Skillicide:

Lets face it, it's high time to face the fact that 90% of people reading this will think I am making up the diving skill.

In a game where one of the primary ways to differentiate PCs is skills, having too restrictive and overlapping a skill list where everyone is kinda samey is only trumped by a far too bloated skill list where skills are sub-divided to the point where 90% won't see play because having a skill dedicated specifically to forging paper documents in a setting where paper documents doesn't exist is dumb, causing no one to use these skills that were too subdivided in favor of the powerful, broad skills, causing everyone to end up kinda samey while also making entire areas of expertise worthless.

The intent of the skillicide is to remove every 'useless' skill in the game, as well as consolidating useful skills down so that it only takes 1 skill to be good at a generally broad concept, such as how all aspects of surgery, including implantation surgery and maintenance, are part of medicine. Some skills were merged into skillgroups as well, based both on thematic links and in an attempt to make having high ranks in a 'utility' skill group dramatically helpful and hold up either an archetype or a 'sub-archetype' single handedly. Ideally, it should now be possible to build a type of character who could use any of the skills in the game without feeling like a putz. Because seriously... there was a skill dedicated to scuba equipment that was entirely separate from the skill to operate efficiently in water.

While there is justification to have these skills be separate, because it is possible for someone to be say... skilled as a cyber-implant repairman but for them to also have no knowledge of how to actually cut someone open, this isn't a good argument for subdividing skills until they are toothless. Every skill in the game can be subdivided, but no one is chomping at the bit to make 5 separate versions of perception because it is technically possible to be keen eyed but not so great at hearing or whatever. The point of a skill mechanically is to be a useful bundle of power that allows a PC the ability to accomplish a range of tasks related to that skill that might crop up, or to accomplish a very specific task that will definitely come up. Not to realistically simulate the fact that being a trained rescue swimmer doesn't mean you know how to use scuba equipment. In the end, that isn't even how thematically skills work in fiction! The reason vet-tech was removed was because it was never useful to the story OR the mechanics to have a version of medicine that only worked on animals, and likewise it isn't useful to the fiction to have a version of medicine that only works on cyber or bioware.

The terminology "Merged into" in reference to a skill merging into a skill means that the skill being merged no longer exists, and all aspects of and references to the skill in the context of the merger now refer to the skill it was merged into.

When a skill is 'merged into' a skill group, the skill is now one of the skills awarded by the skill group if one takes ranks in the skill group, in addition to existing as a separate skill.

- All engineering skills merged into single engineering skill, called Engineering.
- Armorer, engineering, and demolitions are now part of the new fabrication skill group.
- The Biotech and Cybertech skills are merged into the Medicine skill.
- The biotech skill group now includes Chemistry.
- Freefall is merged into gymnastics.

- Forgery is merged into the computers and artisan skills. All electronic forgery, including forgery of specific hard coding such as on a credstick, document forgery, or emulating a specific person's programming or persona style, are merged into computers. All physical forgery, such as forging paintings, graphic designs, handwriting, or documents and seals, are now aspects of Artisan. In extremely rare cases some forgery require other skills, to create the object to be tampered into the forgery, such as making a counterfeit firearm or vehicle, but in general it should only require computers or artisan, even if the forged item includes some machinery. Even if the forgery requires another skill (Such as engineering to make a convincing vintage car) any form of documentation such as certificates or comcodes would require one of the two forgery skills.
- Diving is merged into swim.
 Seriously what the hell?
- Navigation and Tracking merged into a new skill, the Pathfinder Skill, which includes both wilderness and urban wayfinding, tracking, and stalking.

In essence, if you are trying to find a place or a person, be it via word on the street about that crazy chick with the holographic hair, learning what the most happening yakuza club is, or physically tracking footsteps, you use pathfinder. Note that pathfinder is about finding things you don't already know about, and it is still possible to obtain answers from knowledge skills that pathfinder might give you, because it turns out your PC already knew the answer or could find out with a minor amount of research!

- Pathfinder and Animal handling are merged into the outdoors skill group
- Pilot Aerospace and Aircraft merged into Pilot Flight
- All piloting skills are now merged into a new skill group: Vehicular piloting
 The utility of having a bunch of different piloting skills isn't really that great, and
 this also allows people to be incompetent in piloting skills again. I can personally
 attest to the hilarity that is watching someone roll to program a grid-guide
 destination.
- Instruction is merged into leadership
- Astral combat and assensing merged into new skill: Astral control. Astral Control uses Intuition
 when used to assense, and willpower when used for astral combat.

