

Dune RPG

A Hack of the Cortex Plus Firefly System

Dune, by Frank Herbert, is possibly the best novel in all of science fiction. Fans like myself wished for a good system to come along to properly represent the things that we loved about the novel, but the one highly anticipated try fell short and went out of business not long after putting out an unfinished and unplayable core book. I'm looking at you, Last Unicorn Games. So here is my best shot. Cortex Plus Action Firefly is a great base. The Cortex Plus Firefly RPG is required to use this hack.

The Skills section is modified to better reflect the Duneiverse. I also added Strategize to cover the goings on in Dune from the politics of the Imperium to the plans of assassins to open war on the battlefield.

In creating this hack, I went through the Dune novel and designed a new Distinction every time that I saw something in the book that wasn't adequately covered by the Firefly system. Any Firefly Distinctions that the GM decides will work in the game are allowed, though you may want to change their names to be more "Duneish."

I added a category of Distinctions - Advanced. The idea behind them is that they have a prerequisite of one other Distinction in order to take on that Advanced Distinction. The prerequisite Distinction doesn't need to be maintained, but the skills that got the character to that point in the first place may be integral in being successful in the Advanced Distinction. The Advanced Distinctions are also positions of high responsibility. If your character is interested in taking on those Distinctions, they have to understand that they have become more duty-bound and less autonomous than they were before taking it. Your GM may even require the entire campaign to change directions from the characters being out in the field, so to say, to being the leaders of the people who are out in the field. Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown, as the saying goes.

The last section - Special Rules For Dune - is just that. Some things that are important or prominent in Dune weren't easily represented using the standard Cortex Plus Action ruleset. Poison is now just another weapon in a killer's arsenal. Body-shields are another form of armor, so to speak, with their own drawbacks. And The Voice - without which a Dune RPG wouldn't be the same - is represented, but with serious limitations to keep its use from getting out of control and dominating

the game. It was, after all, a very subtle and rarefied skill even in the book. I've also added a Mentat Calculation section for group participation in a Mentat's doings. Why should the Mentats have all of the fun?

Well, there you go. I hope that you enjoy playing this Cortex Plus hack!

Skills

Craft: Build, create, and assemble items from scratch or from basic components.

Drive: Operate land and surface vehicles, including animals, boats, hover cars...and worms.

Fight: Attack with your weapons or body in close combat.

Fix: Patch up and repair objects with working, replaceable parts. Jury-rigging is more difficult.

Fly: Pilot thopters, spotters, carryalls, and other airborne vehicles.

Focus: Concentrate on a subject to steel your will, intimidate, or find a new solution.

Influence: Persuade others to do, think, act, or feel the way you want them to.

Know (Specialty): Represents general knowledge about the Imperium.

Labor: Lift, push, dig, pull, and haul in tasks that require manual labor.

Move: Run, sprint, jump, and climb.

Notice: Spot someone or something out of the ordinary.

Operate: Use mechanical devices ranging from spice refiners to distrans to hunter-seekers.

Perform: Act, sing, play an instrument, or put on a big show to impress or entertain.

Shoot: Fire stunners, lasguns, maula pistols—weapons you point and shoot.

Sneak: Camouflage yourself and sneak past opponents. Sneakily.

Strategize: Think up or counter plans in order to accomplish things from making money to fighting battles.

Survive: Endure less-than-ideal conditions and live to tell the tale.

Throw: Toss things like a knife or throw opponents across the room.

Treat: Heal people by treating injuries or counseling them.

Trick: Spin a yarn or con an opponent. Also covers sleight of hand.

Distinctions

Roles

Affable Noble

In the Imperium, there is a place for every man and every man in his place. It just so happens that, within this structure, you are at the higher end as a member of the noble class. Your very presence inspires those subordinate to you. At the same time, your vassals expect great things of you and will do their part to make it so. By default, the noble rank associated with this Distinction is baronet.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Noblesse Oblige: Double your Influence for the rest of the scene when you physically or socially defend a vassal from a non-vassal.
- Born To Greatness: When in the same scene as a vassal of your House, you may make use of their Plot Points if they approve.

