

Character Options

For the Nova game engine



CHARACTER OPTIONS FOR NOVA

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A SOURCEBOOK WHICH EXPANDS THE CHARACTER CREATION RULES OF NOVA, ALLOWING YOU TO CREATE TRULY INDIVIDUAL AND CUSTOMISED CHARACTERS. CONTAINS RULES FOR NON-HUMAN RACES AS WELL AS SPECIAL GIFTS AND DRAWS BACKS YOUR CHARACTER CAN HAVE.

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Attribute generation

Many role-playing games, especially fantasy and science fiction ones, allow players to play characters other than humans. Common examples are elves, dwarves, orcs etc. A game system then has to contain a mechanic so that these races are in some way different than humans.

The most easy way to do this is during the step of attribute generation. The assumption is that some races are more or less strong, quick or intelligent than humans and this reflects in their attributes.

Humans are considered by most games to be average in all; this gives them a certain amount of flexibility. No changes need to be made in the rules of attribute generation for humans. If this isn't so in your game, feel free to change this assumption.

Other races have strong and weak points. The GM needs to set the basic characteristics of each race before adopting any system for attribute generation. For example, a

list of racial characteristics for a standard fantasy game (a type of game I believe most role-players are familiar with), would seem like this:

Elf- dexterous and intelligent but frail
Halfling- quick and dexterous but very weak

Dwarf- strong with lots of endurance but slow and somewhat arrogant

Orc- strong but stupid

Troll- really strong but really stupid and slow

Now that racial characteristics have been defined in raw terms, it's time to deal with the game mechanics. As explained in the Nova core rules, humans get 17 dice to generate attributes. Other races however don't get any dice. Instead, they get points with which to buy these dice. More specifically, they get 51 points.

Each attribute has a different cost the player must pay to buy a die in that attribute. This makes the whole difference: a race has

some "strong" points (attributes with low costs to buy dice for) and some "weak" points (attributes with high costs).

The cost for a die ranges from 1 to 5. 1 shows that the particular race is very good at what that attribute represents. 3 is considered the average (close to human potential). 5 is considered very bad.

If we put all this to practice, we might turn up with a table like the following for our generic fantasy game.

Don't forget that every character needs to have at least one die in each attribute.

But how about the maximum dice a player can devote to a single

of his character's attributes? Surely a 3 m tall troll wouldn't have to abide by human regulations... You can use the attribute cost to determine the maximum number of dice a starting character may have in an attribute.

Attribute die cost	Max. dice
1	4
2	3
3	3
4	3
5	2

As you may remember, humans have a maximum of three. Other races

Race	CON	LIT	VIT	REA	INT	INS	DET	PRE	COM	INF
Dwarf	2	4	2	3	3	4	2	3	4	3
Elf	4	2	4	2	2	2	3	3	2	3
Halfling	5	1	4	1	3	3	3	3	3	4
Orc	2	3	3	3	4	4	3	2	5	4
Troll	1	5	1	5	5	5	4	3	5	4

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however might have more or less. After the purchase of attribute dice is complete, it's time to find out the final rating for each attribute. Do this by rolling each attribute die as explained in the Nova core rules.

Traits

There are other ways to distinguish between races aside from attribute generation. The following traits have been designed to act secondary, with attribute generation having the primary effect. A GM may use some, all or none of them to design his game's races.

Armor: Some races may have natural armor. This changes the unarmored rating other people use in damage rolls against them. Humans have an unarmored rating of -2. A troll's thick skin however might earn it an unarmored rating of -1. It isn't recommended that the GM gives an unarmored rating greater than 0 to any player character race.

Skills: A race might get a free rating

in a skill because of its physical condition (a troll might get a free rating in endurance) or culture (an elf could get a rating in archery).

Attribute limitations: It's a good idea to not use the attribute limitations for humans. Humans get a 3-dice limitation for physical attributes but they're unlimited in other attributes. Other races may exceed these limits or have limits in other attributes.

