

BOOK TWO INTRODUCTORY RULES



CALL of CTHULHU
40th Anniversary
1981 - 2021

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Clear Credit

The *Call of Cthulhu Roleplaying Game* was originally written by Sandy Petersen, with later revision by Lynn Willis and others. The 7th edition is a collaboration between Mike Mason and Paul Fricker. This starter rule set was written by Mike Mason based on the *Call of Cthulhu Quick-Start Rules* and *Call of Cthulhu Keeper Rulebook* written by Mike Mason and Paul Fricker.

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WHAT IS THE CALL OF CTHULHU?

"The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown."

—H. P. Lovecraft

"That is not dead which can eternal lie, And with strange aeons even death may die."

—H. P. Lovecraft, *The Nameless City*

Call of Cthulhu is a game about secrets, mysteries, and horror. Playing the role of steadfast investigators, teams of characters travel to strange and dangerous places, uncover foul plots, and stand against the terrors of the night. On the way, they will encounter sanity-blasting entities from beyond space and time, hideous monsters, and insane cultists; while within strange and forgotten tomes of lore they will discover secrets that man was not meant to know. These ordinary people will face many challenges, but their heroic stand may very well decide the fate of the world.

Created by Sandy Petersen, and first published in 1981, *Call of Cthulhu* has for over 35 years defined the genre and is consistently regarded as being one of the best games available to play. For those brave enough to uncover its secrets, the rewards are beyond comprehension!

In the game, each player takes on the role of a character, while one player is the referee—the Keeper of Arcane Lore ("Keeper") who moderates the game and presents the plot and setting to the other players. Using dice and the rules of the game, you determine the success and failure of the characters' actions, while they are propelled into dramatic and dangerous situations.

The booklet you now hold gives you all the information you will need to create a character for the *Call of Cthulhu* roleplaying game, as well as the basic rules of the game—enough for you and your friends to take your first steps and enjoy some introductory adventures. Once you have played through the adventures contained in **Book Three**, you will be ready to move on to the full game rules in the *Call of Cthulhu Keeper Rulebook*, available separately from Chaosium and good hobby gaming stores.

PLAYER ROLES

In each game, players take on one of two roles: either an investigator or the Keeper. Most take the part of investigators (as that's exactly what they do) attempting to solve a mystery or to resolve some dire situation. The plots encountered are designed to challenge these investigators, who may become injured, suffer sanity-shattering experiences, or even be eaten by a monster! As the game progresses, investigators can learn about strange magic and horrendous alien monsters, gain special knowledge from arcane books of forgotten lore, and advance in their skills as they become more experienced and adept.

One player takes on the role of the Keeper. They choose a scenario to play or may create one of their own devising. In the game, the Keeper sets the stage, describes the scenes, and portrays the people whom the investigators meet (called "Non-Player Characters" or NPCs). The Keeper also helps resolve the action and referees the game's rules. Since the Keeper must make extra preparation, players often rotate the duty of Keeper between different scenarios. Think of the Keeper's role like that of a director making a movie in which the actors (the investigators) don't know how the story will develop.

The game is an evolving interaction between players—in the guise of their characters unraveling a mystery—and the Keeper, who presents and adjudicates the world in which the mystery occurs.

There is no board to play on. Play is mostly talking: a situation is presented and outlined by the Keeper, and then the players say what they, as their investigators, intend to do. Using the rules to keep matters consistent and fair, the Keeper tells them if they can do what they proposed and the steps they must follow, which often means rolling some dice to determine success. Dice help to resolve encounters and situations and keep everybody honest, as well as adding drama and suspense—the outcome of a roll could mean an unforeseen surprise, a dismal defeat, or a hair's breadth escape from death! Once an outcome is determined, the Keeper narrates what happens, asking the players for their reactions, and so on.

The purpose of roleplaying is to have fun. Right down to pounding hearts and sweating brows, it's part of human nature to find pleasure in being scared, as long as that being scared is not for real. For some, the relaxation after the scare is the most important result. For others, it is the scare itself. *Call of Cthulhu* is a vehicle for alternately scaring and then reassuring players. Enjoyable fun for all concerned!

CONCEPTS OF THE GAME

Call of Cthulhu takes its premise from the stories of an early 20th century writer called Howard Phillips Lovecraft (August 20, 1890–March 15, 1937), whose stories centered on a dark philosophy of an uncaring cosmos in which, unbeknown to humanity, strange alien and god-like beings rule. These concepts were popular enough to inspire generations of writers, who would go on to develop and expand what is known as “Cosmic Horror” within the structures created by Lovecraft (the “Cthulhu Mythos”).

Lovecraft was virtually unknown and published only in pulp magazines before he died in poverty, but he is now regarded as one of the most significant 20th century authors in the horror and weird fiction genres. In spite of Lovecraft’s distasteful racism and outdated personal views, we can find inspiration for gaming in his fictional creations. Lovecraft’s writing is somewhat dense and uses archaic language, which seems to unwind like pages from one of those ancient books of magic he often describes in his tales. As well as engaging with the horror, we also can find pleasure in lampooning his ideas and motifs, for Lovecraft laughed about himself and wrote stories that satirized his friends all the time. Contemporary writers of fiction and game materials have moved beyond Lovecraft in exploring the Cthulhu Mythos and re-examining contemporary and historical social themes. The *Call of Cthulhu* game takes inspiration from these fictional stories.

If you would like to read more in-depth articles on H. P. Lovecraft and the Cthulhu Mythos there is plenty to find on the internet, with Wikipedia being a great place to start.

