



Kathryn Flavin 2013

The Mystic Theurge

SKILL CHALLENGE HANDBOOK

Compatible With:



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My wife Amanda - a continual source of support and useful critique from something of an outsider perspective.

Quinn Murphy - close friend and blogger whose 4E skill challenge articles built the foundation of this manual both in principle and in form. See his writings on the subject at The At-Will Blog. (www.4eatwill.net)

Kait and Casey Peavler, Mike Hasko - always ready and mostly enthusiastic playtesters. Art also by Kaitlynn Peavler

Patreon Backers - Andrew Hauge, "Herman", Paul Stefko, Cheryl Trooskin-Zoller, Brent P. Newhall, Dev Purkayastha, Rob Kirchner, Bryant Durrell, Joshua Ramsey



INTRODUCTION

Skill Challenges in the well-known 'x successes before y failures' model was popularized in 4th edition Advanced Dungeons and Dragons (4E), though it originated in the Alternity RPG as a 'complex skill check.' It was later ported into the Star Wars: SAGA Edition RPG via the Galaxy of Intrigue sourcebook. Hacks of the system made their way into 3rd-party books for the Pathfinder RPG and circled around various internet forums. One of the most popular unofficial variations of the skill challenge was Stalker0's Obsidian Skill Challenge system, which claimed to fix some of the mathematical issues of the original and provided additional tweaks, bonuses and penalties.

Over the course of 4E, skill challenges were largely abandoned in all d20 sectors due to boring and awkward implementation. A few blogs, primarily Quinn Murphy's At-Will Blog, continued to support the skill challenge subsystem through the end of the edition's lifecycle. The D&D brand explicitly disavowed the mechanic with the announcement of what would become the fifth edition of the game. The Tales of the 13th Age Organized Play adventures for the 13th Age RPG carry on the skill challenge spirit in a less structured form and represent one of the last "official" vestiges of the skill challenge system, though some other third-party publishers (such as 4th Dimension Games) also have works on the subject that persist.

The intent of this manual is to provide a new evolution of the skill challenge idea that is streamlined and executes at the table in a sensible way. Some of the conceits of the system are derived directly from the 13th Age RPG and though they will make the most sense in that context, the goal is to present a skill challenge model that is as system-neutral as possible within the d20 family of games. No specific skills or numbers will be referenced so that game masters (GMs) of all d20 variants can apply the specific expressions of their systems as appropriate.

DCs will be defined as Easy, Moderate, or Hard as those terms are universal to d20 and simple to locate in a core rulebook. The occasional Very Hard, Nearly Impossible or Impossible may also appear and calculating the DC of such is at the GM's discretion. Nearly Impossible and Impossible here refer to DCs that can not be reached without several rounds of failure tasks first.

The Skill Challenge Concept

Skill challenges are structured roleplay, plain and simple. In the same way that hit points, attack rolls and defenses set a definite beginning, end and rhythm to a combat situation, the structure of a skill challenge places a definite beginning, end and rhythm to a non-combat situation. An encounter represented by a skill challenge could likely be talked out by the players if desired but the application of the structure creates certain advantages.

When 'players' are talked about in this book, it also includes the GM. The GM is simply a different and unique type of player at the table.

One way to explain these advantages is in showing two different types of players. The first set of players approach RPGs from the 'first-person' perspective; "I do x." They have little trouble with improvisation and interact with the game world as though they personally inhabit it. Mechanics are often a secondary though still real concern for 'first-person' players. Other players take a 'third-person' perspective; "My character does x." They tend to consider the mechanics of the game first and where their characters are strong before acting.

Grouping abstract people into types or categories is a handy explanatory tool, but avoid defining actual people into hard and fast groups. No one is perfectly consistent and every rule has its exceptions. In this case, switching between first-person and third-person perspectives is common.

Applying a skill challenge structure to a scene helps both types of player in different ways. The skill challenge has a discrete goal – convince someone of an opinion, overcome a physical obstacle, survive a looming danger, etc. Freeform roleplay can lose sight of the original intent sometimes, particularly when a bunch of 'first-person' players are involved. The resultant wandering can itself still be fun and move the game forward in many circumstances. In others, the result of a specific conflict is important and the skill challenge structure helps ensure that conflict is resolved in a satisfactory manner.

Another advantage to structure is the ability to bring all players together to contribute to the scene. Calling for skill checks with set DCs for concrete goals helps 'third-person' players find their bearings and choose a course of action. The propriety of first-person 'roleplaying' versus third-person 'roll-playing' continues to be the topic of many futile and vitriolic online discussions. All RPGs that use dice, cards, tokens or any type of randomizer or manipulative are doing some of each. Arguing that one is better than the other is silly and often the most enjoyment is had by doing both at the same time.

Scenes and Actions versus Tasks and Skills

The standard d20 + modifiers roll is the classic example of task resolution in RPGs. It determines whether a character's skill in a certain domain – feats of athletics, alertness, arcane knowledge, etc. – is sufficient to overcome a single specific obstacle. Hitting the orc with an axe is a task. Spotting the hidden kobold sniper is a task. There is one clear skill being tested in each case with an obvious method of approach.

A skill challenge is not a task. It encompasses an entire scene which will involve a number of smaller nested tasks. Furthermore, the scene makes a number of different skills viable from a number of different approaches. When facing a task, the question to ask is "what skill do I use?" When facing a skill challenge, the question becomes "what action do I take?" Skills are the unit-base of a task, actions are the unit-base of a scene.



A concrete example – picking a lock is a task. It challenges one very specific skill such as *Theivery* or *Disable Device*. The player need only roll the obvious skill to roll to determine success or failure. Opening a locked treasure chest, on the other hand, is a scene. In the process of getting the chest open player characters may take any number of actions toward the eventual goal of getting the contents of the chest. Such actions may include checking for traps, picking the lock, smashing the lock, deactivating wards, using magic to examine the chest or its contents and so on. Each action – "examine", "smash", "disable" – is then refined into a task and resolved using a skill check according to the rules of the system. One might decide on the general action "smash the lock " and express that action in a task by hitting the lock with a hammer (an athletics skill), magically slamming it into a wall (using an arcane skill) or carrying it some distance quietly before dropping it from a height (endurance, maybe stealth).