Highlighted Skills: Focus, Influence, Strategize

Agent

Intelligence doesn't come to nobles and spymasters on its own. To obtain the information needed to form strategies and plot against their enemies, such people need to have Agents in the field gathering it. Agents are constantly behind enemy lines - in their keeps, in their courts, and consorting with their people. And when they aren't spying on the enemy, they spy on their own to root out traitors and sympathizers.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Sacrifice the Pawn: Take any Asset that you put on the table off in order to create an I Can Explain D6 Asset.
- Purloined Intel: Gain 1 PP when you acquire an important piece of intelligence.

Highlighted Skills: Influence, Notice, Trick

Assassin

An assassin is intimately educated in the Handbook of Assassins and all poisons and devices thereof. When they kill, there is no duel involved and the target likely only realizes that the assassin was there with their dying breath, if that. They attack from the shadows or with remote devices or poison and there is one attack before the target is dead and the Assassin is already moving toward their escape point.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Hunter-seeker: Spend 1 PP to step up or double your Operate for the rest of the scene while using an assassination device.
- Poison Adept: Step back your Fight to step up or double your Trick when trying to surreptitiously poison food, drink, or a weapon.

Highlighted Skills: Know, Operate, Sneak

Bene Gesserit

You are a member of the Bene Gesserit Sisterhood and trained in their ways - controlling their own bodies completely (even being able to open palm-locks), noticing minutiae, the knowledge of

languages and codes long since forgotten by others, deadly combat, and a mastery of politics. Bene Gesserit may only be females and are bound to duty to the Sisterhood for life.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Prana Bindu: Complete control over one's own body - every muscle, organ, and blood vessel. Manipulate one's own body (heart-rate, temperature, joints) away from the norm, then step back Physical for the rest of the scene.
- The Voice: The ability to enter into a Voice Action. Take or step up an Interfering Witch Complication when doing so.

Highlighted Skills: Influence, Know, Notice

Concubine / Consort

You are the legal concubine or consort of a noble. While you are not married, and indeed the noble in question may have a spouse, many of the benefits that come from being the spouse of a noble are conferred upon you as well. An heir may come from your union, but a child created by an actual spouse will outrank your own.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Ear of the Noble: When trying to persuade your liege or one of their vassals to your point of view, take or step up a Meddler Complication to double your Influence die.
- Household Staff: Spend 1 PP to summon a Bodyguard d8 or Servant d8 Asset.

Highlighted Skills: Influence, Know, Treat

Disdainful Noble

In the Imperium, there is a place for every man and every man in his place. It just so happens that, within this structure, you are at the higher end as a member of the noble class. And everyone subordinate to you had better recognize it! You have the power of life and death over no few individuals, which helps to keep them in line. It also increases the likelihood that they are plotting against you at any given time. Let them try! They will wish they'd stuck to boot-licking when you're done with them.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Plots Within Plots: Take or step up a Plotting Vassal Complication to double your Influence or Focus for the rest of the scene.
- Aumas Or Musky: Not only are your underlings plotting against you, but so are your equals and superiors. Double Notice to detect poison in food or drink. When you do detect poison, take or step up an Overreaching Paranoia d6 or an Almost A Corpse d6 Complication.

Highlighted Skills: Focus, Strategize, Trick

Duelist

You are an expert at single combat. During a duel, two combatants face one another with a similar weapon or weapons, uninterrupted by outside interference. Their fight is a test of pure skill and to watch true duelists face off is an elegant experience.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Master Cut: Spend 1 PP to reroll any Complications made on an armed attack roll.
- Coup de Grace: In an effort to deliver a killing blow and finish off an opponent, step up and double Fight for one attack, then step it back for the rest of the scene.