It's not a good idea to revoke the limitations for developing attributes through experience, especially for Intellect and Comeliness. The reasons for these limitations are well-grounded and beyond racial concerns.

Magic: Always a good way to distinguish between races, if the GM uses rules for magic, he might make some races more adept at it while totally banning other races from its pursuit.

Altered secondary attributes: These should only be used rarely because secondary attributes are derived from attributes, which are altered in

the first place. This option gives more or less Constitution, Stamina or Defense. A troll could get one extra point of Constitution and Stamina, while a halfling could have an extra Defense die.

Special abilities: These include things like flying, lightning reflexes etc.

OTHER WAYS TO ENRICH NON~HUMAN RACES

Universal points

Gifts and Drawbacks are special characteristics which make your character special and unique. Everyone has the same attributes and two people can have similar skills but not anyone is famous, wealthy or has one eye. There are optional, meaning that a player isn't obliged to take one or more of them but he is certainly encouraged to, to add a touch of style to his character.

Both gifts and drawbacks are based on the concept of **universal points**. What are they? Why, as their name implies, they are points which can be used for lots of things. They can buy you new attribute dice or skill dice or you can use them to buy gifts, special abilities or conditions that are beneficial to your character, providing him with an advantage. And of course, the bigger the advantage is, the greater the cost of the gift.

How can you gain universal points? By sacrificing attribute or skill dice (sacrificing means not using them for their original purpose) or

by taking drawbacks, the opposite of gifts. Drawbacks provide your character with, disadvantages, so you get some universal points in compensation. The greatest disadvantage also provides the most universal points.

Be warned that you can't "liquidate" (this means turn into universal points) as many skill or attribute dice as you want. You can gain only 10 points through a single source. This means that you can turn 10 points worth of attribute dice into universal points and another 10 points of skill dice.

See the sidebar for more information on gaining and spending universal points.

Some gifts and drawbacks are conflicting. The GM should rule when a gift and a drawback conflict and forbid a player from taking both. For example, a player could not have both the Wealth gift and the Poverty drawback.

A drawback is supposed to be disadvantageous. In theory, a character could find a way to surpass or nullify some drawbacks but these should require great effort and come

How can I gain universal points?
Sacrifice an attribute die (human): 6 points
Sacrifice points for attribute dice (non-human races): Two points per point sacrificed
Sacrifice a skill die: Two points
Take a drawback: Depends on the disadvantage's cost

What can I do with universal points?

Buy an attribute die (human): 6 points
Buy points for attribute dice (non-human races): One point per 2 universal points
Buy a skill die: 2 points
Buy a gift: Depends on the gift's cost

as a reward much later in the campaign. Taking a blindness drawback isn't very disadvantageous if the character lives in a hi-tech world able to construct artificial eyes. The GM should forbid these instances too.

It is advised that no player takes more than 10 points worth of

gifts nor does he gain more than 10 points from drawbacks.

Gifts

Alertness (1 point): All surprise checks you make are of average difficulty.

Ambidextrous (5 points): You've been born ambidextrous and may use both hands with the same ease. You gain one point in the ambidexterity subskill of sidearms and armed combat (although you still have to possess the main skills in order to use them).

Athletic talent (2 points): Your great experience and natural talent with a specific sport enables you to act as if you had an extra die (at +1 cumulative) in a relevant attribute, but only in situations pertaining to that sport. For example, if you are a talented weight-lifter, you can lift weights as if you had an extra Conditioning die. This die would be useless in other situations like inflicting damage with a hand weapon or breaking a locking hold.

Authority (3 points): You have some kind of authority in the society you

belong in. You might be a law enforcer. A judge or even a tax collector.

Brute (6 points): You have a superb ability to ignore superficial injuries or tiredness. Whenever you lose a Stamina point, make a D6 roll. If the result is 5 or 6, you retain the Stamina point.

Calculating mind (3 points): You gain a –1 bonus to any roll involving planning if you take the time to ponder over the subject and succeed in an Intellect roll of average difficulty.

