

S.M.U.G.

The Simple Magic-User Game

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This game was inspired by White Wolf's *Mage* and S. John Ross's *Risus*.

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1. Materials

All you need to play SMUG are some six-sided dice (referred to as D: 2D would indicate that you roll 2 dice and add the results), some paper and pencils, and your imagination.

2. Characters

To play, you need a character (unless you are the gamemaster, or GM). To make a character, you need to create a concept. Is your character a muscle-bound brawler, or a well-read scholar? There are as many concepts as there are roleplayers, so be creative.

Next, you need to determine what your character is good at. These are called Attributes (innate abilities) and Skills (learned abilities). You get 14 points to divide among the 5 attributes, and 10 points for any skills you want your character to have. The only restrictions are that a starting character can have no attribute higher than 4, and no skill rank higher than 2. Power works a little different, though: players only receive 1 point of Power for every 2 points that they spend on it. Power skills also cost 2 points per rank. What are the attributes and skills? Glad you asked, because here they are.

3. Attributes

The 5 attributes in SMUG are Reflex, Body, Intelligence, Will, and Power. Each defines a certain aspect of your character's innate ability as follows.

Reflex: hand-eye coordination and physical agility

Body: physical strength and toughness
Intelligence: raw reasoning power, learning ability, and memory
Will: mental strength and determination
Power: raw magical ability

4. Skills

Skills represent things a character has learned to do through practice and training. Each skill is tied to a specific attribute, and provides extra dice to tests involving that specific area of expertise.

Skill rolls are resolved as follows: the player rolls a number of dice equal to the character's attribute plus the relevant skill (or just the attribute, if the character has no relevant skill), adds up the results of all the dice, and compares it to the difficulty number determined by the GM. Don't worry if the difficulty exceeds the maximum that you can roll, though. If you roll any sixes, you get to keep them and reroll the die or dice, adding the new roll(s) to your total. This continues until you stop rolling sixes. Here are some sample difficulty numbers:

5: pretty simple
10: average difficulty
15: somewhat challenging
20: moderately challenging
25: challenging
30: difficult
35: pretty tough
40: almost superhuman

Following is a list of example skills, broken down by the related attribute. This list is by no means exhaustive, and if you have an idea for a new skill, run it by your GM. If he or she okay's it, then you're good to go.

Reflex:

ranged weapons	pick lock
dodge	pick pocket
sneak	drive vehicle
speed	ride motorcycle

Body:

endurance	hand weapons
brawl	swim

Intelligence:

knowledges (like history, biology, math, etc.)	
languages (like English, German, Spanish, etc.)	
spellcraft	medicine
investigate	computer

Will:

intimidate
resist

bargain
concentrate

The skills for Power will be discussed in the section on magic, as they work a little differently from other skills.

5. Health

Each character has 4 levels of health: -0, -1, -3, and Down. Each level has a number of points equal to the character's Body. So, if a character has Body 3, their health levels would be -0(×3), -1(×3), -3(×3), Down(×3). As the character progresses in damage, each level indicates the penalty they are working with. All rolls are penalized (lose) a number of dice equal to the health level's indicator. Once all of the health levels have been exhausted, the character is dead.

6. Combat

Combat is conducted in turns. In each turn, characters may either move a number of meters equal to twice their Reflex, or move a number of meters equal to their Reflex and take an action. The characters roll Reflex+Speed, or just Reflex if they don't have the Speed skill, and players declare what their characters are going to do from lowest roll to highest. The actions are then resolved from highest roll to lowest, and damage is applied immediately. The appropriate attack skill is rolled against the appropriate defense skill, and the amount by which it exceeds the defense roll is the number of points of damage that are received. Attack and defense rolls can be modified by weapons and armor: each provides a flat bonus to their respective rolls. Ranged attacks have a penalty of 1 die for targets in Medium range, and 3 dice for targets that are at Long range. Beyond Long range the penalty is 7 dice. These range modifiers apply to ranged weapons like pistols and bows, as well as to ranged magical attacks.

7. Magic

Magic is based on the Power attribute, and allows your character to manipulate the fabric of reality. There are 8 magic skills tied to Power, but they are a little different from normal skills. There are only 8, and you can't add new ones. In addition, if you don't possess the appropriate magic skill for a certain task, you simply can't do it. The magic skills are as follows:

Cognition: the ability to sense and alter the minds of others

Life: the ability to sense and alter the flow of life

Soul: the ability to sense and alter the spirit and emotions

Time: the ability to sense and alter the flow of time

Space: the ability to sense and alter distances and connections

Energy: the ability to sense and alter energy

Material: the ability to sense and alter physical matter

Entropy: the ability to sense and alter the chaotic forces of destruction

These skills are used in the same manner as other skills, but they are much more powerful. With them, characters can sense, alter, destroy, or create the basic building blocks of the universe. Which skill is appropriate is at the discretion of the GM, unless the player can come up with a creative (and sensible) approach for using another skill. Difficulties can be somewhat tricky, but here are some general guidelines.

