*, *+magnification*, *+flare compensation*. Your bioeyes also have the tags *+discrete* and *+unhackable*. When your enhanced sight helps, you may roll Synth for **assess**.

These examples represent a relatively small change from traditional cyberpunk themes, but consider what *The Sprawl* would look like if you incorporated any of the following tags:

+psychic

+enchanted

+identity-melding

+demon-touched

+steam-powered

+infomorphic

+alientech

PERSONALISING DIRECTIVES

Directives are another mechanic with a great deal of flexibility. The Personal Directives in Chapter 7: Advancement is a sample of the kind of personal motivations and complicating factors that could come into play, but you might want to create new Personal Directives to emphasise certain thematic, background or setting aspects of *The Sprawl* that you have created. Actions during play might suggest new Directives for particular characters or the group as a whole, as well. This section discusses how the existing Personal Directives are structured to help you think about the possibilities for creating your own.

There are two types of Personal Directives:

- » those that introduce a relationship
- » those that describe a personality trait

The former allows a player to introduce a person or a group into the setting while also defining their character's relationship to that creation. If you want to model a relationship that is not covered by the existing Personal Directives, write a new one which describes the nature of the relationship more accurately, using existing Directives as a template.

The other type of Personal Directive is internal to the character. They let players describe personality traits which motivate their characters that aren't tied to a specific person or group. None of the samples of this kind of Personal Directive in Chapter 7: Advancement include blanks for the players to write in like relationship directives do, but you might create some new ones that require details like that. For example, a Personal Directive to reflect phobias might read: "When your fear of _____ hinders the mission, mark experience". This kind of Personal Directive could end up as a relationship directive instead, depending on what you put in the blank (consider the difference between a fear of "spiders" and a fear of "Red-Blade Jane").

You can even use Personal Directives to personalise corporations and characters:

- » The Existence Directive: When you give a simsense recording of your illegal activities to your Existence Entertainment handler, mark experience.
- » The Solar Directive: When you go out of your way to damage Ecuadine Petrochem or help Solar Investments, mark experience.

SPLICING MOTIVATIONS

Directives are inspired by Keys from *The Shadow of Yesterday* by Clinton R. Nixon (http://crngames.com/the_shadow_of_yesterday/index) universalised by Eero Tuovinen as *The Solar System* (<http://www.arkenstonepublishing.net/solarsystem>). Keys also appear in John Harper's *Lady Blackbird* (<http://www.onesevendesign.com/lady-blackbird/>), Will Hindmarch's *Always/ Never/Now* (<http://always-never-now.tumblr.com/>), and *Marvel Heroic Roleplaying* by Cam Banks and Rob Donoghue. All of these games are thoroughly worth playing and will absolutely inspire new Directives for your *Sprawl*. In particular, *Always/ Never/Now*, which is also a cyberpunk game, albeit one with a different take on the genre.

The relationship-introducing Personal Directives in Chapter 7: Advancement are quite broad to encompass a wide variety of Sprawls. When you make your own Personal Directives, you can focus in on the specific characteristics of the groups in your Sprawl much more closely:

- » The Witch Directive: When you disregard the precepts of the White Witches in the execution of a mission, mark experience.

Some Personal Directives will strengthen a thematic element of the game:

- » The Addict Directive: When your dependence on Xstatic hinders the mission, mark experience.

From the player perspective, Personal Directives should tempt the character away from the main goals of the mission. For the MC, Personal Directives should suggest interesting potential complications. In fact, these are the same thing: a good directive should inspire the MC to present hard choices to the player. This makes MC inspiration the key to good Personal Directive design. The compelling complications and hard choices come at the characters from the MC, so the MC should be able to imagine scenarios in which they can present a clear contrast between the motivation described by the directive and the basic requirements of the mission. Aim for directives that will make missions harder to complete, not directives that make missions impossible to complete. Players might occasionally have to choose between completing the mission or not, but that shouldn't be the norm. Players have characters in *The Sprawl* because they want to complete missions. Aim to make them fret over *how* they complete the mission not whether they can complete it.

Remember that important principle: Be a fan of the characters.

Also, Personal Directives are a flag for the MC. The MC must consider and incorporate the characters' directives into play and into mission design. This means that Personal Directives direct play in a certain direction. That makes it important to be sure that everyone at the table is comfortable with the direction in which each character's motivations and relationships push the game.