Intercept Buff:

If you were mugged in the street by a knife mugger, you wouldn't just ignore the knife, run away 12 meters every 3 seconds, dodge 60% of the attacks they made against you which only came at 1-2 stabs every 3 seconds, absorb most of the damage of a hit, and just attempt to escape by sprinting. You would hand over your wallet.

Melee is infinitely better than it was in 4e, but it's still sorta... not well done, and as that example shows doesn't remotely reflect the danger of a dedicated assailant trying to harm you. While a knife doesn't necessarily have to be more lethal than a firearm, it should still be scary to be attacked, especially

by a skilled opponent. Furthermore with the way rules work right now there is never a reason to care that you are shooting inside close combat, due to how pathetic the penalty is. In fact, if you were an equally skilled swordsman and gunman, right now even if you were fighting someone face to face, your chance to hit would be LOWERED by switching to melee, simply because the penalty to shoot inside a fight is lower than the gain in hit rate caused by automatic fire.

However, at the same time, this is a game about badass superhumans, and forcing every street sam, or even PC in general, to be afraid of a thug with a knife goes against the spirit of the game. Instead of directly increasing the lethality of attacks, this change attempts to expose non-melee combatants to more attacks if they ignore the melee combatant. A thug with a knife still won't be a serious threat to most PCs, but now a badass samurai getting up close to someone is seriously terrifying.

- The intercept interrupt action now costs 0 initiative to use, and may be used once on any given target between the user's passes.
- The intercept interrupt can now be taken any time the target takes an action other than the following actions: Making a melee attack, casting a spell with the range of touch, or firing a pistol with the close quarters firearms martial arts technique, or any other action the GM deems is sufficiently focused on the close combat in question to not expose the PC to an attack.
- The intercept action now allows the user to spend movement points to follow the person who
 triggered the intercept, unless that movement would take them through the reach of another
 opponent, or if such movement would require an action to complete, such as climbing or jumping
 over something.
- Intercept attacks can be made with a called shot, clinch, touch only attack, subduing attack, flying
 kick attack, full offense attack, herding attack, or half sword attack. If one uses a herding attack
 they may not continue to follow the opponent, and if one uses a half sword attack they will need
 to ready their weapon again to use it in an intercept, or use another readied weapon or unarmed
 attack..
- Intercept attacks can't be made while prone (without making a kip-up attack), are at 0 or lower initiative, or are otherwise incapacitated.
- Intercept attacks can only be made with melee weapons or unarmed attacks, even if the user has close quarters firearms with a pistol.

Club Buff:

I get that we have a cultural attachment to swords but this is somewhat ridiculous.

Clubs are severely undertuned in an understandable fetishim of swords. However, contrary to popular belief, bludgeons are actually fantastic weapons used by more than just cavemen and angry mobs. And... seriously... you ever been hit by a baseball bat? The response is not "Hey... that tickles!"

That said, a serious buff to club damage would just errode the difference between blades and clubs. And shadowrun isn't a simulation anyway, otherwise the katana would have *positive* AP. Instead,

this will focus on the "thematics" of clubs, mainly the fact they smack people around and don't cut, as well as acting as a general accuracy increase to some of the lighter clubs, while increasing the damage of low accuracy clubs.

The intent of this change was to make it so that clubs now are more competitive with blades, but vary more widely in statlines, making more sacrifices for size than blades to, with small clubs still struggling in accuracy and large clubs not being quite as lethal as blades, but still hitting extremely hard and allowing more versatility in which damage track you hit at any given time. Electric clubs are now significantly more accurate and lethal, both because they lost their utility in being stun only clubs, and because they need to compete with stick and shock ammo and the stun glove.

Upon attacking with any club that deals lethal damage, the attacker may declare the attack to
deal stun damage, as they strike to disable. This does not require any action in addition to the
action used to attack, does not change the damage code of the weapon otherwise, and doesn't
apply a penalty to the attack roll.

A lighter club may just be a strike across the side, while a heavier club like a sledgehammer may be used to thrust into the gut rather than shatter all the bones in someone's body. This is ultimately about keeping clubs in their thematic and in universe niche as a potentially less lethal attack, which makes them more "socially acceptable" than blades, rather than being a perfect simulation, which SR isn't.