Charming personality (2 points): Being naturally charming, you gain a –1 bonus to rolls involving charming and persuading.

Classical beauty (10 points): You possess a perfect beauty meeting all standards. Your Comeliness rating becomes 234556 and members of the opposite sex are always fascinated by you. Be careful, as in some cases this fascination can turn to lust.

Disease resistance (2 points): You receive a –1 bonus on all rolls against diseases.

Dumb luck (5 points): You are lucky beyond belief and everything seems

to work out perfectly for you. On every roll you make, you may ignore the effects of one “1”.

Eagle vision (1 point): Your range of sight is double that of a normal man.

Endurance (2 points): Your superb endurance automatically gains you two points in the endurance skill.

Exceptional wealth (3-10 points): The exact advantage derived from this gift depends on the nature of the GM’s world and the points you spend on it. At 10 points you should be one of the richest men in the campaign world.

Fame (2 points): You are famous for your achievements. Many people know and admire you.

Fast healer (2 points): Your wounds heal at double the normal rate.

Good balance (2 points): You have an exceptional sense of balance. Roll two extra dice (at +1 cumulative) for any case involving balance or acrobatics.

Greater aim (4 points): You have some goal which you pursue with fever. When near it, you gain a –1 bonus to all rolls related to it. When it’s actually within your grasp, you

have a –2 bonus and virtually no obstacle can frighten you, as your Determination is increased by two dice (at +1 cumulative).

Hand-eye coordination (3 points): You have a good aim and gain a –1 bonus to ranged attack rolls.

Hardened (2 points): You possess a superior ability to endure environmental extremes and adapt to them. This allows you to survive for nearly double the usual time in hostile conditions, like low or high temperatures, low oxygen concentration etc.

Hypnotising voice (3 points): Your voice has a certain drowsy, mesmerising quality that may win you more than one debate. If you succeed in an Influence check at +1 difficulty, people are favourably inclined towards your suggestions.

Inner strength reserves (3 points): You possess great willpower which you can release in powerful bursts of physical or mental strength. Once per day, you can increase your Conditioning or Determination by one die (at +1 cumulative) for a certain scene with duration up to 5 minutes.

Investigating mind (2 points): As the

calculating mind gift, but applies to rolls involving investigation.

Keen empathy (1 point): You gain a –1 bonus to judge another person’s character or motives.

Keen hearing (1 point): You have a –1 bonus to listen rolls.

Keen perception (1 point): You gain a –1 bonus to awareness checks.

Lightning reflexes (4 points): You are extremely quick and agile, gaining a –1 bonus on your initiative checks.

Meditating (1 point): You meditate rather than sleep. You need only four hours of meditation per day to stay fit.

Mentor (2 points): You have a mentor and supporter who taught you everything you know. You can always ask for his help but he’ll also expect some services from you.

Natural leader (1 point): You possess an uncanny ability to influence the masses. You have a –1 bonus to leadership and orate checks.

Owl vision (1 point): You can see more efficiently in the dark. Penalties are reduced by one point (except in complete darkness).

Pain resistance (2 or 4 points): Ne-

gates the penalty for Stamina loss. If you pay 4 points, the penalty resulting from Constitution loss is halved.

Perfect memory (1 point): You have a kind of photographic memory. You automatically remember every detail you've seen,

Persuading power (10 points): Your ability to influence others matches those of the greatest orators in human history. When you roll any persuade or leadership check, you an extra die. This die has a t# of 5 which remains unaffected by any penalty (bonuses still apply).

Poison resistance (3 points): You have a -1 bonus against all poisons.

Quick learner (4 points): You learn considerably faster than most people. When making an experience check, roll twice and keep the best result.

Sixth sense (4 points): You possess an almost supernatural danger sense. You can sense danger some seconds before it actually occurs by making a Presentiment check. With one success you only feel that danger is near, while with two successes you also sense the direction of the immediate

danger.

Skilled (3 points): You're very adept at one knowledge skill, gaining a -1 bonus to all rolls associated with it.

