

# House Rules Astral America II

## Character Creation

It is always the same: once you are liberated, you are forced to ask who you are.

-- Jean Baudrillard



*US Empowerment  
Agency*

## Vetting

Characters have to be carefully vetted federal employees. USEA does not empower anybody who isn't likely to be an asset, loyal to the US or likely to get into trouble. They have to be US citizens with no criminal record, and most have a distinguished career within one or more federal agencies (see <http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/independent-agencies.html> for a list). That has not stopped people from being problematic, but USEA never empowers anybody with liabilities.

## Allowed Abilities

See the Aberrant Directory

[http://www.nprime.net/downloads/Aberrant\\_Directory.pdf](http://www.nprime.net/downloads/Aberrant_Directory.pdf)

I allow many (but not all!) powers and features there.

## Backgrounds

### Allies

**Alternate ID** (Each dot represents one fake identity, or several dots for a very carefully made identity that will stand up to closer scrutiny)

**Attunement** (Attunement can be used to affect other people with personal powers such as forcefield, but it takes time – the person has to be in contact with the emp for 60/quantum minutes)

**Backing** (Backing represents a combination of formal ranking and standing within USEA. Note that the level of oversight increases proportional to the backing level.

Trainee	Backing 0. The basic training course takes one year.
Deputy special agent	This corresponds to 1 USEA backing,
Special agent	This corresponds to 2/3 backing. Usually team leaders.
Senior special agent	This corresponds to 4/5 backing

Backing can also represent support of other agencies or extra help within the organisation)

### Cipher

### Contacts

### Dormancy

### Equipment

**Nanosuit** (replaces Eufiber)

### Favors

### Fame/Infame

**Followers****Influence****Mentor****Network**

**Node** (Node does not denote any physical node or organ in the emp, but the “Wattage” of their abilities. Emps with well-developed nodes can accumulate and perceive quantum fields better.)

**Rank** (If military or some other organisation beside USEA)

**Resources** (The base pay for a junior emp corresponds to resources three, a senior emp Resources four. Previous lower Resource levels are discarded, previous equal Resource levels is converted to +1 Resources. )

**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 providing information, especially information you are not supposed to have.)

**Staff** (Performs jobs for the emp)

Adversarial backgrounds from Forceful Personalities: Coercion, Fan Club/Cult, Flunky, Media Exposure, Rival, Skeleton in the Closet, Suitors

General adversarial background: Enemies

**System**

Like dreams, statistics are a form of wish fulfillment.  
-- Jean Baudrillard

**Skills**

Martial arts allow the user to make damage with Dexterity rather than Strength (if needed). Megadexterity gives automatic damage successes just like Megastrength.

**Fight Resolution**

Rank people in initiative order. Start with the slowest and have them declare what they do, continuing upwards to the fastest. Then go 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.

The basic system consists of:

- Attacker rolls to hit
- The number of successes on the hit roll is decreased by successes from the defenders dodge or parry (if any).
- If there is a hit damage is rolled.
- Damage is reduced by forcefields
- Defender rolls Soak dice, damage successes reduced by the successes
- Remaining damage is applied to health

Ranged weapons: ranged weapons make more damage when aimed right. They make damage equal to the number of extra successes rolled beyond what was needed to hit, plus the successes of a weapon dice pool. For example, firing a gun with four successes and normal difficulty would make [3]+5d10L damage. If the difficulty had been 3 the damage would have been [1]+5d10L

Mortals and emps have a Bashing soak equal to their stamina.

Megastamina	Extra bashing	Extra Lethal
1	+1	+1
2	+2	+2
3	+3	+2
4	+4	+2
5	+5	+3

Armor Soak is added to this. The entire Soak pool is rolled to remove damage successes.

Botched Soak rolls are ignored, or should be interpreted as damage to armor.

Megastrength does just give its rating as automatic damage successes to close combat attacks.

## **Powers**

Emp powers can damage their own users and have nasty side effects. Forcefields that repel matter will damage a floor an emp is standing on when suddenly activated, a non-fireproof emp better be careful about using his fire powers, magnetic levitation does tend to wreck sensitive equipment nearby and so on. In general, the higher the level, the more dangerous the power. Training can reduce the risks somewhat, but not always.

Mastery is not normally allowed.