The Cthulhu Mythos

The term “Cthulhu Mythos” is generally attributed to August Derleth, a writer and early fan of Lovecraft, who later founded Arkham House publishers, dedicated to keeping in print the collected works of Lovecraft. Today, the term signifies a certain fictional cosmology of alien gods and monsters, arcane lore, and themes that represent “Lovecraftian Horror,” where humanity’s existence is unimportant in the grand scale of the universe.

Lovecraft wrote, “All my tales are based upon the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the vast cosmos at large.” He further imagined that the fundamental truths of the universe were so alien and horrifying that mere exposure to them might result in madness. While humanity might crave both comfort and the truth, only one or the other was possible. The human mind is an inflexible container and cannot contain both cosmic truth and complete sanity—more of one poured in must spill out more of the other.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Some folk have a more visual style of learning, so watching a “how to” video can be useful. Luckily, a vast range of resources are available online to support those new to *Call of Cthulhu*. A simple internet search for “Call of Cthulhu game” will bring up hundreds of hits. To help sort out the wheat from the chaff, here are two video series that can help consolidate your knowledge of the game and the basic rules:

“Call of Cthulhu Review” by Seth Skorkowsky introduces the game’s concept and style of play:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xWpNDDhmOAw>

“Call of Cthulhu Explained” by Paul Fricker (co-author of the latest edition of the game) introduces the game’s rules and mechanics in bite-sized chunks:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emVhUhpMxQ8&t=19s>

In the Cthulhu Mythos, humans desperate for power might choose to forgo all remnants of sanity in exchange for becoming adept at manipulating the secrets of time and space. Their devil’s bargains made, these merciless sorcerers could then whistle down devastation and doom to this world in exchange for more knowledge and power. The alien entities of the Cthulhu Mythos are often remote to humanity, who frequently view them as god-like beings and create cults to worship them. Such cults act in opposition to the investigators in the game.

Mystery and Investigation

Adventures in *Call of Cthulhu* usually center on a mystery, with the investigators called in to help uncover the truth of the situation. Often the mystery has been caused by the criminal wrongdoings of a crazed worshipper or a cult in the service of the gods of the Cthulhu Mythos. The investigators’ job is to find clues, with each clue bringing to light another avenue for research or exploration. As the investigators gather clues, their knowledge of the situations grows until they identify the person or cause of the original wrongdoing, which in turn may lead to some form of final confrontation or challenge. It is the players’ job, in the guise of their investigators, to unravel the



CREATING AN INVESTIGATOR

mystery and decide upon a way to resolve the situation and ensure those responsible are brought to justice or dealt with. Sometimes, the mystery may be the result of strange magics, a hideous monster, or other bizarre event, each of which can adversely affect the investigators.

Of course, not all adventures are the same and some do not take the form of a mystery. Sometimes a scenario simply drops the investigators into a dangerous situation from which they must escape or find a resolution. Each adventure is like a short story, and all are different. Scenarios can be linked together, with each story forming a strand in a larger more encompassing plot—these are called campaigns.

The adventures in **Book Three** can be played as separate scenarios involving different investigators, or can be played through by the same group of investigators.

To play *Call of Cthulhu* you need to create an investigator character. Creating your investigator is a series of steps, which are described below. Players record the details of their investigators on a *Call of Cthulhu* investigator sheet. The investigator sheet holds all the information needed to play the game. There are some blank investigator sheets included in this set; you also can download a writeable PDF version of the sheet at www.chaosium.com/cthulhu-character-sheets.

The following investigator creation process is a simplified version, designed to get you up and running as quickly as possible. A more detailed process, with many more options to fashion investigators, can be found in the *Call of Cthulhu Keeper Rulebook* and *Investigator Handbook*.



Watch out!

STEP ONE: INVESTIGATOR CHARACTERISTICS

To begin, a *Call of Cthulhu* character has eight characteristics:

- Strength (STR) measures the raw physical power your investigator can bring to bear.
- Constitution (CON) is a measure of the health and hardiness of your investigator.
- Power (POW) is a combination of force of will, spirit, and mental stability.
- Dexterity (DEX) is a measure of your investigator's physical agility and speed.
- Appearance (APP) measures the physical appeal of your character.
- Size (SIZ) reflects your investigator's combined height and weight.
- Intelligence (INT) is a rough measure of your investigator's cunning and ability to make leaps of logic and intuition.
- Education (EDU) is a measure of the knowledge that your investigator has accumulated through formal education, or the venerated "School of Hard Knocks."

Allocate the following values where you like among these eight characteristics: 40, 50, 50, 50, 60, 60, 70, 80. Each of these values is a percentage number, so deciding to put 70 into your investigator's Strength means they have "STR 70%," an above average score, meaning they are quite strong. Write down the numbers on the investigator sheet in the large box by each of the characteristics. We call these the "Regular" characteristic values.

Half and Fifth Characteristic Values

Looking at the investigator sheet, you will see that there are three boxes next to each characteristic and skill: the first is noted as "Regular" (in which you have just written the numbers for that characteristic), and then two boxes to the right-hand side. The next box (or middle box) is for the "Half" value, and the box at the far right is for the "Fifth" value.

- To work out the Half value of a characteristic, simply halve the number you chose to allocate to the characteristic, rounding that value down to the nearest whole number if necessary. For example, if you chose STR 70, the Half (Hard) value would be 35.
- To work out the Fifth value, divide the Regular value by 5, again rounding down as required. For example, with STR 70, the Fifth (Extreme) value would be 14.

Write in the Half and Fifth values for each characteristic on the investigator sheet. On page 23 of this book is a **Quick**

Reference Chart for Half and Fifth Values, which allows you to look up the values without needing to do any math. The downloadable PDF investigator sheet works out these values for you automatically.

