

theSpookEngine

COMPACT PLAYER'S GUIDE

VERSION 1.25

Note from the Author: This game is designed with updates in mind, therefore, don't consider this first release as the definitive statement. Add to this the very nature of modern covert operations; this system could change radically in the future. If you come across any new developments in your own research, or if you spot a factual error in the current text, or have suggestions for future releases - please contact the author at mak16@uow.edu.au

The Spook Engine is designed to be a realistic covert operations RPG system, every endeavour has been made to use verified factual material. If you are looking for James Bond style gaming, may I recommend *Spycraft* from Crafty Games. The Spook Engine is designed to be modular in nature. It is hoped that in the future, further agency supplements will appear.

Thanks to Trevor 'Sutherland the Deadly Deskjockey' Osborne & Raymond 'Stampy the Insane ex-SAS Enforcer' Coutts for confounding and delighting me all throughout the playtesting stage. Thanks to Cherie 'Paparazzi' Bush and Trent 'Axis of Evil' Blair for taking part in picture related activities that sadly didn't make it to print. Thanks to Rob 'the Weekend Soldier' Ennew for information about Army training. Thanks to Patrick 'Special Branch' Hogan for his enthusiasm for the project in general.

Thanks to Ken 'the Minder' Finlayson for some of the information presented here from our prior release *Steal: the Modern Roleplay Game*. Check it out!

Finally, if you enjoy using this free system on a regular basis, may I suggest you make a donation to a charity – life isn't a game to everyone.

Good Gaming

Regards Matt K.

Note from the Editor: This compact edition is designed to give a grasp of the rules in mechanical form, and is in no way as complete as the full rulebook. All unnecessary flavour and optional rules have been removed: consult your GM before playing as to the specific optional rules s/he is using. – AW

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Character Generation

Hopefully, your gaming group has discussed some of the issues in *Section 3 - Setting Advice For Players* in the full *theSpookEngine* handbook. You should now have some idea of the type of characters your team will consist of. Generally, most campaign groups will consist of one of the following choices.

- Security Intelligence Services (MI5 & MI6, FBI & CIA)
- Special Operations (S.A.S, Delta Force & SPETSNAZ)
- Paramilitary (Aum Shinrikyo, ETA & Hamas)
- Others (including Professional Assassins, Ex-Special Forces Mercenaries, bodyguards)

Also, you should have downloaded the accompanying character sheets, which can be photocopied for your character needs.

Starting Characters Summary	
Starting Points:	75
Maximum Ranks:	5
Minimum Ranks:	0

Allocating Skill Ranks: Your standard starting character has 75 skill points to allocate: you can put up to 5 ranks into each skill. The higher your skill ranking, the better you are at using that skill. All characters should have ranks in at least most if not all basic persona skills, as they are the most generic.

BASIC SKILL LEVELS	
0 to 1	Average
2 to 4	Professional
5 to 9	Expert

Here is a basic outline of the skills, illustrating how they are used within the game

BASIC PERSONA SKILLS	
Athleticism	A measure of the individual's general fitness and dexterity levels
Awareness	A measure of the individual's general level of alertness to stimuli from the outside world
Constitution	This skill denotes an individual's general level of stamina, the ability to resist toxins – this skill directly determines the individual's Vitality levels
Conversation	A measure of the individual's ability to communicate effectively with others, to put people at ease in social situations and vocal mimicry
Driving	This skill is a measure of an individual's ability to drive road vehicles under pressured situations
Fast Talk	This skill is different from Conversation in that it denotes the ability of the individual to lie effectively
Hand-To-Hand	This skill is the basic ability to fight off assailants with one's bare hands or hand held weapons
I.Q	This skill is a measure of the individual's general intelligence quotient
Sense Motive	This skill denotes the individual's ability to determine lies
Streetwise	The skill determines the individual's ability to effectively read the perils and hazards of an urban environment
Strength	A measure of the individual's might and weight bearing capacities
Willpower	A measure of an individual's ability to withstand the pain of injury and torture. Plus, a measure of the individual's ability to achieve life goals; like a fitness regime or advance in learning tasks

