EXIGENCY
Quick-start Guide

This document will help players select a premade 25XP (Level 5) Exigency character, or make one from scratch with the help of the GM.

Core Mechanics

Roll skill (1d20), then roll effect (minimum 1d6). Sometimes a challenge will only require one or the other: sometimes it will simply compare a flat value to the character's own stats. In most cases dice rolls will be altered by characters' attributes and talents and by situational modifiers.

A success in the Exigency system is called a hit. At its most basic, a hit deducts 1 Hit Point from the target's total, but with the right aspects it could also deliver a status effect: slowing a character down, tripping them, banishing them to another dimension. Lots of things can happen in the field.

Whenever an effect roll beats the Resistance value, apply one hit. If the roll is twice the value, apply two hits. If it's triple, apply 3, and so on. The maximum number of hits you can deliver at once is limited by your talent rank.

The values that oppose skill rolls are called **defences**, whether an abstract challenge or a character. The values that oppose effect rolls are called **Resistances**: Constitution, Reactions, Mind, each used to mitigate the effects of the oppositions' successful rolls.

Attributes affect virtually every check made in the game. Every character has six attribute scores, three physical and three mental, rated from 0 to 10 with 1 being average and 10 being demonstrably superhuman. Attributes can be Injured, halving their modifiers.

A **talent rank** (+1 to +5) is a straight bonus to your rolls, representing a broad ability set and not just raw skill. A talent is always a positive inclusion to a check, but they necessitate taking a particular approach or angle: some enemies might be more or less vulnerable to certain talents. A talent can be used in conjunction with any attribute, but the bonus granted by the rank can never be more than that granted by the attribute score. You lose access to your talents if you hit 0 HP, or if you're Exhausted.

An **aspect** is a special ability that otherwise differentiates your character from the default mechanics: what other systems sometimes call feats or perks. Some aspects merely grant bonuses to stats but others may allow you to perform actions that might not usually be available to your character. An aspect is tied to an attribute, and is lost if you suffer an Injury.

A **Resource** is a source of your abilities. High-tech equipment or implants, a reputation, martial arts training, mutations. They each come with their own set of drawbacks or complications.

Attributes and talents

Physical Attributes

Vitality [VIT]: Endurance, physical resilience, shrugging off fatigue, toxins or disease. Vitality is the primary physical attribute and thus influences a character's Hit Points [HP].

Strength [STR]: Raw physical power. A high Strength character can barge through opponents and obstacles and can wield and wear heavy equipment without penalty.

Agility [AGI]: Agility determines physical speed and gymnastic ability. A character with high Agility is adept at evading harm, be it in the form of dodging fire or avoiding detection.

Mental Attributes

Focus [FOC]: Focus governs your coordination, your perception of the world around you and your ability to operate unhindered by distractions. Focus is significant for any actions that require awareness and precision.

Willpower [WIL]: Daring, bravery, sheer force of personality. Serving as a broad saving throw and tiebreaker stat, Willpower is essential for psionic characters and those that wish to resist psionics.

Knowledge [KNO]: A catch-all mental attribute that also covers a character's ability to reason and assimilate the new. Knowledge is the primary mental attribute and thus influences a character's Hit Points [HP].

Talents

Bio: Everything biological. Treating and diagnosing ailments, survival, control of your own body.

Insight: Intuition and instinct, sensing and analysing. Striking evasive or hidden targets.

Melee: Holding your own in close quarters. Pushing through crowds, coping in chaotic situations.

Mobility: Jumping, climbing, running and keeping balance. Efficiency of movement.

Psi: Using and/or defending against psionic abilities. Understanding them and detecting their use.

Social: Communication and psychology. Etiquette, persuasion, threats.

Stealth: The ability to perform actions while avoiding detection. Espionage, ambushes, using cover.

Tech: Your grasp of technology: hacking, repairing, otherwise utilising.

Using talents with attributes

Some talents may seem inherently more physical or more mental than others, but they can still be attempted with any attribute depending on the circumstances. Remember that the bonus granted by a talent rank can never be higher than that granted by the attribute score! A talent is *always* a bonus, never a penalty, but certain enemies or challenges might be less (or more) vulnerable to particular talents.
Below are some examples of how talents can be used with attributes other than their default.