SUMMARY

- *The GM presents an obstacle via a skill challenge. (An important NPC is bleeding to death)*
- *The players determine actions, which become tasks. (The cleric chooses to address the injury himself rather than call for help or try to move the injured person to safety. How will he address the injury? Apply medicated bandages.)*
- *The task suggests a skill. (The cleric rolls Heal)*

Skill Challenge Philosophies

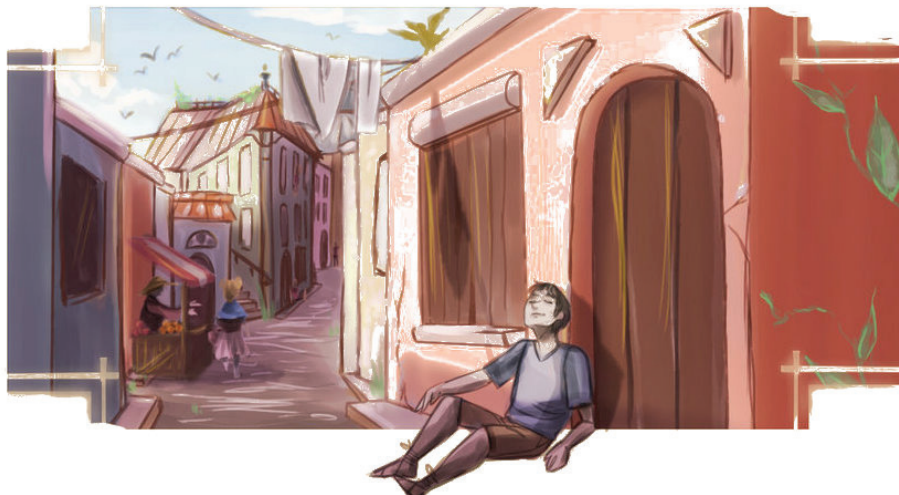
Before jumping into the mechanics of the skill challenge, there are several philosophies or attitudes to understand.

Rolls Follow Fiction - One of the major problems with the original 'x successes before y failures' skill challenge model was the glut of die rolling. The results of one or two die rolls would feel sufficient to model the story of the scenario, but the mechanics called for several more successes anyway. In this revised skill challenge model, it can be perfectly fine for a single roll to complete the challenge if the roll provides a satisfactory outcome.

Scenes Not Tasks - This has already been covered, but it's worth repeating. A good skill challenge allows for multiple routes of approach (actions) and isn't shut down by a single failure. The scene has room to grow, become complicated and encourage creative problem solving. If you as the GM can't think of at least two ways the other players could fail and still keep the game moving forward, you do not have a skill challenge. Expand the scope of your scene.

Voluntary Failures, Multiple Rewards - Roleplayers can be a fickle bunch, ignoring hooks the GM thinks are clever and stubbornly following up on the most unexpected bits of setting. A skill challenge should never trap players who aren't interested in pursuing it, but should open up to those who find it engaging. To do this, players are allowed a certain margin in which they can decide to either fail and try again in the hopes of a better outcome or succeed in part and move on to the next scene.

An Assumed Modicum of Success - d20 games are still mostly big heroes being heroic. Failure adds tension, suspense and consequences to the game which heighten experience. Abject failure tends to cause dead ends. Only the rare skill challenge should force player characters to fail completely. There is always a way forward.



CHALLENGECRAFT

Writing A Skill Challenge

The first step in writing a skill challenge is to define the stakes or the primary goal of the skill challenge. Are the players making a magic item and if so, what are its functions? Are they climbing a cliff face, and if so do they also need to be fast or stealthy? Are they in some kind of negotiation and if so, what do they want and what are they willing to give up? The GM might do this in advance for some circumstances, in others a good group discussion will go a long way.

Using the primary goal of the challenge, set at least two DC values describing degrees of success. The lowest DC must be 0. For example, if the challenge is just to get up a rocky cliff face with no further complications, the DCs might be as follows:

Primary Task: Find a safe way up the ocean cliff face.

Moderate - You make it up the cliff face with no difficulty.

0 - You make it up the cliff face with some cost to HP.

If additional time or approach constraints are in play, the DCs might look more like this:

Primary Task: Find a safe, fast and stealthy way up the ocean cliff face.

Hard - You make it up the cliff face with time to spare and without being noticed.

Moderate - You make it up the cliff face either with time to spare or without being noticed.

0 - You make it up the cliff face with some cost to HP. There are no guarantees as to time or stealth.

The next step is the most important. Define failures! Describe between 2 and 5 things that could go wrong or become complicated and how the primary task changes because of it. If you can't do that, you don't have a skill challenge. These new tasks are called failure actions. Each time a player engages with a failure action, she gets to reroll using a new task with a cumulative +2 bonus. The failure actions might also carry a penalty or the risk of a penalty. The penalty can be mechanical like loss of gold or hit points. It can also be narrative, such as creating a new threat or allowing an already stated threat to come to pass. Additionally determine the maximum number of rolls a skill challenge can incur by setting an allowable failures value. This is one tool used to keep the challenge from running overly long.

Failures can go in a specific story order (like those shown on the next page) or in whatever order seems appropriate. If the failures proceed in a set order, note them as numbers. If the failure tasks could go in any order, note them as letters. Also, the player characters might end up in a spot that needs a different failure story than the ones you write. If players want to suggest failure tasks and the suggestions are reasonable, add the new tasks to the written ones, but maintain the total number of allowed failure tasks.

Adding failures to the cliff-climbing challenge now:

Primary Task: Find a safe, fast and stealthy way up the ocean cliff face.

Format: 2 allowed failures

Hard - You make it up the cliff face with time to spare and without being noticed.

Moderate - You make it up the cliff face either with time to spare or without being noticed.

0 - You make it up the cliff face with some cost to HP. There are no guarantees as to time or stealth.

Failure 1 - Dodge the falling rocks that come loose from people climbing above you.

Failure 2 - Change from an awkward fall to a graceful dive before you hit the water.

The final steps are to decide on who is going to do the die rolling and which rolls count. First, does everyone need to roll or does one roll count for the group? To phrase it another way, does the challenge oppose the party as a whole or each individual member of the party? Mark each challenge as "everyone rolls" or "single roll."

Second, do the failures of the challenge mark steady progress towards a goal (called a progressive skill challenge) or might additional failures make the situation worse? (called a strategic skill challenge)? In a strategic skill challenge, each reroll supersedes the last so taking on another failure task can be a significant risk if the dice roll well early on. In a progressive skill challenge, the first roll is retained and called the "score." Each failure task either replaces the score or adds +2 to it if the roll doesn't match or exceed the current score. *Example: The opening roll of a certain skill challenge is 14, setting the score. The party chooses a failure task and rolls a 12. The 12 bumps the current score to 16 (14+2). The next failure task comes up 21, making the score 21 as well.*

Primary Task: Find a safe, fast and stealthy way up the ocean cliff face.

Format: 2 allowed failures; everyone rolls; strategic

Hard - You make it up the cliff face with time to spare and without being noticed.

Moderate - You make it up the cliff face either with time to spare or without being noticed.

0 - You make it up the cliff face with some cost to HP. There are no guarantees as to time or stealth.

Failure 1 - Dodge the falling rocks that come loose from people climbing above you.

Failure 2 - Change from an awkward fall to a graceful dive before you hit the water.

A skill challenge ends when everyone has passed a DC they are satisfied with OR have used up all the allowed failure tasks. This format gives the players a set of meaningful choices without requiring a lot of pre-planning or branching. A player who rolls a 7 on the initial climb of our example challenge here can choose to take the damage (fatigue?) and get to the top or try a different skill check with a +2 (perhaps acrobatics or jumping) to maintain pace. If that doesn't work, maybe having a good swim skill with a +4 can get things going again.