Highlighted Skills: Fight, Focus, Move

Fremen

An inhabitant of Arrakis and member of a tribe of the Zensunni. You are a master of desert survival, you are a worm-rider, and were nearly born with a crysknife in your hand.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Water Discipline: While wearing a stillsuit, spend 1 PP to create a Full Catch-pockets d8 Asset.
- Crysknife Mastery: When wielding a crysknife, step back Marksmanship for the rest of the scene to double Fight for one round of combat.

Highlighted Skills: Drive, Fight, Survive

Guard

Be it at a military base, noble's stronghold, Fremen sietch or any other place where security is essential, there will be guards.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Mobilization: Spend 1PP to order a Squad of Guards d8 to a specific location.
- Devil In The Details: Gain 1 PP when you succeed in a Notice roll and note a hidden, illicit item on someone that they were trying to conceal and sneak past you while in your capacity as a guard. Weapons, poisons, and the like. You must either call them out on the item or attempt to take it from their person in order to earn the Plot Point.

Highlighted Skills: Fight, Notice, Shoot

Mentat

You are a human computer. Observation, strategy, and logical reasoning are your strengths. While others may be taken unawares by a sudden turn of events, you've calculated what your opponent was going to do and have already planned for it. Your ability to observe seemingly unrelated events, put them together, and predict their outcomes can give others the impression that you possess prescient abilities at times. It is simply the power of the evolved mind, though.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Plans Within Plans: Spend 1 PP to turn any strategy-based Complication into an Asset for the rest of the scene.
- Third-tier Calculation: When you fail on a roll that could have been prevented by a prediction based on a mentat calculation, explain how you would have altered the calculation - what you would have had in place to change the outcome to a positive one. Spend 1 PP and create a new d8 Asset (person, plan, strategy, or thing) representing what you would have brought to the plan and reroll. If you succeed, the failed roll was simply your mental simulation of how it could have happened had you not adjusted your calculation. Whether you succeed or fail, take or step up an Impaired Efficiency Complication after the reroll.

Highlighted Skills: Focus, Notice, Strategize

Propaganda Officer

How will the masses know what to think about their liege? How will they know how well that they are governed if no one tells them? The key to governing House or Imperium is to have just the right information available to the masses to belay any negative, "false" news coming their way. Every solari that is put into filmbase factories is returned tenfold in good favor.

- Use as d4 instead of d8

- All Hail: Spend 1 PP to create a Propaganda Distribution d8 Asset.
- The Payoff: Take a Propaganda Distribution Asset off of the table to step up and double your Influence or Trick for your next action.

Highlighted Skills: Focus, Influence, Trick

Sardaukar

The brutal shock-troops in the direct service of the Emperor, the mere mention of the word Sardaukar is enough to paralyze most citizens of the Imperium with fear. Though few are aware, Sardaukar are pulled from the ranks of those who survive and thrive on the prison planet of Salusa Secundus. The horrible conditions there as well as the training that they receive forms the individual into a soldier of unrivaled skill and brutality, should they survive the ordeals.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Concealed Arms: Sardaukar conceal many weapons on their person, from shigawire garrotes to small knives. Put two false toenails together plus another secreted item and it becomes a transmitter. Spend 1 PP to create a communication device or a concealed weapon d8 Asset, even after you have been successfully searched.
- Unmitigated Brutality: Create a Combat Focus d8 Asset when you kill three enemies in a single scene. Also spend 1 PP to make it a d10 Asset.

Highlighted Skills: Fight, Focus, Shoot

Servant

To serve and to serve well is an honorable profession in the Imperium. You either serve a single person or a small group of them. You make sure that their clothing is picked out for the day and dress them, ensure that their food is prepared the way that they like it, and that others understand that your master WILL get what they want.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- I Live To Serve: Take or step up an I Know My Place d6 Complication to step up or double Labor or Treat.
- Trustworthy Face: Not only are you known to be an obedient servant, but you look the part. Sometimes, though, twisting the truth a bit is just what is needed to get what your master needs. Step back Focus to step up Trick for the rest of the scene.