STEP TWO: SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

There are a number of attributes that are determined after you have worked out the investigator's characteristics. These are Damage Bonus and Build, Hit Points, Move Rate, Sanity, and Magic Points. Additionally, you will need to determine a Luck value.

Damage Bonus and Build: Damage Bonus is how much extra damage your investigator inflicts when making a successful close combat (melee) attack. Build is a scale of combined size and strength used when making a "Fighting Maneuver" (see page 19). Add your Regular STR and SIZ characteristics together and consult the table on page 8. You'll find boxes on the investigator sheet to write in the Build and Damage Bonus values.

Hit Points (HP): are figured by adding SIZ and CON together, then dividing the total by ten and rounding down to the nearest whole number. As your investigator takes damage from combat or other events, your hit points will drop.

Example: SIZ 50 and CON 50 totals 100; divided by ten, this gives 10 hit points. The investigator can suffer up to 10 points of damage before they fall unconscious and, possibly, die.

Move Rate (MOV): humans characters have MOV 8 in the basic game.

Sanity Points (SAN): begins at a value equal to the investigator's POW value, enter this number in the "Starting" box. The "Current" box allows you to note Sanity losses during a game. The "Insane" box notes the one-fifth value of the "Starting" Sanity, which is the number of Sanity points the character can lose before they go indefinitely insane (we don't use the indefinite insanity rule in this version of the game). A character's Sanity score is used as a percentile roll that presents your investigator's ability to remain stoic in the face of horror. As you encounter the monstrosities of the Cthulhu Mythos, your Sanity points score fluctuates.

Example: POW 40 gives a starting Sanity value of 40. When making a Sanity roll, roll equal to or below 40 on 1D100 to make a successful roll. A roll of 41 or higher means the Sanity roll has failed.

DAMAGE BONUS AND BUILD TABLE

Example: Brian set his STR to 60 and his SIZ to 70, totaling 130. When he makes a successful physical attack, he deals an extra 1D4 points of damage (Damage Bonus). His Build is 1.

STR + SIZ	Damage Bonus	Build
2–64	–2	–2
65–84	–1	–1
85–124	None	0
125–164	+1D4	1
165–204	+1D6	2

Magic Points (MP): are equal to one-fifth POW. Magic points are used when casting spells, as well as for powering arcane devices and magical effects. Points that are spent regenerate naturally at a rate of 1 point per hour. Once an individual is out of magic points, any further expenditure is deducted directly from hit points—any such loss manifesting as physical damage in a form chosen by the Keeper.

Example: POW 40 provides 8 magic points. When casting a spell, the spell calls for the expenditure of 2 magic points, so the investigator's value temporarily drops to 6.

Luck: calculate Luck by rolling 3D6 and multiplying the result by 5. A Luck roll is often used to determine whether external circumstances are in your favor or against you. As with Sanity, you must roll equal to or below a Luck value to succeed in a Luck roll. See page 15 for more information about Luck rolls.

Example: Brian is fleeing a board of zombies and jumps into a nearby car. The Keeper asks for a Luck roll to determine whether the keys are in the ignition (as it's a completely random chance). Brian makes a percentage roll using 1D100, rolling 28, which is lower than his Luck score—he turns the keys and the engine roars in to action!

STEP THREE: OCCUPATION AND SKILLS

At this point you should form an idea of what your investigator does for a living. Remember, the term “investigator” does not restrict you to just being a cop or a private eye. This choice of occupation will influence the selection of skills available to your investigator. To begin with, choose an occupation. Anything you think would be interesting to play is valid, but you should agree this with your Keeper. Some favorite occupations in *Call of Cthulhu* are Professor, Journalist, Occultist, and Archeologist—the choice of occupation is only limited by your imagination.

Either pick an occupation from the list following and use the specified list of skills provided, or tailor one to your requirements. To do this, decide upon an occupation and then look at the list of skills on the investigator sheet. Then, choose eight skills that are appropriate for your investigator's chosen occupation, e.g. what skills would a person doing this occupation require? These are your investigator's “occupation skills.” Use some scratch paper to note down your investigator's occupation skills.

Note: a brief description of the differing skills can be found on pages 10-12

You now assign points to the skills on the investigator sheet. No player can add points to the Cthulhu Mythos skill during character creation, as it is assumed that all beginning characters are ignorant of the threat of the Mythos.

Allocate the following values among the eight occupation skills and also the Credit Rating skill: one at 70%, two at 60%, three at 50% and three at 40% (set the skills directly to these values and ignore the skill base values written next to each skill on the investigator sheet).

Example: Susan has chosen to play a Journalist and allocates the following values: Art/Craft (Photography) 50%, History 40%, Library Use 50%, Own Language (English) 60%, Psychology 40%. She chooses Persuade as an interpersonal skill, giving it 70% (very persuasive!). She then looks down the skill list on the investigator sheet and picks two other skills that she thinks might be useful for a journalist: Spot Hidden 50% and Stealth 60%. She has one value, 40%, left to allocate to Credit Rating. Susan writes these numbers into the Regular (large) box next to each of the skills.

After assigning points to the occupation skills, select your investigator's “personal interest skills.” These are skills that your character has acquired outside of work. Pick four non-occupation skills and boost them by 20% (adding 20 to the skill base values listed next to the skills on the investigator sheet).

We recommend that you write your skill values down in the same format as your Characteristics—Regular/Half/Fifth values—as you’ll need to refer to these during the game (see page 23 for the **Quick Reference Chart**). Of course, if you prefer, you can just write the full value of each skill and do the math in your head during the course of the game.

