

By
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INTRODUCTION

A well coordinated team of con men rob a casino, using every apparent complication as part of their plan. Spies navigate a series of double crosses and betrayals at a dinner party, smoothly convincing a double agent to turn triple without ever throwing a punch. Thieves move silently through a well guarded installation, avoiding the gaze of every guard.

Films and shows like "Ocean's 11", "Mission: Impossible", and "Leverage" make capers incredibly entertaining to watch, but it can be difficult to capture that same excitement at the gaming table. Planning sessions can devolve into tedium, and the caper itself can feel like a normal dungeon crawl, without twists or surprises.

In this supplement, you're going to evoke the energy and mood of our favorite heists and capers, by breaking the game into three phases.

In Phase One, Players will choose from 4 possible approaches that form the basis of their caper. Then, they'll prep their approach. This phase guides the players through planning, making their scheme specific enough that they influence the narrative, but still leaving room for surprises.

In Phase Two, you'll run the caper! Starting the caper in media res (the middle of the action), the players successes or failures during Phase One determine if they started off on the right foot. You'll guide the players through challenges, which they'll overcome through a blend of skills, combat, and a special Flashback mechanic, mimicking the feel of our favorite films.

In Phase Three, the players will come together and execute their plan like clockwork, working together to get the score and escape before anyone is the wiser...

PHASE ONE: THE PLAN

Before starting their caper, the players will choose a job style, then make skill rolls to prep the job.

CAPER STYLES

Have the PCs choose between one of the following four capers:

CAPERS

Hit Job	Accomplish the Goal With Violence
Con Job	Lies and Deception to trick the mark
Heist	Stealth through the Caper
Work the Mark	Social Manipulation

In addition to affecting a roll made in Phase Two, this decision is letting you, as a DM, know what kinds of challenges you're going to provide the players with during the caper. If they choose a hit job, you're going to work out some combat encounters. A con job, you want to give them opportunities to lie, along with problems they might have to deal with if they're caught in a lie. For a heist, you want to give them some exciting places to sneak. If they choose Work the Mark, you want to give them interesting choices to make to get what they want.

THIS CONVERSATION IS THE PLAYERS TELLING YOU WHAT KIND OF GAME THEY WANT TO PLAY. LISTEN TO THEM!

Once they have decided on a style of caper, you're going to guide them into answering the following caper specific question in a broad way. Don't get caught up on details! You want them to give a one or two sentence answer.

HIT JOB

If the caper is "Hit Job", have them tell you the target and where they want the ambush to happen. Keep this loose. "We're hitting him at his house". "We are attacking her when her convoy is moving". You're not getting into details of who is hitting where, you just want to know what scene the players are expecting. "We're attacking in the alley," not "Well, the wizard and the rogue will be on the roof, the fighter will be behind the trash can....". You don't want to waste table time getting caught up on that.

CON JOB

If the caper is "Con Job", what is the method of deception? You want to broadly know what they're lying about, but not every detail in the con. "We want her to think I am her long lost uncle" is the perfect amount of detail. "I am going to pose as their bodyguard" is another great example. You don't need to know HOW they are deceiving yet, just what the core lie of the con is.

HEIST

If the method is "Heist", you want to know where they're sneaking in, and when. Players will be tempted to spend forty minutes arguing about if the east window or the west window is better. Don't let them. "We're hitting the wizards tower while everyone is distracted by the tournament", or "We're entering the archives through the sewers".

WORK THE MARK

If the method is "Work the Mark", you need to know what offer they are making to their mark. "We are going to seduce him to get the information we want". "We are going to blackmail them into opening the safe".

THE MARK-

In the context of a caper, a "Mark" is an intended victim or target.

PREPPING THE CAPER

Now, it's time to plan the caper. You are still keeping this fairly broad because during the caper itself you want to give the players an opportunity to surprise themselves and each other. What you're asking for is less about the nuances of what they plan to do during the heist and more about what the characters are doing to prepare.

Your goal is to guide each player into roleplaying or narrating a short scene, then have them each attempt one skill roll.

A PLANNING SKILL CHECK IN PLAY!

Ben, Brian, Leamon and Mike are planning a heist- they're going to sneak into a noble's estate to get to the safe on the top floor.

Ben: I want to figure out the best way in- can you draw up a map?

DM: Well, that's you figuring out the best way in, I want your character to do it. How is Sol-Radi the Rogue going to figure out the best way in?

Ben: Uh...I guess she's going to case the joint? Like, can she deliver a package, to take a look in the front door?

DM: Yeah, that's awesome. Roll insight to spot the best entrance while you're there, or deception to convince whoever is at the door you're on the level, whichever you're best at!

PLANNING SKILL CHECK EXAMPLES

Skill	Plan
Athletics	Dig a tunnel
Deception	Assume a false identity
Performance	Get hired as venue entertainment
Sleight of hand	Pickpocket guard keys the day before
Insight	Research the Mark

This portion of planning is a chance to let the players be creative- allow almost anything that would prompt a skill roll.