Mobility

AGI governs acrobatics and gymnastics but VIT might apply when the real challenge is overcoming fatigue; running a marathon, a forced march. Likewise STR could contribute to athletics; climbing, swimming, jumping.
WIL, as always, might be applicable when the trick is using the mind to push the body further. FOC and KNO may step in when the situation calls for plotting the most appropriate and most efficient path, of knowing one's limitations: perhaps literally looking before you leap!

> *Quarir had to admit the kid was faster than he was: but the spy decided to take the tunnel. When she emerged, Quarir dropped down behind her. Her shocked expression alone made his razorwire fence-hopping detour worth it... And, mercifully, all the scratches were on his back.*

Social

WIL is for passion and persuasion, KNO for painstaking diplomacy and appeals to rationality. FOC covers affinity, noticing and determining motives.
STR is obviously important to intimidation– using your physical power to back-up words of coercion– whereas VIT and AGI might determine a person's visible vigour and grace: their body language, their ability to perform physically. Whereas Stealth is the art of going unnoticed, perhaps Social can sometimes be the opposite.

> *Any juicer could **be** a berserker, but when the camera was on Johan people believed he was the noble hero of the dragon-riddled Yrtffgr Steppes. He could even pronounce Yrtffgr. Between that and his topless swordfighting audition, the producers hadn't even noticed his forged credentials.*

Tech

KNO is the knowledge and understanding of technology, but FOC might be used for more delicate repairs, or spotting the telltale microfractures in a starship's hull.
STR could be needed for hands-on mechanical work, doing heavy lifting, wrestling with clunky levers and ageing engines. AGI is the aptitude of the ace pilot, where the operator's speed is essential. VIT and WIL might both tie in to a user's capacity to withstand unpleasant (or dangerous) working conditions: the toxic plant, the radioactive drive room, the dubious mind-machine interface needed to stop the facility's ominous countdown.

> *With the resident telekinetic hospitalised and all cranes long since lost to the bombing, Innsley took her fighter apart and moved it, **by hand**, chunk by chunk, to the shipyard's launch platform. She wanted off the planet that badly.*

Aspects and Resources

An **aspect** grants some form of stat bonus or additional ability— what some systems sometimes call feats or perks. An aspect is tied to a specific attribute, and if that attribute suffers an Injury the aspect will be disabled until the Injury is addressed *in addition to* the Injury's listed penalty. It's feasible to tie all your aspects to the same attribute (often whichever is highest, as some aspects grant bonuses based off its score) but that will mean you're left without some of your special abilities if that attribute suffers an Injury.

A **Resource** is something that can serve as a source of your character's abilities and skills. A Resource can be Drained, meaning you can't use it in your next turn, or Compromised, which is a worse drawback and unique to the Resource type. But when the GM Compromises one of your Resources, they're usually obliged to give you an Edge Point as a sort of consolation prize!

A Compromised Resource is something dramatic and troublesome: your signature weapon is stolen and used to frame you, your famous reputation results in old enemies re-emerging, your amazing telekinetic abilities can be exploited by a dangerous telepath, and so on. Boss characters are especially likely to have the means to Compromise your Resources, subverting your strengths and turning them against you.

Resources can also grant tokens: a token generally has the power of an Edge Point but not the adaptability, i.e., a Surge token might only grant you the ability to heal, whereas Edge has additional uses (see "Challenge resolution and derivatives" section). A Resource token usually carries a small passive bonus, so it's up to the player whether to retain the bonus or spend the token. Beware! If a Resource with a token is Compromised, the token is lost *in addition* to the normal effect. To recover a spent or lost token you require time to rest and/or resupply.

Unlike attributes and talents, aspects and resources do not cost XP to purchase: but the maximum number you can have is restricted by your level, and several have prerequisites or limitations tied to your extant stats. That Hellfire cannon you've been eyeing might require Tech training and high STR to handle safely.

It's *possible* to make a character with neither aspects nor Resources, although it's not recommended. For example, a character's default Melee talent can only deal Fatigue hits unless it's improved by some sort of Resource: a special martial arts technique, a big knife, your mutant muscles, etc. Likewise your Social talent won't be as potent unless you have widespread contacts or a reputation to back it up, and so on.

