

BITE-SIZED FUDGE

This overview of the Fudge system provides the basic rules needed to play. The full Fudge rules include many alternate approaches and optional rules which can be incorporated into a Fudge game, for those who prefer more detail or structure.

Game mechanics serve two broad purposes: to represent the outcome of the characters' actions, and to represent the characters themselves. The "Action Resolution" section demonstrates how character traits are used in play; the "Character Creation" section discusses how to design a character.

ACTION RESOLUTION

The GM sets the difficulty of a task based on Fudge's adjective scale. This is a seven-word descriptive scale:

Superb
Great
Good
Fair
Mediocre
Poor
Terrible

An average task requires a Fair result; a difficult task might require a Great effort, while a simple task might require only a Mediocre effort.

A character's base ability to perform a task is stated in the same terms. If a character is a Good cook, he can be expected to successfully prepare a meal under normal circumstances. If the character is a Superb cook, he can prepare world-class meals. If the character is a Terrible cook, he'll probably be eating a lot of takeout. Unless a skill is being used in a high-pressure situation, the character's trait level serves as his "normal" ability.

When a situation arises where the character's performance is critical, however, it is often useful to apply a random modifier to the character's innate ability. A Good detective may be skilled at noticing clues, but he shouldn't always notice a clue which the GM assigns a difficulty of Good to, but always miss a clue which requires a Great difficulty to spot. Dice are used to give a random element which reflects the environmental conditions, mental state of the character, plain dumb luck, and other factors. Dice rolls should only be required by the GM when such randomness is deemed appropriate. A player needn't make a test on his character's driving skill every time the character drives to the supermarket. It might be appropriate to test

ABOUT FUDGE

Fudge is a roleplaying game written by Steffan O'Sullivan, with extensive input from the Usenet community of rec.games.design. The basic rules of Fudge are available on the Internet at <http://www.fudgerpg.com> and in book form from Grey Ghost Games, P.O. Box 838, Randolph, MA 02368. They may be used with any gaming genre. While an individual work derived from Fudge may specify certain attributes and skills, many more are possible with Fudge. Every Game Master using Fudge is encouraged to add or ignore any character traits. Anyone who wishes to distribute such material for free may do so—merely include this ABOUT FUDGE notice and disclaimer (complete with Fudge copyright notice). If you wish to charge a fee for such material, other than as an article in a magazine or other periodical, you must first obtain a royalty-free license from the author of Fudge, Steffan O'Sullivan, P.O. Box 465, Plymouth, NH 03264.

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against the driving skill to see if the character is able to make it in time to an important interview for which he's already running late, though.

The GM determines what result is needed to succeed at a task; the default is Fair for a normal task under normal circumstances. To successfully swim across a pond might take a Mediocre or Fair Swimming skill roll. To cross that same pond when there's a turbulent storm might require a Good or Great result.

To determine whether an action succeeds, roll four Fudge dice (4dF). This will provide a result between -4 and +4. Pluses and minuses cancel out, and blanks are ignored. Therefore, a roll of plus, plus, minus, and blank, would leave a result of one plus (+1).

The result of the die roll is added to whatever trait is being tested, moving the result up or down the trait scale. So, if Romeo has a Throw skill of Mediocre, and the player rolls +1, his result is Fair, and he is able to successfully hit the window above him with a pebble.



Fudge Dice

Fudge dice are six-sided dice: two sides with plus signs, two with minus signs, and two sides blank. Fudge dice can be easily homemade using normal six-sided dice and stickers, or by rolling six-sided dice and counting 1-2 as minus, 3-4 as blank, and 5-6 as plus.

Custom-made Fudge dice can be purchased in a variety of colors from [Grey Ghost Games](#) and can be found in many gaming stores. Alternate dice mechanics are offered in the free downloadable rules.

How successfully the character performed the action is sometimes also relevant. If the character needed to roll at least a Fair to hit a bull's-eye, a Fair result indicates a hit to an outer ring. A Superb means he hit it dead center.

Opposed actions

If a character is competing against someone or something, this is referred to as an opposed action. Combat, sneaking past a sentry, a half-dozen people all making a mad dash to grab the Mystical Widget—these are all examples of opposed actions.

As with normal action resolution, the player rolls 4dF to determine success at the action. However, instead of trying to beat a target set by the GM (or, sometimes, in addition to it), the player needs to get a better result than his opponent(s). Relative degree refers to the difference in performance between one character and another in an opposed action. The greater the difference, the greater the victory of the winner of the contest. A relative degree of +1 when haggling over a price signifies a deal struck which favors the winner. Winning by several levels (a relative degree of +3, for instance), indicates completely ripping off the other person.

The same method is used to determine the victor in a combat, with opponents each rolling their relevant combat skill, or comparing the offensive skill of one versus the defensive skill of the other.

