

Night's Black Agents

1: Character Generation

General History

- Pick a name, and a common “handle”.
- Pick age and nationality.
- What did you do before being recruited?
- Previous Patron- what agency did you work for?
- Why did you leave?

Abilities

- Health 4, Stability 4, Cover 10, Network 8, Streetwise 1, Tradecraft 1
- Choose a background (page 13 to 17). Note abilities.
- Spend 18 points in Investigative Abilities. Maximum level is 3.
- Spend 52 points in General Abilities. Note “specials” if an ability is 8 or more. Note that Health and Stability can be increased at this stage. The second highest ability must be at least half the highest ability.
- Pick your Military Occupational Specialty (MOS). This is a general skill that you can automatically succeed at once per session.
- A character with a Weapons or Shooting ability of 8 or more can spend 6 points on Special Weapons Training. This grants +1 damage with a particular weapon (eg: a specific model of pistol).
- A character with a Hand to Hand ability of 8 or more can spend 6 points on Martial Arts Training. This grants +1 unarmed damage.

Further Background

- Pick a Drive (pages 37 to 39).
- Pick your sources of stability: Symbol (an object indicating something of value), Solace (a human contact), Safety (a place you value and feel safe).

Cover and Network

Put some Cover points into a pool (any number desired) to represent one alternate identity. Pick details: a name and a phrase.

Put some Network points into a pool (any number desired) to represent a contact. Pick details: a name and a phrase.

2: Using Abilities

Investigative Abilities

Investigative Abilities are not rolled. If a player uses a relevant ability to look for clues, success is automatic. A player can also *spend* a point from an ability pool to get a bonus- usually extra information that will be useful later on.

A spend might also be required if using an Investigative ability is more than usual effort for some reason. But remember- spends for Investigative Abilities are not the default, and usually the player's choice.

A GM can opt to give a clue to a player character with the highest relevant ability without them deciding to use it. This works if in a location the players would not ordinarily be expected to look for clues, or for passively noticing something others might miss.

General Abilities

To test for success when a character uses a general ability, roll d6. A roll of 4 or higher (the difficulty or DC) indicates success unless there are complicating factors.

Harder or easier tasks have +2 to -2 to DC per factor in play. A DC of 8 is considered 'near impossible'.

Before rolling the die, a character can spend points from their ability pool. Each point spent gives a +1 bonus. Someone with no ability level in an ability can't try it. Otherwise, the only way ability level makes a difference is through spending points from an ability pool, or special bonuses available in some cases if an ability is level 8 or higher.

Some NPCs have a *Stealth Modifier* or *Alertness Modifier*. The Stealth Modifier is the DC to spot them doing something sneaky. The Alertness Modifier is the DC to do something sneaky and not have them notice. Both Modifiers are 4 as a default.

Retries

Retries are only allowed if credible (eg: no retrying to sneak past a guard who has spotted you), and have a plausible supporting action to give them a bonus. Further, on a retry of an ability check, a character must spend more points from the pool than they did the first time around.

Piggybacking

Piggybacking occurs when one PC makes a check in something like Stealth or Infiltration for a group of people to get the benefit. Everyone taking part (apart from the leader making the check) must either pay one pool point, or add 2 to the DC.

Cooperation

Cooperation occurs when a leader benefits from assistance in a task. The assistant pays one point from a relevant ability pool to be able to use further points from his pool to assist the leader in a check.

Full Contests

In a full contest, both sides roll checks with DC 4 until one succeeds and one fails. The character with the lower ability rating rolls first; ties mean the player characters act last. Note that acting last is an advantage here.

Cover and Network

For the Cover ability, the pool is split between different cover identities. A test of a cover identity uses

that identity's pool against DC4. Only one such identity needs to be established in character generation; others can be generated in play.

The pool of the Network ability is split between various contacts in the same way. Again, only one contact needs to be established in character generation.

Neither Cover nor Network are tested directly. The pools do not refresh, and can only be increased with Experience Points. Once a cover or network contact has its pool reduced to zero, it is compromised.

3: Refreshing Pools and Experience

Refreshing Pools

At the end of an operation, all Ability pools apart from Network and Cover fully refresh, assuming the agents have time to relax before another job. This is the only time Investigative abilities refresh.