EXPERT SKILLS	
Computer/I.T	A measure of the individual's basic level of understanding of computer operations, hardware installation and programming. It skill also partly contributes to successful hacking operations
Contacts	A measure of the number of worthwhile contacts an individual has at their disposal to start the game
Counter-Intelligence/ Ideology	A default skill level of intelligence knowledge remembered from basic training – including knowledge of government bureaucracy, spying methodology, agency history and hostile foreign agencies
Electronics	The basic application of electronics in everyday situations and disabling security devices
First Aid	The basic knowledge of resuscitation, patient care, poisons, and the treatment of injuries in the field
Interrogation/ Intimidation	The individual's knowledge of Interrogation techniques and the ability to effectively threaten an individual
Mechanics	The ability to repair and operate a diverse range of mechanized devices
Psychology	The understanding of psychological disorders and remedies
Stealth	The ability to successfully sneak around undetected and ensure the covert nature of OP sites and operational technique
Survival	Covers basic requirements for survival in adverse conditions including lighting fires, flora and fauna knowledge and ways to make shelters
Weapons (Firearm)	The basic deployment of pistols, semi-automatic pistols and guns (SMGs) and rifles
SPECIALISED SKILLS	
Signals Intelligence	The skill used to determine the effective setting up of audio and video communications, the ability to use audio and graphic programs to improve sound/image quality, to disguise vocals and manipulate images, and the use of satellite, radar and microwave technologies
Chemistry	The skill for determining chemical compounds and determining their probable sources, the use of scientific equipment, and the development of useful compounds
Cryptography	The ability to decode and encrypt messages (via computers or other technologies) for the purposes of covert communications
Disguise/Deception	The ability to disguise oneself or conceal items, the ability to blend into crowds effectively, and the understanding of standard deception practices
Explosives	The ability to understand, use and create explosives, as well as defuse placed charges and perform controlled detonation.
Forensics	The ability to use DNA profiling, gun testing, chemical testing and biological theory to develop theories as to the nature of crime-scenes
Forgery	The ability to use computers and/or by hand to develop replica documents, security passes etc.
Illegal Entry	The ability to identify and to by-pass security systems, the ability to understand basic security policy and infiltrate secured locations
Surveillance	The ability to coordinate and design an effective surveillance operation on a target building, group or individual
Weapons (Military)	The ability to use and disable weapons of war such as fully automatic machine-guns, howitzers, tanks, anti-aircraft guns or mobile launchers

Other Character Details

Vitality: A character's Vitality represents the individual's ability to sustain physical damage. This statistic is derived from the characters Constitution. A character has their (Constitution rank x 10) + 10 in Vitality. Therefore if we have 4 ranks in Constitution (4 x 10) + 10 = 50 vitality points.

Status: Depending upon the type of template chosen characters may end up being operational, clean, blown, Missing In Action (MIA), Killed In Action (KIA), held or a double agent. This is a general signifier as to current situation the individual finds him/herself.

Contacts: If you have apportion some of your initial starting ranks into Contacts you will need to talk with your Games Master about appropriate contacts (you will also need to decide at what level of familiarity you are at with the individual).