The most important part is that all skill rolls apply towards the DC ladder. This may feel strange. In the example challenge why should the boosted swim check count toward how fast the character climbs the cliff? Those are two different skills. The key is to remember that the roll is to resolve the scene, not just a task. If a player has fallen off the side of a cliff into the ocean and makes the Moderate or Hard swim roll so as to not take damage, great. If the player takes damage, then clearly that damage is from hitting the water, not climbing fast or hard. The damage source is flexible. A suspenseful thing has already happened either way for this scene, let's just skip to the point where everyone is at the top of the cliff. Rolling to climb again might be more realistic, but it feels monotonous and another fall would be tedious.

So how does the character who fell off the cliff end up getting to the top faster than one who didn't? Probably the best way up required starting from in the water though there could also be a secret underwater entry that no one (including the GM!) knew about before now.

On the subject of mechanics that might feel strange, the +2 bonus for each successive failure also seems to go against the prevailing skill challenge wisdom. Shouldn't there be a penalty to the next check for failing? By that logic, each time a character misses with an attack in combat, the next attack should be at a penalty. Such a rule would make combats drag out for hours! The +2 bonus is inspired by 13th Age's Escalation Die. The Escalation Die adds a steadily-incrementing bonus to player characters' attack rolls in combat to help keep combats short and ensure players get to use their unique abilities. In the same vein, the cumulative +2s for skill challenge failure help keep non-combat encounters from needlessly dragging out or becoming repetitive. We always assume a modicum of success.

Running the Skill Challenge

A properly written skill challenge needs very little extra attention to run. The rewards for success and consequences for failure are clear, the tasks to be performed are known and there should be no places where a skill roll doesn't map to an action that can be reasonably described.

The best advice for running the challenge is something that has been previously stated - a skill challenge is structured roleplay. The challenge does not need to go directly from skill roll to skill roll without interruption. Take a little time to describe how the scene has changed each time a roll is attempted. Two or three descriptions back and forth between the conflicting sides is a good guideline. If a character is out hunting for rare herbs and takes a failure task to fight a monster, play out the one-on-one fight with the combat rules or describe trading attacks back and forth with the player before having her roll another skill check to decide the outcome of the confrontation. In a social scenario, have a handful of dialogue between rolls to flesh out what each one means. Allowing a player to simply say "I roll Diplomacy" isn't going to hurt anything, but it misses the greater picture of what's happening. A little breathing room can make all the difference in creating a memorable encounter for the table.

Assigning XP

Systems that use XP will need to determine how much XP a skill challenge is worth. There are at least three schools of thought here. Different GMs will subscribe to different schools and sometimes multiple schools depending on the situation.

Encounter View looks at the skill challenge as another type of conflict with the game world, albeit shorter and not involving combat. By this perspective, a skill challenge is worth XP equal to a standard encounter of the party's level.

Difficulty View sees the skill challenge as being mechanically closer to a single monster in terms of number and quality of rolls necessary to succeed. By this perspective, a skill challenge is worth XP equal to a standard monster or enemy of the party's level.

Results View cares mostly about how well the party does at tackling the skill challenge. In a skill challenge to search an area for treasure, more found treasure equals more XP, greatly mimicking early D&D experience systems. A skill challenge to avoid or disarm traps might award XP for each trap disarmed but not avoided (or vice-versa). The failure tasks or the success DCs - or both - will have XP rewards associated with them.

GMs should feel free to award XP as it seems appropriate, perhaps even changing that decision on the fly as players steamroll or are stymied at length by various challenges.

SUMMARY

- *Define the scope of the skill challenge. Break the scope down into multiple degrees of success.*
- *Define interesting failure actions that the player characters can engage with if they are unhappy with the results of the starting roll. Aim to create failure actions that can be resolved into a variety of tasks that could use different skills. Use numbers to mark failures that happen in a certain order and letters to mark failure actions that could happen in any order.*
- *Choose a maximum number of failure actions to end the challenge.*
- *Choose whether one character rolls on behalf of the party or if each character rolls individually.*
- *Choose whether the challenge is strategic (each roll supersedes the last) or progressive (roll outcomes or "scores" continue to improve over time towards the end goal.)*
- *Assign XP (if applicable)*

ADDITIONAL SKILL CHALLENGE TECHNIQUES

Aiding and Abetting

For skill challenges where one roll represents the efforts of the whole party, the aiding rules of whatever d20 variant you happen to be using are fine. These rules usually boil down to 'make a skill check at a slightly lesser DC than the main one to add +2 to the main roll.'

Allowing aids can lead to a group stacking bonuses so high as to make the main die roll nearly meaningless. Adding a small risk to the aiding check such as a -1 if the helping roll fails) is one simple way to gently discourage haphazard aiding checks. That said, the GM should strongly consider just letting the helping checks pile up so long as each helping check is not the same type of roll as the main check. For example, imagine a player character crafting a magic sword. If each other player makes a crafting check to aid, the +8 bonus to the main roll can feel unsatisfying because it simply lowers the effective DC without really saying anything about the situation. On the other hand, now imagine one helping player uses endurance to keep shuttling water from the nearby well to the forge, another player uses a knowledge check to keep the fire at a constant temperature, a third uses intimidation to keep other NPCs out of the crafter's area and a fourth uses arcana to set up a ritual that helps funnel magic into the sword. That is a complete scene. Even if the main crafter now needs a paltry 3 or better on a d20 to craft the sword, four players had to pass all sorts of different skill checks to make the sword instead of one. The +8, and thus the simple final skill check, are appropriately justified.



Some players will attempt to leverage their best skills and statistics at all times to accomplish goals. While it can be frustrating to the GM to deal with her DCs always being circumvented, consider what the use of various skills means in the greater context of the setting to create new challenges. Returning to the sword-forging scene, imagine a helping character uses a skill check to steal quality components for the sword. What does that suggest going forward? Are there more guards out because "crime is on the rise?" Use a player's skill choice to make the world around her respond. A player with a high thievery check wants to steal things and hear or create stories about great thefts. Provide that.

Changing Leads

A skill challenge for which one roll covers the entire party does not necessarily need the same character making all the rolls. If another character is better suited to taking the lead role because of her skillset, that is absolutely acceptable. Certain skill challenges may incur a cost for changing leads, but these are the exception rather than the rule.

Falling Out of a Challenge

The skill challenge system described here occasionally faces criticism for being too safe. There doesn't appear to be any real danger since even the worst possible outcome is still a success to one extent or another. How about situations where complete failure is a real option that doesn't stop the story? Just because you didn't get the neighboring regent's assistance doesn't mean you can't go to war anyway.

For skill challenges that could be failed completely without stopping the plot, there can be a chance of "falling out" of the challenge. If a roll fails the lowest non-zero DC by more than 10 OR comes up a natural 1, that character is out of the challenge.

Extended Skill Challenges

Some situations will seem like they call for several skill challenges in succession, such as navigating a trap-filled dungeon. While that approach isn't going to break anything, it is usually better to instead extend the scope of the first challenge to include all successive challenges as phases of the overall scene. This is accomplished by creating a single skill challenge with a mathematically impossible end DC and relying on the failure task bonuses to move the DC into proper reach. At certain threshold DCs, the party will enter a new phase of the challenge with new failure tasks. If all of the failure tasks for any individual phase are used up, the challenge ends with whatever results have been earned. Results that move to new phases are ignored for the purposes of ending the challenge.