Highlighted Skills: Know, Labor, Sneak

Soldier

The battlefield is your home, war is your sustenance, and death is your trade. Your blade, your stunner, and your shield never leave your side; They are a part of you as surely as is your right arm. Through training and combat, you have been exposed to both brutality and extreme exhaustion and have come out the other side all the stronger and more capable.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Well-Maintained: If the weapon has been cleaned, calibrated, and/or sharpened that day, add a Precision Maintained d6 Asset to any roll to recover from a weapon-related Complication.
- Combat Discipline: If you have a d10 or higher Physical Complication, you may add your Focus to any roll to avoid being Taken Out.

Highlighted Skills: Fight, Shoot, Throw

Spice Hunter

The spice melange does not harvest itself. It takes resourceful, brave, and ambitious men and women who don't mind getting their hands dirty or sand in their boots to do so. The best crews - who earn a percentage of the profits from spice harvested - can retire from Arrakis with great wealth. They can just as easily die, though, forgotten in its sands.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Worm-Sign: Gain 1 PP when you spot worm-sign while on a spice-harvester or spotter vehicle.
- Worn-Out Harvester: Step back Notice to step up or double Fix or Labor for the rest of the scene.

Highlighted Skills: Fix, Notice, Operate

Smuggler

Access to a thing of value, the ability to hide that thing to avoid taxes and levies, and transportation of that thing to buyers is the equation that every Smuggler has in mind on their way to becoming rich. To make this happen, one must have a network of contacts, a flexible moral disposition, fast ships, and nerves of steel. The Imperium and its law enforcers do not take kindly to others profiting where they should have been taxed to add to the Emperor's coffers.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Touch of Graft: Spend 1 PP to put a Well-Placed Bribe d8 Asset on the table.
- Guild Connections: Take or step up a Guild Lackey d6 Complication to transport a shipment of goods or people from planetside to an orbiting Guild highliner with no questions asked.

Highlighted Skills: Fly, Influence, Trick

Suk

You are a healer of the highest rank within the Imperium. Your skill to cure and heal is nearly unmatched. As a Suk, you are also conditioned against the taking of life - it is literally impossible for you. There is a reason that only a Suk is allowed inside the Emperor's body-shield. All Suks, by law, are required to wear the diamond tattoo representing Imperial Conditioning on their forehead.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Miracle Worker: Spend 1 PP to reroll a failed Treat roll.
- Imperial Conditioning: When your Imperial Conditioning puts you in a dire situation because you could not kill, gain 1 PP.

Highlighted Skills: Know, Operate, Treat

Troubador

You have a song or tale for nearly every situation. You may play an instrument or you may let your voice alone make the music for you. You can raise spirits, commiserate with those who are mourning, or calm the savage breast.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Caladanian Girls: Make a successful Perform roll (with the Difficulty die based on how grim the present mood is) and describe what you do or the words to the song. If successful, and the other Players at your (real-life) gaming table like what you describe and approve of it, put a Good Spirits d6 Asset on the table.
- Spin A Yarn: Your encyclopedic knowledge of songs and tales (tall and otherwise) gives you a quick wit. In fact, sometimes it's just easier to con someone than it is to make a good case

for a person to do what you want. Step back Influence to step up Trick for the rest of the scene.

Highlighted Skills: Influence, Perform, Trick

Background

Bene Gesserit Influence

You are not a Bene Gesserit - and may not even be female - but you have had some very basic training from members of the Sisterhood. You may not know the Weirding Ways of combat or use of the Voice, but you do know when others are using them and you recognize the subtle signs of Bene Gesserit training in others.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Fear Is the Mind-Killer: When stepping back a fear-related Complication with an Opportunity, step it back twice when you can recite the Litany Against Fear. Reciting the Litany can also be used to trigger a Recovery roll after being Taken Out by a fear-related Complication.
- Resist Voice: Step up Mental or Focus whenever the Voice is attempted on you.