Another Example: Brian chooses Soldier as an occupation. As this occupation is not in the list in this book, he chooses eight skills that seem most appropriate: Climb, Dodge, Fighting (Brawl), Firearms (Rifle/Shotgun), First Aid, Other Language, Stealth, and Survival. Brian sets these occupation skill values as follows: Climb 60%, Credit Rating 40%, Dodge 60%, Fighting (Brawl) 70%, Firearms (Rifle/Shotgun) 50%, First Aid 40%, Other Language 50% (picking Spanish as a second language), Stealth 50%, Survival 40%.

Brian then picks four personal interest skills, raising each one by 20% (adding 20 to the skill’s base value written on the sheet); Drive Auto 40%, Jump 40%, Mechanical Repair 30%, and Spot Hidden 45%. Each skill value is then written on the sheet next to the skill as the Regular, Half, and Fifth values, such as “Spot Hidden 45 (22/9).”



Investigation!

SAMPLE INVESTIGATOR OCCUPATIONS

ANTIQUARIAN—Appraise, Art/Craft (Any), History, Library Use, Other Language, one interpersonal skill (Charm, Fast Talk, Intimidate, or Persuade), Spot Hidden, any one other skill.

AUTHOR—Art (Literature), History, Library Use, Natural World or Occult, Other Language, Own Language, Psychology, any one other skill.

DILETTANTE—Art/Craft (Any), Firearms, Other Language, Ride, one interpersonal skill (Charm, Fast Talk, Intimidate, or Persuade), any three other skills.

DOCTOR OF MEDICINE—First Aid, Other Language (Latin), Medicine, Psychology, Science (Biology), Science (Pharmacy), any two other skills as academic or personal specialties (e.g. a psychiatrist might take Psychoanalysis).

JOURNALIST—Art/Craft (Photography), History, Library Use, Own Language, one interpersonal skill (Charm, Fast Talk, Intimidate, or Persuade), Psychology, any two other skills.

POLICE DETECTIVE—Art/Craft (Acting) or Disguise, Firearms, Law, Listen, one interpersonal skill (Charm, Fast Talk, Intimidate, or Persuade), Psychology, Spot Hidden, any one other skill.

PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR—Art/Craft (Photography), Disguise, Law, Library Use, one interpersonal skill (Charm, Fast Talk, Intimidate, or Persuade), Psychology, Spot Hidden, and any one other skill (e.g. Locksmith, Firearms).

PROFESSOR—Library Use, Other Language, Own Language, Psychology, any four other skills as academic or personal specialties.

SKILL DESCRIPTIONS

Most skills are exactly what their name suggests—such as Drive Auto, which determines how well a character can drive an automobile (or car), or Climb, which concerns how well an investigator can scale up or down a wall. However, some skill names are less obvious, so here is a brief summary of the skills listed on the investigator sheet.

Note: on the investigator sheet, each skill has a percentile number in brackets next to it. This number is the basic chance for anyone using that skill untrained. Thus, anyone could attempt to use a handgun (basic 20% chance of success), even if they've never handled one before.

Accounting: understanding of accountancy procedures; reveals the financial functioning of a business or person.

Anthropology: identify and understand an individual's (or culture's) way of life through observation.

Appraise: estimate the value of a particular item, including the quality, material used, and workmanship.

Archaeology: allows dating and identification of artifacts from past cultures, and the detection of fakes.

Art and Craft: ability with this skill enables the creation, making, or repair of an item, which could be artistic (like painting or singing) or craft (like woodwork or cookery). Choose a suitable specialization and write this in the space provided on the sheet.

Charm: takes many forms, including physical attraction, seduction, flattery, or simply warmth of personality. Charm may be used to compel someone to act in a certain way, but not in a manner completely contrary to that person's normal behavior. This skill can be opposed by Charm or Psychology.

Climb: climb trees, walls, and other vertical surfaces with or without ropes and climbing gear.

Credit Rating: a character's Credit Rating is an indicator of their wealth and class. The more points spent on Credit Rating, the richer the character is. Depending on how many occupation skill points you allocate to this skill, your investigator is:

- Credit Rating 0: penniless, living on the streets.
- Credit Rating 1-9: poor, possessing the bare minimum.
- Credit Rating 10-49: average, a reasonable level of comfort.
- Credit Rating 50-89: wealthy, some degree of luxury.
- Credit Rating 90-98: rich, great wealth and luxury.
- Credit Rating 99: super rich, money is no object.

Example: Brian chose a Credit Rating of 40% for his soldier, meaning that he has an average income.

Cthulhu Mythos: reflects understanding of the inhuman Cthulhu Mythos. It is not founded on the accumulation of knowledge as academic skills are. Rather, it represents the opening and tuning of the human mind to the Cthulhu Mythos.

Thus, Cthulhu Mythos skill points are gained from personal encounters with the Mythos (monsters or knowledge from rare books). The Cthulhu Mythos is antithetical to human understanding, and exposure to it undermines human sanity. No starting investigator may take points in Cthulhu Mythos (unless agreed with the Keeper).

Disguise: used whenever you wish to appear to be someone other than whom you are.

Dodge: allows an investigator to instinctively evade blows, thrown missiles, and so forth. A character may attempt to use dodge any number of times in a combat round (but only once per attack). If an attack can be seen, a character can try to dodge it, thus it is impossible to dodge bullets because they cannot be seen when in motion; the best a character can do is to take evasive action that results in being harder to hit. Determine starting Dodge value by halving the character's Regular DEX value.

Drive Auto: drive a car or light truck, make ordinary maneuvers, and cope with ordinary vehicle problems. If the investigator wants to lose a pursuer or tail someone, a Drive roll would be appropriate.

Electrical Repair: repair or reconfigure electrical equipment, such as auto ignitions, electric motors, fuse boxes, and burglar alarms.