 When using the sweep martial art with a club, the user may treat the DV as lethal damage, rather than stun. If the attack's modified DV is lower than the target's armor, it is still downgraded to stun damage.

Remember when Sauron just swung his mace around and people were flung out of the way and crumpled like tissue paper in The Lord of The Rings? It's kinda

- Any form of shield now uses clubs to attack.
- Battering rams now use clubs to attack. The fluid motion ram has an accuracy of 4 when swung.
- The stun baton now has an accuracy of 5, and a base DV of 12.
- The club now has an accuracy of 6.
- The extendable baton now has an accuracy of 5.
- The Nemesis Arms Maul Stun Staff now has a base accuracy of 7, and a base DV of 12.
- The Staff now has an accuracy of 7.
- Telescoping staves have an accuracy of 6.
- Chains now have an accuracy of 5.
 This represents a normal, but sturdy, chain, and not a specialized chain weapon.

- Sledge Hammers now have a DV of +5.
- Rifle Butts now have an accuracy of 5.
- Overclocked melee weapons no longer have a penalty to DV.

Overclocking is a regression of game design. Whoever wrote it seems to have forgotten the hard learned lesson of the 4e stunball: Dealing stun damage is NOT a cost, it is a benefit, and it is not worth a gain in drain value, or a loss in damage, to deal mandatory lethal.

Mage changes: Psyche out:

Maybe you shouldn't be allowed to sustain... ALL the buffs just with a drug and a power foci?

Buffs are literally the strongest and highest cost to value ratio enhancement in the game of SR. This is fine, it's a good design choice, because nominally buffs are someone else giving up something to help the team. It's fun teamplay! It's good for the game! Yay! But.... the issue is that SR for a while has given mages tools to easily remove the costs to their buffs, making buff focused mages completely overwhelming. The main culprits of this are: Quickening being a complete joke of a mechanic that must be destroyed, psyche causing the sustaining penalty to become trivial, and then power foci overwhelming the remaining sustaining penalty (And causing other bad effects). That said, it is important to remember not every sustained spell is equal. Illusions and Detection is balanced around the idea of sustained spells being easy for the mage, while Manipulation and Health is just bonkers busted when it is. This change breaks up sustaining penalties to be based on spell type, gives some love to sustaining foci, and removes some chronically problematic elements from the game. Like quickening.

The goal is to allow sustained spells, even spells sustained on one's self, to exist, without allowing someone to trivially sustain a bunch of spells. Every buff sustained now has some opportunity cost attached more significant than just offsetting your casting dicepool that already blows past what you need, but if a mage is smart and is specific in what they want to do, they can still play a "Self buffing" mage. They just won't be able to trivially replace multiple forms of versatile augmentations at once without sacrificing their foci, and won't be able to completely emulate an entire augmentation suite at ALL on themselves without crippling their dice pools.

Furthermore, Manipulation is going to lose a lot of spells that were essentially combat spells in nature, a crass manipulation of the elements, that merely happened to last more than one turn. Combat is arguably the weakest category of spell, and despite receiving many buffs can't get past the fact that its name is a lie and it really doesn't hold all the combat effects. You're Not "Manipulating" anything by making a wall of fire or lighting something on fire with intense heat. You are creating a combat effect.

Power foci no longer exist.

Power foci are just supremely overtuned in value in a manner that is hard to remove. They fundamentally distort what foci are meant to be, and their primary limitation of high avail isn't meaningful in a system where you can just get the best power foci you can use by burning an edge and rebuying. Even using only 4 categories of spells and/or spirits makes power foci more karma efficient than any other type of foci, they totally destroy the purpose of most metamagic foci, and, of course, they are strictly optimal in terms of foci limit. The point of foci are being cool specialized mage tools, not a general purpose augmentation of terrifying potency.

Quickening is removed from the game.

I have personally seen Quickening destroy every game it touches. I have seen exactly one cool use of quickening, to permanently sustain an illusion to make a secret door. I have seen it directly kill the joy of SR in new player's hearts. It adds nothing even if you believe it can be "handled well," which I don't, and causes extreme harm to game balance and player enjoyment when miss handled. It serves no purpose, and must be destroyed.