Challenge resolution and derivatives

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Actions

Player characters are allocated a minor action and a standard action every turn or they may consume both to perform a full action. A full action usually applies the Priority status to the user, either because it's obvious and attention grabbing or slow and easier to interrupt. Some enemies have a smaller action allowance, some particularly dangerous bosses might have an even bigger one. Abilities defined as free actions don't eat into this allowance, but generally anything you do that can impact the game world requires you to spend an action.

By default, a minor move action shifts a character 1 tile, a standard action 2 tiles, and a full action 3 tiles. A tile in Exigency's grid is considered to be a large area of space that can hold many occupants. Sometimes tiles are designated as difficult or hazardous terrain and a character must pass some sort of check (usually Mobility) to pass through it safely and without consequence.

The action order in Exigency is determined by Initiative: and you only roll for Initiative if the opposition's challenge level matches or exceeds that of the party. Otherwise the PCs go first! In the Exigency system, an Initiative roll is not a set attribute or talent, it can vary depending on the circumstances (but of course an aspect that benefits Initiative will give its bonus regardless of the check being made).

Hits and Hit Points

You start with 5 **Hit Points**, or a number equal to your VIT+KNO if that's higher. A hit point is a measure of health, stamina, creativity, resourcefulness… in short, it's something you spend to avoid taking actual lasting harm. An attack that costs you HP might merely be a graze or cut or bruise, and abilities that spend HP require some level of exertion. Anything more severe is simulated with status effects: penalties to your modifiers, stuns that eat into your action allowance, and so on. When your HP hits 0, you lose access to your talent ranks and attacks that would normally only cost you HP will instead start to inflict persistent Injuries. You're just not capable of fully defending yourself anymore.

Your HP can also be spent to Empower abilities. By default an Empower lets you score an additional hit against a target you've already engaged or take ten on a d20 roll, but aspects can grant alternate abilities.

An Empower doesn't necessarily require you to spend additional actions, but you can only ever perform one in a turn unless otherwise stated.

Pretty much everyone and everything in the Exigency system has HP. A tree has HP, but not necessarily because you're trying to fight it. HP represent an obstacle or enemy's overall difficulty and complexity, and reducing that HP to zero represents overcoming it somehow: every hit marks a success, and shows you've made progress. But you can fight the tree if you really have to. Maybe the tree was being a jerk.

Hits come in three basic flavours: **Fatigue**, **Normal**, and **Lethal**, often abbreviated to **F N** and **L**. A Fatigue hit can *only* reduce HP and nothing else. A Normal hit reduces HP first, but will become Lethal if HP is at 0. And a Lethal hit is just bad news in general, putting a character in a critical state. In other words: if there is no one around to assist you you're in trouble. With this in mind GMs should use Lethal powers sparingly: even if someone helps you back up and you survive, you'll end up with a nasty Injury penalising one of your attributes.

Enemies and challenges come have three basic forms: mobs, elites, and bosses. Mobs can usually be overcome with F hits alone, but elites and bosses mirror player mechanics and cannot be defeated so easily. The maximum number of hits that you can deliver with an action is limited by your talent rank, to a minimum of 1: but this restriction doesn't apply versus mobs.

Resistances
Your attribute scores also determine your **Resistances**:

Constitution [Con] (VIT or STR)
Reactions [Rea] (AGI or FOC)
Mind [Mnd] (WIL or KNO)

Your **Defence** Capacity (or whatever you'd prefer to pretend DC stands for) is your "active" defence, used to challenge enemy skill rolls (rolling to-hit, the accuracy of an attack or ability). It's based off your highest Resistance and represents your ability to dodge, parry or otherwise frustrate enemy actions. DCs tend to be quite low: in the Exigency system you often have to mitigate hits instead of negating them entirely, although some character builds might have much higher Defence than usual.

If you spend a minor action to guard yourself or an ally, you can swap a Resistance's attribute for a 1d20 roll, but the roll will never be less than the attribute would've been. Unless it's a critical failure!

Talents are also included with your Resistance score if the incoming attack threatens the appropriate skillset. In turn, most attacks and special abilities make use of a talent.

Your damage reductions are **armour** and **resolve**. Each is determined by your STR/WIL scores respectively, but Resources can grant alternative values. Damage reductions effectively provide an extra bonus to your Resistances, although certain attacks might bypass some or all of it.

Pure attacks and Aggravated checks
The **Pure** trait means the attack or ability forgoes the normal skill roll vs defence/effect roll vs Resistance mechanic and challenges a stat directly: grapplers targeting STR, powerful psionic practitioners attacking WIL, and so on.