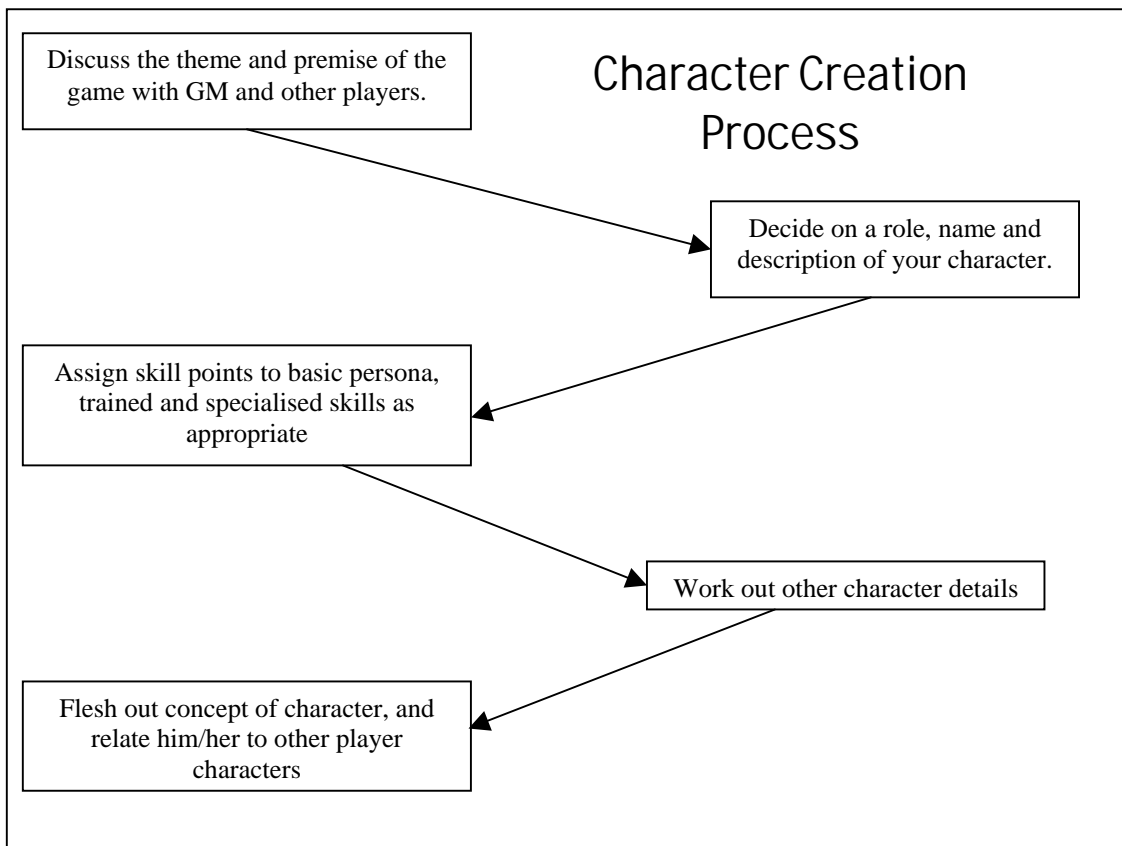
Legends: Although primarily of importance to espionage characters, it may be necessary for other characters to develop appropriate legends (aliases) from time to time - to stave off unwanted attention from the wrong people.

Carry Weights: An individual can carry a set amount before they become heavily encumbered – generally reducing their ability to move with relative freedom. An individual with 4 ranks in Strength can carry $(4 \times 10) + 10 = 50\text{kg}$ before becoming substantively encumbered.

The effects of increasing the carrying weight beyond this point include:

- Reduction in movement to 1/2 current Athleticism rating
- Lose one point of Vitality every hour for every kilogram over weight limit

C.I Index: All equipment carried has a Conceal Index rating; this total is important in visual and body searches, the lower the rating – the better the chance of sneaking through security unmolested.



Game Mechanics

In role-play games like *theSpookEngine* at various times dice are used to decide how well a character performs a set action. The basic way we determine this is by rolling 10-sided dice. The number of dice rolled is equal to the score of the skill being tested, plus an additional 2d10 default dice (it is assumed everyone has some basic ability).

Dice Roll	Counts as x successes
1	-1
2-6	0
7-9	1
10	2

If one or more successes are gleaned, the action succeeds.

Note: The Games Master determines the difficulty of the objective, some particularly advanced tasks might require a higher number of successes.

Zero Skill Ranks

All individuals get default 2d10 dice to play with when attempting any skill check - even if the player has not put any ranks into it. There is still a chance of success that a novice driver will successfully drive into a car and ram it off the road. Although, the chances of doing so successfully are limited – but having zero ranks doesn't mean it can't be attempted.