SIDE MISSIONS

The Mission Directives in Chapter 7: Advancement and Chapter 11: Missions are all group-focused in that they give signposts to help the group as a whole complete the primary mission. The team collects or misses out on those directives together. However, MCs can provide players with personalised side missions by creating Mission Directives to reward pursuit of individual goals. Here are some examples (thank to Colin Jessup for providing some of these):

When you deliver the suitcase nuke to the orbital, mark experience.

When you "evaluate" Parker's loyalty for Existence Entertainment, mark experience.

When the extraction target meets with an "accident", mark experience.

When you copy the financial files from the target facility, mark experience.

Side Missions look the same as regular Mission Directives, except they refer to secondary mission objectives rather than steps along the path to completion of the main mission. They'll also make completion of the main mission more difficult, if only because they are a distraction. Usually, only a subset of the team can (or will want to) accomplish a Side Mission. As such, they are a great way to highlight the trope of competing loyalties pulling a team in different directions that appears frequently in cyberpunk. When they apply to a single character they are a great way to put someone on the spot ("what's more important: your team and mission, or yourself?"). They also provide a devious and non-lethal way of complicating the mission in situations where a character falls into enemy hands. Side Missions are particularly appropriate for *+owned* characters ("When you deliver the package to your handler, mark experience"), or as an offer to remove *+hunted* ("When you sell out your team to remove *+hunted*, mark experience").

Side Missions by their nature might set the characters at odds with each other. For that reason, they're particularly good for one-shot games where intra-team conflict or mission failure are more acceptable, although some groups with ongoing campaigns will relish a more regular dose of internal tension.

The entire team can share a Side Mission. Maybe a rival of the group's original employer wants the entire group to switch sides ("When you give the file to Shanghai Security rather than Existence Entertainment, mark experience" or even better, "When you give the file to Shanghai Security, mark experience", to allow the characters to double-cross their corporate employers! Why should the MC have all the double-crossing fun?). Maybe each member of the team is approached individually ("When you are the first person to bring the file to Ms. Singh, mark experience"). Do the characters know that their compatriots all have the same competitive side mission? If so, how do they work together knowing only one of them can cash in?

As you can see, there are many possibilities to play with; change things up regularly.



PLAYING WITH THE STRUCTURES

Moves, tags, cyberware and directives are the most modular parts of *The Sprawl*. If you know what you want to accomplish, though, more substantial hacks are possible as well. You can also hack Harm and mission structure productively, although they are likely to make a more significant change to the feel of *The Sprawl*. If you go far enough, you may even find yourself designing a complete game, the same way *The Sprawl* was...

Harm

Different groups have different tastes in violent action. If you find that combat scenes in *The Sprawl* don't work in the way you'd like, there are several dials you can tweak to alter the balance in several ways.

- » If you want to place a more dramatic focus on combat generally, or emphasise a particular episode of action, set shorter range goals when you **mix it up**. The objectives you set when you make that move can scale combat situations from one roll that covers the entire action sequence to a roll covering each action beat. If you extend it a long way towards the latter end, you will have to adjust the amount of damage inflicted by each roll, though, or that single lengthy scene will be far too deadly.
- » Too deadly? Lower the harm values of weapons and encourage players to make more use of armour.
- » Not deadly enough? Change **mix it up** so that both sides take harm on a 7-9 or lower the effectiveness of armour. Maybe higher armour levels modify the **harm** move more without subtracting as much damage.
- » Make NPCs tougher or weaker by adjusting how much harm they can take before they are eliminated.

Read and play other Apocalypse-powered games to see how they deal with harm, resistance, healing and combat. Looking at the way other people interpret and expand the basic system might give you ideas about how to fine tune *The Sprawl* to fit exactly what you want.

Missions

The Legwork/Action Clock structure of *The Sprawl* can handle most mission-based ideas you can come up with, but there are always outliers that might work better if you tinker with the mission structure.

The most important consideration here is your group. If the characters' focus is all Action and minimal Legwork, then a skipping the Legwork Phase entirely is fine. This can also reflect a mission where the employer gives the team all of the information they need (although that begs the question of why the team trusts their employer to be completely honest here) or a reactive mission like bodyguard duty. However, if the Legwork is where your table likes to focus their attention, don't skimp without checking with your players first.