Sometimes you will be called upon to make an **Aggravated** check, which means you have to use the *lowest* attribute of a Resistance's pair. Aggravated checks don't allow you to include a talent rank.

GMs should take care not to overuse Aggravated and Pure effects. They should ideally be surprising and unexpected, and not just a way of frustrating any min-maxers in the party. Unless you think they deserve it.

Ability dice

Every talent has an associated **ability dice**, which starts at 1d6 but can be increased in size by high attribute scores and/or Resources. For example, your Melee AD determines the damage you can inflict with your bare hands (or feet or teeth if it comes to that). Generally your innate ability dice can only deal Fatigue damage (i.e., you can reduce enemy HP to 0 but do little else) and you'd need a Resource of some sort to overcome that limitation.

Ability dice are commonly used in Manoeuvres: actions that apply a status effect to a target. Manoeuvres also tend to have the Pure trait, so your 1d6 roll only needs to beat the target's STR score (or whatever) to apply its effect.

Status effects

There are many status effects in the Exigency system, but some of the most common/most important:

Advantage: Every turn, gain +2 to a single roll. Can be spent for +1d6 to a roll.
Drain: Disables the target Resource or aspect for 1 round.
Exhaustion: All your checks are Aggravated. Hitting 0 HP is one way to become Exhausted.
Exploit: A status an enemy can spend to guarantee one roll's success. Happens if you critically fail.
Exposed: Defence is halved (includes dice rolls when guarding) and cover is negated. Move tiles to end.
Injury: Halves an attribute's modifier, and disables any aspects tied to that attribute.
Knockdown: You can take no actions and every enemy can treat you as Vulnerable for one hit a turn.
Priority: Enemies gain +2 to a roll per turn and will prioritize you over others. Full actions apply this to you.
Resilience: Absorbs the listed number of hits. Does not affect Lethal hits.
Slowed: Removes minor action from a character's allowance for a number of turns
Stunned: Removes standard action from a character's allowance for a number of turns.
Vulnerable: For a certain number of hits (even Fatigue hits!) you'll take an additional 1N.
Wounded: Take 1F damage every round. Wounded + Exhaustion becomes an Injury.

Edge Points

In addition to your 5+ Hit Points you will also start with 3 **Edge Points**, which characters can spend on Edge powers, including but not limited to:

- Surge. Roll 1d20 + Constitution or Mind, healing 2HP plus another HP for every ten points rolled.
- Shield. Grants +20 armour (or resolve) for one turn, and reduces an incoming negative status effect by one category (Stunned downgraded to Slowed, and so on).
- Haste. Perform an additional standard action.

- Refresh. Take an encounter power off cooldown. You can do this repeatedly, but refreshing an encounter power for a second time costs 2EP, then 3EP for the third time, and so on.
- Life. Spending an Edge point can turn a Lethal hit into a Fatigue hit.
- Feat. Performing a Feat maximises a dice roll *and* lets you perform an Empower effect: either one granted by your abilities or adding another hit to a successful action.

You might also have additional Edge abilities available depending on your aspects. You recover 1 spent EP at the end of an encounter, and the GM will give you another whenever they Compromise one of your Resources. Resource tokens can potentially grant the same effects, although they're locked to a specific Edge power and can't be used to perform others. For example: a medkit that grants +1 to your Bio talent but can be consumed to mimic the Surge power.

The exception is the Life power: you can *always* spend any kind of token to avoid a Lethal hit, but you'll suffer 1 Fatigue hit instead. Sacrificing a token in this fashion might represent your armoured vest being blasted away, or your sword breaking during a parry, or even your suave demeanor crumbling in the face of unpleasantly detailed threats.

Criticals

If an action requires a skill (1d20) roll, it can critically hit or critically fail. A natural 20 is a critical hit: you may maximise your effect roll or you may apply a free Empower to any action in your turn. If you have additional or alternate **critical traits** granted by your aspects, you could invoke one of those instead.

A natural 1 is a critical failure: you gain the **Exploit** status effect. The Exploit status effect is persistent but can be spent by attackers to guarantee the success of one of their rolls or the failure of one of yours: their next attack will hit or you will fail the Constitution save against their poison, and so on. The Exploit can also serve as any other lesser status effect for the purposes of aspect abilities and passives. For this reason, when not spending the Exploit, attackers will usually dictate that it serves as Advantage to grant a passive +2 bonus to one of their rolls.

