

# Character Creation

This document is meant to serve as a walkthrough for players who want to dive right in to filling out their character sheet and creating a character for use in [Heart of Darkness](#).

Each character begins the game with one hundred character points, currency which is used to purchase their attributes and traits.

# Step A: Attributes

The first step in filling out a character sheet is to determine the character's scores in each of the eight attributes.

Attributes represent a character's innate physical and mental capabilities. By themselves they have no effect on the character's abilities, but they are used to determine the starting values of the character's skills and aspects.

Attributes range from a score of 1, representing a character with a severe disability in that area, to 10, which represents the pinnacle of human achievement, with an average score of 5.

Each attribute costs a number of character points equal to double the character's score.

If you don't have enough points to build your desired character don't worry, you will have the chance to improve your attributes later and can get more points by picking up flaws.

If you have points left over you can use them to purchase merits or save them for later.

The eight attributes are as follows:

## **Agility:**

Agility measures the character's grace and mobility and represents how quickly and comfortably they can move about.

## **Charisma:**

Charisma is a measure of a character's raw social presence, their ability to interact with other people, and of how generally likeable they are.

## **Dexterity:**

Dexterity represents a character's fine muscle control and their ability to manipulate objects with finesse and precision.

## **Endurance:**

Endurance is a measure of a character's health and their overall stamina and toughness.

## **Intelligence:**

Intelligence is a measurement of a character's mental faculties, how quickly and cleanly they can think and process information and how accurate their memory is.

## **Perception:**

Perception measures the acuity of the character's senses and determines how well they can observe their surroundings.

## **Strength:**

Strength is a measure of the character's raw physical power and muscle mass.

## **Willpower:**

Willpower represents the character's mental fortitude, their ability to resist psychological or magical assaults and to push themselves when the going gets tough.

# Step B: Traits

Traits are what set a character apart and make them unique, modifying their scores and abilities beyond what their attribute scores alone could determine.

Traits are divided into two types, merits and flaws.

Merits are beneficial and cost character points to purchase.

Flaws are detrimental and grant extra character points which you can use to purchase merits or attributes.

A full list of traits and their costs can be found in the companion document, but here are a few of the most useful to get you started:

## Gifted

### 1 Point Merit

Choose one of the character's Aspects. The key attribute is treated as being one point higher than normal for calculating the value of that aspect. This trait can be purchased any number of times and applied to the same or different aspects, but can never raise an attribute above an effective 10.

## Prodigy

### 1 Point Merit

Choose one of the character's Skills. The key attribute is treated as being one point higher than normal for calculating the value of that skill. This trait can be purchased any number of times and applied to the same or different aspects, but can never raise an attribute above an effective 10.

## Sagacious

### 1 Point Merit

Choose one of the character's skills and upgrade its proficiency level by one step, from untrained to secondary or from secondary to primary. This trait may be taken any number of times with cumulative effects.

# Step C: Skills

Skills represent a character's knowledge in various areas and their score in a skill determines just how competent they are in their field.

The success or failure of most abilities in Heart of Darkness depends upon a skill test.

Each skill has a base value determined by one of the character's attribute scores, called the key attribute.

There are three levels of training in each skill, called proficiency levels.

A level of untrained represents a skill in which the character has had no significant education or experience.

A secondary skill represents something which the character has had a bit of education or experience with, usually a hobby or something tangentially related to their profession.

A primary skill is something which the character has dedicated a large portion of their life to mastering and is likely a key component of their role in life and on the team.

A character's proficiencies depend on their Intelligence score.

Every odd point of Intelligence provides two secondary skills. These skills have a score equal to the character's key attribute +3.

Every even point of Intelligence provides one primary skill. These skills have a score equal to the character's key attribute +5.

All other skills are untrained and have a score equal to the character's key attribute.

## **Skills:**

The following are brief descriptions of the various skills a character is likely to have with their key attributes listed in parenthesis.

Characters are free to invent their own skills with the Game Master's permission.