Another option if you want to jump straight into the Action Phase, is using lengthy flashback scenes with multiple rolls to fill in the backstory of the mission. During those flashbacks, continue tracking the Legwork Clock as normal. This will create a non-sequential chronology akin to how time and narrative occur in movies like *Pulp Fiction* (1994).

If the entire game is a chase scene – perhaps because a Corporate Clock struck 0000 – then perhaps you want to make one clock longer – 8, 10 or even 12 or more segments. As long as you define the levels on the clock so that you know what triggers each level and what happens when the clock advances that far, this will work fine.

REMEMBER YOUR AGENDA

Recall the Agenda from Chapter 9: Running the Sprawl:

- » Make *The Sprawl* dirty, high-tech and excessive
- » Fill the character's lives with action, intrigue and complication
- » Entangle the characters in *The Sprawl*
- » Play to find out what happens

Keep these in mind while you hack *The Sprawl* too.

This game is about finding out what happens to characters entangled by webs of action, intrigue and complication in a dirty, high-tech and excessive world. If you find yourself modifying the game away from these fundamentals, you might be writing your own game. That is a fun experience, but it's a lot of work. The only advice I'll give on that front is start with the MC's Agenda, Principles and Moves, then the Basic Moves, and then Playbooks. The MC frames the game and forms a lens for play, so start there. The Basic Moves impart basic colour, guide player interaction between the fiction and the mechanics, and suggest typical character action – how they try to affect the world around them. The Playbooks give the specific colour of the setting and genre you're aiming for. Perhaps even more important than that order of operations, though, is to get some critical friends and playtesters. The best games are not developed in a vacuum.

CONTINUE? [Y/N]

APPENDIX 1: NAMES

CORPORATIONS

When you're setting up *The Sprawl*, you'll have to come up with several corporations. Here's a list of types of businesses. Remember that the major corporations on the list you create in Step 0 are into all of these, but they're especially known for one or two.

Types of Business

- » Biotechnology (cybertechnology, pharmaceuticals)
- » Consumer Goods (commodities)
- » Electronics (IT, robotics, hardware)
- » Financial (banks, insurance, holding companies)
- » Government (national, provincial, departments, bureaus, ministries)
- » Heavy Industry (automotive, Zero-G manufacturing)
- » Illegal (drug cartels, organised crime)
- » Media (news, entertainment, erotica)
- » Matrix and Telecommunications (IT, data storage and security, software, remote operations)
- » Military (technology, operations, security)
- » Primary Resources (mining, fuels, agriculture, chemicals)
- » Transportation (orbital operations, waste disposal)

And here's a list of corporations compiled mostly from the names that my playtesters came up with (including a few nods to the classics here and there). Contemporary corporations are another rich source of inspiration for corporate names in *The Sprawl*. Current media and telecommunications companies appeared like clockwork in my first playtests.

BIOTECHNOLOGY

Acumen

Henderson and Henderson

Iristech

Tashinetics

HelixTec

Lifetech

Kikuyu Optics

Maas-Neotek

Tempel Pharmaceuticals

Pointsman Pharmaceuticals

CONSUMER GOODS

NuKraft

KidiCorp

Vaser

Maangalika Agrotech

ELECTRONICS

Hosaka

Weyland-Hughes

Grand Technologies

Chase-Kaplan Technologies

FINANCIAL

Zurich Orbital
Solar Investments
Empire
Aktivor
Shinjo

GOVERNMENTS

Senate Inc.

HEAVY INDUSTRY

Zhuangzi
Omni Dynamics
Nkembe GmbH

ORGANISED CRIME

Camorra
Okhrana

MEDIA

Global News Network
Pirate Bay
Sploot
Sydney-Holmes Media
Existence Entertainment
Troubadour MediaMatrix and
Telecommunications
United Future
Virtual Interface
Aeon Nova
Wipe
VirtuaTech
Quine Virtual Machines

MILITARY

Shanghai Security
MDI
Unified Security
Blackwater-Verizon
Gold Coast Maximum Law Corporation
Titan Pacifications

PRIMARY RESOURCES

Ecuadine Petrochem
Valdez Combine
Nutrigrow

TRANSPORTATION

New Horizons
RadCom
Namatoki-Boeing
Unified Xeno
Tianxia
Korolev

APPENDIX 2: THANKS...