Sprinter (2 points): You are able to run 1.5 times faster than the average human.

Superior constitution (10 points): You possess an incredible resistance to physical punishment. Your Constitution is increased by two points.

Superior strength (3 points): You're able to utilise the uttermost potential of your muscles. You can lift and carry weights as if you had an extra die of Conditioning. This also applies for damage with hand weapons and bows.

Talented (3 points): You are a natural talent in matters concerning one talent skill. You receive a -1 bonus to all rolls associated with it.

Thick bones (3 points): Your bones are sturdy and resilient, not breaking easily. Damage t#s from falls and blunt weapons are increased by one against you.

Weight lifter (1 point): You are very adept at lifting weights. You can lift and carry weights as if you had one

more Conditioning die.

Drawbacks

Age (2 points): You begin the game at the age of 60.

Amputated limb (5 points): You've lost a limb, as a result of accident or disease.

Bad limb (4 points): You have a broken limb that hasn't ever fully recovered. You have a +1 penalty to all actions involving it.

Blindness (6 points): You are completely blind.

Catatonic (2 points): You're always in a sleepy, lazy, non-energetic condition. You react slowly (+1 to all Reaction checks). In situations of prolonged physical exertion (eg running long distances) you function with one less Conditioning die (the one with the highest t#).

Clumsiness (1 point): You are somewhat clumsy and take a +1 penalty for tasks which require manual dexterity.

Deafness (4 points): You are completely deaf.

Dependent (2 points): You're de-

pendent from an item or person. It might be a specific food or drink, a narcotic substance, a beloved one, a personal item of value etc. When you're without it for a considerable period, your Determination t#s are increased by 2.

Dwarf (3 points): You are extremely short and won't grow up. Your height is limited to one meter and your Conditioning to two dice.

Exhausted (5 points): You have a fleeting endurance which makes you very vulnerable to exhaustion after strenuous physical activity. This forces you to make a D6 roll after any Conditioning or Vitality check. If the result is greater than 2 plus your Vitality dice or if it's 6, you lose one Stamina point (however, this can't take away your last Stamina point).

Flashbacks (6 points): A terrible event in your life haunts you. It comes back to your memory again and again, especially in times of stress. When in a situation of frantic activity (like, for example, combat), roll a D6. On a result of 1-2 you are plagued by these sights and operate at +3 to any action. Roll once per

round.

Hate (4 points): You strongly hate something or someone. You always strive to harm it in any way you can.

Hated 94 points): You are widely hated for something you've supposed to have done. Even the authorities will go out of their way to harass you and you're an obvious scapegoat for everything.

Heavy sleeper (1 point): You need to sleep for two more hours per day than usual to stay fit. It is also difficult to wake you up and you suffer a +1 penalty to all actions for fifteen minutes after rising up.

Horrid look (5 points): You're horribly disfigured and most people tend to avoid you. Your appearance makes you the perfect target for all kinds of bullies. Your Comeliness rating is 8 and can't be improved.

Inner weakness (5 points): You may appear strong, but in times of need your weakness surfaces. During combat or other crisis, you have a +1 penalty to Conditioning or Determination checks (your choice).

Inferior intellect (5 points): You are mentally handicapped. You may not

have more than one die of Intellect at any point during your life.

Looming fate (4 points): You are doomed to die. It won't happen today or even tomorrow, but it's certain that you won't live until the end of the campaign. Your GM will determine the time, place and details of your death, giving you enough time to accomplish something in the campaign before passing away.

Mild paralysis (5 points): You have problems controlling your legs after a nasty infection. Sometimes (3-4 times per day) they just shut down for a while. If there is pressure (as in a battle), this happens more often. On every round, on a roll of 5-6 they fail you. In such a case, movement is halved and you have a +1 penalty to all actions involving your legs.

Multiple personalities (3 points): You have a second personality which re-surfaces from time to time and overwhelms your normal ego. This hidden personality is radically different than you (reverse the personality traits) and somewhat schizophrenic. The re-surfacing of your hidden ego

may be triggered by time, actions or certain events.