SKILL DESCRIPTIONS

Fast Talk: specifically limited to verbal trickery, deception, and misdirection, such as bamboozling a bouncer to let you inside a club, getting someone to sign a form they haven't read, making a policeman look the other way, and so on. This skill can be opposed by Fast Talk or Psychology.

Fighting: a character's skill in melee combat. You may spend skill points to purchase any skill specialization from Brawl (includes knives and clubs, as well as fisticuffs and martial arts), Sword, Axe, Spear, or Whip.

Firearms: covers all manner of firearms, as well as bows and crossbows. You may spend skill points to purchase any skill specialization from Handgun, Rifle/Shotgun, Bow, or Crossbow.

First Aid: emergency medical care, it cannot be used to treat diseases (where the Medicine skill is required). To be effective, First Aid must be delivered within one hour of injury, in which case it grants 1 hit point and can rouse an unconscious person.

History: recall a historical detail or event, the significance of a country, city, region, or person, as pertinent.

Intimidate: use of threats (physical or psychological) to compel someone to act or reveal information. This skill can be opposed by Intimidate or Psychology.

Jump: can be used to halve falling damage. A jump is equal to the person's height (doubled if a running start); further distances may require an increased roll difficulty.

Language, Other: when choosing this skill, the exact language must be specified and written next to the skill. An individual can know any number of languages, but each must be paid for in skill points. The skill represents the investigator's chance to understand, speak, read, and write in a language other than their own.

Language (Own): a character's Mother Tongue. Choose the language best known to your investigator, such as English. The starting value is equal to the character's Regular EDU score.

Law: represents the chance of knowing pertinent law, precedent, legal maneuvers, or court procedure. Helps when dealing with the police, lawyers, and courts.

Library Use: find a piece of information, such as a certain book, newspaper, reference in a library, or collection of documents (assuming the information is there to be found). Use of this skill marks several hours of continuous search.

Listen: interpret and understand sound, including overheard conversations, mutters behind a closed door, and whispered words in a cafe.

Locksmith: open car doors, hot-wire autos, jimmy library windows, figure out Chinese puzzle boxes, and penetrate ordinary alarm systems. May repair locks, make keys, or open locks with the aid of skeleton keys, pick tools, or other tools.

Mechanical Repair: repair a broken machine or create a new one. Basic carpentry and plumbing projects can be performed, as well as constructing items (such as a pulley

system) and repairing items (such as a steam pump). Can be used to open common household locks, but more complex locks require the Locksmith skill.

Medicine: diagnose and treat accidents, injuries, diseases, poisonings, etc. Treatment takes a minimum of one hour and can be delivered any time after damage is taken, but if this is not performed on the same day, the difficulty level (see page 14) of the roll is increased (requiring a Hard success). A person treated successfully with Medicine recovers 1D3 hit points (in addition to any First Aid they have received), except in the case of a dying character, who must initially receive successful First Aid to stabilize them before a Medicine roll is made.

Natural World: represents the traditional (unscientific) knowledge and personal observation of farmers, fishermen, inspired amateurs, and hobbyists. It can identify plant and animal species, habits, and habitats in a general way, as well as identify tracks, spoors, and animal or bird calls.

Navigate: take the correct path to a destination, whether in a strange city or in the wilderness. Read maps and judge distances and terrain.

Occult: recognize occult paraphernalia, words, and concepts, as well as folk traditions; can also identify grimoires of magic and occult codes. Recall secret mystical knowledge learned from books, teachings, or experience.

Operate Heavy Machinery: required to drive and operate a train, steam engine, bulldozer, or other large-scale land machine.

SKILL DESCRIPTIONS

Persuade: convince a person about a particular idea, concept, or belief through reasoned argument, debate, and discussion. Persuade may be employed without reference to truth. The successful application of Persuade takes time: at least half an hour. If you want to persuade someone quickly, use Fast Talk. This skill can be opposed by Persuade or Psychology.

Pilot: pick a specialization, such as Boat, Aircraft, or Dirigible; each type must be paid for with skill points. Allows the safe operation of such modes of transport.

Psychoanalysis: refers to the range of emotional therapies. Psychoanalysis can return Sanity points to an investigator patient: once per game month, to learn the progress of the therapy, make a 1D100 roll against the analyst or doctor's Psychoanalysis skill. If the roll succeeds, the patient gains 1D3 Sanity points. If the roll fails, add no points. If the roll is fumbled, then the patient loses 1D6 Sanity points, and treatment by that analyst concludes. In the game, psychoanalysis alone does not speed recovery from indefinite insanity, which requires 1D6 months of institutional (or similar) care, of which psychotherapy may form a part. Successful use of this skill can allow a character to cope with the subject of a phobia or mania for a short time, or to see delusions for what they are.

Psychology: perception, common to all humans, to form an idea of another person's motives and character, and detect if a person is lying. The Keeper may choose to make concealed Psychology skill rolls on the player's behalf, announcing only

the information, true or false, that the user gained by employing it.

Ride: applies to saddle horses, donkeys, and mules, granting knowledge of basic care of the riding animal, riding gear, and how to handle the steed at a gallop or on difficult terrain. Should a steed unexpectedly rear or stumble, the rider's chance of remaining mounted equals their Ride skill.

Science: practical and theoretical ability with a science specialty gained from some degree of formalized education and training, although a well-read amateur scientist may also be a possibility. Understanding and scope is limited by the era of play. Spend skill points to purchase any skill Specialization, for example: Astronomy, Biology, Botany, Chemistry, Cryptography, Geology, Pharmacy, Physics, Zoology, etc. When a character does not have the obvious discipline specialty, they may roll against an allied specialty with the level of difficulty increased (or a penalty die) at the Keeper's discretion.