- 10: sense basic properties related to skill
- 20: alter minor properties
- 30: alter major properties
- 40: create something within skill's purview

The basic uses listed above are put into practice as follows. Sensing lets you determine the basic characteristics related to the skill. For instance, using Material to sense a rock would let the character know the rock's composition, density, and structure. Altering minor properties would let the character change the rock's size, density, or basic composition (like changing it from granite to quartz). Altering major properties would let the character change the rock into a gun or a car (not that they would necessarily work properly). Creating would allow the character to create a rock from nothing.

Here are some ideas for what the different magic skills can be used to do.

Cognition: Sense: Read someone's surface thoughts and intentions. Alter minor properties: Change someone's current thoughts, make them forget something, read subconscious thoughts. Alter major properties: Change someone's personality entirely, alter all of their memories, change their level of intelligence. Create: Create an independent mind (it will need something to house it). A technically minded magic user could use this to create a true artificial intelligence.

Life: Sense: Detect someone's state of health. Alter minor properties: Inflict or heal minor injuries, alter metabolism, cure or cause minor diseases, make minor appearance alterations. Alter major properties: Change one life form into another, change appearance entirely, heal or inflict major injuries. Create: create a new life form, bring the dead back to life (in conjunction with Soul)

Soul: Sense: Sense the presence of spirits, sense someone's emotional state. Alter minor properties: Change someone's mood, cause temporary emotional changes, summon spirits. Alter major properties: Change someone's emotional being (they now hate their friends, desire to destroy what they once preserved, etc.), bind or banish spirits, animate a dead body. Create: Create an independent spirit, imbue an empty body with a soul (required to bring the dead back to life).

Time: Sense: Detect the passage or alteration of time. Alter minor properties: Slow or speed the passage of time (can increase a character's speed). Alter major properties: Stop the flow of time relative to character or others. Create: create a "bubble"

of independent time (needed to create a separate universe), travel through time.

Space: Sense: Detect distances and alterations of space. Alter minor properties: Alter distances, detect connections between objects or places. Alter major properties: Change spatial dimensions radically, "fold" two locations on top of each other (co-location). Create: create a "pocket" universe (need Time to give it independent time flow, and other magic skills to fill it with anything other than nothing), teleport.

Energy: Sense: Sense the ebb and flow of energy patterns. Alter minor properties: Change the strength of energy (make a sound louder or quieter, increase or decrease voltage, change the temperature, etc.), change the flow of energy types (alter an object's trajectory, reverse current flow, etc.). Alter major properties: Change energy types (convert light into sound, etc.), telekinesis. Create: Create energy from nothing (a lightning blast, a beam of light, etc.)

Material: Sense: Sense an object's basic properties (density, composition, etc.). Alter minor properties: Change an object's size or density, change gross composition (change from one material to one other material), change basic structure. Alter major properties: Change one material into something complex (turning a rock into a computer, although some knowledge of how computers work would be required to make one that operates). Create: Create inanimate material from nothing.

Entropy: Sense: Detect something's state of decay, sense patterns in randomness (calculating probabilities). Alter minor properties: Change basic probabilities (make something more or less likely to occur), accelerate or slow an object or system's rate of decay. Alter major properties: Change probability into certainty (make something absolutely certain of occurring or not occurring), halt decay or make it instantaneous. Create: Absolute mastery of random systems, create random elements in stable systems.

Again, these are suggested uses and not ironclad rules of what can and cannot be done. If you can imagine it and justify it, then as long as you can meet the difficulty number set by the GM, you can do it.

There are some complications, however: joint effects and resisting. Joint effects use multiple magic skills together. If an effect is all-or-nothing, determine the difficulty number of the hardest part (which determines the overall difficulty), and roll the character's lowest applicable skill against it. If an effect could be done piecemeal, treat it as separate effects, with each skill rolled against its appropriate difficulty. Resisting is when a character actively or passively opposes a magic user's effect. If the effect senses or alters a person, the target may make a roll of Will+Resistance, the result of which is added to the effect's difficulty. Note that this only applies to direct alterations: shooting a lightning bolt is subject to Dodge, not Resistance. Another magic user may also resist an effect even if it doesn't affect them. To do so, however, they must possess the skill that they are attempting to oppose. The appropriate skill is rolled, and the result is added to the effect's difficulty.

8. Gear

Starting characters can have whatever items the GM feels they might reasonably have. Some items may provide bonuses at the GM's discretion. Weapons and armor provide a flat bonus (not extra dice) to a character's attack and defense rolls as indicated. Weapon ranges are in the format (Short)(Medium)(Long) and are in meters.

Weapons:

Knife: +1 Range (Body)(Body×2)(Body×3)

Sword: +3

Pistol: +3 Range (5)(10)(20)

Rifle: +5 Range (25)(50)(100)

Armor:

Light Vest: +2

Heavy Vest: +3 (Reflex penalty of -1D)

Full Armor: +5 (Reflex penalty of -2D)

Vehicles: Vehicles have 3 statistics: Move, Armor, and Passengers. Move is how many meters it can move in 1 turn, Armor works just like body armor, and Passengers indicates how many people it can carry.

