

PERSONA: The Fighting/RPG

A Mega-Ten Conversion for:
HERO System, 6th Edition
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PERSONA: THE FIGHTING/RPG

"I AM THOU... THOU ART I... FROM THE SEA OF THY SOUL, I AM CALLED... PERSONA!"

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FOREWORD

Welcome to the updated game briefing document for Persona: The Fighting RPG. This is the controlling document to walk you through the rules, concepts, and unique mechanics that will drive this campaign. Like projects of similar scope, Persona uses its own language, motifs, and scale. From the beginning, players are encouraged to think in terms of this document, and Persona, rather than traditional HERO character creation. Character development will align more closely with games like Shadowrun, Dungeons and Dragons, or similar “off-the-shelf” games than with traditional HERO gameplay, but knowing the intricacies will help avoid frustration and provide for a better overall gameplay experience. This setting choice was born from a desire to run an urban horror style game (Supernatural, Dresden, Lost Girl) a Wuxia/Hong Kong style action film (Hard Boiled, Crouching Tiger/Hidden Dragon, Iron Monkey) and to blend in videogame fighting concepts, with the look, feel and intensity of that genre (Tekken, Street Fighter, and so on). Recently, Atlus had released Persona 4: Arena, their Fighter with RPG inspiration, and that gave me the clarity of thought needed to push forward with a completely new project.

Persona truly is unlike anything I’ve done before; it is highly structured in many ways, and fast and loose in others. It encourages a high level of player involvement and a string of interwoven story lines. Throughout this document you will be introduced to new terms, concepts, the Tarot Cards, weapons, equipment, and other key elements of the series. It will discuss the Velvet Room, obtaining new Personas, treasure, and creating new Personas and Weapons. As a campaign, because of all the moving parts and the lack of a simple GUI as a video-game has, games will likely run bi-weekly (up to twice a month) and focus heavily on the action and story development, with down time and blue-booking being available for trips to the Velvet Room, non-critical “dates” and events with NPCs to build Social Links, and other similar elements. The more involved you are in the “life” of your character outside of game, the higher your return will be in game.

Please also note that this is a living document, and while this is the first presented edition (started 9 Feb, 2013, revised 30 Aug 2015 for use) it will be changed and updated as necessary.



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INITIAL RESOURCES

The game will be run using HERO 6th Edition, with the inclusion of multiple rule adjustments, power and build designs. At a minimum:

HERO 6th Ed Vol 1

HERO 6th Ed Vol 2

HERO APG I & II

HERO Martial Arts

HERO Equipment Guide

FROM 5TH EDITION:

Ultimate Energy Projector (UEP)

The Ultimate Skill (TUS)

Asian Bestiary I & II (Note, by GM request, I include these to suggest you avoid them so as not to spoil some of the horrific surprises in store)

And remember — only those who have Awakened to the power of the Persona may enter the Velvet Room and uncover their true potential. With that said:

[“Welcome... to the Velvet Room!”](#)

ONE FINAL REMINDER BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This is an adaptation of a complex world into a complex system. There will be weird gaps, typos, things will have been missed that will need redressed, and so on. I [me, David, not ‘the author’] have done a lot of work and a lot of number crunching to make sure that this works out of the gate, but there’s always the chance that I missed a step, screwed up a calculation, or rolled a 3 somewhere along the line. Please be polite, and persistent, in pointing out flaws that need to be addressed. I want to make this a cooperative experience for everyone and while I am the GM, a conversion of this scope is a first for me, so some assembly will be required. Thank you for your patience and your continued contributions.



Persona is part of the Shin Megami Tensei (Mega-Ten) universe of Japanese Urban/Horror. It involves murder, the occult, cybernetics, monsters, androids, and epic scale battles the likes of which are commonly seen in JRPGs. The conversion places that style, and that pressure, into the HERO system.

THE WORLD OF PERSONA

HERO does not have a predefined horror setting, and a Persona campaign is not about the jump-scare, but the near future, advanced technology, and the monsters we all too easily create. While it is unlikely that many of those themes will come out in the first few sessions, they will become apparent as the campaign progresses.

This campaign is scheduled for 6-12 sessions, depending entirely on pacing, player involvement, reception and outcomes. As always, if the conversion is done and the characters hit the table and it isn't picked up emotionally, if there isn't an investment, it will be set aside and reworked.



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For this game, will we join our protagonists in the [Hokkaido Prefecture](#), home of [Hokkaido University](#) in [Sapporo](#), the number 9 ranked school in Japan, and [in this setting] is a comprehensive University holding all major colleges along with a few... uncommon ones. It is a complete enclosed campus, with shops, stores, restaurants in walking distance, and a student body bordering on 20,000 enrolled. The surrounding area, Hokkaido, is home to a few hundred thousand individuals.

Digital information has only become more important, weapons have become slightly more advanced, and we can start seeing things that are today still speculative. In other words, there is some latitude with 'reality' that would have a more restrictive or unbelievable feel in another setting, putting it two steps above a special effect, but not as broadly impactful as perhaps we would think of the changes we might anticipate in a pure cyberpunk campaign.

The world of Persona is a world divided: the world as we know it, referred to as 'reality' or First Realm, and the world that lies beyond human reckoning. Second Realm, where the 'others' live. The lost, the forgotten, myths, nightmares, and the shadow. While Second Realm changes from incarnation to incarnation, there are a number of traits that unify it. First, most people are locked into the First Realm. Only those who have Awakened can (of their own free will) tread into Second Realm. It has been established that with proper influence, people's own Shadows can take control and force them in without their consent, as they come under attack from their own repressed emotions and ego.

