

Game System



The Dragons setting uses the Storyteller system, with various house rules and tweaks.

Characters are generally assumed to be human, although heavy enhancement may occur in Syntronics, Hosts and others. Neurocomputer AIs are treated as humans, but have access to some special advantages and disadvantages. Software AIs (and most neurocomputers anyway) are generally too alien to be playable.

Traits

Attributes

Distribute 7/5/3 on stats (or 15 points). Each attribute has one dot from the start.

The nine stats are: STR, DEX, STA, INT, PER, WIT, CHA, SOC and MAN.

Education/world knowledge is normally assumed to correspond to INT.

Appearance is assumed to be normal thanks to widespread biosculpting; exceptional appearance is taken as a merit of flaw.

SOC

SOC represents social standing. This is not just current status but also upbringing, style of speech and contacts. While SOC does not necessarily carry over from one society to another, the mannerisms and expectations tend to be very universal. This can be used for everything from intimidation to making a business deal seem more promising.

- * Underclass (unskilled labour, service class)
- ** Lower Middle class (skilled labour, technicians, foremen, clerks)
- *** Middle class (Self-employed, artisans, sales, basic creatives)
- **** Upper middle class (Management, professionals, creatives)
- ***** Elite (Investors, heirs, executives, ultra-creatives)

Skills

- Characters have **23 points** to distribute over their abilities.
- I use the Aberrant system of skill resolution: 7, 8, 9, 0 are successes. Botches happen if there is no success but a number of ones have come up. 0's may be re-rolled if the skill is specialized.
- Unlike in Aberrant which attribute is used with which skill is not fixed: one can roll Intimidation using both Strength, Charisma or Social class for different kinds of intimidation.
- Specializations cost 1 freebie, but you get one for free when a skill reaches 4.

Backgrounds

7 **background dots**. Allowed backgrounds include:

- **Allies** - Close friends, family, people you can turn to.
- **Alternate ID** - Each dot represents one fake identity, or several dots for a very carefully made identity that will stand up to closer scrutiny.
- **Backing** - Backing represents a combination of formal ranking and standing within a group. Note that the level of oversight increases proportional to the backing level.
- **Body** - This background represents the bodies owned by the character beyond its basic body (which is assumed to be the "best" or most expensive body). Each body has a point cost, which are summed together. A character with a 2 and a 3 body would for example have 5 dots in bodies. This is obviously most relevant for AIs, although syntronics and telepresence workers might also have it.
- **Cipher** (Secrecy) – the ability to keep out of sight from authorities and others.
- **Contacts** – Important people you know.
- **Enhancements** – Upgrades to your body and mind. Each dot gives you an extra freebie to spend on enhancements.
- **Enemies** – People out to harm you (adversarial, gives freebies)
- **Equipment** (see below)
- **Favours** – Somebody important owes you one or more favours.
- **Fame/Infamy** – You are known, for good or ill (infamy is adversarial, gives freebies)

- **Followers**
- **Influence**
- **Library** – Access to information about a subject (specify what, and when it was stored) that has been stored in an off-line format, making it safe from spam and corruption.
- **Mentor** – Someone who teaches, advises or generally guides you when needed. It could be a person, or a well developed symbicomp.
- **Network** - Being part of an informal group or network.
- **Resources** – Income/wealth (see below)
- **Sanctum** - Your safe/useful hiding place(s).
- **Security** - Security systems, safe habits and other factors making you hard to hit in your everyday life.
- **Spies** – People or software providing information, especially information you are not supposed to have.
- **Staff** - Performs jobs for you. This can also be used for bodyguards and AI.

Note that high levels of many backgrounds require time for maintenance – dinners with allies, endless meetings with backing organizations, resolving disputes among your staff, polishing your implants etc.

Equipment

The character owns a stockpile of equipment – weapons, vehicles, AI software etc that represents a sizeable investment. This is either one piece per dot (or one heavy object for two or three dots) or a total value in the initial resources table. Equipment objects can usually not be sold, because they have been acquired in less than legal circumstances or are closely linked to the person.

Resources

Resources denote savings, investments and income. Each level is 5 times the previous.

	Total Income per month	
0	-	
1	\$1000	Getting by
2	\$5000	Middle income
3	\$25,000	Well-off
4	\$125,000	High
5	\$625,000	Rich

Normally the net income is 30-50% lower due to taxes and upkeep. Note that higher levels require time to maintain, just like backgrounds like Network or streetwise. A person with 5 in Resources will have to spend some effort to maintain it, or will have to completely trust the people handling the account.

A character with no resources needs to get a job or have someone (benefactor, parents) to support them.

Virtues & Willpower



Characters 7 points to spend on the virtues **Conscience**, **Self control** & **Courage**. They start at 1 point each.

Conscience denotes how well the character has the ability to remain true to their sense of right or wrong, as well as remain loyal to their allegiances. **Self-control** denotes how well the character can control their instincts and bad sides. **Courage** is the ability to resist terror, panic or fear.

Willpower is initially equal to **Courage**. Both **Willpower** and **Virtues** can be increased by spending **Freebies** (2 per dot), but do not increase each other.