Contests of Skill: Sometimes, events conspire to pit you against another individual. Under such circumstances, each side rolls their allotted number of dice (as per their skill ranks) - the side achieving the highest number of successes will succeed.

Failures & Botches

Every so often, a player might get a poor result from rolling skill checks. Assuming the individual hasn't got below zero - under most circumstances, the individual has attempted the activity but hasn't succeeded in their task. If someone attempts to open a lock using a lockpick gun (Illegal Entry roll) and they have achieved exactly zero successes, they have spent some time attempting the task and failing; but they have not been unfortunate enough to trigger an alarm or broken off the lockpick in the door. The individual is at liberty to try opening the lock again. Of course, if they had achieved a negative result, they may well have broken the lock, or set the alarm off. Repeated failed attempts wastes time, and may also be detrimental to the secrecy of the operation.

Taking Your Time

The chances of succeeding in some tasks can be considerably improved by taking one's time. Ultimately, the Games Master will adjudicate under these circumstances as to whether the extra time will improve the chances of success.

Note: Some tasks like disabling a timed bomb, stanching massive blood loss in a patient, or combat actions cannot be improved by taking one's time.

Modifiers

The GM may impose modifiers on any action you take. These can be positive (for good tools, advantageous terrain, etc) or negative (poor lighting, stress, and so on). Modifiers are represented as dice added or taken away when you roll for your skill. If you have more dice taken away than you have (including the two dice included in any attempt), you cannot attempt the action (it's simply impossible to succeed at that time).

Combat

Combat skills work similar to that of any other skill. To hit someone, one rolls his or her Hand-To-Hand, Weapons (Firearm), or Weapons (Military) combat skill.

Combat Rounds

Combat rounds last 1 second. Any action the Games Master believes that can be accomplished in that time: like firing a gun, reloading a pistol, or diving for cover can occur. The Games Master may adjudicate that complex actions may extend over a number of rounds (like First Aid).

Who Goes First?

Once an individual has acted, the remaining individuals can react in the order calculated by each individual's Athleticism ranking. This occurs until every individual has had an opportunity to participate, thus ending the round. The protagonist will then go first in the next round. The extension of this principle is if a party in advance calculates a clear signal to act in a particular way – then all individuals can act at once.

If the target is blissfully unaware of the protagonist, this is counted as being surprised – meaning they do not get the opportunity to act in the first round. This is a major disadvantage that can possibly prove fatal.

In *theSpookEngine* combat system an individual has the opportunity to attack, grapple or dodge. In any round the individual can also walk slowly (their Athleticism ranking in meters per a round) without incurring a penalty to their roll. An individual can also attempt to sprint (meaning they can travel an additional distance equivalent to an Athleticism skill check in meters – botches meaning they trip over).

Grappling

To grapple an individual, one needs to make a successful Hand-To-Hand roll (H2H). In addition, up to 2 other individuals may attempt to do the same. The target may wish to use their round action to break out of the grapple (opposed H2H check), or seek to dodge the individual (opposed Athleticism vs. H2H check). In the next round it is assumed that the aggressor/s have managed to get their hands firmly on the target (all higher H2H checks), now the aggressor/s each need to roll Strength checks (adding together their total results), the grappled individual also makes an opposed Strength check. If the target of the grapple rolls higher, s/he breaks out of the grapple; if the aggressors win, the target is pinned (or unable to act further that round). Unless, the individual is handcuffed or tied up that round, successive Strength checks will be need to be made to keep the individual pinned.

Blunt Weapons

In *theSpookEngine* blunt weapons are treated slightly differently to sharp weapons (like knives, swords etc). Although they roughly do the same amounts of damage, sharp weapons have additional properties that will be dealt with later.