First Realm, or reality, behaves as you know it today, except that your Persona will give you a supernatural advantage above and beyond the Sleepers. Second Realm exists alongside First Realm, and is subject to change. In some places, it is a gateway to the illusory realm of the Fey. In others, it's a crack in a haunted house, and realm of spirits, or a place reached by the living to understand death and the aftermath. Sometimes, Second Realm can reach through to directly affect those in the First. When this happens, Persona Users often band together to respond to the threat and keep the Second Realm contained. To contain the Shadow.

Beyond the obvious supernatural changes, there are also cyberpunk style elements in the setting, including Shadow fighting androids, mad scientist chimera, cybernetics and people who live entirely in machines, and other horrors. Persona embraces the idea that science can interfere with and measure Second Realm. There is a strong temptation to believe that everything we fear has a place in the setting, but



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instead, the idea is that the setting offers a gateway to certain kinds of stories, rather than acting as a catch all horror setting with a convenient explanation.

NOTE: THIS SECTION DOES NOT COVER THE PERSONAS, ONLY THE BASICS OF CHARACTER CREATION AND CRITICAL RULES ADJUSTMENTS THAT WILL DIRECTLY IMPACT YOUR DESIGN DECISIONS AND PLAY STYLE. BECAUSE THE PERSONAS CONVEY SUPERNATURAL POWERS, AND ARE PART OF YOUR TAROT. EARLY CHOICE IS MINIMAL, BY DESIGN, TO GIVE YOU A CHANCE TO WALK INTO THE SETTING INSTEAD OF CRASH, FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE PERSONAS, THEIR POTENTIAL, AND THE LEVEL OF SKILL YOU WILL ULTIMATELY REACH.

CREATING A PERSONA CHARACTER

Creating a character in Persona involves more moving parts than in other campaigns. In addition to the steps outlined below and the point value structure, familiar in many HERO campaigns, there are two other key elements: the selection of a Major Arcana to govern your Persona and initial NPCs personality traits, and the development of the Social Link behind it. Both of these are explained in detail later on in this document. In *Persona*, anyone who can summon their Persona is called a Persona User — no catchier title applies or is used. Unlike similar games, nothing indicates to an outsider (or other Awakened individuals) that you are a Persona User unless they see you use an Active Skill, deduce use of a Passive Skill, or for whatever reason, meet you in Second Realm.

Characters are constantly juggling two lives: their lives as college students, with classes, majors, dates, exams, a craving for caffeine and a terribly unsatisfied need for sleep. Additionally, they have their lives as hunters, Persona Users who travel to the Second Realm, conduct investigations, and so on.

The details for beginning character creation are as follows:

KEYCH
MIGT NGIOWYIEFL
FELEF OF ZKIGF XON
BOIENIYU' YND THE
BERTONYU' THEIR



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SETTING REQUIREMENTS FOR YOUR BACKGROUND

Your character (hereafter, 'you') is attending Hokkaido University, in Sapporo, a major city in the Hokkaido Prefecture of Japan. it's known for its ice-cold winters and beautiful, temperate summers. Why did you choose to attend Hokkaido University? Where are you from, and what brought you here? What do you hope to get from and leave here with? Do you know all of these answers yet?

You know a Martial Art. Each Persona user must select a martial art, or design one independently. A Black Belt (15 points of MA) is not a requirement, as martial arts can mean anything from remarkable savvy with a butterfly knife, a boxing champion, aikido student who does it for exercise or a girl who inherited a .45 semi-automatic from her father and uses it with remarkable precision at any range. Your martial art will convey a significant part of your story, select it deliberately for its integration into your story, background, and your focus on it.

Define your particulars: age, race, and personal narrative and behavioral baseline. Know before you sit down how you handle: Compliments, criticism, minor problems (being late for a date) major problems (being trapped in a building) and how you react to a legitimate crisis (facing down supernatural horror for the first time). Not that anything like that would happen to you.

You are mentally sound and physically capable, and have some natural combat skill from your training, innate ability, or honed talent. While you will have quirks, you are completely sane. The genre today commonly assumes physical soundness equivocates to being in 'perfect shape,' but having a handicap of some kind remains a common genre trope.

Selecting your Tarot and defining the NPC who personifies it for you will present the greatest challenge to new players. The format suggests passivity on the part of the player, when instead the strength of the relationship defines the total power level of the Personas you can create. The strength of your relationships governs your Arcana and Social Link levels. You will grow alongside the characters in the setting and learn their stories, help them struggle through, and be rewarded with improved Social Links, giving you advantages even though you may not yet control the Personas you have unlocked. In some cases, it may be easier to select an Arcana based on the idea you have for the NPC tied to it, either way is completely valid.



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Mechanics

The following list provides the mechanical requirements for character creation.