Finishing the Character

- Characters have **15 freebie points** to spend on attributes (cost 5 per dot), skills (cost 2), specialties (cost 1), willpower/virtues (cost 2), initiative (cost 1), backgrounds (cost 1), merits and flaws.
- **Nature**: see separate list.
- **Home culture**. Denotes where the character comes from. Note home tech level (see below), nationality (or internationalist nation-of-convenience) and native language.
- **Initiative**: DEX + WIT (plus bonuses).
- **Move**: Crawl 2m (uses all available cover), Walk 7 m (can use partial cover), Run DEX+12, (no cover) Sprint DEX*3+20 m
- **Throwing range**: STR x 12 m
- **Handedness**: select or roll 1d100 (1-85 right-handed, 86-99 left-handed, 100: naturally ambidextrous). (Ambidextrous is a +1 merit that can be bought; this corresponds to having trained for it. Being able to use one's feet for manipulation is a further +2 merit, occasionally found among serious spacers or zero-G game enthusiasts)
- **Rads**: how much radiation the character has absorbed. For Lunarians, it is age x 0.1, for Earthers age x 0.25, for spacers age x 3.
- Describe: Height, Mass, Hair, Eyes and general Description.

- Insurance, Licences, Papers: write up the official documents the character carries. This include passports, letters of passage, vehicle certificates etc.

Biological code

This denotes the character's quarantine level, graded according to the BISA system. A person on a higher level is usually barred from entry into a lower level biosphere, unless wearing an encounter suit or extensive quarantining.

-	White	Neogenetically incompatible (recompiled or artilife). Note that this means that the character can still carry spores and plasmids on them.
0	Indigo	No modification to genome
1	Blue ₁	Only genetic enhancements through selection. Usually treated as Indigo, except in a few cases of extreme biological purist habitats.
2	Blue ₂	Only traditional germline genetic enhancements.
3	Turquoise	Neogenetic enhancements, but no active neogenetics.
4	Green	Immunity (and possibly enhancements), but no active neogenetics.
5	Yellow	Neogenetic effects (Infected), but no detectable active neogenetics.
6	Orange ₁	Immunities allowing limited neogenetic activity (such as Maponyo).
7	Orange ₂	Active neogenetic activity not under the character's control (active infection).
8	Red ₁	Has been in the close vicinity of Dragon or Blight activity without protection (Voices)
9	Red ₂	Active, volitional neogenetics (Hosts)
10	Magenta	Dragon tissue.

Complexity code

The Dracosphere produces enormous amounts of self-replicating, code-cracking and generally annoying information that tends to worm its way into any sufficiently advanced system. This makes truly complex machinery cumbersome to use on Earth, since it will rapidly become host to spam. Anything "smarter" than early 21st century computers is at risk.

Modern personal computer	1
Utility robot	2
Smart dust network	3
Neurocomputer	4
Syntronic brain	5
Nanoimmune system	6
AI software	7

(Bodies usually have a complexity code equal to the number of dots spent on them)

People and machines with high complexity codes are running risks on Earth and LEO, since spam and Dracosphere activity hacks away at their systems. Depending on the intensity of contact, the GM rolls the complexity code number of dice. If there is any "success", the systems

become infiltrated. Botches mean a temporary immunity for the next few rolls (the defense software learned a good way to defeat the incursions: each botch level protects one roll). Each success denotes one level of infection: one means there is some minor degradation, five that the device is now completely spammed and likely not doing anything remotely like what it should be doing. Each time a new roll comes up, add the level of infection to the dice pool.

Lunaside, GEO	One roll every year
LEO, "clean" parts of Earth:	One roll every month
Earth in general:	One roll every day
Dragon Zone:	One roll every scene
Interfacing with infected machinery:	One roll every scene

[Example: a nanotech probe is sent to investigate a dragon castle. It has a code of 5, mainly thanks to extensive hardening. On approach there is one roll. The GM rolls 5 dice, no success. During the exploration of the castle there is a second roll. Now the dragons get 2 successes and the probe starts to act up a bit. As the sender tries to retrieve the probe and its samples, there is a third roll with 7 dice: now there are three successes and the probe goes into total spam mode. Instead of delivering samples, it just broadcasts random signals while moving erratically.]

It is possible to **harden devices**, by limiting their software, putting up firewalls and anti-infiltration subsystems. Each level of hardening increases the price by 50% and halves the code (round up).

One method of protecting devices is to **inoculate** them in a controlled setting: they are exposed to samples from the environment (as if they were in a one level more intense environment), if they are infected they are immediately reset, until the spam botches. This gives a temporary protection by training the defences to meet the spam, but takes time and can be worrying for sentient software.

An infected device can be "cleaned" by getting more successes than the current code + infection level on a suitable extended skill roll. E.g. cleaning a computer from spam would require an intelligence + software security roll, cleaning a nanotech system intelligence + microscopic security. Some devices can be automatically reset (e.g. neuroimplants), but will not retain any customization information. This is obviously not an option for neurocomputers.

Skills

The range of knowledge and specialization makes certain skills automatically specialized from the start:

- **Engineering** denotes the ability to use or design a particular technology. Available specializations: mechanical, construction, computer, nanotech, biotech, artilife, optronics, energy etc.
- **Medicine** still centres on keeping people healthy and happy, but diverges strongly depending on whether it is **traditional** or **neogenetic**.
- **Perform** denotes the ability to perform some art or entertainment activity. Specialisations range from painting and sculpture to gaming to hallucination programming.
- **Pilot** denotes the ability to use some class of vehicles. Available types include: cars, bikes, planes, boats, zeps, spacecraft etc.
- **Science** cover all sorts of academic studies, from theology to theoretical physics.
- **Security** has to specialize between **physical**, **software**, **social** and **microscopic**. Physical security deals with macroscale intrusion, software with digital exploits, social security maintaining cohesion/loyalty and microscopic security deals with bio, nano, negen and artilife infections.
- **Survival** specializes in a particular environment: space, urban, desert, polar, jungle etc.

Networking

Etiquette/politics in the online world or among informal groups (Politics deals with formal political situations). Networkers know their way around the fora, subcultures and mediums that make up internationalist culture. This is especially relevant for people trying to make their voices heard among interplanetarists, internationalists, the Society of Mind or the Netocracy. Other networkers focus on games, criminal subcultures, school cliques or information markets. The background Network represents having a solid network; the skill Networking is about dealing with other networks.