Category	Example	Multiplier
No Weapon	Bare Fists, Kneecap, Forehead	x1
Light Weapon	Small Hammer, Knuckle-Dusters, Small Lump of Wood	x2
Medium Weapon	Length of Chain, Jemmy, 4x2, Baseball bat	x3
Heavy Weapon	Large Metal Bar, Concrete Slab, Large Crowbar	x4

Note on Heavy Weapons: Such large weapons require a Strength skill rank of 3 or better to wield effectively (to do their additional levels of damage).

Piercing Weapons

Piercing weapons also cause Critical Wounds (as explained below, in *Injuries and Luck*). The following is a table devoted to the maximum multipliers for each

Category	Examples	Multiplier
Light Weapon	Knife, Flick Knife, Garrote	x2
Medium Weapon	Small Sword, Sai, Katana, Spear	x3
Heavy Weapon	Trident, Large Sword, Heavy Spear	x4

Note on Heavy Weapons: Such large weapons require sufficient levels of Strength to wield effectively - to do their additional levels of damage (Strength rating 3 or better is needed).

Automatic Weapons

Some guns do not require the cocking of the hammer, being automated to allow for constant firing until the clip is empty. Thus, in any one round they may burst forth a number of bullets. In game terms, this distinction has been put to one side (as most modern spy agencies/special operations units would have access to automatic weapons). However, there are some automated rifled weapons like machine guns, which fire so many bullets per a second to justify an additional damage quotient. The following table seeks to streamline the damage process for firearms.

Category	Examples	Multiplier	Burst
Pistol	Glock 17, Colt M1911	x2	-
Rifle	Winchester '94, PSG 1	x3	-
Shotgun	SPAS 12, Remington 870	x3	5ft arc
Sub-Machine Gun	MP5, UZI, Sten gun	x4	5ft arc
Assault Rifle	AK-47, M16, G3A3	x5	10ft arc
Machine Gun	MINIMI, M-60E	x6	20ft arc

Note: SMGs, assault rifles and machine guns can fire individual bullets as well at the normal Max Multiplier of x2. Each additional success on a burst weapon (while firing bursts) counts as an additional Critical Wound

Dodging

In combat, an individual needs to devote the entirety of his/her round to avoid being hit, an opposed Athleticism versus Weapons (Firearm) check to avoid being shot in the first Round. They can only seek to avoid one attack. Dodging is more effective if the individual is behind cover - adding additional benefits to their efforts (see Cover & Personal Protection).

Cover & Personal Protection

Hard Cover

Hard cover is defined as any surface of sufficient hardness (or flexibility as in bullet-proof glass or thick rubber matting) to absorb the particular type of bullet fired. Although the surface may wear out over time for game purposes it is seen as an impenetrable barrier (things such as reinforced walls, metal shielding or thick concrete are unlikely to be penetrated by handgun fire).

For targeting purposes, the level of hard cover is apportioned into 5 levels of protection

Cover level	Surface Area Coverage	Penalty to hit (dice)
Level 1	01-30% coverage	1
Level 2	31-60% coverage	2
Level 3	61-90% coverage	3
Level 4	91-99% coverage	4
Level 5	100% coverage	Cannot Be Hit

Soft Cover

In most cases, finding secure cover can be extremely difficult. Very few surfaces in reality can be said to truly provide the strength to stop bullets. The Controller will secretly assign a percentage barrier rating to any such surface (i.e leather chair, wooden cabana bar, plywood door). Thus, a sturdy looking sofa may stop roughly 15% of bullets on average penetrating it (this calculation

takes into account the relative size of the object for hiding purpose, and the sturdiness of the material).

The same principle is applied to body armour in the game, a Kevlar vest has a barrier rating of 40% - meaning that if a bullet hits an individual, there is a 40% chance it won't breach their armor (assuming the assailant isn't making a Called Shot). If an individual is wearing personal body armor and firing behind soft cover, the maximum percentage of coverage that they can be afforded is 85%. This limit represents the level of visibility needed to fire a weapon effectively, and the level of danger this enterprise entails (as personal body armor rarely affords solid protection to the head).