- 1) 200 points with 100 points in matching complications. 10 points are required Perks/Talents, and 50 points are pre-defined, required Complications. Final builds are 200 (190 open) points, with 100 points in matching complications (50 open):
 - a. Haunted by Shadows (Hunted, Mo Pow, Freq — 20 points)
 - b. Social Limitation: Student Obligations (Social, Freq., Minor, 10 pts)
 - c. Distinctive Features (Fighting Style, Freq., Minor, 10 pts)
 - d. Physical Limitation: Persona Imperative¹ (Common, Moderate — 10 pts)
 - e. Normal Characteristic Maxima applies (No Points)
- 2) The following Perks/Talents, totaling 10 points:
 - a. Awakened (Custom Perk, 3 points)
 - b. Enrolled Student² (Fringe Benefit, 1 points)
 - c. Combat Luck (3 rPD/3 rED); must be aware of attack/in combat, does not stack with other defenses, 6 points).
- 4) Skill Level Caps at character creation. Take note that these will remain in effect until expressly allowed by the GM.
 - a. Only 1 Overall Skill Level (12 pts)
 - b. 2 10 Point Skill Levels (any combination)
 - c. 3 8 Point Skill Levels (any combination)
 - d. 3 skill levels for any given skill (i.e., Driving, Physics, etc.)
 - e. Skill Enhancers are allowed (this note specifically addresses the absence of Power Frameworks in this setting, defined later on).
- 5) At minimum, the following skill purchase is required:
 - a. One skill pertaining to your Martial Art (below)
 - b. Three skills pertaining to your major, or, Two to your major, one to your minor
 - c. One interaction skill³ (Acting, Charm, Seduction, Interrogation, etc.)

¹ 'Persona Imperative' is the drive to be involved, to explore and use your power, to learn from others and gain forward momentum

² You may create and play a character "on campus" but not enrolled for some reason. Remove *Enrolled Student* (1 pt) and replace it with *Access: Hokkaido University* (3 pts).

³ Note in this setting, "Charm" and "Seduction" are two separate skills



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6) Martial Arts Selection; each character must have at least a basic martial arts package. There are few requirements for this, but for balance purposes and to ensure that all characters have an appropriate level of competency. Please review the rules changes and awareness section for key reminders.

a. A minimum of 3 maneuvers: one strike, one defensive maneuver, and weapon element (if Fists or Feet are your primary weapon, then WF: Gauntlets or WF: Combat Boots is required. You do **not** want to fight Shadows unarmed!)

b. At least one of the associated skills with the maneuver set (such as Acrobatics, Fast Draw, Breakfall, etc.) per the Skill section.

SAMPLE CHARACTER

Akihiko was a controllable party member in Persona 3/FES, and played a critical role in the story. This version is slightly stronger than from where players will begin, but demonstrates the nature of character progression up to 225 points. This will give you a rough idea of the kind of diversity of character design in the setting.

AKIHIKO SANADA						
Val	Char	Pts	Total			
17	STR	7	17	6-		
16	DEX	12	16	5-		
14	CON	4	14	5-		
12	BOD	2	12	4-		
13	INT	3	13	4-	PER 12-	
14	EGO	4	14	5-		
15	PRE	5	15	5-	PRE 3d6	
5	PD	3	5			
5	ED	3	5			
4	SPD	20	4			
8	REC	4	8			
40	END	4	40			
40	STN	10	40			
12	Run	0	12m			
4	Swim	0	4m			
4	Leap	0	4m			
Cost						
4	Martial Block: 1/2 Phase, +2 OCV, +2 DCV, Block, Abort					
3	Clinch: 1/2 Phase, -1 OCV, -1 DCV, Grab Two Limbs, 27 STR					
4	Counter Punch: 1/2 Phase, +2 OCV, +2 DCV, 5d6 Strike, Must Follow Block					
4	Cross: 1/2 Phase, +0 OCV, +2 DCV, 5d6 Strike					





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	Talents
1	Ambidexterity (-2 Off Hand Penalty)
6	Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)
3	Lightsleep
6	+3/+3d6 Striking Appearance (vs. young women and cougars)
	Skills
3	Traveler
1	1) AK: Hokkaido University (2 Active Points) 3-
1	2) AK: Hong Kong (2 Active Points) 3-
1	3) AK: Inaba (2 Active Points) 3-
1	4) AK: Sapporo (The Student District) (2 Active Points) 3-
0	WF: Fist-Loads, Unarmed Combat
2	KS: Boxing 3-
3	Paramedics 4-
3	Criminology 4-
3	KS: Police Procedure 4-
3	Conversation 5-
3	Persuasion 5-
3	Security Systems 4-
10	Rapid Attack
24	+3 with HTH Combat
5	Defense Maneuver I-II
9	Power 8-
	Total Powers & Skills Cost: 124 Total Cost: 225



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225+	Disadvantages
20	Haunted by Shadows: Shadows, Frequently (Mo Pow; Harshly Punish)
10	University Obligations: Student Frequently, Minor
10	Distinctive Features: Fighting Style (Concealable; Noticed & Recognizable)
	Detectable by Commonly-Used Senses)
10	Persona Imperative: Compelled to take action (Common, Moderate)
5	Rivalry: Professional (Boxing Club; Rival As Pow; Seek to outdo, Embarrass, or Humiliate Rival; Rival Aware of Rivalry
5	Social Complication: Almost too popular, Infrequently, Minor
15	Enraged: When a teammate is outmatched or in danger (Uncommon), Go 11-, Recover 11-
10	Dependent NPC: Ken Amagi, Frequently (Slightly Less Pow than PC)
15	Psychological Complication: Protection of Innocents (Common, Strong)
	Total Disadvantage Points: 100



CHAPTER II: PERSONA RULES GOVERNOR

This section defines the multiple and significant rules adjustments for this setting. The majority of the information contained here is presented in simple block or notated format, and broken down in order to match the flow of character creation as presented in HERO Designer. Further, some of this information will be repeated for applicable sections.