Telepresence

The ability to control telepresence bodies. Normally no rolls are needed with the skill, but the number of dice from a physical skill used in a roll is limited by the level of telepresence, denoting the limitations caused by uncertainty with the mechanics. Characters without the talent suffer +3 difficulty on any skill use involving physical traits. Certain tricky bodies (i.e. very small or large, or non-human ones) require rolls for use and are more difficult in a crisis.

Zero-G movement

This skill is used for doing things in zero gravity, whether oneself or using telepresence. Normally no rolls are needed with the skill, but the number of dice from a physical skill used in a roll is limited by the level of Zero-G movement, denoting the limitations caused by uncertainty with the microgravity mechanics. Characters without the talent suffer +3 difficulty on any skill use involving physical traits.

Neogenetic skills

Hosts have special skills denoting their ability to control and use their AM nodes to affect themselves and others: Sensing, Autonomous control, Self-modification, Biomanipulation, Communication. See the description of the AM node for details.

Merits & Flaws

*If you want to become whole,
let yourself be partial.
If you want to become straight,
let yourself be crooked.
If you want to become full,
let yourself be empty.
If you want to be reborn,
let yourself die.
If you want to be given everything,
give everything up.
--Tao Te Ching, S. Mitchell translation*

See also my collection

<http://www.nada.kth.se/~asa/Game/Bulk/Backgrounds.htm>

http://ftp.nada.kth.se/pub/home/asa/public_html/Game/2300AD/New%20Merits%20and%20Flaws.pdf

and Death Quaker's collection

<http://www.deathquaker.org/gaming/meritsflaws.html>

Space adaptation (0/+1 Merit)

This is default for everybody born on Luna. This adaptation prevents bone and muscle loss due to low-gravity environments. Long-term spacers need about one hour of exercise to keep in shape, not much more than their Earthbound colleagues.

No police mode (+1 Merit)

Merit for Japanese AIs. Normally they automatically have the flaw police mode. However, in some AIs the mode is not properly implemented and the AI would retain freedom even if authorities tried to suborn it. This can occur due to manufacturing or growth errors, human or machine interference but also due to jurisdictional incompatibilities (e.g. a reserve officer AI might formally not be under police control, and figuring out the proper bureaucratic pathway and codes will be hard). If the merit comes into play the police will likely detect that the AI does not obey, and will want to take it in for debugging.

A variant suitable for humans is having suitably hacked software in one's exoself. Police overrides apply to many forms of advanced equipment and software, and some people find it useful or reassuring to evade it. If discovered it is a safety demerit, unless the hacked equipment was used in a crime.

Ambidextrous (+1 Merit)

You can use both hands as well as your dominant hand.

Emergency life support (+1 Merit)

An AI character has extra support for their brain. If the brain loses external power the life support can keep it alive for a few extra days. This support is usually combined with energy and nutrient

savings; performance decreases more and more as they try to use less and less power. If disconnected, the AI will lose one dot in every dice pool every two days. Once a mental trait has been reduced to zero, the next time it will take one dot of permanent damage and when all mental traits have been reduced to zero the neurocomputer dies. This merit can be bought again, making the reduction occur every four days etc.

Tough (+2 Merit)

You are powerfully built, and have one extra Bruised level.

Gall (+2 Merit)

You got moxy, kid. Add an extra die to any Social roll requiring backbone.

Thrifty (+2 Merit)

You are frugal or just good at saving money. Your initial savings are one SOC level higher than they would otherwise be.

Will to live (+2 Merit)

The character is unusually unwilling to “give up the ghost”. Each time this Merit is taken, the character can survive one extra level of damage beyond Incapacitated. Note that it doesn’t allow the character to resist the damage better, just that they won’t die of it.

Beisutsukai training (+3 Merit)

The character has undergone Bayescrafting training, honing their ability to think clearly and rationally. Bayescrafters tend to be cautiously skeptical and intellectually humble; this merit doesn’t go well together with opposing traits (although arrogant beisutsukai are a popular cliché). It gives three extra dice in situations where issues of probability, rationality, avoiding cognitive bias or intellectual integrity are relevant.

Hot blooded/Nekketsu (+3 Merit)

The character has enormous passion, throwing them into anything with wild energy, often coming through due to sheer force of will rather than actual skill. A hot blooded character can spend multiple willpower points on the same roll. If Willpower runs out, the character will be totally manic and attempt to “win” using whatever means available even when it is completely hopeless, until they drop by exhaustion.

Unremarkable Appearance (+3 Merit)

You are just a face in the crowd. This is a drawback if you want to be famous. But if you want to blend in, it is an asset. If someone wants to remember what you look like, they have to make an INT roll. Penalize the roll by -1 for every twelve hours since they saw you.

Multidextrous (+3 Merit)

You can use hands and feet to manipulate objects dexterously. Obviously most useful if your feet are also articulated like hands.

Armored braincase (+3 Merit)

Your neurocomputer is extra well protected from shocks and accelerations.

Beautiful/Handsome (+3 Merit)

The character is very good-looking. People enjoy the sight of him or her, Amor smiles. This is not just due to biological luck or skilled surgery, but a great deal of personality.

Backups (+5 Merit)

Only available for software-based AI and some advanced neurocomputer AI with highly modified neuronal matrices. You have backup copy information stored in safe locations, and if your main brain is lost a backup will be reactivated to take your place.

Superfast body (+5 Merit)

For characters living in or regularly using artificial bodies. Controlling a speeded up body is also a mental skill. While many fast bodies have autopilot macros (i.e. "go there", "pick up this set of objects") to actually move freely you need the right mental software. This allows you to use your extreme body well enough to do things in a crisis or combat. Beside any DEX, WIT and initiative bonuses the body may have, you have one extra action per turn.