Other refresh opportunities are:

- Spend time relaxing at a place of safety to fully refresh three general abilities (but not Health or Stability).
- Pools for Athletics, Driving, Hand to Hand, Piloting, Shooting and Weapons refresh when it is 24 hours since these abilities were last used.
- Following a Drive into danger or story complications refreshes 2 points of any general ability.
- Health refreshes at 2 points per day of restful activity.
- Once per session, if you gain some benefit from a source of Stability, refresh 2 points of Stability.

Experience

At the end of an operation, each participant gets 2 experience points per session they took part in. This experience can be spent on all abilities, or special weapons training, in the same way as points in character generation.

4: Equipment

A character's exact resources are not tracked. *Normal* items are always available, and can be assumed to be at hand if they're the sort of thing its likely an agent would have on an operation. Stranger or bulkier normal items, or restricted items require a difficulty 4 Preparedness ability test to have at hand. They can also be obtained with an appropriate investigative ability (eg: *Streetwise* to find an arms dealer) or use of a network contact. Some could be manufactured using a difficulty 4 check in a relevant ability.

Special items require either a difficulty 6 ability check, a spend from an Investigation ability to get hold of, if available. They might also come up in the story. Finally, *Rare* items cannot be simply obtained through abilities- acquiring them must come up in the story.

Caches

A Difficulty 6 Preparedness ability test can be made to locate a cache- something prepared earlier either by an agent or his former agency. This cache can contain a vehicle. The agent finding the cache can name two items it contains. Every other agent can spend a point of the Preparedness ability to name another item. Any normal or restricted items are available; rare items require GM permission. A GM may also specify other things in the cache, if appropriate.

Equipment and Skills

Typically, skills will have a -2 penalty (or are impossible) if appropriate equipment is not available, for example, using Engineering for repairs without a toolkit and possibly power tools. For investigation abilities, a spend might be needed to use the ability at all. Exceptional equipment, such as some restricted spyware might give a skill a +2 bonus. This should certainly be the case if a hard to get hold of item is used. For investigation abilities, such equipment might grant the equivalent of a free spend.

Everyday Items

Item	Availability	Notes
Bolt Cutters	Normal	
Drugs or Chemicals	Normal	Possibly Restricted
Expensive Bottle of Wine	Normal	
First Aid Kit	Normal	
Headphones	Normal	
High Powered Torch	Normal	
Ordinary Clothing	Normal	
Night in Hotel	Normal	
Restaurant Meal	Normal	
Spray Paint	Normal	
Taxi Journey	Normal	
Binoculars	Normal	
Camera	Normal	
Fancy Clothes	Normal	
Long Train Journey	Normal	
Office or Apartment Rental for one month	Normal	
Plane Journey	Normal	

Uniform	Normal	
Light Video Camera	Normal	
Charter Flight	Restricted	
Nice Apartment or House	Restricted	
Local Business	Special	
Mansion	Special	

Technical Equipment

Item	Availability	Notes
CB Radio	Normal	5km range
Fire Extinguisher	Normal	
Industrial Cleaning Fluid	Normal	
Power Tool	Normal	
Toolkit	Normal	
UV Lamp	Normal	
Climbing Hoist	Normal	
Flare Gun	Normal	
Radio Transmitter	Normal	100km range
Cutting Torch	Normal	
Night Vision Optics	Restricted	
Remote Controlled Detonator	Restricted	1km range
Hidden Microphone	Restricted	
Telephone Tap	Restricted	
Miniature Camera	Restricted	
Lockpick Gun	Restricted	See below
Explosives	Restricted	See below
Locator Bug	Special	See below
Jamming Gear	Special	Jams radio signals within 100m
Suitcase Nuclear Device	Rare	

Lockpick Gun

This gun fires metal rods to destroy an ordinary lock, though high security locks in metallic doors are resistant.

Locator Bug

A locator bug is a small device about 1cm across that transmits its location to a receiver with a range of about 10km.

Satellite Phone

A satellite phone skips local mobile phone networks to communicate directly through satellites, meaning it can be used where there is no signal (if above ground), and it cannot be traced.

Explosives

Regular explosives annihilate a target at point blank range, does 3d6 damage at close range (10m). An Athletics check at DC9 is made to avoid D6+3 damage at near range (30m). Smaller explosives are also available. When detonated, they annihilate what they are touching, and do 2d6 damage to everyone in Point Blank range of the target. At close range, possible victims need a DC6 Athletics check to avoid d6+2 damage.

Vehicles

For vehicles, use common sense to decide speed, number of passengers and so on.