Utilizing Time

Roleplayers often learn that time in a game is advanced in a moment-to-moment linear chronology, mostly from the way combat scenarios are run. Since a skill challenge covers an entire scene, however, a step-by-step advancement of time is not always the best option. Skips and flashbacks are also vital tools to creating and running an engaging skill challenge.

A skip moves the challenge forward in time through unimportant bits to the crucial points of the encounter. Any time a group travels overland and rolls to check for a random encounter that day, they have executed a skip. The hours and hours of walking aren't worth playing out, only the possibility of that all-important ambush. Skips aren't limited to long periods of time, though. A rogue trying to sell off stolen goods to a fence might have a couple minutes of back-and-forth with the fence about previous sales, the condition of the item(s) in question and possible markets for it.



There might even be numbers argued about the transaction with or without dice rolled. It can be fun to play out all that arguing, but to save time and keep the game's momentum up the roll resolving the negotiation can skip right to the moment where the rogue either gets what she wants for the item(s) or has to settle for a lesser amount.

The flashback is the opposite of the skip. It moves time backward to a moment prior to the assumed 'current' time and looks at something done in the past. The flashback can be less intuitive than the skip but also carry more power. The beauty is that it allows a character to have previously set up some sort of beneficial conditions without the player having to actually work it all out in advance. It makes the character smarter than the player. Imagine a ranger being chased on horseback through an open field. Unable to simply outspeed the pursuers, the ranger flashes back to the previous evening and describes where he laid down caltrops and a large net in the field should something go wrong the next day. Now he can roll some type of tactics check to succeed at placing the traps in locations where his pursuers will run into them or a bluff or ride check to lead his pursuers into the traps personally. A flashback need not even be intentional on the character's part. Imagine a cleric having a hard time working out a deal with a stubborn landowner asking "Could I have maybe given a blessing to some random kid this morning who turns out to be this landowner's daughter and she recognizes me?" One religion or perception-based check later, the cleric now has a new rapport with the landowner that the character didn't expect. As a bonus, the GM has a new NPC to whom the cleric owes a favor!

Unless the game is intended to have a lot of espionage/counter-espionage or maybe heavy divine intercession, constant flashbacks might come across a little forced. Limiting this sort of temporal maneuver to once per 3-4 hours of table time still allows smart characters to show off and new story elements to be introduced reasonably.



SKILL CHALLENGE EXAMPLES

SOCIAL SKILL CHALLENGES

Entertain the Crowd

Primary Task: Sing, perform illusions, tell jokes - whatever it is you do best.

Prerequisite: A place where you can be easily seen by many, preferably with some height

Format: 2 allowed failures; single roll; strategic

Hard - The crowd is enthralled with your performance. You can keep them enthralled for a long time or collect enough money to eat well for a week.

Moderate - The crowd is pleased with your performance. You can keep them enthralled for a short time or collect enough money to eat well for a night.

O - The crowd rejects you. If you continue performing you will be chased away and pelted with rocks, mushy fruit or drinking glasses.

Failure A - Veer into local topics such as politics, history, heroes and the like. If you do not pass at least an Easy DC, you do not get to try again.

Failure B - Get a volunteer from the audience. Look for someone gullible, attractive or otherwise useful to your performance. Make that person the star instead.

Suggested Helping Tasks: be a plant in the audience, supply props or sound effects, pickpocket

Mediate a Dispute (personal scale)

Primary Task: Set terms amenable to both sides of a small dispute.

Prerequisite: Both sides must deem you fit as a neutral arbiter.

Format: 3 allowed failures; single roll; strategic

Very Hard - The terms are agreed upon and upheld by both sides for the foreseeable future.

Hard - The terms are agreed upon by both sides, but one will renege at the first opportunity.

Moderate - The terms are agreed upon but both will renege, leading to hostility in the future.

O - The negotiation degrades into open hostilities.

Failure A - Scold someone. Take one of the two sides away from the bargaining table and give them a piece of your mind. If this side were going to give you a gift for helping mediate, they're not now.

Failure B - Create rapport. Use your insight to help each side see the other's point of view. If you succeed, the parties set terms they like which might not at all be in your best interest.

Failure C - Take a break. Bring in entertainment or a distraction until cooler heads prevail. This option uses up time towards a more pressing matter.

Failure D - Offer payment. Add in something of value to one side's terms to make the deal even more equitable. Reroll the primary task.

Suggested Helping Tasks: investigate the history of the dispute, bring in additional arbiters

SOCIAL SKILL CHALLENGES

Mediate a Dispute (political scale)

Primary Task: Convince both sides to assent to you and your party as arbiters.

Prerequisite: Your party must have some kind of connection to both sides of the dispute.

Format: 6 allowed failures; single roll; progressive

Impossible - The terms are agreed upon and upheld by both sides for the foreseeable future.

Nearly Impossible - The terms are agreed upon by both sides, but one will renege at a critical moment sometime in the future.

Very Hard - You put the two sides in a sufficiently trustful mood to carry on. Proceed to Phase 3

Hard - You get everyone together in one place to hold talks. Proceed to Phase 2.

0 - The negotiation degrades into open hostilities.

Phase 1 – Getting To The Table

Failure A - Throw a party. Find the best possible food and entertainment to lure the two opposing sides into meeting. The tab is all yours.

Failure B - Create a crisis. Falsify an emergency such that each side arrives at a designated point, then lock the doors.

Phase 2 – Creating Trust

Failure A - Create rapport. Use your insight to help each side see the other's point of view. If you choose to end the challenge here, the parties set terms they like which might not at all be in your best interest.

Failure B - Silence rabblers. Get people out of the way who would stand to benefit from continuing conflict.

Phase 3 – Down To Brass Tacks

Failure A - Scold someone. Take one of the two sides away from the bargaining table and give them a piece of your mind. If this side were going to give you a gift for helping mediate, they're not now.

Failure B - Appeal to history. Show previous instances of similar disputes or prior treaties between the two sides. This will use up time towards some other pressing goal you have.

Failure C - Sweeten the pot. Introduce an option or resource not available to either side previously that you can bring in to make things even. The outlay must put a serious dent in your resources or the resources of someone who trusts you.

Suggested Helping Tasks: investigate the history of the dispute, bring in additional arbiters

(see Extended Skill Challenges on pg. 11 for more information on this challenge)

SOCIAL SKILL CHALLENGES

Persuade Another (against another player character)

Primary Task: Convince someone to do something you want her to do.

Prerequisite: You need to be able to speak to this person in private.

Format: 1 allowed failure; single roll; progressive

Will Save/Will Defense/Mental Defense - The player will tell you what you need to do or say to get her character to go along with you (if possible).

O - You either get no useful reply or information that is wrong in a crucial way.

Failure A - Give ground. Lighten up on your demands and roll the primary task again.

Failure B - Bribe. If you succeed, the other player can demand coin or other compensation alongside whatever else she wants to go along with you. Roll the primary task again.