Host (+5 Merit)

You are equipped with an AM node, allowing you to receive and send dragon plasmids. This allows you to use neogenetic skills (see the AM node document) to sense other organisms and change yourself and others. On the downside, you become vulnerable to dragon trances and a whole host of icky neogenetic problems. Your neogenetic code is Red.

Recompiled (+5 merit)

Your DNA and protein translation system is altered to use a different code from the rest of the biosphere. You are completely immune to all viral diseases and neogenetic manipulations, but unable to reproduce except with somebody with the exact same genetic code.

Mindshare (+5 Merit)

Advanced syntronics have learned to mesh their thoughts through the Society of Mind, cooperating extremely well. This merit allows the character to roll Network (Society of Mind) to find someone who is an expert on a task or problem, and can "borrow" some of their ability. Each success gives one temporary skill dot for the current task. Note that fairness applies: someone who constantly uses other members without contributing anything useful will soon start to lose network standing. It is also impossible to hide what is going on: the other member (and quite possibly everybody they talk to) will know about the situation where the skill got used.

Untraceable digicash (variable Merit)

You have money deposited in the internationalist system of untraceable digital currencies. When using your special digicash cards/codes you can pay for services in an essentially untraceable way (as long as you do not make it obvious who you are; having an alternate ID can be a real advantage); the money comes from temporary orbital dummy corporations generated on the fly for just that transaction. Some governments or companies may object to untraceable trades, but it is hard to make completely illegal without preventing many legal and desirable kinds of trade.

The level of the merit depends on how much money you have in the untraceable system: it is equal to the level of Resources you have as untraceable money plus 1. If you want to have an

amount corresponding to Resources 3, you need a +4 Merit. Note that this money is separate from your official Resources. You can convert normal Resources into untraceable money by paying one dot: a Resource 4 person can turn it into 3 levels of untraceable resources. This requires the appropriate Business rolls or contacts.

Bad self control/conscience/courage (special)

By using this flaw dots from the Virtues can be used to purchase other abilities such as Backgrounds or skills (1 Virtue point = 1 freebie).

Foreigner (-1 Flaw)

In homogeneous or closed societies outsiders stand out and are treated differently. This is not always a drawback: lunar Japanese excuse bad manners in foreigners more readily since they cannot expect to know how to behave properly. But in general it adds a social distance to most interactions. This flaw is worth more if the game is set in a more xenophobic or closed society.

Black and White (-1 Flaw)

You see all situations in black and white, good and evil, etc. In situations where this limited, judgmental way of thinking may hinder your reaction to something or cause you to act socially inappropriate, add a +1 difficulty to social or whatever rolls.

Hero Worship (-1 Flaw)

You idolize absolutely idolize someone, and disobeying them requires an effort of will (spending Willpower or succeeding a Willpower roll). You also are at +2 difficulty to any roll that may force you to admit/realize that your hero may be in the wrong.

Ugly (-1 Flaw)

The character is not just plain but actively repulsive. Esthetes avoid him or her, Amor turns his face elsewhere.

Radiation poisoning (-1 Flaw)

You have been exposed to sizeable levels of radiation, perhaps due to a nuclear accident or a solar flare. Your beginning rad level is 200 rads higher than it would otherwise have been (this can be taken several times for a more serious case). This matters when encountering new radiation sources, since your already weakened constitution may be extra vulnerable. See the space living rules for details of radiation and long-term effects.

Vacuum Phobia (-1/-2/-3 Flaw)

Fear of vacuum and empty space is a common phobia on Luna. One reason was that a large population was launched there under rough conditions, giving many older people enough reason to fear space. This has been passed on to their children, often in the form of stern warnings or scare stories to keep them away from airlocks and other dangerous places. While phobias can relatively easily be cured today, most Lunarians consider vacuum phobia to be somewhat adaptive.

As a -1 flaw, the character sensibly avoids contact with vacuum but can enter airlocks and spaceships by succeeding with a Courage roll. As a -2 flaw the character has to spend Willpower

to enter a spaceship and will feel very uneasy even when merely telepresencing into vacuum. As a -3 flaw the character will refuse to live close to the surface, make sure they always have an emergency survival kit close by and never travel into space.

Unwillingly tagged (-1/-3 Flaw)

You have been implanted with a RFID tag, nanolocator or neogenetic marker against your will, and in such a way that it is hard to remove. The tag might be from a past military career, a period in prison or an ill-advised visit to black clinic. If the tagger is remote or not too interested in you (e.g. an old military tag) the flaw is worth 1 point. If the tagger is out to get you or use you, and you have to stay out of scan by using firewalls or hiding, it is worth 3 points.

Overbearing Family (-1/-3 flaw)

In some cultures families and clan have a very important role and can dictate what members do. Even if outsiders find such demands extreme, they are regarded as natural by people from the culture. This flaw denotes a family that boss the character around far more than the cultural norm. As a -1 flaw, it is mostly annoying emotional blackmail and minor demands. As a -3 flaw, the elders dictate what the character can and cannot do – including education, marriage and who to associate with. As a -5 flaw the character is a slave to the family: if the patriarch says they need to kill a dishonoured sibling, they better do it. It is of course possible to disobey, but that requires Conscience or Courage rolls and might cause punishment if discovered.

Harassment campaign (-1/-2/-3 Flaw)

Somebody doesn't like you and does their best to make you miserable. At -1 it might merely be poison pen emails and putting you on evangelical mailing lists. -2 is more serious, involving mail bombing, character assassination in media and threatening messages in the middle of the night. -3 harassment might involve physical but non-lethal attacks such as thrown fruit, stalking, picketing from protestors, well-planned media campaigns, pointing crazies your way and litigation.