Item	Availability	Notes
Motorcycle	Normal	
Cheap Car	Normal	
Pickup Truck	Normal	
Speedboat	Normal	
Luxury Car	Restricted	
Motor Home	Restricted	
Sports Car	Restricted	
Armoured Car	Special	Armour 4
Helicopter	Special	
Small Aeroplane	Special	
Yacht	Special	
Private Jet	Rare	

Weapons and Armour

A weapon with Melee Range can only affect a target in the same zone. One with Short Range reaches two zones, and Long Range three zones. Some stunts and special equipment can increase this.

Item	Availability	Damage Modifier	Range	Notes
Unarmed	N/A	-2	Point Blank	
Baseball Bat	Normal	-1	Point Blank	
Knife	Normal	-1	Point Blank	
Machete	Normal	0	Point Blank	
Hairspray and Lighter	Normal	0	Point Blank	Explodes or fizzles on d6 roll of 1.
Crossbow	Restricted	0	Near	
Katana	Restricted	+1	Point Blank	
Laser Sight	Restricted			Reduced cost to extend range by 1, reduced Hit Threshold by 1.
Silencer	Restricted			
Smoke Grenade	Restricted		Near	Fills area with smoke.

Bulletproof Vest	Restricted			Damage Resistance 2 vs. firearms, 1 vs. cutting weapons
Pistol	Restricted	+1	Near	+3 damage at point blank range
Shotgun	Restricted	.+1	Near	+4 damage at point blank range, +0 at near range.
Hunting Rifle	Restricted	+1	Long	
Grenade	Special		Near	
Flash Grenade	Special		Near	
Body Armour	Special			Damage Resistance 3 vs. firearms, explosives, -1 to physical abilities except Pilot, Driving, Shooting
Concealed Armour	Special			Damage Resistance 1 vs. firearms
Heavy Rifle	Special	+2	Long	
Disguised Pistol	Special	0	Near	Appears to be a watch, pen, or similar.
Submachine Gun	Special	0	Near	Can use autofire.
Assault Rifle	Special	0	Long	Can use autofire.
Flame Thrower	Special	0	Near	See below
Rocket Launcher	Special		Long	See below

Grenades

An ordinary grenade does 2d6 damage to everyone in Point Blank range of the target. At close range, possible victims need a DC6 Athletics check to avoid d6+2 damage.

A Flash Grenade blinds everyone in range for a scene; DC8 Health or Athletics test (or protective eyewear) avoids this.

Flame Thrower

Against a target in close range, a second subsequent hit does +2 damage. It cannot be used at point blank range.

Rocket Launcher

Annihilates the target and everything within point blank range, and does 3d6 damage at close range (10m). An Athletics check at DC9 is made to avoid D6+3 damage at near range (30m).

5: Combat

Combat is divided into rounds of a few seconds each. Each round, a character can act once, usually to make an attack.

Initiative

At the start of a fight, each character says what ability they are using in the first round. This decides *Initiative*- the order in which people act. Characters with guns go before characters using melee attacks. Characters who have weapons ready (or are using Hand to Hand) go before those who don't. Otherwise, proceed in order of the ability score, from highest to lowest. Ties go to the player characters.

Initiative is fixed for the fight's duration.

Attack

An attack is an ability test with a combat ability against a DC called the opponent's Hit Threshold. Those with some combat training (including the player characters) have a Hit Threshold of 3, or 4 if their Athletics ability is 8 or more. Ordinary people have a Hit Threshold of 2; monsters might have a higher Hit Threshold still.

Damage

If an attack succeeds it does d6 damage, plus a weapon's damage modifier (to a minimum of 1). Armour might absorb some of this damage. The rest is subtracted from a character's Health.

Ordinary NPCs die at 0 Health. PCs have more of a chance, as do major NPCs at the GM's option.

At Health 0 to -5, a character is Hurt; they need a test each round at a DC equal to the amount Health is below 0 to stay conscious. Further, all actions have a -1 penalty.

At Health -6 to -11, a character is seriously injured. They still need a Health check to stay conscious, but even if they succeed, they can't fight or move quickly. The above -1 penalty remains to other actions, and use of Investigative abilities always requires a spend in this state. Further, unless they receive medical treatment, they lose 1 Health every 30 minutes.

At Health -12 or lower, a character is dead.

A character can exert themselves, reducing their Health further (to a deadly -12 minimum) for a bonus to their test made to stay Conscious.

Special Rules

Autofire

When using a weapon with autofire, such as a submachine gun, after a successful attack, a character can spend 3 points from the Shooting pool to do an extra d6 damage to the victim or nearby target. This is allowed any number of times.

