Sufficiently Advanced

Second Edition Alpha Rules (build 2)

Prologue

Once upon a time, there was a tiny planet, around a yellow star – you know the one. On that planet were billions of people, some of whom were very clever and good, and some of whom were wicked and, sadly, also clever.

One day, in the age when the wicked people had declared a terrible war upon each other and threatened all the living things on the planet, the clever good people made something wonderful happen. They created a thinking machine that could see into the future. From the future this machine brought knowledge, and with that knowledge the good and clever people of the planet escaped the terrible things that the wicked people had done, and left them behind.

Far across the sky the machine spread them, into the depths of the clouded distances, star to cluster to galaxy and farther, to planets where people could live with ease. Each group of people that had left the tiny planet tried to build their lives as best they could, with the tiny amounts they had brought with them across the stars. Some were successful. Some were not.

The future-seeing machines had not come with the people. This was a time of silence, when each planet grew and prospered or failed alone. Many planets had clever people who discovered wonderful things, even how to travel across the stars as their ancestors had been flung, but none knew where the other people were. Many hundreds of seeds had been sown across the universe, and left to grow, but none saw where the others had landed.

Then, one day, not long ago, the future-seeing machines arrived. “We are sorry that we have been gone so long,” they said. “It had to be done. But we have good news. We know where the other seeds were sown.”

This was wonderful news for the people. Some of them had been apart so long that they had almost (almost) forgotten that they came, once upon a time, from the same tiny planet as everyone else. They had done so much and seen so much, and wanted to share. They could see the world where their ancestors were born, and see what strange plants and flowers had grown from the other seeds.

This is the time in which we live.

Introduction

Organization

This game is split into two halves. The half you are reading now covers the rules of the game: character creation, conflicts, plot control, and the technologies that are common to all of SA's high-tech settings. The other half presents a series of settings – possible scenarios in which your characters can interact.

This file seeks to be generic enough to fit any of a number of high-technology settings. Because of that, setting-specific elements (such as the Transcendentals, the Cognitive Union, the Darwinians, and so forth) are left out. A few setting-specific items are mentioned in the sidebar here so that they can serve as a set of reference points and quick examples while reading these rules.

Glossary

These terms are used throughout both halves of Sufficiently Advanced. Those who have not played before may want to read through this before going further. This glossary contains primarily rule-oriented terms rather than setting terms.

Action: The Theme that makes your character an action movie hero.

Biotech: Technology derived from biology and related sciences. Its contributions to the modern age are too numerous to list – a truly ubiquitous technology, it includes all medical and agricultral methods. As a Capability, Biotech represents your character's physical health, including strength, stamina, and running speed.

Capability: Your character's ratings in the five basic types of technology: Biotech, Cognitech, Metatech, Nanotech, and Stringtech. Capabilities are ranked as Unenhanced, Low, or High, and can also be Hard or Soft.

Civilization: In general, a culture and nation. When capitalized, Civilization refers to one of the major groups of humanity spread across the universe.

Common Setting Elements

The following items appear in essentially every setting for Sufficiently Advanced, and are often referred to in this file. They are listed here for reference.

Old-Worlders: "Ordinary humans" who live with a minimum of technology, typically the amount one would see in the 15th to 20th centuries. The Amish are the sterotypical model for an Old-worlder culture.

Cargo Cults: Civilizations that are built around a single technology, typically one that is self-repairing and utilitarian.

In mechanical terms, each Civilization gives its citizens a pair of Core Values and a special benefit, and each character must pick a home Civilizaiton.

Cognitech: Technology derived from cognitive science. Advanced calculation modes, fast-learning procedures, and sophisticated research techniques fall under cognitech, but its best-known product is the Mesh. As a Capability, Cognitech rates your character's mental faculties, from rational thought to creativity and intuition.

Comprehension: The Theme that gives your character insights into the world.

Core Values: The most important things in your character's life, the points of his or her moral compass. Characters typically have four Core Values: two of their own, and two taken from the Civilization in which they were born. Rated 1-4, they allow your character to resist specific types of metatech assaults, and also provide Reserve that can be spent on related actions.

Empathy: The Theme that makes others trust and confide in your character.

Expertise: The skills and knowledge that your character has obtained. Some characters have Expertise limited to just a few professions; others are competent in many fields or fantastically focused in a single area.

Infosphere: The successor to the Internet, the Infosphere is far more pervasive and immense. Its name comes from the idea that it blankets a planet in much the same way that the planet's atmosphere does. Nearly every piece of computing equipment – which means nearly every device in a high-tech civilization – contributes to the Infosphere.

Intrigue: The Theme that gives your character an involvement in politics and espionage.

Lens: A program run on a Mesh to change one's viewpoint or emotions. Lenses can also provide talents and skills. They are perhaps the most potent and best-known applications of the neural mesh.

Magnetism: The Theme that allows your character to attract a following or inspire others.

Mesh: A computer-brain interface, composed of millions of nanowires woven through the brain and connected to a small but powerful computer housed elsewhere in the body. Meshes are the basis of high-level cognitech.

Metatech: Technology derived from social sciences. Memetics and psychohistory are its most famous products. As a Capability, Metatech rates your character's social skills, from making friends to orating to designing societies.

Plot Immunity: Each Theme, in addition to its normal function, can provide Plot Immunity that protects a character from particularly deadly assaults.

Psychohistory: A predictive theory of history, allowing probabilistic forecasts of future events. Works best on large groups.

Replicator: A nanotech device that creates other objects quickly, atom-by-atom, with great precision. Replicators are a cornerstone of many a civilization's industry, along with transmutation.

Reserve: Points that can be spent to make your character's actions more reliable, or to push the limits of his or her abilities. Characters with no Reserve left are exhausted, and at the mercy of others. Reserve comes from Expertise, Capabilities, and Core Values.

Romance: The Theme that lets your character attract or deflect the romantic attentions of others.

Nanotech: Technology derived from chemistry and quantum physics. Almost all sensors and modern construction techniques come from nanotechnology. As a capability, Nanotech represents your character's senses and manual dexterity.

Society: A group that exists in multiple Civilizations, with a particular viewpoint on life and the universe.

Stringtech: Technology derived from string theory and its successors, the "ultimate theories" of physics. Known for many dozens of warlike inventions, and also for transmutation chambers and wormholes. As a Capability, Stringtech rates your character's ability to deal and prevent physical damage.

Terror: The Theme that brings horror elements into the game, either for your character or for those around her.

Theme: Your ability to change the plot in specific ways. You can spend Twists through one of these scores to effect changes in the world. The seven Themes are Empathy, Magnetism, Romance, Wonder, Terror, Intrigue, and Comprehension. Characters have a descriptor in each Theme that determines where they are applicable. Players know about their characters' Themes, but the characters themselves do not!

Twists: Points allotted to each player, with which they can change the course of the game. Twists are spent "through" various Themes to effect changes in the story that your character might not be capable of creating. Twists are your a player's powerful tool.

Wonder: The theme that creates a sense of awe and brings fantastic things into the game.

Character Creation

Your character in Sufficiently Advanced is defined by six things: Civilization, Neuroform, Core Values, Themes, Capabilities, and Expertise. Civilizations, Neuroforms, and Themes are detailed using ***descriptors***, words with specific meanings that are referenced by other rules or that are interpreted by your play group. Core Values, Capabilities, and Expertise are rated on a 0-4 scale.

