

Gathering Knowledge in TFT

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[Updated for the released Legacy Edition rules]

I made a simple system for research and knowledge for a game I'm running in another system that I think would work very well in TFT and it would give players **another solid reason to round out their characters with non-combat talents** (I count at least [10 skills in my skill list](#) that could work for this) because they would actually **do something** in the game (social conflicts being a significant additional reason for choosing non-combat talents). Without rules, **research is completely subjective** and there's not much reason for a player to spend points on the talents that might help with it. The rules should work for any type of research such as

- library research
- searching a house for clues
- interviewing people on the street
- checking with contacts in your guild
- navigating a bureaucracy
- torturing a prisoner for information
- ...

Here's an example of interrogation as a form of research.

Bob: I want to interrogate the goblin to find out everything I can about their motives

GM: OK, you have Interrogation and you're way stronger than the goblin but she's very wily, it may not be as easy as you think. Roll vs IQ+1

Bob: (rolls 3 dice and gets a 12) Just made it with a 12

GM: (rolls 3 dice and gets a 13) You find out that "they are raiding the town for revenge" and you get one clarifying question

Bob: (consults with other players) Revenge for what?

GM: The townsfolk killed their children in their campsite two weeks ago

This technique creates a dialogue between the GM and the players in which the players end up giving the GM clues about their view of the story. This provides insight into the players' expectations and desires and gives the GM a chance to tailor the story and may provide inspiration for new story developments or direction. Actually, this technique can be the primary driver for a story, with the GM starting play with only one scene and no idea where the story will go.

The results should only be what they could conceivably figure out or find by using their technique. If the character is using an extraordinary technique, like divination, then they should be able to find out things mundane techniques could not find out. Try to make sure the results fit the technique. Also, the results represent everything the characters found out using that angle of investigation, research, divination, etc. Further attempts in the same vein will not yield more useful information, they'll need a different approach to gain more, probably only after following the leads from the current attempt.

This technique shouldn't generally be used as a way to reveal fixed clues to the players, holding back those clues unless they succeed at dice rolls. Rather, the idea here is to make the investigation process a dynamic way to drive the story and communicate about the story in-game. I.e. information is almost always made up on the spot by the GM when the player makes the roll and performing an investigation or divination should be initiated by the players, not planned ahead by the GM.

1. Perform the investigation

Roll vs attribute using skill

The player uses their skill or ability and rolls against the appropriate attribute, potentially with a modifier determined by the GM. Success usually helps both the players and the GM, as indicated above, so imposing a debilitating modifier is usually counterproductive for the story.

2. On Success, GM provides a phrase

This characterizes the results

This should be a phrase or short sentence that answers the investigation in general terms. The answer should be useful and not misleading. If the players don't understand simple things like what a pronoun is referring to, etc., the GM should clarify those things.

3. Find number of clarifying questions

Player can ask 1-3 questions (4 with critical success)

The number of clarifying questions the player can ask normally depends on how well they rolled (skills or abilities may differ in the specifics). All the players should be allowed to brainstorm to help the investigator ask good questions and they should be allowed to brainstorm after each answer. Here is the normal number of questions for different margins of success.

NOTE: for opposed rolls where you succeed and the opponent fails, add 1 to the number of questions, 2 if they rolled a 17, and 3 if they rolled an 18.

Margin of Success	Number of questions
0-5	1
6-9	2
10+ (or roll of 4)	3
roll of 3	4

4. Answer clarifying questions with phrases

Each answer is a helpful, 5 "word" phrase

In this phrase, single concepts each count as one word. Phrases can be shorter if more words are not helpful)

Each noun (person, place, thing, date, etc.) is one word, regardless of how many real words it takes to communicate it.

Any words that could be omitted and have the phrase still make sense ("a", "an", "the", etc.), like a newspaper headline, don't count towards the total.

Try to use punctuation instead of words and/or rearrange the phrase to make it as small as possible. For example, you might be able to change a phrase that ends with “on June 12” by putting “June 12:” at the beginning.

In the first example, the GM answered the example question with the words "townsfolk", "killed", "children", "campsite", and "two-weeks-ago" and then sprinkled in some modifiers and articles to convert it to English. Instead of "their", the GM could have used, "the goblins" as a modifier.

Knowledge works similarly except that the **player gets to declare** the phrase and potentially ask and **answer** some clarifying questions that represent the depth of their knowledge on the topic (at least that they can remember at the time). This is, of course, subject to GM approval. Example:

Angela: We're low on supplies but we're in a labyrinth that's been dug out and my character is a miner. Can I make some observations about the environment?

GM: OK, it's definitely a familiar environment for you, mining will give you +3 IQ...

Angela: (rolls 3/IQ and gets 13) Hmm...

GM: At least you rolled well enough to get one clarification. What's your declaration?

Angela: My declaration is, "The creatures here live off the environment so we should be able to as well"

GM: Clarifying question?

Angela: "Based on observations, where should the nearest drinkable water be?", answer: "this level"

GM: OK, that's a reasonable clarification and you're down two levels. Your character feels almost certain that a drinkable water supply is on this level...

The knowledge rules let the players use talents to spotlight their characters a little bit and also to flesh out the world in a tiny way (subject to GM approval).