Hitting with a ranged power: as described ranged powers will always hit, doing a standard amount of damage. However, when bought a ranged power can also be declared aimed: the roll to use it (Dex + power rating, usually) works as firing a weapon and has to overcome the difficulty to hit the target, but when it hits the extra successes adds to the damage like for a gun.

Shapeshift is removed, and replaced with a set of more specific shapeshift powers from “Predaphile”. The complete old Shapeshift is now a Level 4 power.

Molecular alteration requires the right kind of atoms – wood cannot be turned to steel, but it could become diamond. Other powers may transform one element into another.

Molecular authority should properly be called matter authority. It doesn’t change molecules as much as the properties of matter.

## **Forcefields**

Forcefields stop incoming extreme energies, be they the kinetic energy of a bullet or a gamma ray laser. When a character is created the exact kind of forcefield is described. To define the forcefield, select the type of forcefield (how it absorbs damage, ruleswise), what kind of damage it stops, how it is activated, what it lets through, its shape and finally appearance. A forcefield starts out as a level 0 power and depending on what features are taken it will decrease or increase (a quantum power will always cost at least as a level 1 power).

For example, a vanilla forcefield would have conscious activation (+0), Lethal and Bashing damage absorption (+2 levels), Personal (+0), matter permeable (+0), degrading (+0) = level 2. A constant field (+2) would be a level 4 power, which could be reduced to level 1 by making it immobile (-1), Blocking (-1) and opaque (-1).

The basic absorption is equal to the emp's Quantum + Stamina + (MegaStamina + Forcefield)\*2. If more damage than can be absorbed is dished out, the remaining has to be Soaked.

Type of Forcefield	Description	Level
Degrading	Starts at the absorption level, removes damage successes but loses strength itself until it vanishes. At that point it can be restarted, but the emp is vulnerable to his next action.  E.g. For a forcefield with initial absorption of 12. If 10 points of damage is applied the field can only stop 2 next time, and after that it has to be restarted.	
Quantum maintenance	Stopped points of damage cost quantum points from the quantum pool equal to the damage divided by the forcefield rating, rounded up.  E.g. 10 absorbed points of damage to a character with forcefield 1 will cost 10 quantum, while just 5 to a character with forcefield 2, 4 to a character with forcefield 3 and 2 to forcefield 5.	
Constant	Gives a constant protection equal to the absorption.	+2 level
Soak	Produces soak dice rather than just removing damage points.	-1 level
Activation Condition	Description	Level
Reflexive	Activated as a reflex as soon as the emp experiences the situation as dangerous, even at a higher initiative than the emp's action as long as there is any indication that an attack is coming. Note that this means the field will occasionally be activated spontaneously just by stress or verbal threats.	+1 Level

Conscious	The nova has to declare that he activates the forcefield. Occurs at the next action.	
Gradual	The field is consciously activated and increases in strength one power rating per turn until it reaches its maximum strength	-1 Level
Permanent	The field is always on. Unless it is permeable or filtering, the emp is seriously in trouble with eating, breathing and excreting. No touch-based powers work.	
<b>Permeability</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Level</b>
Permeable	Lets through air, but also dust, toxins and vacuum.	
Filter	Lets through air but not dangerous substances or vacuum.	+1 Level
Nonpermeable	Prevents matter from passing through. While protecting from gas or vacuum, the air inside will go stale quickly (time depends on shape: a personal field will be filled with toxic levels of carbon dioxide within 10 turns).	
Opaque	As nonpermeable, but also blocks any energy from passing through. Characters inside can't look out.	-1 Level
<b>Shape</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Level</b>
Personal	Surrounds the body fairly closely.	
Spherical	Surrounds the emp in a sphere, can protect others standing inside.	+1 Level
Wall	A flat wall protecting from attacks from one direction.	-1 Level
Object	Forms an object like a shield that can protect, but must be used as a parry to work against an attack.	-1 Level
Tool	As Object, but can be used as a physical hard tool and change shape, e.g. a forcefield sword, axe, chair or cloak.	
<b>Damage type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Level</b>
Bashing		+1 Level
Lethal		+1 Level
Aggravated		+1 Level
Quantum powers	Powers (but not megaattributes) trying reach through the field are "soaked" just like damage. Note that powers that affect the field itself (like Disrupt or somebody telekinetically pushing it) are not stopped.	+2 Level