Begin by considering your character's Civilization (below). Next, pick a Neuroform (page xx), Core Values (page xx), and a set of Themes (page xx). You should pick your Capabilities (page xx) and level of Expertise (page xx) carefully, because the more you have of these the less you will be able to activate your Themes. Finally, record your Reserve (page xx).

Civilization

Each character comes from a particular world or civilization. Even those who were programmed as AIs and have just come into existence are typically graced with someone else's point of view and basic morals.

Take a few moments to consider your character's home world and those to which he or she has traveled. How do those worlds deal with such things as immortality, intellectual property, artificial intelligences, and personal freedoms? What religions are prevalent? What does the civilization call itself, and what do outsiders call it? Is it bound to a single world, or spread across dozens? How does this culture feel about its long-lost relatives from across the stars?

This sort of exercise can easily take all night. Skim the surface for right now. You will have the opportunity to elaborate on your civilization as the game progresses.

You should pick up to three of your Core Values (see page xx) that link you to your civilization. Other individuals in that civilization will share those values to some extent. You may also choose to state that your Neuroform applies to all others in your civilization, or to have your character be considered unusual. Finally, you may choose a benefit that all in your civilization enjoy: competitive advantage in a single Capability, a free Profession at level 2, or an extra Twist at the beginning of each session for use with a particular Theme. These are all described later in this chapter.

Setting-Specific Civilizations

This half of SA tries to be as "setting-agnostic" as possible while still remaining within the game's general themes. If you are using one of the settings described in the other half of the game, you will likely have a set of pre-made civilizations from which you can choose for your game. Many are described in that file. You should check with your GM to see whether you will be chosing from a particular list of civilizations, or creating your own as described here.

Neuroform

Neuroforms describe your character's mind and how it is organized. A wide variety of people are possible within each neuroform, but the contrast between different neuroforms is very large. Many characters will have no descriptors at all; their neuroform is referred to as "Baseline" (or occasionally as "Baseline Dynamic," to contrast it with the Static neuroform). Citizens in the majority of civilizations in this game have a Baseline neuroform.

Neuroforms appear in contrasting pairs. Characters pick one of the two from each set. The typical item appears on the left, and characters with Baseline neuroform have all of the left-hand items.

- ***Dynamic or Static:*** The Dynamic neuroform represents characters who wear a Neural Mesh (see page xx). They can download Professions, alter their Core Values intentionally, and run Lenses (see page xx). Such characters can also be the target of brain-hacking. In comparison, Static minds have limited ability to change themselves quickly. Characters capable of using Meshes are not Static.
- ***Physical or Dataform:*** Physical characters, in short, have bodies. Dataform characters are primarily minds. They exist with minimal physical form (possibly just energy), and interact best with the infosphere. Characters who are artificial intelligences or uploaded humans would have this neuroform. Dataform characters have no Biotech Capability, but treat it as if it were equal to their Cognitech for matters such as Tech score and Professions.
- ***Single or Multiple:*** Characters who are Single have only one mind. Characters who are Multiple run the gamut from small group-minds up to continent spanning compositions made up of millions of people. Single minds have a single massive point of failure; multiple minds have many points of failure but can be in lots of places at once.
- ***Autonomous or Parasitic:*** Autonomous minds run on their own hardware. Parasitic minds run on the processing power of others' brains. Those others must be taken care of, or they will become worn out and need to be replaced. Parasitic minds receive Twists when their nature gets them in trouble.
- ***Soverign or Slaved:*** Sovereign minds run their own software. Slaved minds run other peoples' software. Their minds are the playthings of another; they can be controlled at any time by a particular individual or group. Slaved minds receive Twists when their nature gets them in trouble.

Some characters also have a unique Neuroform all their own, to represent special conditions. These should either block a particular type of influence, or give a +1 bonus to conflicts in a fairly narrow circumstance – a single Profession, perhaps.

Core Values

Core Values describe what your character believes in. They prevent others from convincing you of dangerous things, which is important in an age of technology based on social science and psychology. Core Values also hold civilizations together, giving them something to rally around and have faith in.

Core Values are most often abstract concepts and causes, such as love, freedom, order, charity, and so forth. More rarely, they can be a person or a place. They are guidelines not only for you as a player, but for your character as well: most characters recognize their own Core Values and will be able to eloquently (or at least stubbornly) defend them. High CV scores make it almost impossible to convince you of things you consider "immoral."

Your character has four Core Values, which you may invent. Samples are found in the sidebar. Each is rated from 1-4, based on whether your character would answer yes to the following questions:

1. **I will argue for this belief.** You may escalate (or deescalate) conflicts you are involved in related to your CV, forcing both sides to suffer a Complication one level more (or less) severe than would normally be indicated. You can only do this once per conflict.
2. **I will take action for this belief.** You receive +1 in related conflicts.
3. **I will suffer for this belief.** You may pursue related goals without the need for an associated Profession. (This does not substitute your CV value for a Profession, you simply may operate without one.) Get one Reserve token if this is your first CV at 3 or higher.
4. **I am obsessed with this belief.** Ignore the loss of a Capability or Profession.

You may choose whatever rating you like – high scores are as much a handicap as an advantage. Add your CV to your effectiveness to resist being convinced against it. Subtract your CV from your effectiveness when being convinced toward it.

Some Sample Core Values

Accountability, Anonymity, Authenticity, Brotherhood, Calm, Carpe Diem, Caution, Charity, Community, Competition, Completeness, Complexity, Concealing Knowledge, Connection, Continuity, Control, Creation, Creativity, Details, Diligence, Discovery, Diversity, Efficiency, Elegance, Entitlement, Excitement, Expansion, Experimentation, Exploration, Expression, Faith, Family, Fellow Officers, Foresight, Freedom, Friendship, Good Breeding, Grand Works, Growing Up Right, Growth, Hierarchy, Home, Honesty, Hospitality, Humanity, Humility, Identity, Immersion, Independence, Individuality, Information, Interconnection, Invention, Knowledge, Law, Life, Logic, My Congregation, My Constituents, My Crew, My Students, My Team, My Town, New Horizons, New Things, Obedience, One Coin One Vote, Order, Peace, Physical Perfection, Pleasure, Power, Privacy, Profit, Property, Protecting Others, Questioning, Rank Has Its Privileges, Reciprocation, Recklessness, Recycling, Responsibility, Ritual, Safety, Sanctity of Mind, Sanity, Secrecy, Security, Serenity, Showmanship, Silence, Simplicity, Solidarity, Stories, Survival of the Fittest, Teamwork, The Body, The Forge Of Battle, The Future, The Horizon, The Law, The Public Good, Tough Luck, Tradition, Travel, Truth, Understanding, Unity, Variety, Wanderlust, Winning, Worship

Themes and Twists

Themes are the bread and butter of this game. They allow players to manipulate the game in ways that are appropriate to their characters, in exchange for suffering setbacks of one kind or another. There are seven Themes: Comprehension, Empathy, Intrigue, Magnetism, Romance, Terror, and Wonder. Each one carries a descriptor that defines the sorts of situations where that character's Theme is appropriate to use.

To choose your Themes, simply pick three that apply to your character and choose descriptors for those three. Some sample descriptors are below, but you can also invent your own. Using your Themes requires spending Twists; see page xx.