Wounds

Wounding may be handled completely subjectively, with the GM declaring the outcome based upon the relative degree by which an attack succeeded and factoring in the weapon being used, the strength and

skill of the attacker, the damage resistance of the defender, the tactics used by each, etc. A subjective method of determining wounds allows a much greater sense of verisimilitude and more character to the *type* of wound received—a GM could decide that a very successful (+4 relative degree) attack by a burly opponent wielding a club might break the defender’s arm, or that the force of a blow was sufficient to unseat the knight from his horse, winding and bruising him but doing no significant damage.

Some people are more comfortable with firmly defined rules for wounds, however, and so an objective damage system is defined below.

If an attack is successful, the damage done is based upon:

$$\text{Relative Degree} + \text{Offensive Damage Factor} - \text{Defensive Damage Factor}$$

Relative Degree is the difference between the opposed skill rolls of the attacker and the defender.

Offensive Damage Factor is based upon the weapon being used, the strength of the attacker (if relevant to the type of attack), etc.

Defensive Damage Factor is based upon the defender’s damage capacity (toughness, endurance, or similar attribute), armor worn, etc.

The resulting number determines the severity of the attack. Where that number falls on the wound scale determines the effect of the wound.

For example, Bill wins in combat with a relative degree of 2. He is using a sword, which gives him a +3 damage modifier, but he is relatively weak (Mediocre strength), so his total Offensive Damage Factor (ODF) is +2. Ted is of average build (Fair toughness) and unprotected, so has a Defensive Damage Factor (DDF) of 0. Bill’s attack does 4 damage to Ted (2 + 2 - 0), making Ted Hurt.

Here’s a sample wound progression chart:

1, 2	3, 4	5, 6	7, 8	9+
Scratched	Hurt (-1)	Very Hurt (-2)	Incapacitated	Near Death
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Scratched: the character is grazed or winded, but took no significant damage.

Hurt: -1 to all traits which would logically be affected.

Very Hurt: -2 to all traits which would logically be affected.

Incapacitated: incapable of any actions, except (perhaps) slow, painful movement; any such exertion poses a risk of bringing the character to unconsciousness.

Near Death: unconscious and will die shortly unless medical attention is received.

Wounds are progressive. If a character receives several less-serious wounds, gradually they will wear him down. After taking three Scratches, the next Scratch will result in a Hurt box being checked. For example, a character receives a blow which does 5 damage, making him Very Hurt. He is then hit again for another 5 damage. The Very Hurt box is already filled, so he would instead fill in the next damage box, Incapacitated.

The number of check boxes, and even the numbers at which different wound levels occur, can vary based upon how deadly or cinematic combat is in a given game. The basic wound track does not allow for

a character to be killed by a single unlucky strike; but for a more deadly game, one might make Near Death occur on a 9 or 10, and Instant Death on 11 or higher.

Scratches go away after ten minutes. More serious wounds require a week of rest per box of damage. Medical treatments can hasten recovery time.

CHARACTER CREATION

Traits are a means of defining characters. Although there are no specific traits that are used for every game, there are several types of traits that are generally used: attributes, skills, gifts, and faults. Attributes and skills measure how good a character is at particular activities, and fall within the seven-step scale of Terrible, Poor, Mediocre, Fair, Good, Great, or Superb. Gifts and faults are qualities which don't fit into the Terrible . . . Superb scale.

Attributes are traits which everyone has, to varying degrees. These tend to be very broad categories, such as Perception, Agility, Strength, or Charisma. Attributes default to Fair.

Skills are more specialized traits, which generally require some practice or knowledge. Examples of skills would be Swimming, Wrestling, Acting, or Nuclear Physics. Skills usually default to Poor, though some may default to Terrible or even non-existent.

Gifts are positive traits which are not defined on the Terrible . . . Superb scale, either because that level of detail is not needed or because it is a trait which one either has or does not have. Examples of gifts are Attractive Appearance, Direction Sense, Lucky, or Good Reputation. For some games, characters may possess a more potent form of gift—magical ability, superpowers, cybernetic enhancements—which costs double (or more) the cost of a normal gift.

Faults, like gifts, are traits outside of the normal trait scale; but in this case, they are things which put the character at a disadvantage, imposing physical or psychological limitations on the character, or causing negative reactions to the character by others. Examples of faults are Irritating Voice, Faints at the Sight of Blood, Sense of Duty, or Addiction.

There are two standard means of character creation for Fudge. In subjective character creation, the player comes up with a character concept and assigns traits and trait levels as appropriate to the concept, subject to GM approval. With objective character creation, the player designs a character under specified criteria.

One common objective method is the point system. A character is assumed to have any attributes default to Fair and most skills default to Poor, unless the player raises or lowers the trait. The player is given a set number of points to apply to the character's traits. Forty points is a good rule of thumb, though it will vary based upon how broadly skills are defined, the genre of the game, the desired power level of the characters, etc. These points may be spent to raise the levels of traits. Lowering trait levels gives additional points to spend elsewhere.

Recommended point costs

- 1 point to raise a skill one level
- 3 points to raise an attribute one level
- 6 points to purchase a gift
- 6 points to apply elsewhere for each fault taken