### **Academics (Intelligence):**

Academics is a measure of the character's knowledge and book learning. It represents a study of literature, history, geography, law, politics, theology, and philosophy and is a good representation of how generally educated the character is.

### **Acrobatics (Agility):**

Acrobatics represents a character's ability to move with grace and to control their natural agility. It includes all manner of gymnastics and is often used to protect the character by allowing them to evade hazards or tumble to safety.

### **Alertness (Perception):**

Alertness is a character's skills at noticing things. This can be as simple as keeping a lookout or eavesdropping, or as complex as investigating a crime scene or tracking a fleeing suspect.

### **Art (Intelligence):**

Art is the ability to craft objects with little utilitarian purpose but with great aesthetic value. It includes painting, sculpture, body art, composition, engraving, and all manner of ornamentation.

### **Athletics (Agility):**

Athletics measures a character's ability to perform physical endeavors including sports, swimming, running, and climbing.

### **Awareness (Perception):**

Awareness measures a character's sensitivity to supernatural energy. It is commonly used to sense the presence of magic and other mysterious phenomenon, but can also give a character premonitions and insight into their future.

### **Business (Charisma):**

Business is a character's ability to cut deals and manage money. It includes bartering, investment, marketing, and managing a successful enterprise.

### **Domestics (Intelligence):**

Domestics is a catch all term for skills which are useful around the house including cooking, cleaning, tailoring, and personal maintenance. It is commonly the domain of servants and home makers, but it is always useful to have someone around the camp who knows how to prepare food and sew.

### **Expression (Charisma):**

Expression represents a character's verbal ability and vocabulary as well as their ability to read others and put forth a convincing argument. It is used to plead one's case and to persuade people into doing what you want them to.

### **Fortitude (Endurance):**

Fortitude is a measure of the character's control over their own body. It is used to fight off poison and disease, to steel oneself against incoming blows, or fight off exhaustion and injury to keep on going.

### **Gaming (Intelligence):**

Gaming is a character's aptitude at games of chance or skill including card games, dice games, and board games of all sorts. It is primarily useful as a diversion, but a skilled gambler can make their living off of their gaming abilities.

### **Larceny (Dexterity):**

Larceny represents skill at trickery and other semi legal feats of dexterity. It includes magic tricks, picking pockets, opening locks, disarming traps, and bypassing various security systems.

### **Leadership (Charisma):**

Leadership is used to instruct and to inspire others. It is used by teachers, tacticians, and politicians of all sorts.

**Marksmanship (Dexterity):**

Marksmanship is a character's ability to aim and fire ranged weaponry including guns, bows, slings, and crossbows as well as thrown weapons and grenades.

**Medical (Intelligence):**

Medical measures a character's knowledge of anatomy and medicine. It is used to diagnose and treat all manner of injuries, diseases, and other harmful conditions.

**Melee (Dexterity):**

Melee measures a character's skill in dueling and their accuracy with swords, maces, spears, axes, knives, whips, and other close combat weapons.

**Metalworking (Intelligence):**

Metalworking is the ability to craft and repair all sorts of objects which are made from metal including most tools, weapons, and armor.

**Performance (Charisma):**

Performance is the ability to entertain others and is used to influence emotions and inspire allies. Performances typically consists of song, dance, music, acting, or even inspiring oration.

**Reason (Intelligence):**

Reason is applied Intelligence. It represents a character's ability to use logic and mathematics to solve puzzles and come to reasonable conclusions.

**Resolve (Willpower):**

Resolve is a character's control over their own mind. It is used to fight off outside influences, resist magic, ignore pain, and to otherwise keep one's head clear and collected in the face of adversity.

**Riding (Dexterity):**

Riding is the ability to guide mounts of all sorts, be they horses or other animals or mechanical crafts such as coaches, trains, and sailing vessels. This skill also represents the ability to maintain one's conveyance as well as the ability to navigate and quickly mount or dismount.

**Science (Intelligence):**

Science represents a character's knowledge of the secret workings of the natural world. Biology, chemistry, geology, physics, astronomy, meteorology, and more. This skill is also represents the character's ability to make potions and explosives using lost Atlantean alchemy.