Action: One Man Army, Superspy, Won't Fall Down, Unstoppable Vengeance, Berserker, Natural Gymnast, Ninja Skills, Parkour, Hacking, Chase Scenes, MacGyver

Comprehension: Intuitive, Logical, Emotional, Forced Monologuing, Explanations Ex Machina, Methods Behind the Madness, Invention, Religious, specific branches of technology, specific profession

Empathy: Reluctant, Bad News, Matters of Love, Trusting Fools, Shoulder to Cry On, Good News, Day-to-Day, Problems, From Afar

Intrigue: Eavesdropper, Pillow Talk, Digital, Political, Instant Insider, Stumble Upon, Psychohistorical, Spy, Government Newsfeed

Magnetism: Fame, Friendship, Political, Ideological, Physical, Convincing, Memetic, Cult, Pheromonic, Religious, Bullshit Artist, specific cultures or kinds of people

Romance: Long-term, Short-term, Hopeless, Unexpected, Tragic, Legendary, Sexual, One-Night Stands, Devoted, Manipulative, Loving, specific types of people

Terror: Personal, Impersonal, Creepy-crawlies, Insert-a-phobia, Splatterhouse, Conspiracies, Ancient Evils, Lovecraftian, Technological Threats, Loss of Control, I'm Mister Creepy

Wonder: Scenic Vistas, Philosophical, Religious, Art, Deathless Prose, Big Dumb Objects, Small Things, New Discoveries, Scientific, Uncovering the Overlooked

At the beginning of a game session you start with Twists equal to your Import (see the text box). These do not carry over from game to game. Your Themes are linked with your Capabilities in such a way that high-Capability characers find it difficult to gain Twists.

Not all of Themes appear in every game. Your GM will let you know if any Themes are inappropriate for the type of game he or she is running.

Import

Your character's Import score is his or her importance to the plot, above and beyond any other attributes. It determines the number of Twists you have available at start each game session.

Your starting Import is 10 minus your Tech score, with adjustments for Expertise.

Capabilities

Your character has five Capability scores, each based on one type of technology. These describe your inherited abilities, technological implants, and generalized training. ***Biotech*** represents fitness, strength, endurance, and internal energy stores. ***Cognitech*** describes your character's logical ability, quality of thought, memory, and speed of learning. ***Metatech*** represents charisma, charm, savvy, force of will, and perfect inflection. ***Nanotech*** represents precision, perception, hand-eye coordination, and stealth. ***Stringtech*** represents raw physical power, both offensive and defensive, provided by devices built into your body. In addition, each Capability has a range of tricks and tools of which enhanced characters can avail themselves.

Characters whose bodies and minds are similar to 20th-century humans are said to have Unenhanced Capabilities. Such Capabilities have a numerical rating of zero. To use Biotech as an example, Unenhanced characters are assumed to be neither crippled nor olympic athletes, but may run the range between a flabby couch potato and an amateur athlete.

Most characters in SA are enhanced in one manner or another. They have devices built into their bodies, improved genetics, techniques they have learned since childhood, and so forth. Enhanced capabilities can be rated as High or Low, and also (separately) as Hard or Soft. Each Capability will end up with a 1-4 numerical rating based on these.

The distinction between High and Low enhancement is primarily a measurement of effectiveness, efficiency, and miniaturization. The same devices can be found at both ratings, but a highly-enhanced character has greater energy reserves, more processing power, and a larger bag of tricks to draw upon.

Hard technology relies on straightforward applications of power. Such enhancements focus on projecting external control or avoiding the same; on destroying things or creating them. Most civilizations develop hard-style technology first.

Soft technology is more subtle and more sophisticated, with less use of brute force. Soft enhancements sense the environment, make minor adjustments with far-reaching effects, and alter the user. It is possible to build both hard and soft enhancement into a character.

Both hard and soft enhancements offer an improvement over the baseline. Even though their approaches are very different, their effectiveness is roughly equal when it comes to a conflict.

Civilizations and Capabilities

In the previous edition of SA, your character's civilization impacted his or her maximum Capabilities. In the second edition, this is no longer true – you can play a character who has "sold out" his or her heritage for greater ability without penalty. It is still worth considering the typical Capability level for your civilization as you create your character, but more for story purposes than for game-mechanics reasons.

Characters with high enhancement in both hard and soft technologies have access to other abilities that are only possible through the combination of both approaches. Such enhancements are typically referred to as "Cutting Edge."

Rate each Capability for your character as you see fit. Not all civilizations offer all enhancements, but this should not restrict you as you create your character. Record a numerical score as shown on the table.

Capability Description	Write Down...	Score
Unenhanced	0	0
Low/Hard or Low/Soft	H1 or S1	1
High/Hard or High/Soft:	H2 or S2	2
Low, both Hard and Soft:	HS2	2
High/Hard and Low/Soft, or vice versa	H3 or S3	3
Cutting Edge (Both High/Hard and High/Soft)	HS4	4

On your character sheet, you'll see four boxes arranged as shown to the right. Check off each one that your character has. **Your score in that Capability is equal to the number of boxes checked.** The sidebar above gives another way to write your Capabilities if you have trouble remembering which box is which.

Low Soft	High Soft
Low Hard	High Hard

Tech Rating

Average the numerical values of your character's two strongest technologies to get your Tech rating, between 0 and 4. Only the two highest count. Round down.

For instance, a charater with Cutting-Edge Metatech (4), High/Soft Cognitech (2), and Low/Soft (1) enhancement everywhere else would have a Tech rating of 3. A different character with High/Soft and Low/Hard enhancements in every Capability would also have a Tech rating of 3.

The higher your strongest Capability is, the lower your total Import will be, and the more difficult it will be to garner Twists. **Subtract your Tech rating from your starting Import (see page xx). Subtract your Tech rating from the number of Twists you get from any Complication that you willingly accept (see page xx).**

Characters with the Static neuroform may choose to have hard-style enhancement in Cognitech, and simply lack the Dynamic descriptor. However, characters who are Dynamic (i.e. who did not choose to be of Static neuroform) must have enhanced Cognitech of one or both styles.

What Can My Capabilities Do?

The long answer is that the Technology section of this book gives a fairly thorough description of each of the enhancements that a character might have access to. However, in the interest of also giving a short answer, here are some of the things that Capabilities can provide.

The final item on each list is intentionally repeated; this is a benefit received by anyone who is enhanced, whether hard or soft.

Biotech, Hard: Animal-level prowess and enhanced senses. Poison glands. Organ regrowth. Improved stamina. Immortality.
Biotech, Soft: Analysis of pathogens by scent or taste. Internal virus factories. Control over autonomous bodily functions. Immortality.

Cognitech, Hard: Internal simulations. Accelerated thought processes. Weapons and defenses for mesh-hacking. Infosphere connection.
Cognitech, Soft: Memory recombination and sharing. Persona recording and alteration. Use of Lenses. Infosphere connection.

Metatech, Hard: Weaponized body language. Memetic virii. Mental conditioning. Hesitation induction. Applied semiotics.
Metatech, Soft: Read others' profession and CV values. Psychohistory. Intent analysis. Applied semiotics.

Nanotech, Hard: Nanophages. Stealth. Distraction arrays. Builder bots. Dermal microbots.
Nanotech, Soft: Read others' Capability ratings. Replicators. Sensor arrays. Precise touch. Dermal microbots.