Thanks... to the media

If you're not familiar with Cyberpunk as a genre, begin by reading William Gibson's *Sprawl* trilogy, *Neuromancer* (1984), *Count Zero* (1986), and *Mona Lisa Overdrive* (1988). For a distilled hit of mission-focused cyberpunk, read the short stories in *Burning Chrome*, especially 'Johnny Mnemonic', 'Fragments of a Hologram Rose', 'New Rose Hotel', and 'Burning Chrome' itself. For the tone and aesthetics of *The Sprawl*, watch Ridley Scott's *Bladerunner* (1982), preferably the 1992 *Director's Cut* or the 2007 *Final Cut*.

READ

George Alec Effinger, *When Gravity Fails* (1986), *A Fire in the Sun* (1989) and *The Exile Kiss* (1991).

Tobias S. Buckell, *Hurricane Fever* (2014).

William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (1984), *Count Zero* (1986), *Burning Chrome* (1986), and *Mona Lisa Overdrive* (1988). The Bridge Trilogy (*Virtual Light* (1993), *Idoru* (1996), and *All Tomorrow's Parties* (1999)) is also relevant, and has an interesting near future representation of New Zealand.

Richard K. Morgan, *Altered Carbon* (2002), *Broken Angels* (2003), and *Woken Furies* (2005), *Black Man* (Published as *Thirteen* in the US) (2007).

Kieran Shea, *Koko Takes A Holiday* (2014).

Neal Stephenson, *Snow Crash* (1992).

Bruce Sterling (ed.), *Mirrorshades: The Cyberpunk Anthology* (1986), *Islands in the Net* (1988).

Daniel Suarez, *Daemon* (2006) and *Freedom™* (2010).

Walter Jon Williams, *Hardwired* (1986).

WATCH

<i>Robocop</i> (1987)	Any of the <i>Ghost in the Shell</i> anime franchise.
<i>Max Headroom</i> (1987)	
<i>Total Recall</i> (1990)	<i>Dredd</i> (2012)
<i>Johnny Mnemonic</i> (1995)	<i>Elysium</i> (2013)
<i>Strange Days</i> (1995)	<i>Robocop</i> (2014)

LISTEN

Music is a particularly personal form of media, but here are a few albums I like to listen to get in the mood for fighting the man in a cybernetic future.

- » Fear Factory, *Obsolete* (1998) and *Demanufacture* (1995).
- » Pendulum, *Immersion* (2010).
- » Rage Against the Machine, especially *Battle of Los Angeles* (2000).
- » Shihad, *Ignite* (2011), *FVEY* (2014).
- » The Prodigy, especially *Invaders Must Die* (2009) and *The Day is my Enemy* (2015)

Thanks... to the designers

The Sprawl is built on the shoulders of giants. The games listed here all contributed in a meaningful and often identifiable way to this one. If you are an MC looking to improve your craft, I highly recommend reading and playing all of these. They all do things slightly differently, but each offers valuable insights and inspiration into the things you can do with *The Sprawl*.

The Sprawl is Powered by the Apocalypse, which means it uses Vincent Baker's excellent Apocalypse World system as a foundation. If you're not familiar with Apocalypse World, I can't recommend it enough. If you are familiar with Apocalypse World or its various published hacks, much of this game will be familiar.

Most importantly, thanks to Vincent Baker, for Apocalypse World. Available at <http://apocalypse-world.com/>.

Thanks also to:

- » Clinton R. Nixon for *The Shadow of Yesterday*, especially for Keys, from which directives are drawn. Available at http://crngames.com/the_shadow_of_yesterday.
- » Jeremy Keller for *Technoir*, especially for the use of tags. Available at <http://technoirpg.com/>.
- » Sage LaTorra and Adam Koebel for *Dungeon World*.
- » Paul Riddle and John Harper for *The Regiment*.
- » John Harper for *Blades in the Dark*.
- » Gregor Vuga for *Sagas of the Icelanders*.
- » Jason Morningstar for *Night Witches*.
- » Avery Mcdaldno for *Monsterhearts*.
- » Mike Sands for *Monster of the Week*.
- » Bob Charrette, Paul Hume, Tom Dowd and everyone else who brought the *Shadowrun* universe to life.
- » Mike Pondsmith and everyone else involved with the *Cyberpunk* RPG.