- Mages may not use their magic in any way while channeling, which includes giving orders to their spirits other than the spirit they are channeling, sustaining spells, using adept powers, using counterspelling, activating command alchemy preparations, or utilizing foci.
- Manipulation spells now cause a sustaining penalty of -3 per spell. Combat, detection, and illusion spells now cause a sustaining penalty of -1 per spell.

Manipulation spells are, spell for spell, generally the strongest spells to sustain per game because they do an amazing amount of things per-spell. A manipulation mage could enslave a large group trivially for at least a few turns starting out, and with some overcasting could do so indefinitely. Because manipulation spells are individually "heavier" in effect while sustained, sustaining them should be bigger too.

Likewise, detection, illusion, and the new combat spells tend to be really limited in scope compared to health spells, or in the case of illusion magic are designed to generally have a lot of spells in play at once. While analyze device is a potent buff, its limited scope is clear compared to spells like increase reflexes or attribute. Detection and combat spells have smaller effects when sustained, and illusion spells need to work in concert, so their sustaining "weights" are lighter.

 Sustaining foci now remove a total sustaining penalty equal to their force from the caster, rather than sustaining individual spells, from spells that match the sustaining focus's category.

Sustaining foci were always mathematically a bad deal, because you generally would rather get +1 to the effects of all your buffs, rather than removing the sustaining penalty of one spell, if you are doing a purely physical action. If doing a magic action, any +1 buff to casting rolls is clearly superior to the chance to remove a single -2 (or -1 with psyche) penalty per spell. Sustaining foci took multiple force of foci to handle small penalties, while spellcasting foci just gave you power per force. These new foci still don't surpass specialized casting or summoning foci if your want to focus on magical stuff most of the time, but are significantly more useful for buffing yourself.

 Psyche now offsets a total of -2 sustaining penalties, rather than changing the cost of sustaining spells.

Psyche was a deceptively disruptive effect that completely changed the value of sustained spells. By halving the penalty, it made sustained effects, which were already significantly stronger than all other mundane or magical augmentations, twice as strong. Now as long as a buff provided at least 2 dice to whatever you wanted to do, it was inherently obvious to use it, and you could compensate for other buffs that didn't affect dice pools directly with a mere 1 extra net hit on your other buffs, or only 1 more dice in the case of unbuffable activities like magic. Worse, because magic dice were already super inflated compared to how many you needed, psyche just pushed buff mages to 3.5 cleric levels of insanity.

Powerblade, Manablade, elemental wall, elemental aura, pulse, sterilize, interference, and ignite
are all now combat spells. They maintain their functionality as manipulation spells for their actual

behavior (such as how they are resisted) but are now combat spells for the purposes of mentors, specializations, sustaining penalties, and foci.

Combat magic is about tossing around mystical energy to break stuff or destroy things. The fact that it is more nuanced than "Lightning bolt to the face" shouldn't change that. You're not manipulating anything by frying electronics, you are attacking them. Elemental aura thematically and mechanically is about smashing stuff with fire and lightning at the end of the day!

Adept changes: The way of the pure

Burnout is the path to easy power. Purity is the hard path. But it should still lead to power.

Adepts have an issue where their rewards for maintaining max magic don't really... exist. Or they are just really bad. This change is an attempt to make it so that maintaining one's magic is better, without infringing on the niches of burnouts and mundanes. It mostly consists of changing some powers to proc off of magic, or changing powers that currently activate off magic to be better.

- Any power that is activated by making a skill+attribute test, such as wall running, may be activated using magic instead of the listed attribute, if the adept wishes.
- Attribute Boost now has a flat drain value of 2, regardless of how many ranks an adept has in it.
- Attribute boost now affects all values affected by the boosted stat besides condition tracks, including melee damage, movement speed, soak, and initiative.
- An adept may now activate multiple attribute boosts as one action. They must still resist the drain for each of them individually.
- Berserk now lasts for a number of turns chosen when activating the power, up to magic x2, and causes drain equal to 1/4th the number of turns the adept remained berserk, rounded up, to a minimum of 2.
- Blind fighting now totally removes the fighting blind penalty.
 As if getting not vision based methods of seeing was hard in SR.
- When activating adrenaline surge the adept may now choose how many ranks of the
 power to apply, only gaining the additional initiative equal to the number of ranks used,
 and likewise only taking drain based on the number of ranks used.
- Improved physical attribute now costs 1 PP for the first level, and .5 PP for each additional level, limited to ½ the adept's magic in ranks.
- Improved sense now lacks ranks, and gives an adept a number of senses from the options provided equal to ½ their magic, rounded down.