Called shots can be made by restricting your aim to the unexposed portions of the target. This is preferable to highly skilled shooters, because it operates as hard cover (above). Note how useful this can be when the "soft" cover is still a deterrent from firing, e.g. a human shield.

Injuries & Luck

Stabbing or shooting people in real life is deadly, *theSpookEngine* reflects this in the loss in Vitality & Critical Wounds. Normally, blunt weapons (as seen above) do damage equivalent to the number of successes times the additional maximum damage multiplier (calculated by additional successes above the target number). Slashing and stabbing weapons also do damage in this basic way, but there is an additional complication called Critical Wounds.

Critical Wounds

Critical Wounds are the amount of successful hits from piercing, slashing or firearms shots that the body can take before the individual's Luck runs out. As such, the player will not know just how far they can push their luck. At the start of each adventure (usually before the first combat), the Games Master will secretly roll a figure (for each player character) based on that individual's Constitution ranking. Using this table, each character will be secretly assigned a figure (the Games Master rolls a singular d10). This figure is the amount of Luck the individual will carry into each combat round throughout the adventure (assuming he hasn't had time to recuperate in hospital). The player will never know the result, so tactically avoiding firefights will seriously extend the characters' life.

Roll	Luck
0	Always 1
1-2	1-5=1 6-10=2
3-4	1-3=1 4-6=2 7-9=3 10=5
5-6	1-3=1 4-6=3 7-9=5 10=6
7-9	1-2=1 3-4=3 5-6=5 7-8=6 9-10=7

Dying & First Aid

If an individual has received a potential fatal wound, or been reduced to zero (or below) vitality points through blood loss, they will need urgent medical assistance. The following table sets out just how much time may remain for them if they don't receive professional care.

Trauma Level	Time Remaining Before Death
Zero Luck / Zero Vitality	Constitution + d10 hours
-1 or -2 Luck	Constitution + d10/2 hours
-3 or -4 Luck	Constitution + 2xd10 minutes
-5 Luck	Instant Death From Trauma

First Aid

A trained medic can render temporary assistance in the field (assuming they have a first aid pack handy). For each Critical Wound (bullet hole or stab wound) a medic can attempt to render assistance once. The amount of successes achieved directly correlates to the increase in the patient's Vitality (up to the total damage sustained in the hit). If the medic achieves 5 successes or more, the medic has managed to stitch up a Critical Wound and/or remove the bullet (meaning it is no longer considered a Critical Wound for Luck purposes).

To perform such functions during a combat round, the medic and patient must not be hit by a bullet, or be present in a hand-to-hand threat zone; such activities require 10 combat rounds to complete work on a single wound. Once a wound has been treated by a medic, they cannot make repeated attempts to treat the injury in the field – although they may recognize that serious medical care is still needed.

A medic working in the field doesn't have the ability to fix up a near fatal injury; such Critical Wounds require the services of a professional surgeon, with access to serious medical equipment; hopefully in a hygienic hospital.

Combat Modifiers

It is not uncommon in battlefields for combat to take place over a sizeable distance. The table to the right seeks to determine the relative modifiers for the use of sub-machine guns (machine pistols), machine guns, rifles or non wired-guided rockets at distance.

Distance	Modifier
01 to 10 meters	+1 modifier
11 to 30 meters	no modifier
31 to 74 meters	-1 modifier
75 to 100 meters	-2 modifier
101 meters to max. range	-3 modifier

The table below provides examples of other modifiers to ranged combat.

Modifier	Dice +/-
Prone Individual	+2 if shooter, -2 if target
0 to 10 meters with pistol	+1
Poor Light	-1
Near Darkness	-2
Point Blank	+2
Grappled Individual	-2 if shooter, +1 if target and collateral damage irrelevant
Intoxicated/Drugged	-1
Last 10 Vitality points	-1
Restricted Movement	-1

Note: All bonuses/minuses stack, ending up with 0 dice (including 2 universal dice) indicates action is impossible for character.