**Social (Charisma):**

Social represents a character's knowledge of human thought and culture. It includes the disciplines of anthropology, psychology, and sociology and is often used to fit in or assess someone's motives or abilities.

**Stealth (Agility):**

Stealth is the ability to remain unseen, to hide and sneak without being seen, and is used by scouts, spies, thieves, and assassins the world over.

**Stoneworking (Intelligence):**

Stoneworking represents the ability to design, build, and repair stonework. This includes buildings, walls, towers, bridges, castles, and all manner of structures as well as statuary and hastily dug earthworks and battlefield fortifications.

**Survival (Intelligence):**

Survival is a character's knowledge of nature and their ability to get along in it. It includes the ability to forage for food, protect oneself from the environment, and to tame wild animals.

**Technology (Intelligence):**

Technology is the ability to design and maintain complex machinery including tools and firearms.

**Unarmed (Dexterity):**

Unarmed represents a character's skill and accuracy when fighting without the use of weapons.

**Woodworking (Intelligence):**

Woodworking is a character's ability to build and repair wooden tools, weapons, furnishings, and structures.

# Step D: Equipment

A newly created character begins play with the following equipment:

A suit of armor. This armor may be light, medium, heavy, or armored clothing and may include a helmet.

A single two handed weapon of their choice OR a pair of one handed weapons of their choice OR a single one handed weapon of their choice and a shield (or a parrying dagger, tower shield, or buckler). Weapon modifications are allowed if they do not increase the item's cost.

Twenty four rounds of ammunition for each ranged weapons they carry (if any).

A tool for each skill in which they are trained.

Combat skills instead allow an additional pick from the weapon choices presented above.

Skills which do not have an associated tool instead allow the character to select an additional personal effect (see below) related to the skill.

Clothing of a style and quantity appropriate to their background. This may include reasonable accessories such as belts, hats, cloaks, coats, or shoes.

A purse or coin pouch with enough money to make minor purchases.

A bedroll or sleeping bag.

A backpack or sack and enough quivers, bandoliers, scabbards, and holsters to transport their other equipment.

A week's worth of food.

A canteen, skin, or bottle with enough water or wine to last them for a week.

A furnished home of a size and quality appropriate to the character's background.

One personal item of the character's choice.

One additional item of their choice, either an additional pick from the above, a utility item, a potion, or perhaps even a mount or pet.

A single personal effect or sentimental trinket.

Note that all starting equipment is considered to be of ordinary quality, although it can be enhanced by the *heirloom* or *artifact* merits.

# Step E: Details

Now we really get in to what makes a character unique. A character's details do not affect their abilities or characteristics, instead they are merely descriptive features to help the other players imagine your character and to guide you on how they would act in a given situation.

## Name:

You can name your character whatever you like. This is not a decision to be undertaken lightly, as a character's name will be with them for a long time and will often be the first impression people get from them, so make sure to pick something evocative and appropriate.

## Ethos:

A character's ethos is a quick summary of a character's morals, allegiances, and personality quirks.

This is only a very brief guideline, and you are free to play the character whoever you like or change the character's ethos as they grow over the course of play.

It is important that all players on the team pick ethos for their characters that are at least somewhat compatible, tension is fine but constant arguing and conflict can quickly spell the end of an otherwise enjoyable game.

## Species:

Heart of Darkness assumes that most player characters are going to be human. Although Pangaea is home to countless species most of them are alien creatures and are ill suited to most games.

Still, if you want to play an inhuman character and your Game Master agrees to it you can find rules for playing many other species in the bestiary.

## Sex:

You can be either male or female. Though there are still many cultures that treat one gender differently than the other the world as a whole is fairly egalitarian, and the blood of Atlantis has ensured

that most women are as large and powerful as their male counterparts. A character's gender has no effect on their scores or abilities.

### **Homeland:**

Your character can be from anywhere in Pangaea, although you might want to talk to the other players and the Game Master so that you can coordinate where the game will begin.

The setting chapter contains descriptions of numerous locales and you can choose any of them to be your homeland or use their example to invent a new location to hail from.