Sleight of Hand: allows the visual covering-up, secreting, or masking of an object or objects, perhaps with debris, cloth, or other illusion-promoting materials. Also, fine dexterity and manipulation of objects.

Spot Hidden: find a secret door or compartment, notice a hidden intruder, see an inconspicuous clue, recognize a repainted automobile, become aware of ambushers, notice a bulging pocket, etc.—an important skill in the armory of an investigator. When an investigator is searching for a character who is hiding, the opponent's Stealth skill is used to set the difficulty level for the roll.

Stealth: when attempting to avoid detection, moving quietly, and hiding without alerting those who might hear or see.

Survival: expertise required to survive in extreme environments, such as in desert or arctic conditions, as well as upon the sea or in wilderness terrain. Inherent is the knowledge of hunting, building shelters, hazards (such as the avoidance of poisonous plants), etc. Spend skill points to purchase any skill specialization, choosing which type of environment from Wilderness, Arctic, Desert, Sea, etc. When a character does not have the obvious survival specialty, they may roll against an allied specialty with the level of difficulty increased (or a penalty die) at the Keeper's discretion.

Swim: ability to float and to move through water or other liquid. Only roll for Swim in times of crisis or danger. Failing a pushed Swim roll can result in loss of hit points. It may also lead to the person being washed away downstream, or partially or completely drowned.

Throw: hit a target with an object. A palm-sized object can be hurled a distance up to STR divided by 5 in yards. If the Throw roll fails, the object lands at a random distance from the target, determined by the Keeper. Use this skill in combat when throwing rocks, spears, grenades, or boomerangs.

Track: follow a person, vehicle, or animal over earth, and through plants. Factors such as time passed since the tracks were made, rain, and the type of ground covered may affect the difficulty level of the roll.

STEP FOUR: BACKSTORY

Take a look at the skills, characteristics, and the values you allocated to each. With a dash of imagination, you begin to get an idea of who this new character is. You might want to add notes on your investigator's background and personality as you decide them. Who are they really? Where did they grow up? What is their family like? The more time you spend thinking about your character, the more developed their personality becomes, and the more fun you will have when playing *Call of Cthulhu*.

Each backstory entry (on the reverse of the investigator sheet) should be a short, pithy statement. Think about how your character appears to others and write a brief entry in Personal Description. What does your investigator believe or what is their outlook on life? Write a sentence to sum it up under Ideology/Beliefs. What mannerisms do they have? Write down annoying habits and the like under Traits. Don't worry about filling every entry on the back of the investigator sheet—just two or three entries will be enough to get you going.

Example: Susan writes "Born and raised in New York," under Meaningful Locations, "Never without my trusty pistol," for Treasured Possessions, and "Science can explain everything," for her journalist's Ideology/Beliefs.

STEP FIVE: FINAL TOUCHES

You now have something that looks like a finished character. Go back to the top of the investigator sheet to make sure you have given your character a name, and also write down their sex and age. On the reverse side of the sheet, write down any standard equipment the investigator might be expected to carry on them for their occupation.

Example: Susan writes down "Note pad, pencils, ink pen, hair brush, hair pins," under Gear and Possessions for her journalist character—those hair pins might come in handy if she ever needs to pick a lock!

There is space on the sheet for you to draw or glue in a portrait of your investigator. If you are using the downloadable PDF sheet, you can click on the portrait space, opening a dialogue box to input an image you have already found or saved on your computer.

Don't worry about the Cash & Assets section on the reverse of the investigator sheet—it's just for advanced campaign games, where a character's money on hand and savings might be important (such things are covered in the *Call of Cthulhu Keeper Rulebook*).

Personal Info

1920s Era Investigator

Name _____ Birthplace _____ Pronouns _____
Occupation _____ Residence _____ Age _____

CHARACTERISTICS

STR _____ SIZ _____ Hit Points _____
CON _____ POW _____ Magic Points _____
DEX _____ APP _____ Luck _____
INT _____ EDU _____ Sanity _____

Max Sanity ☐ Temporary Insanity ☐ Indefinite Insanity ☐ Major Wound ☐ Unconscious ☐ Dying ☐

SKILLS

☐ Accounting (05%) ☐ Firearms (Pistol/Shotgun) (25%) ☐ Persuade (10%) ☐ _____
☐ Anthropology (01%) ☐ Firearms (Revolver) (25%) ☐ Persuade (10%) ☐ _____
☐ Appraise (05%) ☐ First Aid (30%) ☐ Psychoanalysis (01%) ☐ _____
☐ Archaeology (01%) ☐ History (05%) ☐ Psychology (10%) ☐ _____
☐ Art/Craft (05%) ☐ Intimidate (15%) ☐ Ride (05%) ☐ _____
☐ Charm (15%) ☐ Jump (20%) ☐ Science (01%) ☐ _____
☐ Climb (20%) ☐ Language (Other) (01%) ☐ Sleight of Hand (10%) ☐ _____
☐ Credit Rating (00%) ☐ Language (Own) (EDU) ☐ Spot Hidden (25%) ☐ _____
☐ Cthulhu Myths (00%) ☐ Law (05%) ☐ Stealth (20%) ☐ _____
☐ Disguise (05%) ☐ Library Use (20%) ☐ Survival (10%) ☐ _____
☐ Dodge (Half DEX) ☐ Listen (20%) ☐ Swim (20%) ☐ _____
☐ Drive Auto (20%) ☐ Locksmith (01%) ☐ Throw (20%) ☐ _____
☐ Elec. Repair (10%) ☐ Mech. Repair (10%) ☐ Track (10%) ☐ _____
☐ Fast Talk (05%) ☐ Medicine (01%) ☐ _____
☐ Fighting (Brawl) (25%) ☐ Natural World (10%) ☐ _____
☐ Fighting ☐ Navigate (10%) ☐ _____
☐ Firearms (Handgun) (20%) ☐ Occult (05%) ☐ _____

COMBAT

Weapon _____ Skill _____ Damage: 103 + DB # of Attacks: 1 Range: _____ Ammo: _____ Malf.: _____ Move: _____
 Brawl _____ Dodge: _____ Build: _____ Dodge Bonus: _____
 Dodge (repeated here) _____

GAME SYSTEM

“Skill rolls” may be called for during dramatic situations in the game. Walking down a well-lit hallway is not a dramatic situation, whereas running down a rubble-strewn corridor while being chased by monsters most definitely is!