ONE: SKILLS AND STATISTICS CHANGES

1. Caps and Requirements
 - a) Normal Characteristic Maxima applies; see 6th Edition for a full breakdown
 - b) Without express GM permission, no character may raise a Stat (any stat) over Normal Characteristic Maxima; this includes END, STUN, and BODY.
 - c) Skill Enhancers are the only allowable Power Frameworks.
 - d) Initial caps are also in place for skill selection; this is done to represent a wider variety of skills and talents, and indicate your current overall talent level
2. At the start of the game, despite the likelihood that players will advance quickly through the lower level Social Links, higher level Personas will have multiple conditions before they can be equipped:



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- e) Discovery; some Personas are only found during events or through Shuffle Time, even though a Social Link grants access to a Persona, it must still be earned through gameplay.
 - f) Creation; others are only available once forged with a combination of other Persona, this is done by Igor in the Velvet Room (see rules in applicable section)
 - g) Power; characters must have sufficient strength (ie, XP gain) to control the Persona. These benchmarks are roughly +25xp/Persona level: 200, 1; 225, 2; 250, 3; 275, 4; 300, 5; 350, 6; 400, 7; 450, 8; 500, 9; 600; 10
3. Skills. Skills are handled on an SV/DV basis. This is managed in HERO designer and a separate Rules file will be distributed, and made available via Dropbox. HDv3 will still display skills as N-, if you ignore the '-', the values will still be correct. As you rank up in the skill, you'll improve your SV (Skill Value). Every test will be rated an appropriate DV (Difficulty Value). Additionally, regular modifiers will be applied to improve or inhibit success based on circumstances. Common modifiers include rushed, improper equipment, being under the affects of a PRE attack, Inspiration, and so on.
4. Using Skills. This game uses the alternative calculation found in APG II, in summary:
- a) Skills are defined as Characteristic/3 with no base. With a DEX 15 and a rank in Acrobatics, Acrobatics Tests are set to Skill Value: 5, vs the Difficulty Value defined by the GM. This would make someone with a 15 DEX and a rank in Acrobatics 'Talented (5).' Additional skill points raise the SV by 1, as they do normally.
 - b) Characteristic rolls are handled the same way, Stat/3 to determine the target value of a given characteristic roll
 - c) An average base roll is 3 (Average); Proficient (4); Talented (5); Exceptional (6)
 - d) Rolls are done purely on a Target/Difficulty Value system (see APG II for details)
 - e) No rounding up; a base 4 requires a Characteristic of 12-14, 5 is 15-17
 - f) Everyman Skills provide a base SV of 2; Proficiency grants an SV 4; independently of the Characteristic. Otherwise, both follow all of the same rules.
5. The standard DV (difficulty values) follow:
- g) Simple: 1- 3



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- h) Average: 4-6 (5 is a basic challenge)
- i) Difficult 10 - 13
- j) Nightmare 15+

EXAMPLE OF DIFFICULTY DETERMINATION

Calling forth their Persona, a User raises her STR to 22, and wants to force the lock. They have no associated skills. The lock is heavy, old, and fused into a solid piece of metal. DV assignment is 11. Check is now: $21/3 = 7$; $7 - 11 = -4$, success is 7 or less. For example: A Pick Locks check on a rusted padlock would be: Lock Pick 3, Dex 14: SV 7. The GM assigns DV of 3 (simple). Check is made against normal HERO rules, with a +4 test, so 15 or less on 3d6. The User immediately determines the lock is rusted shut can't be picked. Calling forth their Persona, a User raises her STR to 22, and wants to force the lock, even though they have no associated skills. The lock is heavy, old, and now fused into one solid piece of metal. DV assignment is 11. Check is now: $22/3$ (rounded) 7, $7 - 11 = -4$, success is 7 or less.

MARTIAL ARTS AND THE CV SCALE

In any high-flying action film, genre work, or anime, it often feels as though *everyone* has some kind of acrobatic martial art ability, short of the armies of heavily armed and armored soldiers using their machine guns, grenades, and similar equipment. This is no less true in Persona, except in addition to the armies of faceless corporations the protagonists will also face hordes of monsters called shadows. Shadows, even low level ones, possess some measure of 'Monster Martial Arts.' This represents that they are a real and material threat, both as a supernatural force with access to skills, and as physical combatants.

To maintain game balance and the appropriate threat level and sense of danger, a Combat Value (CV) cap is in place on the players at all times. The cap will be in effect for monsters and define in part the threat they represent. A lower-level shadow may have a total cap of 14, while a boss will have considerably more skill levels. This also demonstrates early on that no normal human would have much of a chance — it takes training, guts, and a Persona. Again, the current CV Cap applies to PCs and their NPCs only, not to shadows or other higher level threats.



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The CV Cap is currently 19 (as of 31 Aug, 2015). Regardless of the total available skill levels and modifiers available from their own core skills, no character can utilize more CV levels between OCV and DCV than this at a given time. Second, a character may never imbalance past their base OCV/DCV. The maximum base a character may have is 8 OCV/8 DCV.

For example:

Akihiko Sanada has a base OCV/DCV of 5/5. He has 1 Overall Skill Level, 3 5 point HtH Skill Levels with his Martial Arts package (Boxing) and is under attack by a Mericless Maya! He aborts to Martial Dodge (+5 DCV). Currently, his total CV allocation would be:

- Base 10 (5 OCV/5 DCV)
- 1 OSL, which he commits to DCV (6 DCV, 11 total)
- 3 HtH levels, which he commits to DCV (9 DCV, 14 total)
- 5 DCV levels for his Martial Dodge (14 DCV, 19 total)

This is within the cap, with no further adjustment required. In the same example, if it began with 7 OCV/7 DCV, then his total would be 7 OCV/16 DCV (23 total), exceeding the cap by four, and he would either have to reallocate his skill levels, or lose the remaining points. Note that points cannot be ‘dumped’ — a higher level of flexibility means more skill levels and fewer core levels, while having more core levels determines reliability. Please note that the cap is not a recommended level, it is the *maximum level allowable*. There are many characters who will focus on MOCV/MDCV, who will have more skills, and so on. I expect that 7/7 +5 Dodge will be a common combination, which is part of how I derived 19.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a Persona’s skill levels and abilities do not count or contribute towards the CV limit. That means if a Persona grants ‘+3 DCV vs Fire,’ that stacks. If a Skill is used that grants ‘+3 OCV,’ that stacks.