- An adept may now take improved sense to emulate augmentations that apply a dice bonus as well as having additional effects, such as a cybernose. The improved sense does not apply the dice pool bonus, but does grant other features, like the cyber nose's ability to ignore certain scents and to gain additional information humans are normally incapable of obtaining from scent.
- Pain resistance now costs a flat .25 and allows an adept to ignore pain penalties equal to ½ of their magic score.
- Elemental body now has a drain value of the number of initiative passes the power was used. The adept's magic no longer factors into the drain.
- Adepts may learn adept spell any number of times.
- Kiai is a flat .5 cost power and is rolled using the adept's magic+intimidate, rather than magic+kiai
- Voice control is now a .25 PP power with no levels, that grants +1 to impersonate tests, and +1 to social limit.
- Master archer costs .5 PP.

Adept changes: The way of the way

If you follow a way, that is your way, no two ways about it!

Ways are a great mechanic that help encourage adepts to both remain pure and remain thematic, granting amazing abilities that tend to scale with magic, and discounts that get larger the more magic you have. However, at their extreme cost, they eat too much of an adept's quality karma, crowding out an adept's quality choices. This creates an issue where an adept clearly is following a way, but for mechanical reasons can't start with one.

Furthermore, many of the higher end way powers are needlessly gated. And, worse, some way powers are clearly intended to be archetype defining in a way that makes it hard to justify a character leaving gen without them while being set up to use them effectively.

- Adept ways have their cost reduced to 10 karma.
- Totem form no longer requires Attune Animal
- Hot Qi no longer requires living focus.
- The claw metamagic now requires one rank of Body Control
- The invisible way and the speakers way can apply their discount bonus to Body Control
- An adept may no longer buy a 'way retroactively post gen for base karma cost, and must now pay double karma cost like any other quality, for a total cost of 20 karma.

New Quality: Embodiment of the way: Cost: 5 karma.Requirements: Any adept way. You
embody your way to such a degree that you may purchase one, and only one, of its
initiatory powers as if it were a 1 PP power. This quality is only available at character
generation, and may not be taken for powers that require initiate grades to function at all,
such as air walking or presence.

This quality is intended to make Apex predator and supernatural prowess builds more viable out of the gate, though there is no particular reason to only be limited to these build defining powers, if thematically you really want your adept to have master of the nine chakras or barrage if that is your thing!

Burnout 'Ware changes: Essence shred!

Burnouts are an integral part of lore, literally the first archetype ever presented to a player ever, in the first edition of shadowrun. But while burnouts existing is fine, them being "the default" really sucks. So what to do? Make the REALLY abusive crap hurt awakened more!

Credit to /u/LeVentNoir for this one. The idea is simple: Don't punish burnouts for burning out directly, but make sure anything that gets *really* crazy in the hands of a mage or adept costs more essence, to make it a bigger investment on their part. This also now makes it possible to actually burn out without going sub 1 essence with no initiations.

• Each piece of 'ware with the essence shred tag reduces the user's magic permanently by 1, and their maximum magic by 1, for each piece of 'ware with essence shred they have. This is in addition to the magic loss caused by 'essence loss.

For example, if an adept took 2 pieces of essence shred 'ware, spent a total of 1 essence, and lacked the exceptional magic quality and had no initiations, their maximum magic would be 3, and their magic would be 3 lower than its starting value. -2 for 2 pieces of essence shred 'ware, and -1 for essence loss.

- If 'ware with essence shred is removed, the user's maximum magic is restored, but their current magic is not.
- If a user replaces an essence shred 'ware with another essence shred 'ware, (Such as an
 upgrade), their current magic does not go down unless it is currently above their new maximum
 magic score.
- The following 'ware now has the essence shred tag: Muscle replacement, muscle toner, muscle augmentation, and pain editors.
- When buying magic or resonance, the cost is calculated as if your magic was your current magic, plus 1 for every point of magic you currently have burnt out. Ex: If you had burnt out 2 magic points by buying rating 1 muscle toner and essence shredding, reducing your magic to 4, then initiated, and tried to buy up magic to 5, you would need to pay karma as if your magic was 6 for the increase. If you then remove the muscle toner, the cost to raise your magic from 5 to 6 is still calculated as if you still had the 2 magic you lost. If you raised your magic to 7, its cap, and then installed an essence shred 'ware again, losing 1 magic because you were over the cap caused by essence

shred, and tried to initiate again, despite having lost that point of magic twice to essence shred, you are only treated as having burnt out twice, because you still only currently have lost 2 magic from your 'ware choices.