Highlighted Skills: Know, Focus, Notice

Harkonnen Captive

Whether as a prisoner or slave of House Harkonnen, you have suffered under them and have been scarred - likely mentally, physically, and emotionally. Regardless, you survived the experience and know the Harkonnen as few others could and have an insight into the way that they think.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Great Trauma: Gain 1 PP when you choose not to act in an Action round (physical, social, or mental), putting yourself or others in danger or giving the other party the upper hand, due to experiencing a flashback to your captivity. Describe the flashback briefly.
- Hark Hatred: Act rashly in hopes of harming a Harkonnen (physically, mentally, or socially), putting yourself, a negotiation, or social occasion in danger in order to step up Fight or Focus for the rest of the scene.

Highlighted Skills: Focus, Labor, Survive

Personality

Dedicated Vassal

You not only serve a noble, your loyalty to them is unquestioned. You will serve to the very end, whatever that might mean.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- For My Liege: Gain 1 PP when you take on a Mental or Social Complication that was meant for one of the nobles who you serve. Role-play how you go about taking it onto yourself.
- Dare You Doubt Me: Spend 1 PP to create a Fervent Loyalist d8 Asset when your loyalty to your noble or the noble's fitness to hold their title or responsibility is called into question.

Highlighted Skills: Influence, Know, Treat

Honor Above All

There is nothing in your life that matters more to you than your family, House, and personal honor. Anyone who wishes to besmirch it will meet with dire consequences...as long as you have rank to call them out.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Call Him Out: Gain 1 PP when you do something to protect your honor (personal, family, or House), putting yourself in direct or potential physical danger in doing so.
- Honorable Control: Spend 1 PP to reroll a failed Social Test that would equate to a loss of face or honor.

Highlighted Skills: Fight, Focus, Strategize

Advanced

Bashar

Prerequisite Distinction: Sardaukar

Roughly the rank of colonel

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Lead From the Front: Most military units of the Great Houses are led by military lieutenants, but the Sardaukar lead from the front. When you go into battle ahead of your troops, engaging four or more ganged up enemy soldiers, put a Battle Inspiration d8 Asset on the table.
- Will of the Emperor: As if just being a Sardaukar shock troop wasn't reason enough to do as you say without hesitation, you speak with the backing of the Emperor of the Known Universe. Spend 1 PP to double your Focus when intimidating another individual.

Highlighted Skills: Fight, Focus, Strategize

Master of Assassins

Prerequisite Distinction: Assassin

An individual trained expertly enough in the ways of the assassin, and able to view the larger strategic picture, may also manage a cadre of assassins, strategically directing their use and targets to maximize the damage to another House. A Master of Assassins may also direct military units for more overt and forceful strikes against the enemy. They are indispensable advisors to any House conducting a War of Assassins.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Master's Guidance: When you communicate with and lend a die to an assassin under your command, spend 1 PP to step up or double it. Spend another PP to do both.
- Mind of the Assassin: Spend 1 PP to step up or double Mental when rolling Strategize or Notice for the rest of the scene when trying to place or root out assassins.

Highlighted Skills: Notice, Strategize, Trick

Naib

Prerequisite Distinction: Fremmen

Each Fremmen sietch has its own leader - a Naib, literally one who has vowed never to be taken alive by the enemy. To become the Naib of your sietch, you have to kill the present one.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- Test of Combat: As Naib, you have beaten the strongest of your sietch in mortal combat and all others are, by definition, weaker than you. Others will, occasionally, challenge your

position and attempt to take your position as Naib through combat. Gain 1 PP when you kill the challenger and maintain your position.