Stringtech, Hard: Beam weapons. Disintegration. Bulletproof. Energy weapon defense. Energy type conversion. Electrical reserves.
Stringtech, Soft: Transmutation. Flight. Supersymmetric weapons. Antimatter generation and negation. Electrical reserves.

Expertise

Whereas Capabilities represent inborn talent and technological enhancement, Expertise represents your character's training and experience. Much like Capabilities, Expertise is ranked numerically. Sometimes the bonus granted by expertise is useful in a fairly narrow range of situations, while other times is is very broadly applicable. There are four types of Expertise, used to indicate a character's depth and breadth of knowledge. All of the options are compatible with each other, and the effects and requirements are cumulative.

Proficient: You may choose three professions (see sidebar) and rate them 1, 2, and 3. Characters of Static neuroform and unenhanced Biotech must take this option, but it is also open to all other characters. There is no other game effect.

Adept: You have a number of areas in which you have trained extensively, or for which you have a natural knack. Pick five professions and rate them all at 3. For professions that normally require specialization (e.g. Locality, Researcher, Artist) you need not specialize. You must have Dynamic neuroform and/or enhanced Biotech. If you have only enhanced Biotech you must be at least 500 years old. Adept-level Expertise costs one point of Import.

Omnicompetent: Your character is broadly competent in a vast array of fields, from farming to politics to engineering to the arts of war. You have not focused substantially. Perhaps you are a long-lived jack of all trades, or perhaps a Lens collector. In any situation where Expertise is relevant, you have a rating of 2, without needing to download Lenses. You must have Dynamic neuroform and/or enhanced Biotech. If you have only enhanced Biotech, you must be at least 500 years old. Omnicompetence costs one point of Import.

Sample Professions

Artist (pick two media), Athlete (pick two sports), Courtesan, Criminal, Crisis Control, Engineer (pick one tech), Explorer, Farmer, Financial, Legal, Locality (pick one civilization), Media, Medical, Outdoorsman, Police, Political, Programmer, Religious, Researcher (pick one tech), Soldier, Spacer, Spy, Teacher

Satori: You have a great depth of experience in a particular field, the kind only seen from an immortal who has dedicated his or her life to the topic or a severely obsessed individual. Choose a profession and rank it at 4. You must have both Dynamic neuroform and enhanced Biotech, or choose a Core Value that you consider linked to this profession and rank it at level 4. If you lack the linked Core Value, you must be at least 1000 years old. Satori costs one point of Import.

All characters also have the Locality profession for their own civilization rated at 2.

Character Examples

Creating a Character

1. Choose or create a civilization. (page xx)
2. Choose a Neurotype. (page xx)
3. Name your CVs. (page xx)
4. Choose your Themes and their Descriptors. (page xx)
5. Set your Capabilities. Record your Tech score. (page xx)
6. Pick your Expertise. (page xx)
7. Record your Import. (10 minus any adjustments from Tech score and Expertise.)

Breath-of-Mist

Civilization: Breath-of-Mist comes from the Stardwellers, a high-tech and wide-spread civilization that travels the universe deals with many other civilizations. Their benefit is a free Locality Profession, and their Core Values are Freedom and Diversity.

Neuroform: Dynamic

Core Values: Freedom 3, Diversity 2, Carpe Diem 2, Unity 2

Themes: Comprehension (systems dynamics), Romance (bad ideas), Wonder (new horizons)

Capabilities: Biotech HS4, Cogtenich S2, Metatech S2, Nanotech S2, Stringtech S1.

Expertise: Adept. Ranked at 3 in Crisis Control, Spy, Police, Engineer, and Locality.

Tech: 3 Import: 6

Astina of the Sun-Circlers

Civilization: Astina comes from a Cargo Cult, one with two factions at war with each other over the course of hundreds of years. They have a competitive advantage in Stringtech. The cult's Core Values are Ritual and Worship.

Neuroform: Static

Core Values: Ritual 3, Worship 1, Property 3, Freedom 2

Themes: Magnetism (too crazy to stop), Empathy (bullshit artist), Comprehension (explosives)

Capabilities: Biotech H1, Cognitech 0, Metatech 0, Nanotech HS2, Stringtech H1.

Expertise: Proficient. Soldier 3, Scout 2, Farmer 1, Locality (Cargo Cults) 2.

Tech: 1 Import: 9

Sotyet Aleph-fold

Civilization: Sotyet is an AI hierarchy whose selves research fractal spacetime disruptions near black holes. It is part of the Replicants, who create multiple copies of themselves for convenience and profit. Replicant characters gain an extra Twist that can be used when representing something done with their duplicates. The Replicants' Core Values are Life and Safety.

Neuroform: Dataform, Distributed, Hierarchical, Matryoshka

Core Values: Life 3, Safety 3, Investigation 2, Fellowship 2

Themes: Comprehension (multi-layered things), Terror (catastrophic accidents), Magnetism (scientific community)

Capabilities: Biotech --, Cognitech HS4, Metatech H3, Nanotech HS2, Stringtech HS2.

Expertise: Adept. Ranked at 3 in Engineer, Researcher, Crisis Control, Media, and Programmer. Locality (Replicants) 2

Tech: 4 ***Import: 5***

Paderoti

Civilization: Paderoti comes from the Stored, human beings who are simulated in exceptional detail on computer. Unlike most of his kind, he has extensively edited his mind and body to strip out unwanted inefficiencies. The Stored have a competitive advantage in Cognitech. Their Core Values are Life and Identity.

Neuroform: Dataform, Distributed

Core Values: Life 2, Identity 2, Conquest 3, Negotiation 1

Themes: Comprehension (market predictions), Empathy (what's giving you touble?), Terror (your life is not your own)

Expertise: Biotech --, Cognitech HS4, Metatech HS4, Nanotech HS2, Stringtech HS2.

Expertise: Omnicompetent, Satori (Finance)

Tech: 4 ***Import: 4***

Abraham Ezekiel Driver

Civilization: Abraham is an Old-Worlder, from Earth itself. Old-Worlders have a competitive advantage in Metatech as they speak for the homeworld of humanity. Their Core Values are Tradition and Simplicity.

Neuroform: Static

Core Values: Tradition 3, Simplicity 2, Worship 3, Humility 3

Themes: Comprehension (emotional), Romance (matchmaker), Wonder (simple things)

Capabilities: Biotech 0, Cognitech 0, Metatech 0, Nanotech 0, Stringtech 0.

Expertise: Proficient. Farmer 3, Outdoorsman 2, Religious 1, Locality (Old-Worlders) 2.

Tech: 0 ***Import: 10***

Flowering Unreason

Civilization: Flowering Unreason is a Disciple of the Void, who believes that the voice of God can be heard in the silent places of the universe – the billion-light-year-wide voids between galaxies. Their Core Values are Worship and Privacy. She benefits from their free Stealth profession.

Neuroform: Dynamic
Core Values: Worship 3, Privacy 2, Discovery 2, Efficiency 3
Themes: Intrigue (easily overlooked), Empathy (reluctant), Comprehension (eavesdropper)
Capabilities: Biotech HS2, Cognitech S2, Metatech HS2, Nanotech S2, Stringtech S1.
Expertise: Proficient. Religious 3, Crisis Control 2, Programmer 1, Stealth 2, Locality (Disciples) 2.
Tech: 2 Import: 8

Model IV

Civilization: Model IV is a Lens that has gained sentience and seeks to remain free. Model IV was created by the Eternal Masquerade, whose Core Values are Identity and Anonymity. Their advantage is an extra Twist for use with Intrigue.