While doing things this way is harder on bookkeeping and always has rubbed me the wrong way, it just turns out the "discount" on raising magic that burning out grants you makes it too hard to balance. Now the cost of burning out is forever.

Rigger update: You can survive attacks now!

Hey you know those super badass cyberpunk drones you see in movies and TV? You know the Tachikoma? Want something as badass as that just scootin about? Well... have fun!

Riggers have a serious problem as a role because their main investments don't fundamentally change anything about drones to make them worth existing as a primary role. A rigger's control rig makes a drone go crazy in the offense department, sure, but offensive power in SR is not really all that special or unique, and rolling 1 extra dice on a samurai is objectively not worth the absolutely devastating loss of soak. The opportunity cost of being a rigger who rigs into a good drone and is supported by other drones is... not being a samurai who just has drones following them and an RCC. While having lots of drones is always going to be dubious due to its cost to the players at the table in time, the least we can do is make the control rig actually do some serious work in making your personal drone survivable.

Furthermore, decker-rigger hybrids work again, because while splitting those roles could be considered good, making sure they never can be combined ever ever never is stupid.

 Control rigs now grant automatic hits on defense tests equal to their rating on attacks made on the vehicle or drone the rigger is jumped into.

Yes, now you can casually sidestrafe out of a dead on burst of high velocity ammuni- I mean APDS ammo sprayed right to your face, just like in your Japanese Animes!

Technomancer Update: Let's get functional out of the gate!

Stop gating things behind submersion.... Stop gating things behind submersion!

Technomancers flounder extremely hard out of the gate due to many vital functions of technomancy being locked to submersion, and an overdependence on sustained complex forms. Furthermore, many intended technomancer builds are either crippled because they can't be genned for due to being echo dependant, or require you to build your PC in a nonsensical way lore wise for an echo your PC hasn't ever had for their entire life.

- Technomancers may now slave devices to themselves, in the same way that other devices may, using their resonance score as their device rating.
- All technomancers are treated as if they were running the wrapper and bootstrap programs at all times.

It makes no sense that a matrix freak show who breaks all the rules at will has to stick to the standard form factors for themselves. Bootstrap is just too important a program to gate behind echoes.

• New quality: Machine Synthesis, 10 karma. Requirements: Technomancer. You are able to emulate the enhanced connection of a control rig, allowing you to jump into drones as if you had an control rig and gaining the benefits of a control rig of rating 2. You don't gain a datajack.

Rigger technomancers now function out of chargen thus justifying them starting with rigging skills!

- The mind over machine echo no longer has ranks, and instead of granting the technomancer the effect of a control rig, gives the technomancer a +1 to their control rig's rating, to a maximum of 3
- Mind Machine Interface no longer exists.

It was errata sold as content, describes literally any ASIST powered technology, and is the lamer name of the two! Three strikes, you're out!

- Pulse storm lasts until the target resets their device. If the device is not a persona and is put
 offline by noise, it remains offline for a number of minutes equal to the amount the noise caused
 by pulse storm was over its rating before it resets and comes back online.
- Resonance Veil now functions against OS gained by opposed matrix tests.

Cleaner was objectively better for noise over time, functioned against noise caused by opposed actions, causes no drain if used properly, and the fact it required actions was almost never relevant.

- Transcendent Grid no longer allows people to target the user as if they were on their grid, and
 instead causes ALL matrix users targeting the user with hostile matrix actions to take the off grid
 penalty, regardless of what grid they are on.
- Tattletale now works on targets without OS. It does not cause their OS to start increasing over time if they did not already perform an illegal action.
- The Otaku to Technomancer quality is renamed to Deep Resonance Connection.

Naming qualities after incredibly important fluff aspects that they have no connection to directly on a mechanical level encourages nonsensical characters and enforces an 'optimal" character background. It should NEVER be done.