Watchlist (-1/-3 Flaw)

You have been involved in something bad in the past, and the authorities noticed. Whether it was joining the Black Lotus Fan Club, being sighted suspiciously close to a drug kingpin or served prison time for espionage, you have been noted and computers occasionally react to your name. For 1 point it is a remote, minor problem (happened on another planet, just a suspicion), for 3 points it is a regular hassle (getting any kind of security clearance is impossible, travel is... exciting). A twist might be that the real shady character is somebody else: you just happens to have the same name or some other distinguishing markers to cause the confusion.

Rulebound (-2 Flaw)

The character cannot avoid following laws, rules or regulations unless they succeed with a Willpower check no matter how ridiculous the rules are or how dire the situation is. This is a common flaw among nationalist bureaucrats and AI.

Nolang (-2 Flaw)

You have grown up with translator devices (or even neurointerfaces) always translating what people say. So you never really learned your "own" language: you speak a personal shorthand

that your devices understand and translate, and they translate everybody else into your language. Very convenient, except when forced into a situation where you cannot rely on translation. [Halve the number of successes on any communications roll, rounding down when a translator tuned for you is not available.]

Fragile (-2 Flaw)

Your body is weaker and more easily hurt. You have one less Bruised level.

Cybersensitive (-2 Flaw)

Your body reacts negatively to implants; each implant gives double the immune load. Even things like piercings and replacement organs might cause an extra dot immune load.

Spendthrift (-2 Flaw)

You have a hard time holding on to money. You might have an expensive lifestyle, be overly generous or just unwilling to save money. Your initial savings are one SOC level lower than they should be, and during the game you will have to roll an INT roll to actually save money when you need to.

Police mode (-3 Flaw)

Many polities demand that equipment has an override that allows authorized law enforcement and disaster management to take control over it, either to stop criminal/dangerous use or to use it in containing crime/danger. While this may be of some concern to privacy-conscious people, to AI characters (or heavily enhanced characters) it is a deeper infringement: they might be suborned themselves. In some polities (Lunar Nippon) this is standard for all AIs.

Guilt Complex (-3 Flaw)

This flaw is similar to Sense of Duty and can be taken in addition to a standard Sense of Duty. The difference is that people with guilt complex feel a responsibility whenever anything goes wrong with the people or institution he feels an obligation to. This leads to depression or an urge to atone; for the next day or so the Nature is Martyr for all practical purposes (if willpower is regained thanks to selflessly acting in favor of the object the depression lifts). Many survivors of the Dragons and Spamocalypse have guilt complexes as they feel they survived unfairly when family, friends or communities were destroyed.

On the Edge (-3 Flaw)

You are constantly in a state of high alert, tense and ready for fight or flight. You will have +1 to detect imminent danger, but when surprised by anything you will have to either flee or attack it unless you succeed with a Willpower roll. For example, a veteran who hears a loud bang might throw himself under the table or strike somebody who slaps his back.

Cannot Back Down (-3 Flaw)

Sometimes you don't care whether you live or die. You are not actively suicidal, but you will take unreasonable risks when in mortal danger. When you face a life-threatening situation (piloting a burning vehicle, assaulting a combat drone, staring down a street gang while armed only with a toothbrush, etc.) you must make a successful Willpower roll before you can retreat.

Numbed (-3 Flaw)

You have suffered emotional trauma that has numbed you; you do not feel any strong emotions, neither positive nor negative. While this helps you get by, it also reduces social and psychological dice pools by three. The emotional dissociation can be broken using careful therapy or cognotech, but can also be broken by various drugs – in that case the character becomes temporarily overcome with extreme flashbacks to the traumatic situation and is for all practical purposes clinically insane for the duration.

Procrastinator (-3 Flaw)

You cannot get anything started early. Any time you want to start to do a major project without outside pressure, make a Willpower roll, at one difficulty level higher for every day of additional time you have and with a +1 to +4 bonus if someone is pressuring/watching/you'll lose your job otherwise.

Stateless (-3 Flaw)

You have been uprooted from your nationality, either because your nation ceased to exist with no successor state, your state has repudiated you or through bureaucratic slip-ups. Stateless people have a hard time entering any jurisdiction, getting jobs or be trusted by any official. They are essentially illegal aliens with nowhere to go. Some places like the Heterogenous Zones or fierce internationalist habitats like Banksville are relatively open to stateless people, while most European nations and Luna are effectively closed.

Underclass/Outsider (-3 Flaw)

The character doesn't even have SOC 1, but 0. They might be true outsiders to society or belong to the real underclass of unemployed/unemployable, maybe coming from a derelict habitat, a infected refugee camp or a relocation arcology. Some people may be sympathetic, but in general the character will have a disadvantage when dealing with the rest of society.

Bad Economic Sense (-3 Flaw)

You simply don't "get" money, and it always seem to slip out of your fingers. You make bad investments, get into debt with "friendly" loansharks, buy stuff you don't need to high prices and then sell it for low prices or just forget to pay your bills. Your initial savings are two SOC levels lower than they should be (if your SOC is 2 you have no money, and if it is 1 you are in debt). If during the game you fail a business-related roll, treat it as a botch. Note that you can still have Resources, it just that they represent an income you are wasting quickly.

Syntronic link (-3 Flaw)

The character is dependent on his or her syntronic abilities: if the contact is broken for whatever reason they will not just lose the ability to use their abilities, but they become essentially nonfunctional (-5 on all dice pools) until it is restored.