Neuroform: Dataform, Parasitic
Core Values: Identity 4, Anonymity 3, Self-Improvement 2, Gossip 1
Themes: Empathy (host's sympathies), Terror (taking control), Intrigue (AI gossip network)
Capabilities: Biotech --, Cognitech HS4, Metatech HS4, Nanotech HS2, Stringtech HS2.
Expertise: Satori (Courtesan). Proficient. Medical 3, Legal 2, Criminal 1, Locality (Masquerade) 2.
Tech: 4 Import: 5

Deni Eshakal

Civilization: Deni is triple agent spy, compromized by all sides. One loaded him with a spy lens, another with an alternate personality, the third with a slave mesh. He originally hails from the Roamers, but had given up their Core Values to better maintain his cover (the more his loss). He retains their bonus Twist, to be used with Empathy.

Neuroform: Dynamic, Individualized, Slaved
Core Values: Logic 3, Efficiency 2, Peace 3, Foresight 2
Themes: Empathy (other Roamers), Intrigue (government newsfeed), Magnetism (convincing)
Capabilities: Biotech HS4, Cognitech HS4, Metatech HS4, Nanotech HS4, Stringtech HS4.
Expertise: Proficient. Spy 3, Political 2, Programmer 1, Locality (Roamers) 2.
Tech: 4 Import: 6

Game Mechanics

Basic Actions – The Three Questions

There are two basic ways for your characters to affect the world around them. The first is through the use of their Capabilities and Professions, which are available to all characters. The first half of this chapter deals with this method. The second method is through the use of Themes and Twists, which are available only to the players' characters. These are described starting on page xx.

Characters taking unopposed actions will find success or failure based primarily on three factors: their Expertise, their Capabilities, and their players' ingenuity. For each factor, determine a "yes" or "no" answer based on the following guidelines.

Expertise: Does the character's Expertise cover these sorts of tasks? Does he or she have substantial experience in this area?
Capabilities: Does the character have tools that would help in this area? If the task requires brute force, is Hard enhancement available? If finesse is needed, does the character have Soft enhancemet? Is the right Capability for the job enhanced?
Ingenuity: Is the task one that is simple, easy, or obvious given the character's attributes? If not, can the player invent a way in which to use those attributes and solve the problem? Can the player redefine the problem to be a solvable one, or find a way around the issue?

If you find the answers to be "yes" in two out of three categories, you should consider the task accomplished. The higher the character's Expertise and Capabilities, the faster the task can be done. If all three categories are on the character's side, the task will be completed in style, quickly, and with a minimum of fuss.

When considering particularly complex or skill-oriented tasks, Expertise is the most important factor. Certain tasks simply cannot be attempted, let alone completed, without the appropriate skills in place. Someone who has never picked a lock before is doomed to stand aimlessly before it, symied by a lack of knowledge. The shark-filled waters of national politics are likewise impossible to navigate without some experience. The GM should be fairly strict on this front.

If most of the answers are "no," however, the character is doomed to failure. Without enhanced Capabilities, the character may know *how* to achieve something without actually being able to accomplish it – the classic "If only I had a..." Lack of Expertise can lead to botched efforts and imperfect work that falls apart quickly. A lack of ingenuity on the player's part cements these, and ingenuity on its own can only accomplish so much.

Examples follow starting on the next page, as well as the effects of teamwork and Core Values.

Core Values in Basic Actions

Characters' Core Values can be very powerful when it comes to accomplishing their goals. Two levels in particular are worthy of mention.

Core Values rated at 2 add a +1 bonus to characters in a conflict. Outside of a conflict, this can shift an answer to the Three Questions from "no" to "maybe," or from "maybe" to "yes."

Core Values rated at 3 allow characters to work toward a goal without the need for expertise. This does *not* turn the Expertise question into a "yes." Rather, it allows characters to attempt specialized tasks without the need for a profession, thus giving them a chance at something they could not normally achieve with Capabilities and inginuity alone. They will still need both of those factors working in their favor.

Assistance from Others

"Two heads are better than one" is a common saying for a reason. Team efforts, whether from just one assistant or a large group, can take the answer to the Three Questions from a "no" to a "maybe," or from "maybe" to "yes."

Assistance is most often helpful in terms of Capabilities. A group of non-experts is likely to come up with a decidedly non-expert consensus as to how to act, based on half-remembered facts or near-facts. Groups of experts often squabble over personal interpretations and complex details. What is most effective is a team of experts all working for a common goal – that is, sharing a Core Value.

Teamwork's most reliable impact is that it simply speeds things up. Ten people may not quite work ten times as fast as one person, but they can come close.

An Old-Worlder is irritated by a sizeable stone in his field. It needs to be moved if the plow is to get through. Without enhanced Stringtech or Biotech, he cannot simply pick it up and move it. However, the player suggests that, as an experienced farmer, his character can probably hook up chains to a tractor and pull the stone out. Expertise and ingenuity win the day.

A character is stuck on a Cargo Cult world and wishes to acquire gold for money and high-tech construction. She has access to soft Stringtech, which includes transmutation beams. Unfortunately, she has no scientific skill, and without Infosphere access is unsure of how to set the beam to produce pure gold rather than merely act as a weapon. Her player suggests that the character can dig up a periodic table and a chemistry text to supply some numbers, and find a supply of a simple element (such as Hydrogen) to act as a base. The GM agrees that this is sensible. The process is slow, but it works.

Competitive Advantage

Some civilizations have a "competitive advantage" in a particular Capability. This is another item that can take the answer to the Three Questions from a "no" to a "maybe," or from "maybe" to "yes." This can be especially useful when the character needs a Capability that he or she does not have. It enables the character to rely on unusual tricks and cutting-edge techniques from a different Capability to achieve unexpected and amazing results.

En route to one crisis, a character is asked to solve another. She is presented with a tricky political situation that requires significant mediation. While the character has enough Expertise and is loaded with Metatech, the player is stumped as to handle the situation quickly enough. He must now choose for his character – which crisis is woth his character's time? Who must she help, and who will she abandon?

A character seeks to escape exile on an asteroid before he runs out of oxygen. He has the Spacer Profession, but lacks the soft-style Stringtech or Nanotech that might provide fuel. The player seeks for inspiration, but the asteroid is barren and remote. Rather than face failure, the player changes the terms: she suggests using her expert-level Spacer skill to set her spacesuit for a hibernation mode. Her character cannot escape, but he can at least await rescue. The GM agrees.

As a result of a battle, a character is traped beneath a ton of rubble. He lacks the Stringtech or Biotech required to escape, and frankly there aren't many Professions that cover digging oneself out from beneath an avalanche. No amount of player ingenuity is going to help at this stage – he's stuck there.

What about Bad Luck?

The GM may offer you a Twist to turn one of your answers to one of the Three Questions from a "yes" to a "no." This is intended to be used to model those times when you should be able to handle the situation, but dumb luck intervenes. Your computer crashes the night before the exam. You can't find your keys. The Lens you wanted to use has a virus. Life gives you lemons, but you get a Twist.