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TWO: COMBAT RULES ADJUSTMENTS

Japanese Role-Playing Games (JRPGs) are notorious in the West for being wildly different from their D&D counterparts. The settings are rarely truly fantasy as Tolkien envisioned it, despite some similarities, and the magic systems and mechanics get relabeled from game to game, while the root systems stay in place. There are elemental spell effects, buffs, debuffs, and most importantly, status effects. In Western gaming, the status effect is based on a spell that commonly has an absolute effect, for example, 'Paralysis,' 'Instill Fear' or 'Ignite.' JRPGs, however, commonly roll those effects into other abilities.

Western Fireball: Send a single explosive projectile toward a target, where it will detonate and ignite any flammable things in the zone. It's a missile launcher.

Eastern Fireball: Send a swirling stream of flame that will deal damage upon contact, and may cause the target to burn (take Damage Over Time) or inflict a similar debuff. In short, status effects are part and parcel of the base effect, and many of them once calculated are worth over a hundred points.

Normally, this would require a compound power; one for the base effect, and one for the status effect, which would create large and unwieldy power constructs that unfairly skew the balance toward those powers with status effects. For this conversion, the solution was to add a 15 point adder, 'Cause Status Effect' to the applicable powers, and then incorporated into the Critical Hit rules. In addition, powers in Persona often have other modifiers such as First Strike, improved critical chance, and other modifiers.

Under standard HERO rules, a Critical Hit is score when an attack succeeds by less than half. Assuming an even match, with an 11- required to hit, a critical hit is scored on 5- (half, rounded down in favor of the *Defender*, not the player). In the following sections, all of the current combat rules adjustments have been laid out with their applicable notes, starting with Variant Rules, followed by the new rules unique to Persona.

VARIANT Block Rules

- a) **Combat Maneuver: Block (Untrained).** Block only stops one half of the total damage of a given attack. For full damage negation, either Marital Block or appropriate equipment is required.



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- b) Blocking Ranged Attacks. Ranged attacks *cannot be Blocked* without equipment or cover of some kind; they must be Dodged or Deflected/Redirected. Note that some Shadows have sufficient armor or natural defenses that meet this requirement, while others, lesser Shadows will not

VARIANT Critical Hit Rules⁴

A Critical Hit occurs when an Attack Roll (of any kind) succeeds by greater than half. These rules play a major role in Persona, as they drive the status effects attached to many of the Skills.

Target	6-7	8-9	10-11	12-13	14-15	16-17	18-19	20-21
Critical	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

The Advantage, “Improved Critical Chance,” gives some abilities an applicable OCV Bonus that is used to confirm Critical Hits. If a Skill has ‘+2 OCV, Only for Critical Hits,’ add that value *after the attack roll is resolved* and before damage/effects are determined. Skills that raise the Critical Hit threshold affect only the required result; in the above example, if the target is 13 (assume an OCV of 10, and a DCV of 8), and a 7 is rolled, the additional +2 OCV would change the result from a hit to a Critical Hit.

On a confirmed Critical Hit, the following occur:

- Effects of the weapon type are added as applicable (see below)
- Damage dice are doubled, then rolled as a set; defenses are counted once
- Status effects are resolved

VARIANT Attack Types, Critical Hits and Standard Effects

The rules for Critical Hits now include the additional functionality of the attack types: Slash, Pierce, and Bash. Each has a separate function. First, some shadows and Personas are susceptible to a given attack type, others are resistant to it. These abilities proceed under two conditions: When the target has the susceptibility, and when a Critical Hit is confirmed, the following occur:

- Slash: Add 1 DC prior to rolling damage (double this for a critical)
- Pierce: Add *Armor Piercing*. Double this if the weapon is already AP.

⁴ Note that ‘2’ is possible on a roll of 3 or 4 with a modified Critical Hit requirement.



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- c) Bash. Add 1 STUN multiplier, and remove 1 die of Knockback (2x Crit)

SETTING Persona Attack/Defend with MCV

All Persona attacks and defenses are based on your MCV (Mental Combat Values). Persona skills are based on EGO, and to hit rolls are based on OMCV, while attacks targeting your Persona are rolled against your DMCV. Additionally, tasking your Persona to Block would be an OMCV roll, *even if the attack they are blocking is physical in nature*. The Persona is the representation of your soul and will made manifest, so the conventional rules for mental combat do not apply.

SETTING Persona Modifiers⁵

Persona Physical Attacks based their STR modifier on EGO. This rule exists to reinforce the place that the Persona holds mechanically and to more easily differentiate characters built as “casters” with those built as “strikers” or pure physical combatants. It forces a point decision that, in a game where everyone has easy access to the abilities, is sorely needed.

SETTING Time Blocks

Because time and how you spend it, and with whom, plays a pivotal role in Persona, the time system exists to simplify interactions and maintain continuity. The time blocks are: Morning, Afternoon, Evening, and Night. While you can fit many activities into a block, you can only have one meaningful interaction/training/etc per time block.

NEW Status Effects

Mentioned previously, Status Effects are a staple of the genre, known more commonly in Western RPGs as ‘debuffs.’ At lower ability levels, inflicting a status effect on a target will be challenging, but doing so successfully will have a big payoff. There is a complete list of status effects in the Skills section.