Failure C - Threaten or Flatter. Make a threat or tell the person something you appreciate about her. Roll the primary task again.

Suggested Helping Tasks: n/a

Persuade Another (against a non-player character)

Primary Task: Convince someone to do something you want her to do.

Prerequisite: You need to be able to speak to this person in private.

Format: 2 allowed failures; single roll; progressive

Will Save/Will Defense/Mental Defense/Moderate DC - The person is convinced of your point, though the GM might require you to say or do something else first.

O - You do not get your point across to your listener.

Failure A - Give ground. Lighten up on your demands and roll the primary task again.

Failure B - Bribe. Spend some coin that would be impressive to your listener. Roll the primary task again.

Failure C - Threaten or Flatter. Make a threat or tell the person something you appreciate about her. Roll the primary task again.

Suggested Helping Tasks: n/a



SOCIAL SKILL CHALLENGES

Appease The Spirits

Primary Task: Convince guardian spirits that you are worthy to pass through or receive aid.

Prerequisite: n/a

Format: 2 allowed failures; single roll; progressive

Hard - The spirits are pleased and you get what you ask for.

Moderate - The spirits are satisfied but offer only the minimum assistance or knowledge.

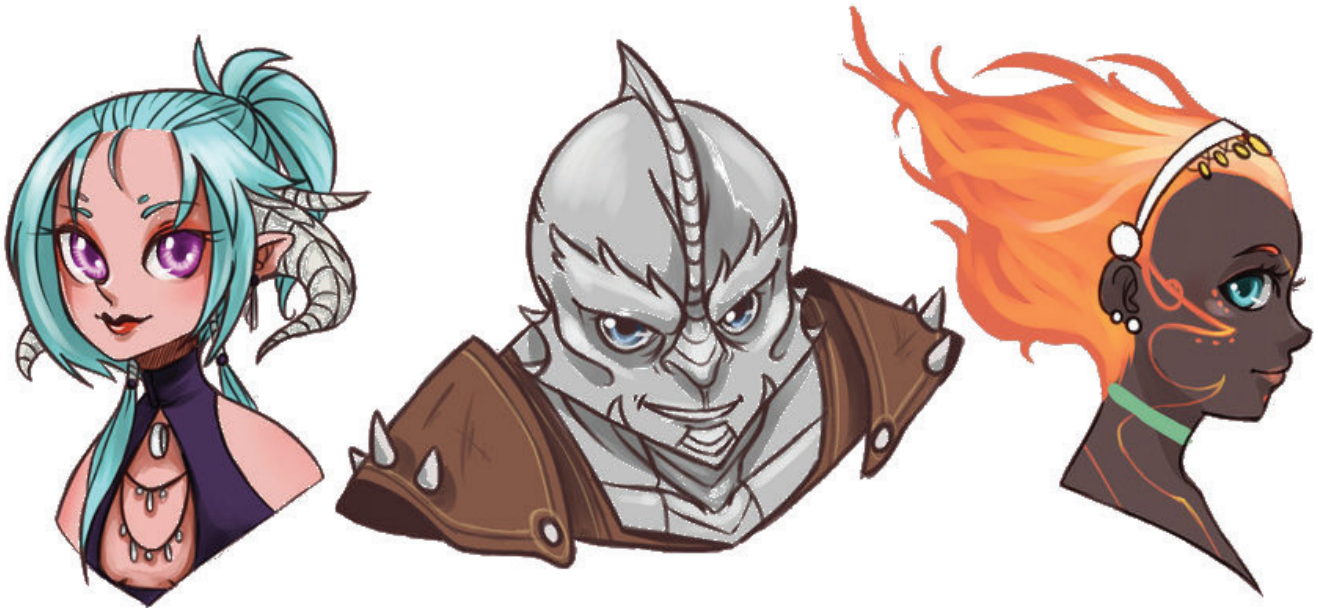
0 - The spirits are offended. They attack you or offer false assistance that will probably put you in trouble later.

Failure A - Give a gift. Gold will probably not do, but you could flash back to an earlier scene where you bought something that would be of value to them in preparation.

Failure B - Show off your strength, skill or knowledge. It's a desperate move and resets the current highest roll value to whatever you get with this task.

Failure C - Be of the right lineage. Explain how you are related to the spirits themselves or other heroes the spirits respect. If you do not pass an Easy DC, you instead cite a traitor or coward in your lineage and the challenge ends immediately as though you had rolled a 0.

Failure D - Submit to a mind meld. Concentrate and allow the spirits to see into your soul. If you roll an odd number, tell the GM something about yourself you did not intend the spirits to learn. Suggested Helping Tasks: intuit what the spirits might want to hear, use proper cultural protocol



ECONOMIC SKILL CHALLENGES

Craft Small Item (weapons, armor, scrolls, potions, etc)

Primary Task: Create a personal-use item from raw materials.

Prerequisite: Spend the necessary components (gold, XP, mundane goods, etc)

Format: 3 allowed failures; single roll; strategic

Craft DC + 10 - Your product is mechanically better (to-hit, damage, healing, etc) than normal.

Craft DC + 5 - You get 25% of your spent components back due to efficiency.

Craft DC - You make the intended product.

0 - You have wasted the consumables and no useful product is made.

Failure A - Lower your expectations. Your product will be of slightly less mechanical quality (to-hit, damage, healing, etc) than normal. It might also have a limitation, quirk or side effect that is undesirable but not debilitating. Reroll the primary task and ignore the Craft DC + 10 result if you get it. This failure can be utilized twice.

Failure B - Use more resources. Spend 10% more on the item than you intended. You may have to sell or trade something else you own quickly and at a loss to get resources in time. Roll the primary task again.

Failure C - Take additional time. The DM will make good on a previous threat or introduce a new one. She may also ask you to describe something you don't want to see happen. Answer truthfully. Roll the primary task again.

Failure D - Recruit Help. Find another craftsman to help you. You may need to convince her to help you for free or pay her for her work.

Suggested Helping Tasks: operate equipment, research construction plans, ensure quiet space

Scavenge Supplies

Primary Task: Gather supplies from nature to create a consumable item of your level or lower.

Prerequisite: You must not have collected materials from this general area in the recent past.

Format: 2 allowed failures; single roll; strategic

Craft DC + 10 - You make two of the desired product.

Craft DC + 5 - Your product is mechanically better (to-hit, damage, healing, etc) than normal.

Craft DC - You make the intended product.

0 - You can not make the product you want from this location.

Failures A, B and C - (as Craft Small Item above)

Failure D - Unintended Effect. For magic items only. Your item has a limitation, quirk or side effect that is undesirable but not debilitating.

Suggested Helping Tasks: operate equipment, research construction plans, ensure quiet space



ECONOMIC SKILL CHALLENGES

Haggle for Goods (absolute tracking of gold and item costs)

Primary Task: Convince a vendor to let items go at a deep discount

Prerequisite: Spend half of the normal cost of the items to initiate this challenge

Format: 3 allowed failures; single roll; strategic

Hard - The vendor accepts your offer.