Sedan: Move: 25 Armor: +2 Passengers: 5

Sports Car: Move: 45 Armor: +1 Passengers: 2

Van: Move: 20 Armor: +2 Passengers: 8

Motorcycle: Move: 30 Armor: +0 Passengers: 2

9. Gamemastering

If you are the gamemaster, congratulations! It's a hard job, but well worth it. You are the one who describes the world and people that the characters interact with, create adventures for them, decide how difficult tasks are, and many other things.

Adjudicating: One of the GM's most important jobs is that of impartial judge. It is your responsibility to interpret the rules and how they apply to a given situation. If there doesn't seem to be a relevant rule, just wing it. Look at your decision later and if it seems unreasonable or unfair, then change it. Just try to be fair to the players.

Challenging: It is also the job of the GM to challenge the players. The most obvious means is to create adventures, or interactive stories, for the characters to participate in. Don't spend a whole lot of time coming up with very specific plot points, as players can throw plans in the wringer with a simple decision that you didn't predict. Don't lose your cool if that happens, though. Just remain calm, and try to improvise. If you can direct them back to your main story, great! If not, don't worry. The resulting story will probably be just as memorable, if a bit more chaotic.

Maintaining: Keep the game flowing! If you stop to look up rules, or listen to a

player arguing a decision that you made, the flow of the game can be destroyed. While this can sometimes lead to interesting diversions, it more often is detrimental to everyone's enjoyment. If a player wants to argue, tell them that you are making a temporary ruling, and you will be happy to listen to their take on it AFTER the game session.

Creating: If you have an idea for a skill, item of equipment, or anything else, go ahead and make it. It's your game to play. Just come up with the relevant statistics, bonuses, or whatever, tell the players about it, and go.

Advancing: Characters are not static; they develop over time. In the game this is represented by experience points, or XP. You dole them out, and players spend them to improve their characters. In general, characters should receive 2 to 4 XP per session. 1 point just for surviving; 2 points for any success they had regarding the plot; and 1 point for creative roleplaying, making everyone laugh, ingenious solutions to problems, or just for making it an entertaining evening. XP are spent as follows: Increasing a skill costs a number of XP equal to its new rank, and you can't skip ranks. For example, increasing Drive from 2 to 4 costs 7 XP, not 4 (3 for increasing to rank 3, 4 for increasing to rank 4). Attributes cost a number of XP equal to the new rank multiplied by itself (squared). Once again, no skipping ranks. Power costs a number of XP equal to its new rank squared, multiplied by 2. That is to say, it costs twice as much to raise Power as to raise any other attribute. Power skills cost a number of XP equal to twice the new rank. In all of the above, NO SKIPPING RANKS! You may need to adjust the amount of XP you give out if you think that the characters are advancing too quickly or not fast enough.

Enjoying: That's it! It's your game, so have fun with it.

10. Extras

Here is some extra stuff to get you going. It's basically just a few monsters, NPCs (Non-Player Character. They're the extra people in the world that the GM portrays.), and a simple character sheet.

Monsters:

Dog: Just your standard guard dog.

Reflex: 3	Body: 3
Speed 2	Bite 2
Intelligence: 1	Will: 2
Power: 0	

Gremlin: Nasty buggers who live to break stuff.

Reflex: 3	Body: 1
Speed 1	Brawl 2
Intelligence: 2	Will: 2
Power: 0	

Imp: A minor troublesome spirit.

Reflex: 3	Body: 2
Speed 1	Brawl 1
Intelligence: 2	Will: 2
Power: 2	
Energy 1	
Entropy 1	

Salamander: A fire spirit.

Reflex: 4	Body: 2
Speed 1	
Fire Touch 2	
Intelligence: 1	Will: 2
Power: 2	
Energy 2	

NPCs:

Police Officer: Help or hindrance.

Reflex: 3	Body: 3
Speed 2	Brawl 2
Ranged weapons 3	
Drive Vehicle 1	
Intelligence: 2	Will: 2
Investigate 2	Intimidate 1
Power: 0	

Magic-user: A potential ally or rival.

Reflex: 2	Body: 2
Speed 1	Brawl 1
Dodge 2	
Intelligence: 3	Will: 2
Investigate 2	Concentrate 1
Knowledge (Biology) 2	
Power: 2	
Mind 1	
Life 2	
Spirit 1	

S.M.U.G. Character Sheet

Character:

Player:

Reflex: ___D

Body: ___D

Intelligence: ___D

Will: ___D

Power: ___D

Weapons:

Cognition _____
Life _____
Soul _____
Time _____
Space _____
Energy _____
Material _____
Entropy _____

Armor:

Other Gear:

Notes:

Damage:

Taken	Levels
___ -0	(×___)
___ -1	(×___)
___ -3	(×___)
___ Down	(×___)
Dead	