⁵ This is important: HERO naturally divides ‘Mental’ and ‘Physical,’ and you cannot use your DMCV against a bullet. Persona actively splits the two pieces for rolling and targeting, but does not divide the effect. Having the Persona use Agilola is done with OMCV, but a shadow can defend with DCV. If your Persona is targeted by an attack, it is against your MDCV.



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Powers that inflict Status Effects will have the Adder, “<Status Effect> Chance on Critical.” When using a power that inflicts a status effect, it occurs upon confirmation of a critical hit, on a trigger. Status Effects are complex, debilitating, and curable with the right Skills or Items. All Status Effect Adders cost 15 points.

NEW 1/2 Phase Action: Change Persona

The ability to change your Persona is a half-phase action for players with multiple Personae in their queue. Further, you may *abort to Change Persona* if doing so would provide a material defense against an incoming attack.

NEW Abort to Soak

Soak raises your Active Defenses (not CVs, but PD, ED, etc) by 1.5 (rounded in favor of the Defender). If you currently have 10 DEF, it becomes 15. If you have 20, it becomes 30, and so on. Note that like any combat action, you must declare your intent prior to the rolling of the dice. This defensive option allows tanks to take punishment cinematically without making them invulnerable to damage. Because this rule has not been sufficiently tested, it may be reviewed later. At this time, the player must declare what attack type they are soaking: Physical, Energy, etc. This is important not for the immediate attack (commonly telegraphed, but may have a sub-function, such as AVAD) but for subsequent attacks targeted at the character who will continue to Soak until their next action.

NEW Advantage Group

Introduced in Persona are compound powers that behave differently than the common usage. They include functions like ‘Difficult to Block,’ ‘First Strike’ and so on. Some attacks are so fast that they make Blocking inherently more difficult. This advantage commonly occurs on Beam attacks, high speed strikes, and so on, and their respective write-ups are in the Skill descriptions. Like other similar modifiers, ‘Difficult to Block’ only changes the OCV required to block the attack, not the attacker’s OCV for purposes of hitting.



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NEW Losing and Recovering END in Second Realm (LTE)

Second Realm fatigues even the heartiest of individuals. Because of that, END does not recover on 12; only STUN. Further, Second Realm causes a variation of LTE. Rather than the complex math covered in 6E2 p. 132.

- a) Every fight reduces LTE by 1
- b) Every three rounds a given fight goes, another point is lost
- c) Every floor ascended reduces LTE by 1
- d) LTE is recovered after one night of full rest

THREE: PERSONA COMBAT, DAMAGE AND RECOVERY

With the core changes defined above, this section will detail and explain concepts unique to the Personas themselves. These include: Damage, recovery, summoning, changes, frame disadvantage, and so on.

Summoning your Persona. One of the most critical actions that you will perform is summoning your Persona, your latent and materialized psyche to do battle along side you. To summon Persona you must meet the requirements of the limitation “Persona Skill (-2),” one of the most important being the limitation Focus: Evoker (OIF, -1/2). To summon your Persona, the Focus must be in hand and positioned so that the gas discharges into your mind. This drives the mind far enough outside of itself to enable you to call forth the power within.

NEW Combat Rule: Frame Disadvantage

After your Persona is summoned and its power is activated, its after image lingers leaving it vulnerable to attack. Personae can be struck with any weapon, skill, or Shadow. As a campaign rule, all Personas have the limitation “Physical Manifestation (-1/2). The limitation is calculated as:

$$\text{Active Points}/20 = \text{Frame Disadvantage in Phases}$$

For Example: Izaru activates his Persona, Vesta, and uses Bufu (Ice I). As a Class I Skill, it has 60 Active Points, calculating its frame disadvantage to 3 phases. Meaning, if he activates the skill on 4, Vesta is still eligible to be attacked until his Dex on 7.



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Rank	I - II	III - IV	V - VI	VII
Phases	3	6	9	12

Persona take damage normally; it has BODY equal to its Users + S-Link

Persona DEF equaling the Users EGO/5 + their S-Link Level

Once a Personas BODY is depleted, it is *shattered*, and must recharge

A Persona can ONLY regain BODY in a dungeon once shattered, and, it gains BODY equal to the REC + S-Link level, and only when the Character would take a Recovery.

For this reason, Users may not summon their Persona while they are shattered.

Remember that the Persona takes on many shapes, but there is still only one — your soul, manifested.



CHAPTER III: PERSONAS

Defining a Persona

A Persona is a manifestation of an element of a person's soul, brought forth through a connection to their Social Link and their bond to the Second Realm. Even though each Persona is independently discovered, as though it is a living thing, it is, in its rawest form, a spirit that grants a piece of its strength to the Persona user, so that they may call forth the attributes of that Persona. The easiest way to think of a Persona is as an old slide show carousel.

A normal person has a burning light – their soul – and that soul projects light through the individual's self-image to the outside world. It is the only version of “them” that they can conceive of. A Persona user adds slides to the carousel, and instead of being limited to a single image, they can change the image as necessary, calling forth latent powers within themselves. These powers are called Persona.



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Limited Power of Personas

Each Persona has five measurable categories: Statistics, Combat Skills (in HERO, Powers in the upper-right), Non-Combat Skills (Skills/Talents, in the lower left), Resistances and Vulnerabilities (lower right) and Inheritance Eligibility (lower right, the bottom). The following is to better explain how the values and rules are derived, and remove as much mystery from the process as possible.