O - The vendor rejects your offer. You may pay the remainder of the items' cost or have your money returned to you.

Failure A - Search out a less reputable vendor. There's a good chance your items have been stolen and someone might come looking for them.

Failure B - Give in a little. Pay an additional 20% of the total item cost and roll the primary task again. This failure can be utilized twice.

Failure C - Assess which of the vendor's goods might be a little less than perfect. The items you purchase come up a little short on attack bonus, HP restored or other mechanical measurement.

Failure D - Perform a service. Perform some sort of time-consuming labor for the vendor such as looking for raw material or delivering previous orders quickly.

Suggested Helping Tasks: direct other shoppers to this vendor, visibly engage with a competitor

Haggle for Goods (abstract tracking of gold and item costs)

Primary Task: Convince a vendor to let items go at a deep discount

Prerequisite: You must not have haggled over the same type of item since last receiving income

Format: 3 allowed failures; single roll; strategic

Hard - The vendor gives you all of the items you desire.

Moderate - The vendor gives you most of the items you desire.

Easy - The vendor gives a few of the items you desire.

O - The vendor rejects your offer.

Failure A - Search out a less reputable vendor. There's a good chance your items have been stolen and someone might come looking for them.

Failure B - Give in a little. Offer a unique item you're carrying or convince the vendor one of your items is appropriately valuable and offer that instead.

Failure C - Assess which of the vendor's goods might be a little less than perfect. The items you purchase come up a little short on attack bonus, HP restored or other mechanical measurement.

Failure D - Perform a service. Perform some sort of time-consuming labor for the vendor such as looking for raw material or delivering previous orders quickly.

Suggested Helping Tasks: direct other shoppers to this vendor, visibly engage with a competitor

HIGH-ACTION SKILL CHALLENGES



Chase Sequence (as the quarry)

Primary Task - Find the fastest route out of your pursuers' grasp.

Format: 3 allowed failures; single roll; progressive

Very Hard - You escape cleanly to a safe location

Hard - You escape most pursuers, but are forced to fight a few in a secluded place

0 - You are captured and taken to a prison, dungeon or similar detention facility.

Failure A - Split up and take separate routes. Each character is now on her own and must succeed individually.

Failure B - Create a diversion or trap to stall pursuers. If your roll is odd, you cause collateral damage (a sacred grove, a merchant's stall, someone's house, etc); your victim will catch up to you eventually.

Failure C - Use a more strenuous route involving a lot of climbing, jumping or balancing. If you do not meet at least a Moderate DC, you take damage from fatigue or a minor injury.

Failure D - Choose a different safe location on the fly. Your pursuers will either ransack your original safe location or endanger some of your friends to try to lure you out.

Suggested Helping Tasks: yell for help, use spells or ranged weapons, look for scapegoats

HIGH-ACTION SKILL CHALLENGES

Chase Sequence (as the pursuit)

Primary Task - Trap desired fugitives before they get away beyond your reach.

Format: 2 allowed failures; single roll; strategic

Very Hard - You trap your quarry in a helpless situation and they give up.

Hard - You trap your quarry in a dangerous situation but they fight back.

O - Your quarry escapes you.

Failure A - Split up and take separate routes. Each character is now on her own and must succeed individually.

Failure B - Create a diversion or trap to stall your quarry. If your roll is odd, you cause collateral damage (a sacred grove, a merchant's stall, someone's house, etc); your victim will catch up to you eventually.

Failure C - Use a more strenuous route involving a lot of climbing, jumping or balancing. If you do not meet at least a Moderate DC, you take damage from fatigue or a minor injury.

Failure D - Choose a different safe location on the fly. Your pursuers will either ransack your original safe location or endanger some of your friends to try to lure you out.

Suggested Helping Tasks: yell for help, use spells or ranged weapons, get a better vantage point

Barfight

Primary Task: Overpower a number of inebriated foes.

Prerequisite: Incite someone to violence

Format: 2 allowed failures; single roll; strategic

Moderate - Your opponents lie on the ground dead or incapacitated.

O - You must flee or be captured, probably by local law enforcement.

Failure A - Use furniture or servingware in your defense and roll the primary task again. You now owe the establishment's owner some money.

Failure B - Take it outside. Convince your opponents to follow you out of the establishment. The long fight costs you a few HP.

Failure C - Utilize excessive force. Add your normal to-hit bonus to your next check instead of +2 to represent the use of lethal weaponry. Roll the primary task again. In many places you're now a criminal. Your victims' friends and family might want revenge.

Failure D - Drag your friends into it, perhaps with words or by using one of them as a shield. All of your associates in the establishment must now navigate the challenge individually.

Suggested Helping Tasks: rally onlookers, join the fray, create a distraction, employ chicanery

HIGH-ACTION SKILL CHALLENGES

Don't Get Boarded!

Primary Task: Keep pirates, brigands, buccaneers or other undesirables off your boat.

Prerequisite: You must have a boat with some defensive capabilities.

Format: 2 allowed failures; single roll; progressive

Very Hard - You repel the attack successfully.

Hard - One small group of hostiles makes it onto your boat. Fight them.

0 - You get outmaneuvered, boarded and captured.

Failure A - Fire the big guns. Cannons, harpoons, specially-trained sorcerers - smoke 'em if you've got 'em. If you roll a 5 or less, you damage your own ship and are captured.

Failure B - Control the waters. Use a spell that you can not cast at-will to wield the very sea as your defense.

Failure C - Utilize a second form of motion. If you're sailing, start rowing. If you're rowing, hoist the sails. The person who made the initial skill check can not make this one.

Suggested Helping Tasks: give the crew orders, use two oars to free up others, fire small arms



HIGH-ACTION SKILL CHALLENGES



Seal A Portal

Primary Task: Close a portal to some other location or plane of existence.

Prerequisite: Must have the ability to manipulate magic

Format: 2 allowed failures; single roll; strategic

Moderate - The portal closes permanently and safely.

0 - You and your associates must each make an Easy save or skill check to avoid being drawn into the portal. The portal then closes permanently.

Failure 1 - Remove supports or impediments. Find objects that are sustaining the portal or hindering your work and get rid of them..

Failure 2 - Brace for the worst. Tie everyone to something heavy or find/create solid cover.

Suggested Helping Tasks: read inscribed sigils, channel energy, block entry with something big

Shoot the Rapids

Primary Task: Sail, paddle or surf through turbulent waters and arrive in one piece.

Prerequisite: You must have a seaworthy craft.

Format: 4 allowed failures; single roll; progressive

Very Hard - You arrive at your destination in whatever condition you've held together.

Hard - You arrive somewhere close to but not quite at your destination. You will lose time getting there.

0 - You make a crucial mistake and the party is separated into 2-3 groups.

Failure A - Capsize. Try to find and grab everything you had in the craft. If you fail a Moderate DC on this check, you lose an important piece of gear or equipment.

Failure B - Control the waters. Use a spell that you can not cast at-will to counteract a powerful current at just the right time.

Failure C - Utilize a second form of motion. If you're sailing, start paddling. If you're canoeing, try to catch the wind. The person who made the initial skill check can not make this one.