### **Religion:**

There are many deities in Pangaea, and your character can pay homage to any of them or to none of them. Most people within the Imperium follow the Tao and worship the Goddess or follow one of the Olympians. There are also numerous pagan faiths, mystery religions, and cults dedicated to Demons, Devils, or the Titans.

Players are free to pick any god or gods from those listed in the game's setting. It is also fine to play a character with no particular allegiance or even one who questions the existence of the gods altogether. Players are free to have a character who is a member of any real world or fictional religion or even create a new faith for the character to belong to so long as the Game Master and other players deem it appropriate.

### **Age:**

Your character can be any age that you like, although most characters will probably be between the ages of fifteen and fifty, old enough to be physically mature and socially responsible but not so elderly as to be made infirm by old age or too experienced for a starting character.

### **Handedness:**

You can choose to make your character either right or left handed. Characters with the ambidextrous merit are both at once.

### **Height:**

Your character can be as tall as you want. Most humans are about six feet in height, and characters who are shorter than four feet or taller than seven feet generally require the Tiny or Huge traits respectively.

### **Weight:**

Weight in Pangaea is typically measured in stones, defined as one tenth the weight of the Empress, or just under 10 kilograms. Most people weigh a number of stones equal to their Strength score +5, but your character can be as heavy or as slender as you like, within reason.

### **Body Build:**

A quick description of your character's overall physique. This is up to the player but should be in keeping with their Height, Weight, and Attribute scores.

Examples include muscular, thick, stocky, fat, slender, lanky, gaunt, athletic, curvaceous, lithe, wiry, and average.

### **Skin Tone:**

Your character can have whatever skin tone you like. Most people have brown skin, with those who live in polar climates being so light they are nearly white and those who live in tropical regions being almost black.

Travelers were common enough in the Imperium that those of any skin color are likely to be found and accepted in any region, though those who have inhuman ancestors might have vibrant and unusual colorations that put other people at odds.

### **Hair and Eye Color:**

You can choose whatever hair or eye color you like for your character.

Humans in Pangaea typically possess blue, brown, or green eyes in roughly equal measure and most have black, brown, blonde, orange, or gray hair.

Those who have inhuman ancestry or supernatural blood often exhibit unusual coloration and can have hair and eyes of most any color you can imagine.

# Step F: Aspects

A character's aspects are derived from their traits and attribute scores. Aspects typically determine a character's passive capabilities.

Aspects can be tested against in the same manner as skills, but this is rare. More often they will be used to oppose another character's test.

Some aspects provide a character with currency which can be used over the course of play for various in-game benefits.

The aspects are as follows:

## **Chakras:**

A character's chakra score is a measure of how many beneficial magical effects their life force can sustain at any given time. The effects of chakras are detailed further in the magic section.

A character possesses a number of Chakras equal to their Charisma score plus ten.

## **Concentration:**

Concentration represents a character's ingenuity and ability to stay focused on a tedious project. Concentration is spent as a currency to perform laborious actions such as crafting. More details about laborious actions are given in the companion documents.

A character begins each mission with a number of Concentration points equal to their Willpower score.

## **Destiny:**

Destiny is a measure of the character's luck, good fortune, and fate. A character can use their destiny to reroll dice as described in the companion documents.

A character begins each mission with a number of Destiny points equal to their Charisma score.

## **Dodge:**

A character's Dodge score is a measure of how difficult they are to strike in combat and their ability to avoid blows by blocking, parrying, diving for cover, or simply getting out of the way.

Whenever a character is attacked they may oppose their opponent's accuracy roll with a *dodge* test of their own.

A character's Dodge score is equal to their Agility score plus five.

## **Encumbrance:**

Encumbrance is a measure of how much gear a character can carry. A character can carry a number of stones equal to their Encumbrance score without penalty.

A characters' Encumbrance is equal to their Strength score.

## **Essence:**

A character's Essence score is a measure of how brightly a character's soul burns and their overall influence on the world as well as the intractability of their nature.