When attempting a skill roll, you should agree a goal with the Keeper. If your skill roll is successful, you achieve your goal. Additionally, when you successfully roll a given skill, put a check mark in the box next to it on your investigator sheet. You can only get one check per skill at a time. At the end of the scenario, that skill could increase due to experience—see **Rewards of Success**, page 22, for further information.

On occasion, you may need to roll a test that is not covered by the skills on your sheet. If so, look at your investigator's characteristics and determine which one of them is best to use and treat it like a skill.

SKILL ROLLS AND DIFFICULTY LEVELS

Your Keeper will tell you when you should attempt a skill roll and how difficult the task is.

- A regular task requires a roll of equal to or less than your skill value on 1D100 (a Regular success).
- A difficult task requires a roll result equal to or less than half your skill value (a Hard success).
- A task approaching the limits of human capability requires a roll equal to or less than one-fifth of your skill value (an Extreme success).

If you can justify it through your investigator's actions, you can “push” a failed skill roll. Pushing a roll allows you to roll the dice a second time; however, the stakes are raised. If you fail a second time, the Keeper gets to inflict a dire consequence upon your character. Before a pushed roll is made, the Keeper has the option of foreshadowing what might happen if the

pushed roll is failed; the player can then decide whether it's worth the risk to take the second roll or not.

Example: your investigator is trying to lever open the heavy stone door of a crypt. The Keeper decides this is very difficult and asks for a STR roll, specifying that a “Hard success” is required. Your investigator's STR is 60, so a Hard success requires a roll of 30 or below. You roll the dice but the result is 43—you have failed, as you rolled above half your investigator's STR. You ask if you can push the roll, stating that your character is picking up and using a spade to help lever the door. The Keeper permits a second roll, but warns you that if you fail this roll, not only will the door still be closed but “something” may hear you and could be coming for your blood!

OPPOSED SKILL ROLLS

If two investigators are opposing one another, or if an investigator is in a conflict with a significant Keeper-controlled character (an NPC, i.e. one for whom statistics are listed in the scenario), the Keeper may require an “opposed roll.”

To resolve an opposed roll, both sides make a skill roll and compare their level of success. A Regular success beats a Fail, a Hard success beats a Regular success, and an Extreme success beats a Hard success. In the case of a draw, the side with the higher skill value wins. If both skills are equal, then have both sides roll 1D100, with the lower result winning.

Bonus and Penalty Dice

Sometimes, the prevailing conditions for the investigators, their environment, and/or the time available to them can hinder or benefit a skill or characteristic roll. Under certain conditions the Keeper may grant a “bonus” or a “penalty” die to a roll. One bonus die and one penalty die cancel each other out. Such bonuses and penalties operate in a similar way to raising the difficulty of a roll, and can be used instead of, or in addition to, an increased difficulty. Normally, though, bonus and penalty dice are used primarily with opposed rolls.

LEVELS OF SUCCESS

(worst) FAIL — REGULAR SUCCESS — HARD SUCCESS — EXTREME SUCCESS (best)

For each bonus die: roll an additional “tens” percentage die alongside the usual pair of percentage dice when making a skill roll. You are now rolling three separate dice: one “units” die and two “tens” dice. To take benefit of the bonus, use the “tens” die that yields the better (lower) result.

Example: two rival investigators, Malcolm and Hugh, are vying for the affection of Lady Greene. Only one can gain her hand in marriage, so the Keeper determines that an opposed roll is needed to determine the outcome of their wooing. It is decided that each should make an opposed Charm roll. The Keeper reviews the events of the scenario so far: Malcolm has visited Lady Greene twice, each time lavishing expensive gifts upon her, while Hugh has only visited once and brought no gifts at all. The Keeper states that Malcolm has an advantage and will receive a bonus die in the opposed roll.

Hugh's player rolls first against his Charm skill of 55, getting 45—a Regular success.

Malcolm's player rolls against his Charm skill with one bonus die, rolling one units die and two tens dice (see fig 1.) The units die reads 4 and can be paired with either of the two tens dice to give scores of 44 or 24. Malcolm's player takes the lower result 24—a Hard success.

Malcolm wins the opposed roll, and his proposal of marriage to Lady Greene is accepted.

For each penalty die: roll an additional “tens” percentage die alongside the usual pair of percentage dice. You're now rolling three separate dice: one “units” die and two “tens” dice. For a penalty, use the “tens” die that yields the worse (higher) result.

Example: in a dire turn of events, two investigators—Felix and Harrison—have been captured by the cultists of the Scarlet Smile. The cultists decide to have some “fun” at the investigators' expense, decreeing that both must undertake the Ordeal of Pain, from which only one can survive. The loser will be sacrificed to the cultists' foul god.