Called Shots

For a called shot to do extra damage, add +2 to the Hit Threshold; if the attack succeeds, do +2 damage.

A called shot at +3 to the Hit Threshold can also be used to disarm with Hand to Hand or Weapons.

Cover

In a firefight, participants are assumed to be taking some cover. If a character is fully exposed, they

have -1 to their Hit Threshold.

If full cover is available, a character can only be attacked when they pop up to shoot. In this case add +1 to their Hit Threshold.

Critical Hits

If an attack exceeds the Hit Threshold by 5 or more, and the die roll is a 6, do an extra d6 damage.

Extra Attacks

An extra attack can be made after a successful hit. It requires a relevant combat ability of 8 or more. With Hand to Hand or Weapons, spend 3 from Hand to Hand or Weapons, and 2 from Health to make a second attack immediately. With Guns, spend 4 points from Shooting and 1 from Stability.

If a different target is chosen for the extra attack, add +2 to the Hit Threshold.

Healing

To deal first aid, spend points from the Medic ability; one point from Medic restores two Health for a character who is not seriously injured. Without spending points, first aid can heal one Health point. Health also regenerates at a rate of 2 per day of restful activity.

A DC 3 Medic test (DC 5 for self-treatment) stabilises a seriously injured character, preventing further Health loss. A seriously injured character needs hospital treatment; one day per point of Health below zero. On release, they are fully healed.

Held at Gunpoint

If one character holds another at gunpoint, and decides to shoot (for example through being charged), they make one attack that automatically hits for triple damage. A successful distraction reduces this to normal combat; the gunman will still get to act first.

Mooks

Mook combatants have a Hit Threshold of 3 and a Health of 3. They may or may not have further combat ability pools.

Jump In

To Jump in, spend 4 Athletics pool points, or 3 Shooting, Hand to Hand, or Weapons. This lets a character act immediately, regardless of initiative. Afterwards, that character stays where they acted in the initiative order (unless they use *Jump In*) a second time.

Range

There are five abstract ranges:

Point Blank	In arm's reach.
Close	10m or so.
Near	Up to 30m.
Long Range	Up to 100m.
Extended	Up to 500m

Moving between point blank and close range is automatic at the end of the round if desired. Moving between two other neighbouring ranges...

A character can spend 2 Shooting pool points to extend the range of a gun by one range category for a

single attack.

Running Away

To run away from a fight, instead of attacking, roll an Athletics check at DC3 plus the number of enemies. On a failure get automatic damage from the opponent with the highest damage value.

An opponent who is directly engaged can spend 3 from the Athletics pool to block instead of taking another action.

Sniping

A character with a Shooting Ability of 8 or higher can take a round to aim with a rifle to get a +1 bonus to the next attack, or +2 if a target is unaware.

Surprise

Someone taken by surprise in combat acts last in initiative, and has +2DC to their first action.

Using Investigative Abilities

Use of Investigative Abilities during a fight must be narrated and plausible, but is allowed by any player character, whether or not they are directly involved. An Investigative Ability can only be used once per fight by any character; two characters cannot use the same one.

This use of the ability requires a spend, but refreshes 3 points to the pool of a combat ability.

6: Chases

A *chase* consists of a *Pursuer* and a *Runner*. At the start of a chase, there is a *Lead* of 5 between them. If the Lead increases to 10, the Runner gets away. If the Lead is reduced to 0, the Runner is caught.

A chase consists of a series of rounds, in which both Runner and Pursuer make checks in a relevant general Ability against DC4. If one side has an Ability of 8 or more, and the other doesn't, add +1 to all their rolls. If one side is faster than the other (but not so much faster a chases makes no sense) add +1 to all their rolls.

- If the Runner succeeds in a check, and the Pursuer fails, increase the Lead by 2.
- If the Pursuer succeeds in a check, and the Runner fails, decrease the Lead by 2.
- If both sides succeed or fail in a check, and the Runner has a better result, increase the Lead by 1.
- If both sides succeed or fail in a check, and the Pursuer has a better result, decrease the Lead by 1.

The opposition in a chase will have a pool in the relevant ability as follows.

Opposition	Ability in Chase
Militia or thugs	2 to 3
Trained professionals; cops or soldiers	4 to 5
Elite professionals, special forces	6 to 8

Special Tricks and Notes

Attacking in a Chase

For a vehicle passenger in a chase, attacking with ranged weapons is possible; add +1 to the Hit Threshold. Range is close at Lead 1 to 2, near at Lead 3 to 6, and long at Lead 7 to 9.