Failure D - Go for broke. Try using the whirlpools and eddies to your benefit instead of dodging them. You can not choose the Hard DC result on this roll.

Suggested Helping Tasks: navigate by landmarks or stars, use two oars to free up other allies

INVESTIGATIVE SKILL CHALLENGES

Hunt Down the Crime Boss

Primary Task: Surprise the crime boss in his or her secure location.

Prerequisite: n/a

Format: 8 allowed failures; single roll; progressive

Impossible - You catch the crime boss at an embarrassing or vulnerable moment.

Nearly Impossible - You and the crime boss meet on equal ground.

Very Hard - You locate the crime boss' secure location. Proceed to Phase 3

Hard - You find an important clue as to where the crime boss hides out. Proceed to Phase 2.

0 - You are caught by the crime boss in an ambush. You can be captured or fight your way out.

Phase 1 – No Good Leads

Failure A - Grease some palms. Spend some gold to bribe an employee of low loyalty or buy information from a shady broker.

Failure B - Take a wild guess. Follow your best instinct as to where a clue might turn up. If you do not pass at least a Moderate DC, you must hand the Lead off to someone else.

Failure C - Pretend to be a rival. Put on a show that might draw the attention of the boss' minions. If you do not pass at least a Moderate DC, you are mistaken by a band of do-gooders for the boss' minions.

Phase 2 – Hot On The Trail

Failure A - Shake down a crony for information. If you consider yourself a hero, give up the Lead and describe whether or not your actions violate your beliefs. If you consider yourself an anti-hero or villain, you gain a +2 morale bonus on your next check.

Failure B - Start a fight somewhere public. Ask questions of your defeated enemies.

Failure C - Tail a known associate of the crime boss. if you do not beat the Very Hard DC by at least 3, you must choose to go on alone or try another route.

Phase 3 – Keep Your Enemies Closer

Failure A - Infiltrate the location. Sneak through air vents, climb rooftops, etc. You can not choose the Nearly Impossible option for this roll.

Failure B - Infiltrate the organization. Try to pass yourself off as one of the boss' underlings. You may have to leave behind your best weapons, magic items or armor.

Suggested Helping Tasks: chat up the locals, find infiltration gear, create a distraction

(see Extended Skill Challenges on pg. 11 for more information on this challenge)

INVESTIGATIVE SKILL CHALLENGES



Gather Intelligence

Primary Task: Research or scope out a person, location, item or situation.

Prerequisite: You must know what information you want specifically. (Use a basic skill check for generic "what do I find out?" instances)

Format: 1 allowed failure; single roll; progressive

Very Hard - You get the information you seek and then some.

Hard - You get the information you seek.

Moderate - You don't quite find out everything you want to know.

0 - You either get no useful information or information that is wrong in a crucial

way.

Failure A - Call in a favor. If your contact doesn't owe you, you now owe her.

Failure B - Bribe. Throw around a little coin to get into a better location.

Failure C - Meet with opposition. A fight erupts. You may make a skill check as normal to keep going or enter full combat to automatically get the information you want at the end .

Suggested Helping Tasks: case a different locale, make a disguise, get hired as short-term help

Break The Ward

Primary Task: Defeat a magical barrier preventing you from getting to your destination.

Prerequisite: Must have the ability to manipulate magic

Format: 2 allowed failures; single roll; strategic

Hard - The ward breaks with no further complication.

Moderate - The ward wavers; you can get through but it will stop you again on the way back.

0 - The ward breaks, triggering an alarm. They know you're coming now.

Failure A - Trigger a trap. Now and after each additional failure, the ward attacks you and your associates with a level-appropriate spell. Reroll the primary task.

Failure B - Pull a convenient plot device from your backpack. Flash back to a scene where you grabbed something useful to this situation 'just in case.'

Failure C - Go ballistic. Spend a spell that requires a daily refresh and reroll the primary task with a +4 boost instead of +2.

Suggested Helping Tasks: recall lore about the ward, channel energy, attack it with weapons

INVESTIGATIVE SKILL CHALLENGES

Navigate the Maze (long)

Primary Task: Make it through a dangerous, labyrinthine dungeon.

Prerequisite: n/a

Format: 8 allowed failures; single roll; progressive

Impossible - You get through to the end of the dungeon without alerting anyone ahead of you.

Nearly Impossible - You get through to the end of the dungeon but they know you're coming.

Very Hard - You spot, disarm or dodge the remaining traps. Proceed to Phase 3

Hard - You see through the illusions of the first section. Proceed to Phase 2.

O - You succumb to the Looming Threat of the section and awaken later in grave danger.

Phase 1 – Illusory Terrain (Looming Threat – Disorientation and Starvation)

Failure A - Hustle. Push yourself and your team to move faster. Leave behind some gear or take some damage.

Failure B - Sense Arcana. Figure out if anything here is magical somehow. You also locate a cursed item no matter what else happens.

Failure C - Plow Through. Try to make a shortcut by spell or weapon. You can not take the Nearly Impossible option on this roll.

Phase 2 – Gauntlet of Traps (Looming Threat – Giant Pit Trap)

Failure - You fail to spot, disarm or dodge a trap and it makes an attack against you. Reroll the primary task. You may choose this failure up to three times. The trap attacks several people the second time and everyone the third time.

Phase 3 – The Horror Show (Looming Threat – Fear or Despair)

Failure 1 - Tune out the images and sounds around you. Sing a hymn, stare only straight ahead, whatever you need to do. If your roll is odd, you fail to see a useful treasure as you pass by.

Failure 2 - Give in to your anger. Draw resolve from the thought of ending whatever foul beings did this. You get a +1 to hit in the next battle, but -2 to any save or defense against mind-altering attacks.

Suggested Helping Tasks: examine stonework, recall history of the place, scout ahead stealthily

(see Extended Skill Challenges on pg. 11 for more information on this challenge)

INVESTIGATIVE SKILL CHALLENGES

Navigate the Maze (short)

Primary Task: Make it through a dangerous, labyrinthine dungeon.

Prerequisite: n/a

Format: 3 allowed failures; single roll; progressive

Very Hard - You get through to the end of the dungeon without alerting anyone ahead of you.

Hard - You get through to the end of the dungeon but they know you're coming.

O - You succumb to hunger, disorientation or a deadly trap and awaken later in grave danger.

Failure A - Hustle. Push yourself and your team to move faster. Leave behind some gear or take some damage.

Failure B - Sense Arcana. Figure out if anything here is magical somehow. You also locate a cursed item no matter what else happens.

Failure C - You fail to spot, disarm or dodge a trap and it makes an attack against you. Reroll the primary task.

Suggested Helping Tasks: examine stonework, recall history of the place, scout ahead stealthily

Infiltrate A Base

Primary Task: Enter a secure location without alerting anyone or leaving a trail.

Prerequisite:

Format: 2 allowed failures; single roll; progressive

Very Hard - You get in and have free movement within the base.

Hard - You get in without being noticed but you're not sure where you are.

Moderate - You get in without being noticed but you're quickly spotted by a patrol once inside.