Before discussing the powers of the Personas, it is important to understand their limitations. Strictly defined, a Persona's has level based statistics via applied Social Links, and Court Cards, with a moderately complex rules set for using XP to improve their stats (ie, it isn't 1:1 for a Persona as it is for a character). Second, Persona gain skills on three tiers, and those tiers may not be adjusted. For game balance purposes, and because there are many Persona, no single Persona can cover all of a given scope of needs.

Power sets are defined by the Persona, and while powers can be unlocked, new powers external from the list cannot be added directly to a Persona. Lastly, Resistances and Vulnerabilities are also defined by that particular Persona, and cannot be changed. In short, only Statistics and Non-Combat skills can be enhanced through XP, while powers can be bought and unlocked.

Persona Statistics

[Working Concept] A Persona's statistics can be activated by the User to grant them those points in times of need, and behave in all ways like an Aid to that statistic. A Persona with a Strength of 8 would be able to enhance the User's strength directly.

Non-Combat Skills

To expand on the functionality of the Persona outside of Second Realm, they have been given additional non-combat skill enhancements that you can call upon as needed.

Persona Inherent Defenses

All Persona have at minimum one attack type resistance, and one vulnerability. A User can change these through fusion, however by campaign rule, every Persona must have at least one vulnerability.



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Weak: A Persona with a Weakness toward a given attack type takes double damage from it, like a vulnerability.

Resist: A Persona with Resistance grants 5/5 Defense vs that element, +1 per Social Link level, ie, a base of 6, where a Level 5 SL grants 10, and a level 10 SL grants 15.

Block: Grants an automatic Block attempt (based on MOCV); a failed block means damage goes through to the target; a successful block means the Persona takes it.

Personas Block for 1/2 damage on Physical, full damage on Resist.

Reflect: Requires a successful Block, but otherwise behaves like Missile Reflection

Absorb: Gain END and STUN from that element

Persona Characteristic Enhancements

The Persona Stat Block grants a modifier to rolls associated with the applicable statistic, and is eligible for the User to push and activate. Each Persona has a stat block that defines its eligible enhancements upon being equipped, and these exist in both realms. In other words, so long as the Persona is equipped, the statistical enhancements are available. The current guidelines are as follows [13 August 2015]:

May spend END to gain modifier to a listed statistic; at a 3:1 ratio. Because these are direct modifiers to the roll, they place significant strain on the User. This cost cannot be offset, however, a User does not need to activate the entire pool (if the max is 4, they may elect to use 2 for 6 END. This lasts for one Turn (22 Aug 2015; change to scene?), ending prior to the same phase in the next Turn. Activating a Statistic in this way is a Zero Phase action. In addition to the level advancement statistics it receives:

An additional 2 points in each Primary Statistical Category from its Major Arcana at levels 3 and 9. Arcana Primary Statistics are based on their Rank (0 – XXI).

An additional 1 points in each Secondary Statistical Category from its Major Arcana at levels 2, 6 & 10. Each Arcana commonly has one or two Secondary Statistics over the first (1 & 3, 3 & 5, and so on).

+1 to any statistic

at levels 5 & 9.

To further differentiate the Personas, the following additional slots may be assigned by the player at the following intervals:

Rank 2: Secondary



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Rank 4: Primary

Rank 6: Secondary

Rank 8: Secondary

Rank 10: Primary

Using this system, no Persona can ever have two stacked adjustments in the same category; a Persona without a modifier to STR can receive STR twice, but one that already has STR can only have one additional boost, either Primary or Secondary. Statistics increase at no cost to the player through advancement of the Social Link. This is the most common and advances all Persona under the Social Link through their Major Arcana.

Via Experience Expenditure. XP costs are based on the Arcana that the Persona is based upon. This design mimics the “leveling” mechanic of videogames; 10 points in Primary raises all Primary statistics; 7 points raises all Secondary statistics, and 5 points per allows a player to raise a non-affiliated stat ad hoc.

Non-Affiliated statistics are the easiest to raise, at 5:1

Secondary Statistics can be raised at 7:1

Primary Statistics can be raised at 10:1

Finding and using a Court Card (see the Equipment or Court Card spreadsheet). A Court Card actively improves statistics based on its own affiliations, improving three Primary and three Secondary characteristics aligned with its own Suit and Rank. Using this model, you can derive the base stat adjustments of any Persona based on its own Rank and the current Social Link level. This also helps weaker, lesser used Persona stay competitive with those of higher rank & level combinations.

There is a gradual improvement across the Arcana; this is in keeping with the thematic structure of the game, and is done by design. The fairly smooth curve means that even though The World (4 primary, 6 secondary) improves all of its statistics faster than The Empress (1 primary, 2 secondary), the Empress' Persona still have a great deal to offer and give the player greater flexibility in how to improve it through experience, while the path of the World is set.



In this section, the requirements behind the Social Link structure will be explained more completely from a rules perspective. Some of this information may be repeated from other sections.

Social Links are built as Contacts; while they convey multiple benefits, they are still Contacts, with their own skills and talents to contribute to the fight against the Shadows (although many of them will do so indirectly). A Social Link gets built up through interaction with its affiliated Contact. As the Social Link levels, the affiliated powers and abilities grow along with it. These benefits are built into the structure itself. The Social Link functionality can be summarized as:

- a) Defines which Persona can be created
- b) Determines the DEF ($\text{EGO}/5 + \text{SL}$) and BODY ($\text{User's BODY} + \text{SL}$)
- c) Grant Characteristic bonuses based on Arcana and Social Link

Full engagement in the campaign means understanding and building Social Links; only by building your relationships do you strengthen your soul, and in turn, your ability to create and control your Personae.