Bodiless (-3)

Syntronics occasionally lose their bodies. In most cases the death of the human body means the end of the syntronic mind, a few have either successfully transferred enough of their identity into neurocomputing, had their brains slicescanned or could put their brains on life support. They

now interact with the world virtually and using telepresence bodies. Even in 2100 most people either assume them to be AI or are creeped out when they understand the situation.

Spam Infection (-3/-5 Flaw)

The neurocomputer version of being neogenetically infected. The neurocomputer has a persistent and impossible to erase infestation of spam. It is not bad enough to render it unusable, but it interferes with normal function in unpredictable ways and makes most decent systems unwilling to interface with the neurocomp. This disadvantage can be used both by AIs, syntronics and by people with hard-to-fix implants. The -3 infection gives occasional trouble, like having babbling hallucinations appear in tense moments and limiting access and certifications. The -5 version implies a serious infection, not unlike a psychotic derangement, which the AI must keep secret from the authorities unless they step in and "clean up".

Body Dysmorphic Disorder/Surgical Addiction (-3/-5 Flaw)

You do not feel comfortable with your own body. It is ugly, defective. You would like to change it – make it more beautiful, more functional, maybe have a leg less. People with BDD have low self-esteem and are compelled to seek out surgery or neogenetics to change their bodies to make them better. Of course, this will not change the underlying condition and they will then continue with further improvements. Whenever a character can afford it, he will try to get an improvement. While "classic BDD" was mainly about appearance and a feeling of ugliness, in the post-Dragon world "enhancement BDD" is increasingly common where people want to enhance themselves as much as possible.

As a 3 point flaw the BDD will mostly be a drain on resources and a minor health risk due to the frequent clinic visits. As a 5 point fully blown surgical addiction will make the character set up "accidents" that will force desired modifications, or he will even start modifying himself (possibly using a programmed autodoc, some bootlegged plasmids, but in a pinch some local anaesthetic and a scalpel might do). A Host with BDD will be constantly changing his body in various ways.

Fatwa (-5 Flaw)

You are subject to a global "fatwa" – somebody out there *really* doesn't like you or what you stand for, and has put a significant price on your head. Anybody who can prove they have killed you will be able to earn the prize in untraceable digicash. Napsters might seek to kidnap you and zealots sympathetic to your enemies might strike out of principle. Although most people may have nothing personal against you, being near you could be dangerous – prepare to be isolated. The authorities are likely not overjoyed by having to take extra precautions to protect you and anybody close. While fatwas are far rarer now than in the past, they can still be dangerous.

Weak Immune System (-5 Flaw)

Your immune system is naturally weak, or has been crippled by radiation, plasmids or too much cybernetics. You tend to get the common cold all the time. The GM is rolls monthly a stamina roll for a potentially serious disease for the character. If it fails, the character develops a serious (and potentially contagious) affliction that will leave him bedridden until he succeeds with a new health roll (one roll each week). A botch means a potentially fatal complication has emerged.

Infected (-1/-3/-5 Flaw)

You are documented to have some form of neogenetic alteration of unknown but possibly sinister effect. This is reflected in your biological code, and many authorities will do their best to keep you quarantined. Many people get nervous when you are around if they know of your status. Depending on how severe the alteration is, this might just be prejudice or a very sensible survival trait.

At -1 this flaw is merely a genetic aberration or some minor complaint. At -3 it is either causing direct trouble or there are good reasons to think it could be nasty. At -5 you are a genetic timebomb – there is something very dangerous in your body, and if/when it emerges *everybody* will be sorry. This is essentially the neogenetic version of the Dark Fate flaw.

Vulnerable to fugue (-5 Flaw)

The syntronic often retreats into their own internal world, leaving the outside behind. Whenever subjected to an interesting problem, hardships, annoyances or any other reason to retreat, they have to roll a self-control roll not to go into fugue. They will remain in the fugue until they either succeed with a willpower roll (roll every scene or day) or an outside person succeeds with a Psychology roll, allowing them to roll for leaving the fugue.

Enhancements



Figure 1: (Playstation)

*Knowing others is intelligence;
knowing yourself is true wisdom.
Mastering others is strength;
mastering yourself is true power.
- Tao Te Ching, S. Mitchell translation*

Enhancements are of six types:

- **Genetic selection:** your embryo was selected from others to have the best possible traits. Such enhancements can only bring up any trait to the maximum normal of the human range, and cannot introduce anything totally new. On the upside, selection does normally not count against ones biological code.
- **Germline enhancement:** your embryo was transfected with genetic cassettes containing new genes. This allows not just beyond-traditional range abilities, but also biologically based new abilities such as having night vision or being able to synthesize vitamin C. You are at least Blue2.
- **Gene therapy, implants, surgery:** Enhancements added in adulthood. Such enhancements can go beyond the normal range and even include nonbiological abilities such as neurointerfaces. Implants and some gene therapy can be neutralized. You are at least Blue2.

- **Neogenetic enhancements:** Enhancements added using neogenetic changes. Like the previous categories, but only able to do biological things (however, a clever Host can stretch biology very far). You are at least Turquoise.
- **Passive Immunities:** protects you against neogenetics. You are Green.
- Active neogenetic enhancements: **Immunities** with minimal AM-nodes (such as Maponyo) or full **Hosts**. The character can produce biology-transforming plasmids, affecting themselves and possibly the surroundings. Orange₁ to Red₂

These do not have any game effects directly, but affect biological codes, how security and people in general react to them, as well as their vulnerabilities.

Enhancement costs (in freebies) are as follows:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Enhancements that add to skills or willpower but with limitations, provide effect of specializations, lower particular skill difficulties or increase initiative. Syntronic skills. |
| 2 | Enhancements that add to skills, willpower |
| 3 | Enhancements that add successes to skill rolls. |
| 4 | Syntronic mental attributes. |
| 5 | Enhancements that add one to an attribute. |

Entirely new abilities will have costs depending on how extensive they are.