O - You put the base on high alert. Stealth is useless from this point forward.

Failure A - Split up and go in separate ways. Each character is now responsible for her own success. Reroll the primary check.

Failure B - Create a diversion. Do something to distract guards. (also "Assassination. Silently end one or more guards.") If you fail an Easy check, the base goes on high alert and the skill challenge ends immediately.

Failure C - Use a difficult mode of entry, such as tunneling or squeezing into a very tight space. If you do not pass at least a Moderate DC, you take damage from your efforts..

Suggested Helping Tasks: find blueprints, bribe off-duty guards, case the joint beforehand

SKILL CHALLENGE



ACTUAL PLAY

SKILL CHALLENGE ACTUAL PLAY EXAMPLES

Disable the Machine!

Primary Task: Turn off the crazy doomsday contraption.

Prerequisite: n/a.

Format: 3 allowed failures; single roll; strategic

30 - You stop the machine from completing its preparations.

0 - The machine looses its horrible death ray towards the target you're trying to save.

Failure A - Smash something. You will get no further information about the machine or its origins once you attempt this task.

Failure B - Overload the circuitry. Provide a powerful electrical jolt or try rerouting things. On an odd roll, the machine makes an electrical attack against you at +8 vs. AC for 2d8 damage.

Failure C - Reprogram the machine. If you get a total of 25 or better on this roll, you can end the challenge immediately and roll a d4. On a 3-4, the ray fires but doesn't hit anything important. On a 1-2, the ray fires and hits something less important than the original target.

Suggested Helping Tasks: n/a

Tak'tha, Rün and Reese are in a research laboratory. An ominous machine is about to do something that will cause untold suffering to innocent people.

DM: Alright, who's first?

Reese: This has to have a switch or a power supply or a button somewhere I can locate. Thievery? Use Magic Device?

DM: I'll take Use Magic Device.

Reese: OK. I can live with that. <dice roll> 24.

DM: 24 won't stop the machine. OK, so you find a power supply all right, but it's got a failsafe on it. If the device is powered off in the middle of the firing sequence, it triggers the blast with whatever happens to be charged already.

Reese: Who does something like that?

DM: Really desperate people.

Reese: Tak'tha, maybe you can overload that circuit so we can just yank this thing?



REESE

SKILL CHALLENGE ACTUAL PLAY EXAMPLES

Tak'tha: I'll try. Shocking Grasp and Arcana coming right up.

DM: This is your first failure task, so remember to add +2. Also, this is a strategic challenge, not a progressive challenge. Only the last roll counts.



Tak'tha: Roger that. <dice roll> 17, with the +2. Guess I'm taking feedback.

DM: Yup. <dice roll> How's a 15 to your AC?

Tak'tha: I've got 16. No damage.

DM: Good save! You reverse the polarities just in time.

Reese: FOR SCIENCE!

Rün: I've had it with this machine. I'm going to hit with my hammer.

TAK'THA

Reese: Seriously? And lose any information we might be able to get out of it? Let me try to reprogram it. <rolls dice> With a +4 for the second failure task... 26. I'm rolling well tonight!

DM: 26 still isn't enough to stop the blast but you could take the d4 option if you want and hope it doesn't hit anything vital.

Reese: I'm ok with that.

Tak'tha: I'm not! What if it hits our base instead? Or, I don't know, the portal to the Astral Sea we're trying to keep open!??

Rün: Seriously. We're done here. Hammer time.

Reese: Wait!!

Rün: +6... <dice roll> Nat 20! 34 total!

DM: You wreckt it something fierce. The firing sequence halts.

Rün: Told ya.



RÜN

SKILL CHALLENGE ACTUAL PLAY EXAMPLES

Fortify The Perimeter!

Primary Task: Stop as many squads of invaders as possible from entering this building.

Prerequisite: n/a.

Format: 2 allowed failures; single roll; progressive

25 - You stop three squads.

20 - You stop two squads.

15 - You stop one squad.

0 - Your design backfires on you and one squad takes advantage of it. You will have to stop them from leaving rather than entering. The other two may also get in.

Failure A - Plant weapons caches. You will need to find someone who can sell you a lot of weapons quickly and quietly first. It may cost you.

Failure B - Create obstructions. If you roll less than a natural 5 while doing this, you accidentally destroy something important in the process.

Fhered, Aric and Rhaberd and trying to shore up the defenses of a bank vault knowing several teams of would-be robbers are on their way.

DM: Alright, who's first?

Aric: I'll go. I start by shoring up the loose ends of the place - sealing windows, fixing loose hinges and locks, sealing up the vents, etc.

DM: That sounds like a perception check to me. You need to find all the little places where security is loose. OK?

Aric: Absolutely. Let's do it. <dice roll> 17 total.

DM: Cool. You start on that and notice a couple of the windows have been shimmed. Looks like someone's already been here and gotten started.

Aric: Great. <rolls eyes> Well, one down. So what next - weapons or obstructions?

Fhered: Weapons. I don't want to risk doing any more damage than we absolutely have to and I've got some extra cash. Streetwise to find a 24-hour arms dealer?

DM: Because of course nothing could go wrong with that. <smiles>

SKILL CHALLENGE ACTUAL PLAY EXAMPLES

Fhered: Of course. Nothing. <chuckles> <dice roll> Ugh. 10. Actually, no. 10 plus the 2 for this being the first failure task is 12.

DM: So you find a guy. Name's Saloni. Everyone else calls him Shady Sal. He'll sell you what you need for 200 gold.

Fhered: 200 gold! Can't I talk him down any?

DM: You rolled a 12. This was not your finest hour. If you don't want to pay the 200 gold, he's got some stuff for 80 but even he admits it's hot.

Fhered: No, no, 200 is fine.

DM: This is a progressive challenge, so your total will always go up. 12 is less than the original 17 Aric rolled, bringing your total to 19.

Fhered: Still not enough.

Rhaberd: Guess I'm up for the obstructions. I'm a pretty strong guy, I'm going to use Athletics to rearrange the heavy stuff, set up walls, the whole thing.

DM: Go for it! You get a +4 since this is the second failure task.

Rhaberd: Alright, +4. <dice roll> 18 plus 4 is.. 22.

DM: 22 replaces the 19. Not bad! You've used up your failures, though, so that ends the challenge. When the action starts a couple days later, the NPC guards can use your obstructions and weapons to hold off two of the teams. That just leaves you with one to deal with. Roll initiative!

This manual uses trademarks and/or copyrights owned by Paizo Publishing, LLC and Fire Opal Media which are used under each company's Community Use Policy. You may not be charged to use or access this manual. This manual is not published, endorsed, or specifically approved by Paizo Publishing or Fire Opal Media. For more information about Paizo's Community Use Policy, please visit paizo.com/communityuse. For more information about Paizo Publishing and Paizo products, please visit paizo.com. For more information about Fire Opal Media's 13th Age Community Use Policy, please visit www.fireopalmedia.com/communityuse. For more information about Fire Opal Media and 13th Age products, please visit www.fireopalmedia.com and www.pelgranepress.com. This manual is published freely under the Open Gaming License (OGL).