- **Claim of Water:** When your group kills an individual or group of non-Fremen, and you have access to a death-still (or when you are able to take the body to one), take the outlanders' water for the tribe and put a Claimed Water d8 Asset on the table. At the same time, create or step up a Fremen Bounty Complication.

Highlighted Skills: Influence, Survive, Strategize

Reverend Mother

Prerequisite Distinction: Bene Gesserit or Fremen (female)

A Bene Gesserit sister may at some point reach the level in their training that it is possible for them to transform the bile of a dying sandworm of Arrakis and survive the Spice Agony, awakening within them their Other Memory and leading to new levels of consciousness and understanding. The Fremen also produced Reverend Mothers. Owing to the intervention of the Bene Gesserit teachings and training in their culture many generations prior, there emerged a few women who could undergo the Spice Agony and survive, though lacking in the knowledge and other abilities that a traditional Reverend Mother possessed.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- **Other Memory:** You have the genetic memory of your entire female line at your disposal. Other Reverend Mothers, as they died, may also have passed their own Other Memory onto you as well. Take a Know specialty that you don't already have for the rest of the scene by taking or stepping up an Intruding Consciousness Complication.
- **Poison Immunity:** Having transformed the Water of Life, you can also counteract most other poisons. Spend 1 PP to step up or double Focus when resisting the effects of a poison. Spend an additional PP to do both.

Highlighted Skills: Know, Notice, Strategize

Warmaster

Prerequisite Distinction: Soldier

Each and every individual to attain the title of Warmaster is a hardened combat veteran with more medals of valor and scars than they can count. But being an expert in battlefield killing is not enough to call oneself a Warmaster - an intimate understanding of battlefield tactics, the psychology of soldiers (both friendly and enemy), and strategic innovation are all required. In addition to direct battlefield concerns, a Warmaster is also responsible for training the elite troops of a House.

- Use as d4 instead of d8
- **Military Genius:** Spend 1 PP to ignore a strategy-related Complication for one action.
- **Best of the Best:** Spend 1 PP to step up all of your Signature Assets that represent combat personnel for one round.

Highlighted Skills: Focus, Strategize, Treat

Special Rules For Dune

Poisons

Poisons are integral to the culture of Dune. In order to minimize civilian casualties during Wars of Assassins, the Great Convention authorized the use of specific poisons as one of its tools. Nobles are trained in their names and how to recognize them. Chaumurky is the general term for poison in drink, chaumas for poison in food, and basilia for poison injected into the bloodstream by blade or needle.

Characters should be aware, cautious, and afraid of poisons. But if poison detection rolls are taking up too much time at meals, either use just one roll for the entire scene or as GM honestly assure the players that no poison will come into play. Having these “safe-zones” come into play is a good idea if constant poison detection rolls are interrupting actual role-playing.

Just as no weapon Asset is required to attack another individual with a weapon under Cortex Plus rules, so does there not need to be an Asset when poison is used as the weapon when delivered through food or drink.

If an effort is made to detect poison, the base die pools are Mental + Notice versus the poisoner's Mental + Know (Poisons) or (Assassin's Handbook). In the case of an NPC on either side of the equation, roll their dice pool as normal for an NPC of that type. Any poison snoopers Asset is doubled for the detection roll.

Should any poison use be successful through ingestion, it is treated as an attack on the person. The poisoner's Mental + Know (Poisons) or Know (Assassin's Handbook) versus the victim's Physical + Focus. Again, if either party is an NPC, roll accordingly. Should the poison have a delayed effect, double the victim's Focus.

For basilia to be used on a blade or needle, it must be an actual Asset that is added to an attack roll and is resolved like any other attack. As opposed to chaumurky or chaumas, where the poison IS the attack, with basilia the poison is a secondary part of the attack and the best way to represent that is simply with an Asset. Basically, the attack roll determines whether or not one character cut/pierced and then harmed another character and a standard attack roll with a poison Asset answers that best.