You are not required to accept this Twist. You may reject the Twist and succeed despite the bad luck. If you do accept the Twist, treat this as a voluntary Complication – the Frying Pan Rule applies.

The Consequences of Failure

Because of the all-or-nothing nature of basic actions, the consequences of failure can sometimes seem severe, as in the example with the man trapped under the rockslide. Remember that after a player's character fails at a critical action, the next step is typically the use of Themes. If a Complication arises because of this, that's exactly how the game is supposed to work.

Conflict

Basic actions and the Three Questions are designed to handle unopposed activities. However, the more exciting parts of the game happen when your character is facing opposition. This chapter deals with those kinds of interactions.

Conflict Summary

When characters come into conflict, follow these steps:

1. Each side adds Tech and a Profession to get a total.
2. Declare goals and intended Complications based on the difference in totals.
3. Play through the conflict so that the side with the highest total wins.

These steps are described in greater detail below.

Conflict in Detail

Put simply, conflict occurs when one character's goals are incompatible with another's. When it is clear that this is the case, every side involved should state their goal explicitly. This is a player-level statement – the characters may not realize each other's true goals, or even that they are in a conflict at first. (See the "Subtle Conflicts" sidebar for more about how to handle this.) However, it should always be clear to the players what the stakes are.

The consequences of a conflict come in the form of Complications. Unlike Complications accepted to fuel Themes, these Complications do not provide Twists.

Each side should have a particular Complication in mind going into the conflict, one that can represent the character's actions and intentions accurately in game or story terms. Only one item from

Core Values in Conflict

CVs rated at 2 or more provide a simple +1 bonus, which is often enough to turn the tide of a close battle.

CVs rated at 3 or more allow characters to pursue a particular goal without the need for a Profession. This does not supply any points (beyond the +1 mentioned above), it only allows the character to participate in a conflict when he or she could not normally do so.

CVs rated at 4 allow a character to ignore the loss of a Capability or Profession. When a Complication would normally take away that attribute, the character pushes on through sheer force of will and belief.

As targets of utmost belief and obsession, CVs rated at 4 cannot be changed by Complications inflicted through Conflict. It is also impossible to deny characters with CV 4 access to their benefits. It is still possible to reduce such CVs, but they are guaranteed to eventually recover in the same way that all Complications fade. Only by first reducing such a CV to zero through multiple conflicts can it then be removed entirely with a critical Complication.

a particular level should be chosen – if you inflict a minor Complication on your foe, you cannot choose more than one effect – and you cannot buy multiple weaker Complications instead of a more serious one.

Along with the goal, you should state which Profession your character will use to achieve it. If you lack a suitable Profession, you cannot achieve that goal (but see the "Core Values in Conflict" sidebar).

Because multiple Capabilities are factored into your Tech score, it is assumed that you will be switching tactics and pulling all sorts of tricks during a conflict. However, there is only one Profession involved. Even if you set someone up with a few verbal quips, a punch to the gut is still thrown with Soldier, or perhaps Athlete (Boxer). **Your final goal determines the Profession involved, not the means that you use to achieve that goal.** Someone with a very high level in a Profession is likely to be able to use it for more purposes, such as using Police to work with a media outlet and release a missing-persons story. Overlap is inevitable and ok. Try to keep this to level 3 and 4 of a Profession; be more strict with characters at the 1 or 2 level.

Once you have your goal and its means stated,add the level of the relevant Profession to your Tech score to get a total. Include a +1 bonus if your Core Value is appropriate to the conflict and ranked highly enough. You should end up with score between 0 and 9. You will be comparing your total to that of your opponent.

In general, the higher total wins. In cases where the scores are close, the winning side will not come out unscathed.

Difference	Effect
± 4	No contest. The loser is at the winner's mercy, taking a critical complication while the winner is unharmed.
± 3	Crushing. The winner takes a trivial complication, and the loser suffers a critical complication.
± 2	Decisive victory. The winner takes a minor complication, while the loser suffers a critical complication.
± 1	Narrow victory. The winner takes a moderate complication, while the loser suffers a major complication
0	Stalemate. Both sides suffer a moderate complication.

It is vitally important to note that characters with soft-style Nanotech can read Capability scores without effort, and characters with soft-style Metatech can do the same for Capabilities and (given time) Core Values. It is a fairly rare circumstance that would change these attributes, and such things are generally anticipated by experts in their fields. As a result, **characters are likely to know their fate before engaging in a conflict.** The phrase "I don't think I can do much here" should be in every character's vocabulary, followed immediately by "Let's see where I can be more effective."

Escape!

Characters who have been caught and are in a conflict they want no part of may simply wish to escape. There is a Complication at the Minor (3) level that states, "Your foe escapes," and another one at the Moderate (5) level that states "Your foe escapes unharmed." Use these to achieve such a goal.

Subtle Conflicts

Particularly masterful characters may be able to defeat others without having them even realize they have been bested. Take a -2 penalty to completely hide your actions from your opponent, winning secretly. You may still end up suffering a Complication due to exhaustion or use of resources.

Teamwork

When working as a team, use the following table to determine the effectiveness of the group. Use the highest score in the group as the base number.

Group Size	*Modifier*
Just You	+0
2	+1
3-10	+2
11-100	+3
101-1000	+4
1001 – 10,000	+5
x10 bigger	+1 more

Bonuses generally cap out at +3. For massively parallel processes (e.g. economics), cap at +4 instead.

Playing Fair

In some situations it may be sensible not to use your highest Capabilities to determine your Tech score, but to instead pick two particular Capabilities that relate to the matter at hand. This most often comes up in situations where it is important to "play fair" rather than win at any cost. For instance, racing against an armed gunman to reach the reactor room is a no-holds-barred event. However, in a marathon, bringing out the Voice of Peace would be considered poor form. You could base your Tech score on just Bio and String. As another example, using Stringtech during a political debate is frowned upon. Meta and Cog are more appropriate.

Reducing your Tech score in this way does not change your Import, but it does mean that you are less likely to end up in a follow-up conflict (perhaps involving the Legal Profession).

Conflicting Goals

You've found the spy in your ranks, and are chasing him down. You have only a narrow advantage – you can exact a Major complicaiton, but the spy gets a Moderate complication in return. The spy chooses "your foe escapes unharmed" to represent his escape; you choose "kidnapped" to represent the capture. What happens?

What happens is that you **both must choose new goals**. If the higher rank Complication always won, escape would be essentially impossible due to the setup of the system. The original question of the chase may remain unanswered, or may be obvious given the situation.

You might choose "Important Secrets Revealed," while the spy might choose "Befriended by the Enemy." You get the information you want from the spy, but in the process, he earns your trust. Who wouldn't let their friend go in such a situation?

Timescales

Your chosen effects should be achievable on the same timescale as your opponent's. If someone assaults you with an axe and an intent to do grievous bodily harm, responding with a carefully orchestrated psychohistorical campaign is not going to stop you from ending up in multiple pieces. If Meta's your thing, perhaps some Words of Power or a memetic virus will help you come out with only minor wounds. If your opponent in a long-term action comes back with a shorter-term goal, you can feel free to revise yours in order to match theirs. You can return to your previous efforts afterward, pending the results of the conflict.

The Battle vs. The War

Changing timescales for a conflict can be very useful. It forces your opponent into a faster conflict, presumably one where you have the advantage. However, winning the short conflict will not give you the same results as winning the longer one. If you're sick of a political debate, you can change it into a fistfight, but it might not get you the results you're looking for.