The skill roll DC is based on the security level of the caper target. (See table)

If the players skill roll hits the target, they may either contribute a +1 bonus to the Approach roll in Phase Two, or gain a point of inspiration to spend on a "Flashback Effect" in Phase Two. There are no negative effects for failing a roll- you don't want to discourage planning! However, players may only attempt one skill roll.

PHASE TWO: THE CAPER

The job is on! In Phase Two, you jump right into the action. After picking a "Face", a player will make an Approach roll to determine how smoothly the first steps of the caper went. Then, you'll place a series of complications in their way, which the PCs will navigate through skill checks, combat, and Flashback effects!

THE APPROACH ROLL

Players will pick a "Face". The Face is considered the leader- they'll be taking point on the first part of the caper. You start the caper in media res. To determine how well the first part of the caper went, the Face is going to make an Approach roll. The player will roll 1 d20, then add an attribute bonus based on their caper. (See table.)

FACE MODIFIER

Caper	Attribute Bonus
Hit Job	Strength
Con Job	Wisdom
Heist	Dexterity
Work the Mark	Charisma

The Face rolls the d20 then adds any skill bonus roll the team got for skill checks during Phase One. Then, they subtract an Approach modifier, based on the Marks security rank.

MARK SECURITY RANK

Security Rank	Approach Modifier	Skill DC	Mark Examples
1	-1	10	A Gullible Noble, A Merchant Storefront
2	-2	15	A Secured Bank, A Well Guarded Noble Home
3	-3	20	Xanathars Lair, Kolat's Tower
4	-4	25	Orcus' Tower, The Contract Room of Hell

A NOTE ON APPROACH MODIFIERS

The Approach modifiers on the table assume a party of 4-5 players. For especially large parties, you may want to impose a larger negative number, because more skill checks will be made during the planning phase. Also, for a grittier feeling game, increase all skill DCs by 5.

APPROACH ROLL RESULTS

After the Face has made the approach roll, you start the caper! You are starting right when the action does- we want capers to have a fast, exciting pace, so jump right into the first point of conflict.

An Approach result of 1-5 is considered a fumble, a huge complication has arisen. Before the caper proper can begin now, the players must deal with a problem outside of the method they chose. For instance, if they chose "Heist", something went wrong and they must have a combat encounter. If they chose "Work the Mark", something went wrong and they have to rely on deception.

FUMBLE COMPLICATION EXAMPLE

The PC's have decided to "Work the Mark"- they're going to be meeting with a Cassalantar sibling at a dinner party, and convince her to go double agent for them. On a normal engagement roll, we would just start the caper right at the party- but, since they fumbled, they're having a hard time getting in. The party is a bit more exclusive than they thought it was- now they've either got to sneak in through the back (Heist), Forge some invitations (Con Job) , or fight their way in (Hit job)!

On a result of 6-14, a minor complication has arisen. Give the PCs a scenario in the caper where they are using their chosen method (Hit job, con job, heist, work the mark), but because of whatever complication you've added, the first skill roll is made with disadvantage.

On a result of 15-20, the caper is going as expected for the PCs. Explain what the first challenge is, and allow the players to explain where their characters are in relation to it. The first skill roll is made with advantage.

A result of 21+ is a critical hit. Tell the players what the first challenge was and allow them to narrate how they easily passed it.

RUNNING THE CAPER

Running the caper should have a somewhat loose, improvisational DM style. Your goals should be to have 3-5 complications that stand between the team and what they are trying to accomplish. You'll want 1 complication that somehow ties into a skill roll they made while pre-planning- let them bypass this complication entirely so they feel slick. (An example: During the "Planning" Phase, a player used a persuade roll to make a friend inside. During the heist, look for or create an opportunity to have that friend get the team out of a jam.)

You'll want the majority of rolls or complications to be tied to the method they chose, with one or two from another method. For example, if they chose "Hit Job", you'll want roughly 3 fights, 1 stealth, and 1 deception encounter. For "Heist", 3 stealth encounters, 1 fight, 1 social. This isn't an exact science- you want to feel the pacing of the heist- but the main takeaway is that we want the "Planning" session to heavily influence this narrative, with a few surprises.

CAPER CHALLENGE EXAMPLES

Caper Complication

Hit Job Civilians Present

Heist Another team is attempting a heist at the same time

Work the Mark An opposing faction has leverage on the mark

Con Job The mark has an especially savvy friend monitoring the situation

Just like in the planning phase, the skill Roll DC during the Caper is determined by the "Security Rank" table.

USING FLASHBACKS

When confronted with a skill check the player is nervous about, a point of inspiration can be spent to flash back to the day before, and the player may then narrate how their character prepared for this eventuality.

Mechanically- The Flashback mechanic allows the player to spend a point of inspiration earned during the Phase One skill roll to substitute a requested skill roll for one of their choosing.

A FLASHBACK IN ACTION!