Enhancements that are limited are cheaper. A limitation that works for some situations but not others is one level cheaper; a limitation that makes the enhancement highly specialized is worth two levels. For example, improving dex using modified joints and muscles cost 5. Improving just manual dexterity (not whole body coordination) cost 4, and turning just one hand dextrous costs 3.

Example enhancement costs



*The baby's blood type? Human, mostly.
—Orson Scott Card*

- 0 General good appearance
Smart or living tattoos
- 1 Body compartments
Synthesize vitamin C
Fur
Radical cosmetic changes
Bioluminescence/flashlight
Extra senses
RFID
The Fortuna Complex
Radiation tolerance
Controlled lipodystrophy - prevents getting fat
Night vision
Flesh pockets
Reproductive control
Nictitating membranes
Low gravity enhancement
- 2 Peripheral neurointerfaces, Primary neurointerfaces

- Hardened skeleton
- Subdermal transponder
- Temperature control
- Claws
- Low pressure lungs
- Anti-shock
- Poison
- Regeneration
- 3 Intentional neurointerfaces, Emotional neurointerfaces, Attention control systems, Syntronic interfaces
- Hydraulic legs (faster running or jumping)
- Extra limbs
- Body armour
- Reduced sleep
- Drug glands
- 4 Associative neurointerfaces
- Nanoimmune system
- Fractal hands
- Stabilizer
- Amphibious
- Pain control
- Compartmentalized mind
- 5 Personal defence drones
- Enhanced strength
- Enhanced dexterity
- Enhanced stamina
- Enhanced intelligence
- Enhanced perception
- Enhanced speed
- Enhanced social abilities
- Multitasking (extra actions)

AIs

An AI character is a carefully trained neurocomputer. Most neurocomputer training is simple and intended to weave together the brain into something useful, and then put it into work. But if the goal is something humanoid the training has to aim for human-like values and modes of thinking. This requires a digital “childhood” of experiences building up a sense of self, a sense of belonging to the human culture, an understanding of humans that allows social interaction and even some human-like emotional responses. This is expensive and often uneconomical, but especially the Japanese Ministry of Science and Technology use it to generate reliable AIs. After all, it is good to have warship AIs that actually understand the concept of loyalty. Some simpler AIs manage to become humanoid enough to play through long interaction with humans (such as butlerbots or manager AIs).

AIs normally have fairly resilient construction (although this can be improved as an enhancement/merit – especially spaceship AIs are built to take pretty hefty accelerations and

radiation). AIs are born with neurointerfaces, usually similar to peripheral interfaces (if it is desired that the character has a more advanced, pay the difference in cost).

AIs require energy and nutrients. Energy comes from external batteries, but they have some emergency life support that lasts a few hours at most (some are of course equipped with longer support). A typical AI requires at least 10 Watts of energy. Nutrients are supplied and waste removed using compact "ration cartridges"; one cartridge lasts for a few days.

Syntronics

Syntronic enhancements are based on cultured neurocomputing cortex interfaced with the brain using a dedicated computer link and neurointerface (itself a level 3 enhancement). This allows the addition of syntronic cortex in one (or more) culture tanks. Syntronic abilities cost less than the normal point cost, but bind the character to remain within close linkup to the tank.

Syntronic cortex adds to one or a few skills. They can go arbitrarily high, although in the 5+ realm they tend to become quite divorced from reality. Similarly it can add cognitive abilities (mainly extreme pattern recognition, but sometimes multitasking, intelligence and mental speed).

Syntronics that run out of money run the risk of having their brains literally repossessed.

Tech levels



Figure 2: A Hoversuit, a system for rapid individual transport. Despite more than a century of improvements (nanotech engines, AI safety, smart clothing), it is still too dangerous and cumbersome to be in wide use. (James Clyne, Minority Report)

Each dot below 5 represents about 10 years behind cutting edge. This mostly denotes hardtech levels; when it comes to neogenetics Earth is usually one or two steps ahead of space, and in terms of nanotech and artilife Earth is at least two steps behind.

*	Heterogenous zones (China, parts of Russia) and isolationist states (Egypt, Israel, Sweden, Kazakhstan). 2050's style technology or earlier.
**	Underdeveloped regions of Earth (Mid-east, parts of US, parts of Africa). 2060's technology.
***	Developed parts of Earth (South America, Europe, North Africa, Australia, Mexico, parts of US, parts of Africa). Widespread use of 2070's technology.
****	Luna, Earthside habitats. Widespread use of 2080's technology.
*****	Lunaside habitats. Cutting edge 2100 technology, widespread use of 2090's technology.

When trying to buy something from a higher tech level, the cost is increased by the difference from your society – in a level 3 society level 5 technology is two steps higher.

Prices

Prices are denoted by dots, representing the level of resources a character needs to have to afford something. Cheaper things can be bought more or less arbitrarily, things on the same level are affordable but will make a dent in the savings of a normal person, things on a higher level tend to be out of reach unless one gets financing.

Technology levels also matter: things from higher tech societies are more expensive. As a rule of thumb, add the difference in tech level to the price if the good is from a higher level, subtract it if it is low-tech.

Body Costs

As a rough guide to how much different kinds of bodies cost (as the Body or Equipment background or when bought off the shelf). The cybershells in GURPS transhuman space are a good inspiration, although there are some differences (e.g. human-level neurocomputers cannot be put in buzzbots so they are run by telepresence).