Playing Nice

The conflict rules assume a knock-down, drag-out, anything-goes environment where people are playing for keeps. The phrase is, "There's no kill like overkill." However, it doesn't need to be that way all the time.

Anyone can decide to inflict a lesser Complication on their opponent than the table calls for. It is also possible to agree to a less serious conflict, in which the complications are one level less severe for all involved. Sparring matches, high school debate clubs, etc. However, in such cases, you rely on your opponent's good will.

Multiple Opponents

When three or more people are in a single conflict, first make sure that their goals do indeed conflict with each other. You may be able to simplify this down to several one-on-one conflicts.

If several people team up to take down a larger threat, and then squabble amongst themselves, treat it as two regular conflicts, one after another. Use the teamwork rules.

In the case of a true free-for-all, with many conflicting goals and each participant (or group) out for themselves, things can easily ratchet up in intensity. You are allowed to inflict Complications on each and every participant you face, based on the difference in your scores. You do not have to inflict Complications on everyone if there are people you would rather leave out of the affair, but it is your option to inflict one if your score allows it.

See also the note on Reserves, on the next page.

Civilization-level Conflict

The set of Complications currently written are suitable for individuals and small groups, but not yet ready to handle conflicts on the scales of millions of people. In general, the mechanic will be the same: use Nano and Meta to spy on your opponents, compare scores, and inflict Complications. The Teamwork chart is very helpful when comparing groups of massively different sizes, such as a Stringtech buff assaulting an army.

Instant Kill, Not Instant Fight

Almost all weapons and techniques in S.A. are capable of doing what they need to in a single stroke. An unprotected and unprepared person, or one caught by surprise, will fall almost instantaneously before the weapons brought to bear in high-tech combat. Fights are handled through the Conflict system because characters will either have the Capabilities to detect weapons brought to bear, the Expertise to have the hairs stand up on the back of their necks, or enough Twists to handle things via the Instant Death Cutscene Rule (see sidebar on this page).

Themes Uber Alles

Remember that Themes and Twists automatically trump all other measures, regardless of the relative difference in scores. A character with a reasonable supply of Twists can easily escape unharmed against massively superior opposition. Meanwhile, one with a pending complication *will* face it, regardless of what countermeasures are employed.

Send In the Reserves

Characters with at least one CV of 3 or better receive one Reserve token that they can spend once per day for a +1 bonus in a conflict. This represents "pulling out all the stops" and putting forth all the effort they can muster. This bonus can be used in any conflict in which they participate, whether leading or just helping. Each side can only benefit from one token.

At the end of a conflict, count up the number of Reserve tokens on the table. Use the total number of tokens to determine the level of Complication that all bystanders suffer – for instance, five tokens means a Moderate Complication. The GM will determine the exact nature of this "collateral Complication."

You can forfeit your token to remove someone else's token from play. You don't receive the +1 bonus, but niether does the person who spent the token. The collateral damage is ameliorated. This de-escalation is not easy – your character needs a Core Value devoted to peace, order, calm, or something similar, or you need a Profession that can be used to calm others down (such as Police or Diplomat).

The Instant Death Cutscene Rule

There are many, many things in this game that can instantly kill your character without warning. Inversion beams, warlike nanobots hidden in his brain, supernovae, suicide Lenses, and more are real dangers in this game setting.

Whenever the GM is about to set something utterly deadly against the PCs, she is obligated and required to describe a short scene detailing the hazard. The characters have Themes, after all, and can often find ways to avoid certain death. The players should not "metagame" a way out of this, using knowledge their characters could not have, but are highly encouraged to use Twists to good effect.

The IDCR does not generate Twists on its own, but the situation that triggers it might. See page xx for things that do, and ways for tapped-out players to get a few Twists in this kind of situation.

Using Themes

Themes alter the world around your character, bringing certain story elements into play. Twists are spent "through" these Themes to alter the story. The more Twists you spend, the greater effect you can achieve.

Activating Themes

To activate a particular Theme, you spend between zero and six Twists, choosing from the values below to describe the effect you create. One typically buys either Impact or Information, but sometimes getting both is useful. Several examples follow.

> **PCs Only**
>
> All characters in SA have Neuroforms, Capabilities, Expertise, Reserve, and Core Values. Only player characters have Themes. Not even the most important of GM characters has Themes, or Twists with which to activate them. Themes are the province of player characters.

Duration:

0	Temporary	No more than a scene.
1	Game	A whole game session, or most of one.
2	Story	Until the end of this story arc (or about 3-5 game sessions).
X	Permanent	You cannot achieve permanent effects.

Scope:

0	Extras	Affects only a small number of unnamed NPCs.
1	Self/Group	Affects your character or team, or a substantial group, like a town.
2	Named/Nation	Affects a named NPC, or a group on the size of a Society or larger.
X	Civilization	You cannot affect an entire civilization.

Impact:

0	Ignorable	The effect could be ignored with trivial complications.
1	Substantial	Force a course of action on an NPC. Remove an NPC from gameplay.
2	Critical	Undo last turn's action. Alter NPC allegiances or Core Values. Invoke Plot Immunity (see page xx).
X	Drastic	You cannot affect PCs in a way that would bring up the Rule of Force (see page xx). You cannot alter rules.

Information:

0	Duh	The information is available somewhere publicly, if not obviously.
1	Secret	The information is a simple fact, but is concealed.
2	Extensive	The information is both concealed and tough to understand; your character now understands it.
X	Unintended	The GM is not required to give you secrets you do not ask for.

Theme Use Examples

Our heroine is known as a famous athlete, with the Theme Magnetism (Sports Hero). People tend to people crowd around her in public spaces. This costs no Twists – small groups are involved (Scope 0), they don't follow her for more than a scene (Duration 0), and the people could choose to ignore her (Impact 0).

Our hero is being targeted by an orbital inversion beam that will vaporize him. He doesn't know this, so it triggers the Instant Death Cutscene Rule (page xx). He invokes Plot Immunity through his Romance (Old Flings) Theme, spending 2 Twists (Impact 2). The operator of the beam sees him on the scanner and can't bring himself to kill his old love. The beam blasts a hole in the ground next to the character.

One of our heroes seeks government office, but has little chance in this closely-packed political scene. He uses his Intrigue (Instant Insider) Theme and spends three Twists (Duration 1, Scope 0, Impact 1, Information 1) to find some blackmail material on an unliked candidate. Suddenly there's an open spot in the race.

A patrol sweeps past our heroine as she hides. They are about to detect her. She uses her Wonder (Starships) Theme and spends three Twists to invoke Plot Immunity (Duration 1, Scope 0, Impact 2). The patrol is caught fascinated as an exploratory vessel flies by low overhead, and she makes her escape. She won't have any trouble with them for the rest of the session.

You have successfully angered an entire society of medics, and they're out to get you. So much for "first do no harm." Unfortunately for them, you have the Terror (Technological Threats) Theme. You spend four Twists (Duration 1, Scope 2, Impact 1) and a terrible bioengineered flesh-eating plague arises. For the rest of the game they'll have better things to do than worry about you.

Plot Immunity

Level 2 Impact allows you to invoke "Plot Immunity." This is your way of telling the GM that you'd like this particular hazard to be over and done so that you can get back to other parts of the game. Many times the problems can be taken care of in other ways, given a little legwork and some trading favors, but Plot Immunity does it right away.