During the caper, Brian's character comes across a locked safe. His "Dexterity" score is low, so he's concerned he won't make the roll. Brian spends a point of inspiration to trigger a Flashback, and narrates a scene explaining how yesterday, he took the safe designer out to dinner, and learned the combination. He may now open the safe using a "Persuade" roll instead of his Dexterity!

It's important to note that "Flashback" doesn't allow a player to change the fiction. If three guards burst into a room, he can't flashback to kill them in their sleep, for example. We've already established three guards are in the room. However, he could flashback and show how he had a distraction pre-planned, allowing him to make a "Stealth" roll instead of going into combat.

The first few times players attempt this mechanic, be very loose with what you allow. Give the players time to get comfortable with it, and let the plans be a bit over the top. A lot of the fun of heist movies can be captured with this mechanic. No matter how ridiculous a level of foresight would be needed for this plan, say "Yes" if it's something that can trigger a skill roll.

PHASE THREE: THE SCORE

In Phase Three, the PCs will finally reach their goal. They'll work together as a team, execute a perfectly coordinated plan like clockwork, and escape with no one the wiser...hopefully!

CAPER SKILL CHALLENGE

Once the team nears their goal, ask the players to figure out how they are wrapping up the score, then ask for a group skill check. In a group skill check, you go around the table and ask the player to describe either how they are finishing the heist, or how they are helping the group to escape without a trace. Give them a TON of freedom in this.

They can be narrating either something their characters are doing now or something their characters did the day before to prepare for their escape. Players narrate what they're doing, and tell you what skill they are rolling. The Skill DC is still based on the Security Level of the Mark, but reduce the DC by 1 for every successful challenge overcome during Phase Two. (This reduction includes a challenge overcome by a critical result on Engagement, but does not include an extra challenge given by a fumble on Engagement.)

Whenever a player succeeds in a skill roll, put a tally in a "Success" column. When a player fails a roll, put a tally in the "Failure" column. If the group as a whole gets three failures, the caper is a bust- decide an appropriate consequence.

If the group as a whole gets five successes, the Caper was pulled off without a hitch! Narrate a scene where their mark figures out they've been had, right when it's too late to do anything about it!

USING SPELLS DURING A SKILL CHALLENGE

At the DM's discretion, players may use a spell to get an automatic success in 1 skill roll, provided it is a spell that requires a slot- it must burn a resource!

A SCORE SKILL CHALLENGE IN PLAY!

Brian, Mike, Leamon and Ben are trying to steal Xanathar's Goldfish! The DM has run them through several combat and skill encounters, and they've finally reached Xanathar's office.

DM: Okay, you guys are in. I'm going to need a group skill challenge to pull off this heist. 5 successes before 3 failures. The DC would normally be 20, but you've overcome 3 obstacles, so now it's 17. How are you pulling this off?

Leamon: Okay, check this out. Yesterday, I went and bought a dozen goldfish that look just like his. And I've been carrying them this whole heist. Handle Animal check cool?

DM: Haha, that's great, looks like a shell game, roll it.

Leamon: 19!

DM: Great! I need 4 more successes before you get 3 failures. Who's got something?

Ben: I'm going to run through his entire lair screaming, holding a fake goldfish above my head to distract everybody. I'm really booking it- athletics check? 21, got it!

DM: Nice, keep it moving!

Mike: I'm taking some heat off Ben- I'm gonna make an intimidation check to scare off some of the guards chasing him- I got a 12.

DM: Okay, that's 2 successes and 1 failure so far. I need 3 more successes before 2 more failures, or it's all over for you!

Brian: While everyone is pretty distracted chasing Ben's character, I'm going to make a stealth roll and grab the real fish. 18!

DM: Awesome! Start pushing the narrative towards escaping.

Mike: Well, we gotta help Ben first, he's still getting chased! I'll make a performance roll, and dramatically announce where the real Goldfish is! 22!

DM: We need one more success, how are you all getting out?

Ben: In all the chaos, we're switching to the disguises that we of course pre-packed. That's a 20 on my Deception check!

DM: Five successes, you're out! The four of you casually step out, goldfish under your arm as the chaos unfolds behind you, dozens of guards running around with dozens of goldfish. Xanathar looks to his empty fishbowl, and lets out a yell of rage!

CREDITS

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INSPIRATION

The fantastic roleplaying game **Blades in the Dark**, by John Harper, put out through Evil Hat Productions, strongly informed the approach to capers in this ruleset. In "Blades in the Dark", you play a group of daring scoundrels seeking their fortunes on the haunted streets of an industrial fantasy city. If you love capers, you owe it to yourself to buy a copy of this game!

For additional inspiration on heist adventures, enjoy films such as **Oceans' 11, Inside Man, The Italian Job, A Fish Called Wanda, Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, Heist, Out of Sight, Ronin, The Thomas Crown Affair, Logan Lucky,** and **Heat**.

On television, check out shows like **Mission:Impossible, Leverage** and **Hustle**.

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