Muteness (3 points): You are mute and you can communicate only through signs or writing.

Obsession (3 points): You are obsessed with a certain item, person or position of power which you crave for at all times and will do anything to gain possession of.

One-ear (2 points): You've lost an ear. You have a +1 penalty to Presentiment checks that utilise this sense.

One-eye (3 points): You've lost an eye. You have a +1 penalty to Presentiment checks utilising this sense.

Overconfidence (1 point): You are confident that you can face all dangers with success and this attitude may cause you a lot of trouble.

Pacifist (2 points): You're not eager to fight and prefer to sacrifice something to prevent a conflict. As a starting character, you can't increase any combat skill by more than a point.

Paranoia (5 points): You are completely paranoid. You confuse the world and the people around you with something else that makes sense

only to you.

Paraplegic (7 points): You are completely paralysed up to your belly.

Phobia (variable): You're very afraid of something. It may not be something extraordinary: heights, insects, tight spaces, crowds are all options. When facing your phobia, you have a penalty equal to the drawbacks' cost to any actions you attempt.

Poor disease resistance (2 points): You are vulnerable to disease, having a +1 penalty on all rolls against it.

Poor hearing (1 point): You have a +1 penalty on all listen rolls.

Poor perception (1 point): You have a +1 penalty to all awareness checks.

Poor vision (2 points): Your vision is deficient, causing a +1 penalty on all sight rolls and ranged attacks. This deficiency is correctable by wearing glasses, contact lens etc.

Repulsion (1 point): You are strongly repulsed by something and can't stand its presence. It might be an odour, a sound, a category of people or just about anything. Your choice must be a hindrance to you and approved by your GM.

Repulsive personality (2 points): You

act and behave in a way that repulses other people. You have a +1 penalty to all Influence checks.

Secret Enemy (1-4 points): Someone hates you and seeks your harm, although you're unaware of his intentions. His relative power is indicated by the drawback's points.

Sensitive eyes (2 points): Your eyes are well-adjusted to darkness (decrease all penalties by one except in complete darkness), but are very sensitive to light and you suffer a +1 penalty to all actions related to vision during the day.

Short (1 point): You are quite short for a grown man. Your height is restricted to 1.60 m, 1.50 for women.

Short vision (1 point): You can see clearly up to 15 m away. Beyond that, you function as if with the poor vision drawback.

Slow healer (3 points): Your body heals at slow rates. Any wound takes twice the usual amount of time to heal.

The law of Murphy (10 points): You are terribly unlucky and everything seems to work against you. You can be considered a living example of

Murphy's law. On every roll you make which involves the rolling of two or more dice, you always treat one die as being a "1" (whichever you like, as long as it's not a "1" in the first place).

Very sensitive (2 points): You can't stand watching other people suffer and you feel compelled to do whatever you can to help them.

Weakness (1 point): You tend to get tired easily. You can carry 25% less weight and suffer a +1 penalty to endurance checks.

Withdrawn (4 points): The secrets of communication with other people elude you and you're very withdrawn. This forces a +2 penalty on any Influence check. Also, you may not have more than one point in any Influence-based skill.

Dark secret (1 point): You have a secret which can cause you shame and harm if it's revealed (and there's always a way for this to happen).

Poverty (3-5 points): You are among the less fortunate members of your society. Although the exact severity of your poverty will be determined by the GM, it is logical to assume

that at a cost of 5 points, the only thing that's yours are tattered clothes.

Outcast (1 point): You are an outcast from society. Few trust you and even fewer like you.

Outlaw (3 points): You are a known criminal and hunted by the authorities. You might be innocent of course, but they don't really care.

Suspected criminal (2 points): The authorities suspect you as a criminal and you're under constant surveillance. They're only looking for an excuse to pick you up.

Tetraplegic (10 points): You are completely paralysed up to your neck.

Traitor (6 points): You are believed to be a traitor of your country or even your race. Although this may not be true, most people mistrust or even hate you and you're pursued by the authorities.