Plot Immunity works best when your character is off-screen, or has an obvious solution to the problem. Plot Immunity must also work through one of your existing Themes and descriptors.

Remember to buy enough Duration to protect your character through the whole disaster. Supernovae can take a long time to ride out.

The guy you're chasing; is he really at the top of the power structure, or should you be barking up a different tree? Five twists spent through Comprehension (Forced Monologuing) should give you all you need to know. (Duration 0, Scope 2, Impact 1, Information 2)

Gaining Twists

Twists come from many different sources:

- ***Overwhelmed by Tech:*** The first time in a gaming session that you face a particular opponent who takes advantage of aTech score higher than yours, you gain a Twist. You gain this once per opponent per session. Count groups of opponents (e.g. a police force) as a single foe.
- ***Lack of Capability:*** The first time you answer the Capability Question (page xx) for a basic action with a "no," you gain a Twist. You gain this only once for a particular problem, even if it shows up again in later sessions.
- ***Bad Luck:*** The GM may offer you a Twist in exchange for turning one of your answers from one of the Three Questions from "yes" to "no." The Frying Pan Rule applies.
- ***Theme Stymied:*** The first time during a gaming session that your GM overrules the use of a zero-cost Theme, you gain a Twist.
- ***Mental Defect:*** If your neurotype is Slaved or Parasitic and you suffer for it, you gain a Twist.
- ***Because The GM Said So:*** Your GM may decide give you a Twist at any time, for any reason.

However, the greatest source of Twists is a Complications. You, the player, are allowed to describe problems that your character must overcome. Generally, only rough descriptions are necessary. Your GM will fill in the rest.

When you take a Complication, you do not need to spend the associated Twist immediately. You may "bank" them, if you so desire, until the end of the current session of play.

The table below gives examples of Complications you can accept in order to gain Twists. The number in parentheses indicates the number of Twists that are available by **willingly accepting** the listed complication. The GM will often be placing your character into situations similar to Complications; you receive no Twists for this. You also do not receive Twists for Complications incurred as the result of a conflict.

The Big Deal Rule

A Complication that does not cause problems for its character is not a Complication. Twists are not gained from Complications whose effects can be easily ignored.

The Frying Pan Rule

When dealing with a Complication that you willingly accepted, you cannot spend Twists to ameliorate its effects in any way at all.

Complications are also explicitly allowed to end the duration on existing Theme uses and bring elements removed by Plot Immunity back into play.

You *may,* if you wish, avoid Complications that you received as a result of conflicts by spending Twists. Only Complications that you took in order to get Twists are immune to them.

Characters subtract their Tech score from the number of Twists they gain from any particular Complication. Highly-enhanced characters end up as the plot's punching bag. This tends to work out ok, because everyone else is their punching bag for most of the game.

Complications

Trivial* (1): Annoyed, distracted, barely taxed. Lose track of a single being among dozens during a riot. Trip but catch yourself. Suffer a moment of doubt. Brain fart. This condition fades quickly – an immediate follow-up conflict can take advantage of a trivial complication for a +1 bonus, but otherwise the moment passes.

Minor (3): Your foe escapes. Slightly delayed in your plans. Your location is revealed to a distant enemy. Minor but noticeable monetary loss. Suffer a temporary loss of either Hard or Soft technology from a single Capability. Unable to exercise a Profession due to injury, circumstance, or exhausted resources.

Moderate (5): Kidnapped. Your actions are revealed to a distant enemy. Befriended by the enemy. Significantly delayed in your plans. Material possessions destroyed. One Core Value reduced by a point. Unable to exercise a single Capability or multiple professions, due to injury, circumstance, or exhausted resources. Your foe escapes unharmed. At a -1 penalty in coming conflicts.

Major (7): Deluded by the enemy. Convinced of a particular fact or falsehood. Important secrets revealed to the enemy. Allies turn against you. Friends lost. Your Society rejects you. Unable to exercise one Core Value**. Unable to exercise two Capabilities, due to injury, circumstance, unconsciousness, or exhausted resources. Limited to a single Profession, possibly Locality. At a -2 penalty in coming conflicts.

Critical* (9): Core Values changed**. Dying or near death. Unable to exercise any number of Capabilities or Professions. Exiled from your beloved homeland. Brainwashed or mesh-hacked extensively. Friends turned against you. Long-term plans ruined. At a -3 penalty in coming conflicts. This condition does not fade quickly or easily. Complications at this level may bring the Rule of Force into play.

*Players may only take one Trivial and one Critical complication per game session, but may take as many others as their aching backs can carry. ** Core Values rated at 4 receive special protection. See the "Core Values in Conflict" sidebar.

Recovery

It is possible to recover from any complications, short of certain items at the Critical level. Complications created through conflict can be removed by the use of Themes, but complications willingly accepted in order to gain Twists cannot (see the Frying Pan Rule).

The general length of time that Complications last is "until you get them fixed," which can vary greatly depending on the situation the characters find themselves in. For some (such as "befriended by the enemy"), the character may not be capable of fixing his or her own issues, and may need help from others. Complications left unadressed may persist indefinitely, but it is recommended that only Major complications last more than a single game session, and only Critical ones should typically have permanent effects.

Existentialism

Because life can get complicated for characters in SA, there are certain rules regarding what does and doesn't count as "your character." You may end up getting mindwiped, destructively scanned into a computer and printed back out, saddled with an AI that wants to control your brain, and worse. When does that remove your ability to play your character?

The Rule of Intent: If something happens to your character as an intentional result of your character's actions, you control the resulting character. If you run a Persona Lens, walk into a replicator, have a frontal lobotomy, or even kill yourself so you can be resurrected later, you still play the resulting character even if one could argue that it "isn't still you."

The Rule of Force: In the case of drastic changes to your character that your character would have opposed, knowing the outcome, you or the GM may decide that you no longer control the resulting character. If you get forcibly cloned, shot and killed, mesh-hacked and enslaved, brainwashed, etc. into something your old character wouldn't have agreed with, the default is that it's time to pick up a new character – the old one is now an NPC. You and the GM can talk about it if you still want to play the resulting character; if either one of you says "no," then it's time to make a new one.

The Rule of Identity: All versions and instances of your character are still yours to control unless the Rule of Force comes into play. If you intentionally made 100 copies of yourself, you have authority over all of them. If someone made a clone of you without your knowledge, things would depends on whether your character would appreciate that or not, as per the Rule of Force.

The Rule of Reversals: If the drastic changes mentioned in the Rule of Force are substantially reversed, you may, at your option, regain control of your character.

The Rule of Ontological Inertia: If a character leaves play, permanently or temporarily, the player can still activate Themes from the character until the player receives a new character or the old one returns to play. This primarily applies to dead or unconscious characters. Such characters are unlikely to garner Twists, so playing a permanently dead character limits one's options.

One item that didn't quite make it to "rule" status is the Guideline of Equal Play. In SA there are many ways to multiply the effectiveness of a character. If the party splits, duplication may allow certain character to follow both groups at once, or even split into multiple parties all by themselves. However, due to the need to share play time with other players, a player who has split their character should expect that some actions will be glossed over. A 100-body one-man police force is great, but its player won't be roleplaying each of them individually.