Shields

Shields are used everywhere in Dune to the point where they are noted as being on constantly. Only Suks are allowed inside the Emperor's shield, Duke Leto worries initially about Kynes putting his hands on him inside his shield, the Baron Harkonnen is saved from poison gas by his shield being on, and Feyd was worried about his uncle slipping a blade past his shield as he walked away from him. They have also changed the face of combat and warfare - explosives and standard projectiles are useless against a shielded individual. And it's the slow blade that penetrates the shield.

Optional Body-Shield Rule: Shield Distortion

Whenever employing a shield device Asset, an Environmental Factor called Shield Distortion D6 is automatically put into place for the user that should affect only Notice rolls. While the shield may protect a person, it also interferes with their senses, which should affect Notice rolls. The shield shimmers and warps slightly, interfering with sight. Sounds are dulled by the shield. And the smell of ozone is quickly overpowering to a shield user. The idea here is to give a character a reason to have their shield off at one time or another.

If a character role-plays using a shield, but does not use an actual shield Asset, no Environmental Factor is applied. Just as a shield is considered to be factored into a combat interaction when there is no actual shield Asset, the same goes for the Environmental Factor portion when it comes to Notice-based actions.

Any use of a shield device in the desert of Arrakis - Asset or no - results in the first Complication the group acquires during that scene being Enrage Sandworm D6. This may be stepped up as the characters roll more complications in the scene at the GM's discretion.

It should be noted that the interaction between a body-shield and a lasgun is capital-B Bad. One or both sides (shield-wearer or lasgun wielder) may be instantly vaporized or there may be an atomic blast. A shield around a structure, though, is too large to be shorted out by a lasgun and is in no danger of causing these effects.

The Voice

Throughout Dune, the Voice is a powerful tool employed by the Bene Gesserit (and Paul) to give a subject an order ("Remove her gag") or a suggestion ("No need to fight over me") that they find themselves compelled to follow. The command or suggestion cannot be one that would cause the target to harm themselves, but it can be one that puts them in danger of harm.

Because the tone used is catered specifically to one individual's range, this is not something that can be employed on a group.

While the Voice is not a widely known skill of the Bene Gesserit and it is not directly obvious that it is being employed, those in the know do have a chance to detect its use. If anyone antagonistic to the Bene Gesserit does successfully notice its use, the Interfering Witch Complication is automatically stepped up. The Complication may only be stepped up once in this manner per Voice Action.

The Voice Action itself is made by the Bene Gesserit rolling Mental + Influence + the Bene Gesserit Distinction + any Assets that apply. If the action involves a suggestion and not a direct order, Influence is doubled.

The resisting roll is Mental + Focus + any Distinctions or Assets that apply. If the action would cause the target to put themselves in danger, the resisting roll gets to double Focus.

If the resisting roll beats the Voice roll, this turns into an Extended Action where the Bene Gesserit rolls again, attempting to raise the stakes on the resisting roll and so on until one or the other fails to raise the stakes.

If the Voice Action is successful, the target must act appropriately for one action. Suggestions are open to the target's interpretation. For example, "No need to fight over me" may cause a cruel and violent individual to kill their comrade, while a gentle individual may be reinforced simply to not fight.

If the target wins the action, they feel no compulsion and the Interfering Witch Complication is stepped up.

Mentat Calculation

In play, I found that when it came to RPing out a Mentat calculation, a system very similar to Leverage's Mastermind end roll worked very well.

Have the non-Mentat characters gather data through various bits of RP and tests. When the Mentat is ready to make the calculation, all contributing characters roll an action based on the nature of the data that they are providing.

After the contributors are done, the Mentat character then makes an Intelligence + Focus roll, with an additional D6 for every successful roll by the contributors. The result of the roll determines how deeply the Mentat sees through the plans within plans surrounding them.

The GM then gives the Mentat the result of their calculation.