Cost		THS cybershells
*	Small utility robots, very basic telepresence	Virtual interface implant -100 Buzzbot -15
**	Standard robots, cheaper telepresence units, industrial equipment	Combat buzzbot 2 Humaniform 12 Newshawk 13 Volkspider 70
***	Specialized robots, high quality telepresence units, simple biobots, personal vehicles	Cyberdoll 127 Mobile helmet 189 Cyberdoc 232 Snakebot 243
****	Advanced robots, high-fidelity telepresence units, biological robots, artilife bodies	Infiltration android 295 Bush robot 299 Polypede 419
*****	Powerful or military robots, larger vehicles	RATS 519 UCAV 792
6+	Spaceships, nanoswarms	

Combat



*Ba jiao bao shan wei li wu bi
Ba wan si qian zhuan shen hui ci
Wei he, po hou jing shan bu zou*

*The Magical Bajiao fan is powerful beyond imagine,
it can blow anyone 84,000 leagues with one fan,
why does it not affect this damn monkey?
--Monkey Bee, Damon Albarn*

The basic system consists of:

- **Rank people in initiative order.** Start with the slowest and have them declare what they do, continuing upwards to the fastest. Then resolve actions. Note that a multi-action person can declare his slower action(s) optional: what he does can be changed depending on the outcome of faster actions.
- **Attacker rolls to hit:**
 - Hitting body parts: aiming for torso -1, aiming for head -3 successes.
 - If the target is moving or trying to evade, the number of successes on the hit roll is decreased by successes from the defenders dodge or parry (if any).
- **Roll for hit location**

- If the target location is in partial cover the attack will automatically miss, or if very powerful, have to get through the cover.
- **Roll for damage**
 - Muscle-powered attacks add one point of damage for every point of strength beyond 1. Martial arts allow the PC to use dexterity instead of strength, if it is desired.
 - Firearms add one point of damage for every success on the hit roll.
 - If the target is armored in that location, roll a dice per level of armor/cover and reduce damage by one per success.
 - If the initial damage in a single attack exceeds twice the armor, the armor (or cover) is destroyed.
 - Remaining damage is applied to health (i.e. no natural soak due to Stamina!)
 - Bashing damage is marked with single bar, lethal damage by a cross and aggravated damage by a fully filled box.

Weapons on the vehicle scale add 5 to damage to human-sized targets. Weapons on the spaceship scale add 10 to damage to human-sized targets and generally have a wide area effect.

Wounds



Figure 3 (Yoshitaka Kawakami)

Wounds heal at a rate dependent on the current wound level:

	Penalty	Bashing recovery time	Lethal recovery time
Bruised		1 hr	1 day
Hurt	-1	1 hr	3 days
Injured	-1	1 hr	1 week
Wounded	-2	1 hr	1 month

Maimed	-3	3 hr	2 months
Crippled	-4	6 hr	3 months
Incapacitated	No action possible	12 hr	5 months

- Lethal damage past Hurt that is not treated medically will worsen by one level of lethal damage per day.
- Cybernetic limbs may take damage that is not transferred to the damage of the person: an arm reaching Crippled is useless, but does not make the person Crippled.
- If a limb takes more than 7 levels of damage in a single strike, it is destroyed and the person will automatically reach Incapacitated.
- Aggravated damage does not heal normally, but has to be handled through cybernetics, cloned replacement organs or neogenetic regeneration.
- Using a willpower point enables ignoring wound penalties for *one* skill use. Painkilling medication and pain shunts can reduce wound penalties by up to 3 (the higher the reduction, the more interesting dangers and drawbacks).
- Successful use of first aid used on each damaged body part can stop deterioration of the condition and enable transport. A doctor (or automed) with appropriate medical equipment gets to roll once for general diagnosis and initial treatment. A success can fix one health level (the damage was not so serious as it looked). Beyond that, healing time will depend on the quality of care and the skill level of the doctor(s).

Care quality	Type	Healing rate
0	Transport, medieval conditions.	No healing occurs
1	A bed.	Normal healing rate
2	A calm place, nurses present.	Normal healing rate
3	Decent hospital	Healing one level faster
4	Modern hospital	Healing two levels faster
5	Ultramodern hospital.	Healing three levels faster

Doctor skill: 1-3: +0 quality, 4: +1, 5: +2, no skill: -1.

The fastest possible healing rate is one hour per point bashing damage and one day per level of lethal damage.

Neogenetics can be used instead of medicine, although it is risky and might affect biological code. It can in principle accelerate healing up to the maximal rate by rebuilding the damaged tissues out of other tissue.

Repair

Machines do not heal, but have to be repaired or damaged parts replaced in a suitable machine shop (the exception is advanced nanotech systems built to self-repair). The time taken to repair depends on the level of damage and the complexity of the machine. If it is on a higher techlevel it will also be harder to repair, while high-tech environments can speed up the process significantly. It of course requires having proper tools and spare parts; without it the difficulty increases (+1 for technology from another tech-system, +2 for lack of proper tools, +4 for lack of spare parts).

The repairer needs to cumulatively gain more successes on the required engineering roll to overcome the sum of wound levels (count aggravated damage as triple) + machine cost + tech level modifier, one roll allowed per day for major damage (Wounded or more), one roll per scene (or 2 hours) for minor damage (Injured and less). Botches mean faults are introduced or the repair successes are lost (wrong approach used, damage to other parts, incompatible systems clash).

[Example: For a typical Wounded advanced telepresence unit it takes 3 (Cost) +4 (Wounded) = 7 successes to repair it one step. A typical repair station has skill 3 and attribute 3, so it will take it around 4 days to get enough successes to repair the unit to Injured. Beyond that point it will take around 6 hours to reach Hurt, 6 hours for Bruised and 4 hours for polishing away the last damage. The total repair time will be about a week. In advanced societies recycling rather than repair is the rule.]