If the person making the Ability checks in the chase (ie: the one driving, or shooting if running on foot) wants to attack, they must spend 3 points from Shooting or their chase ability, and suffer +1 to the DC of a chase test that round.

Shooting out tires on a car is possible on a called shot. A car with one punctured tire has +1 to the DC of all Chase tests. A car with two punctured tires crashes.

Multiple Pursuers

For multiple player characters pursuing (and not just because they are in the same vehicle, in which case the driver is in charge), treat as Cooperation. For multiple opponents, simply combine their ability pools, with a total spend from the pool equivalent to one opponent meaning they drop out.

Swerve

A swerve is a dangerous trick. It can be used by either side. Raise the DC by 1 for the check. The result of the check has double the usual effects in modifying the Lead. If the Lead goes to 0 or 10, the chase ends spectacularly.

Using Investigative Abilities

Use of Investigative Abilities during a chase must be narrated and plausible, but is allowed by any player character, whether or not they are directly involved. An Investigative Ability can only be used

once per chase by any character; two characters cannot use the same one.

This use of the ability requires a spend, but refreshes 3 points to the pool of the ability used in the chase.

7: Stability

For an instant challenging mental equilibrium, make a DC4 Stability check. Failure results in Stability loss as follows:

2: Typical shock; base level of Stability loss.

+1: Exceptionally grisly.

+2: Large Scale

+2: Supernatural

+2: Involves Network Contact

+3: Involves Loved One

+3: Commit Atrocity Yourself

If Stability is reduced to 0 or below, a character is shaken. They can't make Investigation spends, and have +1DC for all general abilities.

If Stability is reduced to -6 or below, a character is shattered, suffering from a mental illness. Lose 1 Stability permanently.

If Stability is reduced to -12, the character is incurably insane, but is allowed one last lucid act.

Recovering Stability

- Once per session, if you gain some benefit from a source of Stability, refresh 2 points of Stability.
- At the end of an operation, recover all Stability if you have time to relax.
- Spend points from the Shrink ability; one point from Shrink restores two Stability.
- Spend two points of Stability to have a character suffering from Stability loss or mental illness act normally for a scene.

Mental Illness

The first time a character is shattered, the mental illness is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or Addictive Disorder. The second time it is Obsession or Paranoia.

Each subsequent incident raises the DC of Stability checks to resist the effects of the mental illness by 1.

- **PTSD:** Make a DC4 Stability test when something occurs reminding you of the incident that caused the problem. On failure, freeze up for next 15 minutes.
- **Addictive Disorder:** Choose a fix. When it is not available, a DC4 Stability check is needed to avoid dropping everything to pursue the fix.
- **Obsession** (Examples on page 84): Take 6 points from general abilities; put them into a new ability, Obsession, which can only be used to indulge that obsession (this may actually sometimes be useful). When presented with an opportunity to indulge the obsession, a DC4 Stability check must be made to resist.
- **Paranoia:** A DC4 Stability test is needed to avoid ridiculous and time-consuming precautions. Add 1 to the cost of any Interpersonal or Academic investigative spends. Can spend Stability pool on Surveillance.

8: Heat

The group of agents begin with 1 Heat. Heat can be gained as follows.

- +1 Heat: Typical crimes that will eventually be noticed. Keeping a high profile. Failed cover.
- +2 Heat: Conspicuous crimes, immediately noticable crimes.
- +3 Heat: Crime attracting major media attention. Killing someone influential.
- +4 Heat: Killing a police officer or government agent (of country you're in).
- +5 Heat: Assassination of major political figure.

Heat can also be lost.

Elapsed Time: -1 Heat after 72 hours without police sightings or contact. Another -1 after a week. A final -1 after 3 months. Note that anything that gains Heat stops the clock here.

Changing Jurisdiction: -1 Heat when moving to a closely associated country. -2 Heat if fellow EU member but no closer connection. -3 Heat otherwise, or -4 if extremely remote.

Make a Deal with an Official, Frame Someone Else: This might remove all or almost all Heat, but needs to be played out.

Effects of Heat

Heat level is the DC of checks to avoid official notice- or even mundane things like get through ID checks.

Once per session, roll d6. If the result is Heat or less, the agents have attracted additional police attention; a squad is likely to appear, armed (and with numbers) according to the perceived danger the agents represent.