Essence is never used by itself, but it determines the value of some traits and spells and provides a character with an innate resistance to many forms of potions and tonics.

All characters begin with an Essence score of one. This value increases by one each time they complete twenty missions.

## **Initiative:**

Initiative is a measure of a character's wits and reflexes; how quickly they can perceive and react to the events which occur around them. Initiative is often used to determine what order characters will act in during an action scene.

A character's Initiative is equal to the sum of their Dexterity and Perception scores.

**Mana:**

Mana is a reservoir of spiritual energy and mental fortitude. Mana can be used to power spells and other impressive feats and can provide a bonus to any test to represent pushing oneself beyond their limits through sheer willpower.

More details about how to use Mana are given in the companion documents.

A character begins each mission with a number of Mana points equal to their Willpower score.

**Might:**

Might is a measure of a character's raw power. It is used to perform feats of strength and to resist being moved or held in place against one's will.

A character's Might is equal to double their Strength score.

**Resilience:**

Resilience is a measure of how sturdy and difficult to injure a character is. A character can improve their Resilience score by wearing armor or wielding a shield.

Whenever a character is damage a *resilience* test is made to oppose the damage roll.

A character's Resilience is equal to their Endurance score.

**Size Rating:**

All creatures and objects in Heart of Darkness have a size rating, a measure of their comparative volume and mass, which modifies their space on the game board as well as their Resilience, Might, Damage, and how difficult they are to spot.

The full rules for Size Rating can be found in the Bestiary.

A character's Size Rating is determined by their species and can be modified by traits such as Tiny and Huge.

Humans are ordinarily size rating zero, meaning they are neither larger nor smaller than most other creatures.

**Speed:**

A character's Speed is a measure of how quickly they can move about from one place to another. During an action scene a character can move a number of meters equal to their Speed score in any given turn, while a character moving overland at a brisk pace travels at a rate approximately equal to their Speed score in miles per hour.

A character's Speed is equal to their Agility score.

**Tenacity:**

A character's Tenacity is a measure of their tolerance for pain and ability to keep going when injured. A character who suffers damage which equals or exceeds their Tenacity score is Disabled, as described in the Combat Rules.

A character's Tenacity is equal to their Willpower score.

**Vitality:**

Vitality is a measure of a character's health and will to survive. A character who has suffered damage which equals or exceeds their Vitality score is Dying as described in the Combat Rules.

A character's Vitality is equal to their Endurance score.

# Step G: Description

This last step is where you can really let your creativity take hold.

A blank space is provided on the front of your character sheet to describe your character in whatever way you see fit.

The most straightforward way to present your character is to simply draw a picture of them, or if you lack the artistic skill or inclination simply photocopy an image that you think fits.

If you would prefer a less visual medium you can always write out whatever sort of description you desire, be it a summary of the characters appearance and personality or even a detailed history or backstory for your character.

This section is for you to do whatever you think best to bring the character to life and solidify them in your mind or to present them to the other players.

# Advancement

After your character sheet is filled out you are ready to begin the game, but character creation doesn't end here.

A character will keep growing throughout the course of their life, and they will gain new abilities as they grow in power and experience.

At the end of each mission all characters gain a single character point. You can then spend it immediately or save it for future use.

These character points can be used to increase a characters attribute scores at a cost of three character points per increase. These increases are cumulative and adjust the character's skills and aspects accordingly, but they cannot take a character beyond the normal maximum value of ten.

Characters can also use character points they earn over the course of play to purchase new merits or to remove flaws by paying back the character points they received from them.

Most traits can simply be acquired or bought off through training, study, and practice. Others require special circumstances to acquire such as magical or surgical augmentation. What circumstances have to be met to purchase a given merit or buy off a given flaw are up to the Game Master.

It is also possible for characters to lower their attribute scores, lose merits, or gain flaws over the course of play. This might be because of an injury, a curse, or other calamitous events or it might simply be the result of atrophy or the natural aging process.

Whatever the cause, losing Merits or Attributes or Gaining flaws requires the consent of the Game Master and awards additional character points appropriate to their value.