A critical failure (and therefore an Exploit) doesn't represent a PC's fumble so much as the enemy's ability to take advantage of an opening. Mobs don't even benefit from the Exploit that much: only elites and bosses may spend it. Think of a critical failure less as some massive mistake on the PC's part and more as evidence of a foe's competency and dangerousness. If an enemy has the ability to spend your Exploit and make your attack hit an ally, that's not because you're an incompetent fighter, it's because the enemy is a diabolical tactician, or illusionist, or a genetically-engineered nightmare that can grab you and use you as a club.

Premade characters

Pick a set of **attribute scores/talent ranks** and assign them to your attributes and talents in any order. Sample arrays:

4, 3, 2, 1, 1, 0 - Talent A +2, Talent B +1
3, 2, 2, 2, 2, 1 - Talent A +2, Talent B +2
3, 3, 2, 1, 1, 1 - Talent A +3, Talent B +1
4, 4, 1, 1, 1, 1 - Talent A +1
5, 2, 2, 1, 0, 0 - Talent A +2
4, 2, 1, 1, 0, 0 - Talent A +4

The Exigency system is freeform, but the below are offered for players who prefer to have a pool of classes or archetypes available to pick from.

The **Defender** is good at defusing tense situations. But when weapons are drawn they're the first to the frontline, using their unmatched survivability to protect others.

- Resilient, with ways of restoring allies' HP
- Guard actions can protect multiple characters
- Can assist allies by lowering the stats of enemies/challenges

The **Powerhouse** plunges into danger and reshapes the battlefield through brute force, demolishing cover or forcing enemies backwards.

- Has bonus armour *and* bonus armour piercing when using their favoured talent
- Can choose to stun foes or knock them back
- Excels versus inanimate objects or less mobile targets

The **Agent** dabbles in many things but is especially adept at reconnaissance. And assassination, if the mood takes them.

- An escapist with the means to quickly enter or leave dangerous encounters
- Potential to deal massive bonus damage when exploiting a specific weakness
- Can scout an area and grant allies environmental bonuses

The **Executioner** is vicious or pragmatic depending on who you ask, punishing the slightest mistakes and working themselves into an unstoppable frenzy.

- Gains buffs as they wound enemies/progress through challenges
- Access to counterattacks
- Can, appropriately enough, deal finishing blows to beat tough enemies and challenges

The **Specialist** performs consistently and persistently. Utterly single minded, they fill one niche brilliantly.

- The best there is at what they do (at the expense of everything else)
- Gains an encounter-long bonus to critical hit chance on a critical failure
- Has a special attack that isn't spent if it misses or critically hits

The **Hero** has a penchant for showboating and impractical moves but despite their egotism they're very capable of going toe to toe with strong opponents. You either love 'em or hate 'em.

- Can demoralise enemies or inspire allies simply by being there
- Excellent at fighting a single opponent at a time
- High risk, high reward

The **Mastermind** can adapt to any circumstance and turn it to their advantage, exposing weaknesses in enemy plans and shoring up their allies' abilities.

- Can fill virtually any role if given time to prepare
- Can refresh allied encounter powers
- Has tricks and tactics that can swap (de)buffs between friends and enemies

The **Blaster** can disperse crowds or bring buildings crashing down with their powers. There are also less violent avenues for their abilities, but those aren't quite as fun.

- Attacks affect all the occupants of a tile, and can rarely be dodged entirely
- Encounter powers allow for extremely high damage
- Superb crowd control and area denial

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VIT STR AGI FOC WILKNO

	Effect	Inj
❤	3	
✊	2	
⇒	2	
✿	3	
🛡	4	
❓	2	

WARPATH ● Passive

Gain a stacking +1 damage bonus for every N hit you inflict in the encounter. Once this counter reaches +5, it immediately resets to 0 but you recover 2HP.

COUNTER ● Empower

Tied to a guard action. Reduce incoming damage by 1 hit and deal 1 Normal hit to the attacker.

DEATHSTRIKE ● Encounter power

Interrupt, directed at a target you have just attacked or dealt damage to: deal an additional Lethal hit and push them back 1 tile. No save.