	This requires an enclosing field like a personal or spherical field.	
Mental	As Mental Shield (protects against psychic powers) This requires an enclosing field like a personal or spherical field.	+1 Level
Emotion	As Emotion Shield (protects against emotion and social powers) This requires an enclosing field like a personal or spherical field.	+1 Level
Quantum	As Quantum Shield (protects against meta-powers, including powers affecting the field) This requires an enclosing field like a personal or spherical field.	+1 Level
<b>Other features</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Level</b>
Immovable	When created the field cannot be moved.	-1 Level
Blocking	Blocks attacks outwards just as strongly as inwards.	-1 Level
Reflective	Attacks bounce off in unpredictable directions and can hit the surroundings	
Half strength	Halves the number of absorbed damage points.	-1 Level
Subtle	The field is invisible and can be activated surreptitiously. To notice it being on a successful Perception + Awareness or Quantum Attunement roll is needed.	+1 Level
Vulnerable	The field is open to a certain broad kind of attack: hand-to-hand combat, bullets, energy attacks etc. it does not provide any protection against them.	-1 Level
Versatile shape	The field can be reshaped with holes, handles, to fit into cars or any other smaller reshaping that suits the user.	+1 level
Recharging	The field is recharged by a certain kind of energy or attack, e.g. electricity or bullets. Each absorbed damage point (up to the rating of the forcefield) is converted into one more level of absorption.	+2 Level
	E.g. a laser attack against a laser-recharging field with absorption 16 does 10 points of damage. It is absorbed and if the field rating is two, the field now has absorption 18. Next time it will be 20, and so on.	
Regenerating	A degenerating forcefield regenerates absorption at a rate of field rating per turn.	+1 Level

Note that forcefield can be bought as a linked power, where it is always activated together with e.g. Immolate, Bioluminescence or Strobe. Both powers cost quantum to start, but the cost is decreased one level.

## ***Syuit Speaking Characters***

Syuit characters have the following abilities:

**Pre/Postcognition:** as pretercognition (page 215), but a range of one turn forward and one hour backward in time per dot of Perception.

**ESP:** Syuit speakers know what happens around them within Perception x 5 meters. This is normally just a general awareness. To get an exact impression of what is going on roll a Perception + Awareness roll, the number of successes gives the information in the box of page 198 of the Aberrant corebook.

**Knowledge transfer:** two Syuit speakers can learn skills and knowledge directly from each other. General information can be learned just by talking: what one knows becomes known to the other about the specific subject they talk about. By explaining what he is doing (or just talking Syuit while doing it) one character can teach another a skill. Each dot of skill takes one day of relaxed teaching; for faster transfer the teacher needs to succeed in an Intelligence + Instruction roll, and the number of successes indicate the number of points that can be transferred that day. The recipient acquires the skill (as well as specialisations), but either has to pay experience points for it or replace some an equal number of other skill points with it.

When a Syuit speaker tries to teach another character Syuit, this is treated as normal teaching. It is acquired as a new skill, taking three months. Once learned the character becomes fluent in Syuit. Roll Intelligence + Instruction for the teacher; the number of successes can be distributed between decreasing the experience point cost of learning the language or dividing the time. E.g. a teacher with three successes can make the language free in three months or teach it in 1.5 months at a cost of 2 points.

Syuit characters do not have Quantum points, cannot use nanosuits and do not directly show up with Node scans. However, other emp powers such as quantum awareness can detect that there is something different about a Syuit speaker.

As characters, Syuit speakers do not get any Nova points but get the Syuit abilities for free.

## ***Drawing on Taint***

A character can decide to use their Taint to really go beyond their limitations. They dig through their last reserves of power or channel it from the most inappropriate sources to get that extra edge.

They may add a number of dice up to their Taint rating to a roll for any Quantum power or use of megaattributes (the dice are just ordinary success dice). The Taint can also be used instead of Quantum points. If the roll succeeds or botches they gain the corresponding number of temporary Taint points as the number of extra dice/points. Failure does nothing.

Temporary taint slowly builds up – it cannot be removed normally. Once it reaches 10 another permanent Taint dot is added.

**Even at Night,  
Eyes Are  
Watching  
What We Do**



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**Good  
Security  
Never  
Rests!**

