

SKILL CHECKS

When a character attempts to pull off some tricky feat of expertise, the GM may call for a skill check. These checks are not intended for ordinary actions or activities that a given character's concept should be able to perform normally. Instead, they're meant to be rolled when the outcome is uncertain and time-sensitive.

To roll a skill check, the player rolls 2d6 and adds their most relevant attribute modifier and their relevant skill level. If their total equals or exceeds a difficulty number chosen by the GM, the check is a success. Failure means the effort is in vain, or else takes much longer to accomplish than the character finds comfortable.

Characters without even a level 0 rating in a skill suffer a -1 penalty to their roll, and may not even have any chance of successfully using complex or technical skills. It's up to the GM to decide whether an untrained character can hope to succeed at a given roll.

Bad or beneficial circumstances can also affect the roll. Attempting to perform a skill under extremely hostile conditions might apply as much as a -3 penalty to the skill check, while a situation where everything lines up perfectly to assist the PC might grant up to +3 on the roll. The GM determines any modifiers to be applied.

Some mutations or equipment may also grant bonuses on a skill check. As a rule of thumb, multiple bonuses from the same type of aid do not stack. Multiple helpful mutations grant only the best bonus and using several useful pieces of gear gives only the best modifier.

OPPOSED SKILL CHECKS

Sometimes, two or more people try to perform mutually-contradictory actions. A hunter might be trying to prowl close to a wolf, while the wolf might naturally be trying to notice any hunters. Two characters might be engaged in a footrace that only one can win. In these and other similar cases, the participants make an opposed skill check.

Everyone involved rolls their relevant skill checks, and the highest roll wins. Ties are rerolled if a tie doesn't make sense in context. Characters with special abilities that allow for rerolling failed checks can choose to reroll if their first attempt was not a winning one.

EXTENDED SKILL CHECKS

From time to time, it might be important to figure out how long it takes to accomplish some particularly involved task. If you want a ballpark answer, just set a difficulty and have the character roll a skill check; if they fail, the job takes longer than is convenient, with large failures meaning it takes much longer than they like.

Otherwise, you might just assign a particular amount of time to a given skill check and let them roll once for each such interval they spend working on the problem. Once they accumulate a set number of successful skill checks, the task is complete. This technique can also be used when two characters are competing at some extended task, like a foot race or political counter-scheming.

SKILL CHECK DIFFICULTIES

NO CHECK	The task is something the character might be expected to accomplish regularly as part of their background or training, or the character is able to accomplish the task eventually and time is not an issue.
6	Tasks that a trained person can usually accomplish, and even untrained sorts have a decent chance.
8	Tasks that challenge a trained character, and even an expert runs a small risk of failure.
9	Tasks that normally would require an expert to accomplish consistently.
11	Tasks that only an expert has any real chance of accomplishing.
13	Tasks that push the limit of what the skill can plausibly accomplish in the hands of a master.
15	A GM assigns this difficulty when a master tries something that sounds barely possible in a theoretical sense, it being more entertaining than flat denial.

CONCEPT SUCCESSES

PCs are competent, skilled members of their community who have shown unusual capability in their roles. Novice adventurers may not be heroes, but they are rarely bunglers. Incompetent fools do not last long even in the settled places of the wastes, let alone deep in the badlands.

As such, a GM should simply give a PC success at any moderately difficult task related to their concept. If the character is a neo-unicorn riding nomad, she shouldn't have to make skill checks to diagnose horse injuries, estimate the worth of livestock, or keep her saddle under difficult conditions. She might well need to make skill checks to accomplish taxing riding feats of difficulty 9+, but those activities which are normal and expected for her concept should be automatically successful under normal conditions.

As a good rule of thumb to determine whether or not a PC should get a concept success, think about whether failure would make the PC look incompetent at their role. No one would automatically assume that a sniper can draw a clear bead on a distant target through a sheet of shimmering drain effluent, but it would seem awkward if that same sniper couldn't use a scope to identify a specific target in a small group on a distant ridge line. In the first case, you might well force the sniper to make a Wis/Perception check at difficulty 9. In the second case, you'd simply hand the sniper success, or give it to the eagle-eyed archer, but you might make the scrapsmith roll.

Don't feel obliged to let a character's concept creep too far. One who bills himself as a "jack of all trades" might well have a wide range of skills, but letting him get a concept success more than once a session is probably more than he needs. The goal is to let PCs be good at what they are about, not to let someone bypass half their challenges with a well-worded character concept.