RESOURCES

The internet is full of resources that will help you run *The Sprawl* better. Barf Forth Apocalyptica (<http://apocalypse-world.com/forums/index.php>) and the Google+ communities for all of the games mentioned here, including *The Sprawl* itself (<https://plus.google.com/u/0/communities/100639022106768583265>), are great places to start looking.

John Stavropoulos has an excellent post on reading a character sheet for Flags here:

pelgranepress.com/?p=3468

Christopher Chinn has two excellent posts on using Flags here:

bankuei.wordpress.com/2015/01/07/flag-framing-1-setting-up-a-campaign/
bankuei.wordpress.com/2015/01/09/flag-framing-2-running-the-game/

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TECHS

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HUNTERS

jason "JiB" Tryon (Fixer), Kairam Ahmed Hamdan (AntiK-Tera,Tech)

REPORTERS

Mark Redacted (Reporter, Hoot), Rennie Saunders // Hunter, Sarah McMullan

PUSHERS

Adam Morgan, Aleksandr Ermakov, Andreas Monitzer, Andrew Curtis Hull White, Anthony Popowski, Ben Kramer, Benjamin "BlackLotos" Welke, Bill Ayakatubby, Chastity Blackwell, Christopher Lavery, Drew Smith, Eric Harris, Erin-Talia Skinner, Frank Benke, Frost Holliman, Jay Nunes, Jeremy Tidwell, John Milam, John Morton, Jonathan Korman, Justin Evans, Lester Ward, Liralen Li, Malcolm Edwards, Marc Armstrong, marcusuperbus, Mark the Encaffeinated ONE, mat-in, MaxMahem, Mike Burnett, Neil Coles, Nick Beach, Patrick Odell, Philippe "Sildoenfein" D., Richard Dansky, Richard Rossi, Robert Kukuchka, Sam Handwich, Shane Harsch, Simon Early, SlashAxl, Sören Kohlmeier

FIXERS

Aaron Enriquez, Aaron W. Brown, Adam Caverly, Alasdair Watson, anchor blue, Andrea Lo, Andrew Linstrom, Andrew Millar, Andrew Montgomery-Hurrell, Andrew Pearce, Aniket Schneider, Antoine Pempie, Big Andy B, Briam Allred, Carl Rigney, Carsten Friis Rundsten, Charles Lawrie, Charlie Owen, Chris Bekofske, Chris Cooper, Chris Czerniak, Christian A. Nord, Christian Taylor, Dana Kubilus, Dane Ralston-Bryce, Daniel Ley, Daniel Roanoke, Daniel Steadman, David Gallo, David Guilbault, Dennis McFaull, Derek Guder, Dillon Burke, Dina Wilkens, Dryn, Dylan Clayton,

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Glide through the most secure corporate computer networks // Crack the ICE that stands between you and that big score..

Drop your cyberlinked autoshotgun to the floor empty // Flick chrome blades from your fingers // Dive into the midst of that corporate response team to secure your team's exit..

Turn up your synth-leather jacket against the rain // Watch the back-alley entrance of the club for your target // Tail the armoured limo through the neon-bathed streets..

Cut power to the alarms // Drop over the wall into the compound // Slip past the auto-sentries // Locate and secure the prototype // Escape under the eyes of the rotor-drones..

Whatever your story, you are the extended assets of vast multinational corporations, operating in the criminal underground, and performing the tasks that those multinationals can't do -- or can't be seen to do. You are deniable, professional and -- ultimately -- disposable.

The Sprawl is a game of mission-based action in a gritty neon-and-chrome Cyberpunk future for an MC and 2-4 players.

- 🔌 Create your own Sprawl at the nexus of bleeding-edge technology & fragile humanity
- 🔌 Play hardbitten professionals caught between ruthless corporate interests
- 🔌 Win sometimes, lose sometimes and be double-crossed a lot

There are a thousand stories in *The Sprawl*. What's yours?