A Social Link (S-Link, or SL) represents character interactions on both the literal level, your daily interactivity with these individuals, and the symbolic level, in how it directly affects and strengthens your Personae. The stronger you become emotionally, the more power you draw from your relationships with your allies and the more adept you become. Like a ley line, each bond represents the strength of the relationship.



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Raising a Social Link with XP improves the Contact as well. Take note that in Persona, Social Links are built on the passage of events, decisions, and impactful story moments. Many of these situations will involve some kind of Social Test, although others will require a more complex quest or challenge to be completed (defending a young man's honor, finding the 'perfect dress,' or getting seats to a sold out show). Other, darker contacts may have even more nefarious or dangerous plots.

Showing up: 1 point

Quality Time/General Aid (Check Required): 3 points

Extended Meaningful Time/Complex Assistance (Difficult Check): 5 points

Assisting in Dire Circumstances (Dangerous/Complex Check): 7 points

Rank	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Score	3	6	10	15	22	30	40	50	60

All of these stories require strong consistency; your contacts need to know that you care, much of which occurs during down time, between games via blue booking. Time blocks can be consumed during the game, but critical events will likely require party involvement, while internecine moments require documentation, and will keep players mindful of ongoing events between games.

Note: one person's Social Link may not be another's; not everyone is 'all things to all people.' However, that does not preclude the possibility that an individual (or group) representing one link cannot represent it for multiple people. Over the course of a campaign, no one will have the time to build all of the social links to a high level, there won't be enough physical time to manage all of the people, their stories and disparate interests. For a group campaign, this makes far more sense than attempting to shoe-horn any of the various possible variations, instead each character begins with their own specifically focused story, then develops it and others through the campaign.

Further, a Social Link's story can conclude; they may no longer need assistance, at which time you might need to find a new person to take on the role that link represents.

The group social link is represented by The Fool (0). Everyone is part of it, and it is only raised by the GM, and never costs XP. It is raised as major team milestones are accomplished, commonly at the end of a string of connected story arcs and a finale. Each



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player also selects a Major Arcana of their own, and defines the person whom that link represents. When the Contact of a Social Link communicates with a PC, and they complete a mission, etc., their score and ranks grow.

A LEVEL 1 SOCIAL LINK

Hierophant (V): Social Link: Asuka Amliani (Contact has useful Skills or resources) 8-

Rank 1: Amliani-Kun is a sophomore at Hokkaido University. A brilliant but absent-minded chemistry major, she is deep into research on a strange, unknown compound that she believes holds the key to understanding the link between the real and the supernatural world. Does she actually have ectoplasm? Or something else?

Thus begins the story behind Amliani and her strange material. These are the kinds of hooks and stories that the players are encouraged to create, that go beyond a reason to level an SL. A proper social link will have a problem that they cannot resolve without the assistance of the player.

A Level 5 Social Link (with additional, player driven enhancements)

Hierophant (V): Social Link: Asuka Amliani (Contact has access to the J-CDC, Contact has significant Contacts of her own -- the Dean, Contact has useful Skills or resources) 14-

Rank 5: Now that Asuka has access to the J-CDC, she can continue her research in earnest. During class, however, she sends you an urgent text message, asking you to meet her that night outside of the Kunani Center – the campus chemistry lab. Any response you text back is only met with, “mt me there 2nite” – and nothing else. What might she have discovered that’s so urgent?

Using this format, you are encouraged to continue the story of each Social Link and what you’ve done and accomplished with them. That kind of running log will serve as memory for both you, and the GM in the event a story needs to be revisited. Also, it easily marks major milestones for those characters and what missions or tasks you must accomplish to earn their trust and bring you closer together.

Players are actively encouraged (but not required) to write a complete story as to how the individual came to represent that Social Link. As you meet new major NPCs,



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you will learn what their Arcana is and whether it is strong enough to establish a contact. You may attempt to guess, but there is no 'Detect Arcana' ability. Sometimes you just make friends and hope for the best.

To that end, once a player earns the trust of an NPC, they can spend the XP to establish a Social Link. This can never be forced on an NPC, anymore than a PC can be made to take an action that they dislike. Players will often search for meaningful interaction opportunities to build their Social Links. Doing so means both a non-combat boost through the Contact's ability,



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CHAPTER V: EQUIPMENT, WEAPONS AND FUSION



Weapon Crafting. To that end, once a player earns the trust of an NPC, they can spend the XP to establish a Social Link. This can never be forced on an NPC, anymore than a PC can be made to take an action that they dislike. Players will often search for meaningful interaction opportunities to build their Social Links. Doing so means both a non-combat boost through the Contact's ability,



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COURT TAROT CARD APPLICATION TO PERSONA

COINS	STR	DEX(S)	CON	INT(P)	EGO	PRE(S)	STUN	REC(P)
Page		0		1		0		1
Knight		1		2		1		2
Queen		1		3		1		3
King		2		4		2		4

CUPS	STR(S)	DEX	CON(P)	INT	EGO(S)	PRE	STUN(P)	REC
Page	0		1		0		2	
Knight	1		2		1		4	
Queen	1		3		1		6	
King	2		4		2		8	

SWORDS	STR(P)	DEX	CON	INT(S)	EGO	PRE(P)	STUN(S)	REC
Page	1			0		1	1	
Knight	2			1		2	2	
Queen	3			1		3	3	
King	4			2		4	4	

WANDS	STR	DEX(P)	CON(S)	INT	EGO(P)	PRE	STUN	REC(S)
Page		1	0		1			0
Knight		2	1		2			1
Queen		3	1		3			1
King		4	2		4			2