The Ordeal of Pain involves lifting a huge rock and holding it aloft. Whoever holds the rock up the longest will win. This requires an opposed STR roll from each of the investigators; however, the

Keeper rules that Harrison must take a penalty die, as he recently suffered a major wound (he received an injury when he was captured by the cultists) and is still recovering.

Felix's player rolls 51 against STR 65—a Regular success.

Harrison's STR is 55. His player rolls 20 and 40 on two tens dice and 1 on the units die (see fig 2.), which can be combined to read 21 or 41. The extra die was a penalty die, so Harrison must take the higher result—a Regular success

Both players have achieved a Regular success; Felix wins because he has the higher STR value. Felix is able to hold the rock above his head for longer than Harrison. The cultists jeer and lead Harrison off towards their altar...

Luck Rolls

Luck rolls may be called for by the Keeper when circumstances external to an investigator are in question, and also when determining the fickle hand of fate. If, for example, an investigator wants to know if there is an item lying nearby that they could use as weapon, or if the flashlight they have found has any juice left in it, then call for a Luck roll. Note that if a skill or characteristic is more appropriate to a situation, then it should be used rather than Luck. To succeed in a Luck roll, the investigator must roll equal to or under their current Luck value.

If the Keeper calls for a “group Luck roll,” the player whose investigator has the lowest Luck score (among those present in the scene) should make the roll on behalf of the group.

Example: finding a cab doesn't require a dice roll, but getting one before the investigators lose sight of the car that they wish to pursue could. Credit Rating could be a factor in attracting the attention of a cabdriver on the lookout for a well-dressed fare who may tip generously. However, quickly getting a ride at two o'clock in the morning on the undesirable side of town might not be so easy. Would there even be a cab to hail? No skill is going to make a cab appear at that moment. It is a matter of chance whether a cab may be driving down that road, hence a Luck roll is required.

Fig. 1 Bonus dice



Fig. 2. Penalty dice



SANITY (SAN)

Whenever an investigator encounters the horrors of the Cthulhu Mythos or comes across something mundane yet horrific (such as stumbling across a friend's mutilated corpse), make a percentile roll against the investigator's current Sanity score. If you roll over your current Sanity, you lose a greater amount of Sanity points. If you roll under, you will lose less or none. The Sanity loss is generally described for an event as something like "0/1D6" or "2/1D10." The number before the slash mark tells you how much Sanity your character loses if the roll is equal to or under their current Sanity score; the number after the slash is how much your investigator loses if you roll over their current Sanity score.

When you fail a "Sanity roll" the Keeper gets to momentarily control your next action as the fear takes hold of you; perhaps you unwittingly scream or squeeze the trigger of your gun.

If an investigator loses 5 or more Sanity points as the consequence of a single Sanity roll, they have suffered major emotional trauma. The player must roll 1D100. If the result is equal to or less than their Intelligence (INT), the investigator fully understands and comprehends what has been seen and goes temporarily insane (for 1D10 hours). If they fail the roll, their mind is closed to the horror and they remain sane (for now).

In addition, an insane investigator suffers a "bout of madness"—roll 1D10 and refer to the **Bouts of Madness Table** (page 17). If the investigator is in the presence of other investigators, play out the result round by round. If the investigator is alone you may use the result to tell how the investigator is found sometime later in a bad way, perhaps locked in a cupboard or drunk in a gutter.

If your investigator is temporarily insane, the Keeper may decide to add a phobia or mania to your sheet (such as "fear of the dark," "fear of confined spaces," or "kleptomania, an irrational compulsion to steal things"). Alternatively, they may decide to rewrite one of your existing backstory entries, perhaps corrupting it in some way (where you wrote "Trusting" under Traits, the Keeper corrupts this to "Fearful.")

While temporarily insane, the Keeper may present your investigator with "Delusions" (hallucinations)—is that a zombie creeping up on you or is it just a homeless man asking for spare change? You can only be certain by asking to make a "reality check"—electing to make a Sanity roll; if you're successful, you see through the hallucination, but if you fail, you fall deeper into the madness!

Once 1D10 hours have passed, the investigator is sane once more and cannot be affected by more delusions; however, altered backstories or phobias or manias gained while insane remain in effect.

SAMPLE PHOBIAS AND MANIAS

There are hundreds of possible phobias and manias. Here are just a few possibilities.

Phobias

- Fear of heights (acrophobia).
- Fear of spiders (arachnophobia).
- Fear of books (bibliophobia).
- Fear of mirrors (eisoptrophobia).
- Fear of blood (hemaphobia).
- Fear of dead things (necrophobia).
- Fear of teeth (odontophobia).
- Fear of fire (pyrophobia).
- Fear of telephones (telephonophobia).
- Fear of strangers or foreigners (xenophobia).

Manias

- Pathological kindness (agathomania).
- Obsession with pain (algomania).
- Irrational cheerfulness (amenomania).
- Compulsion for stealing books (bibliokleptomania).
- Obsession to see justice done (dikemanial).
- Uncontrollable compulsion to laugh (geliomania).
- Irrational compulsion to shout (klazomania).
- Irrational compulsion for stealing (kleptomania).
- Delusion of suffering from an imagined disease (nosomania).
- Irrational compulsion for lying (pseudomania).

BOUTS OF MADNESS TABLE

(Keeper chooses or rolls 1D10)

1. Amnesia: the investigator has no memory of events that have taken place since they were last in a place of safety. It seems to them that one moment they were eating breakfast and the next they are facing a monster. This lasts for 1D10 rounds.

2. Psychosomatic Disability: the investigator suffers psychosomatic blindness, deafness, or loss of the use of a limb for 1D10 rounds.

3. Violence: a red mist of rage descends on the afflicted investigator and they explode in a spree of uncontrolled violence and destruction directed at their surroundings, allies and foes alike, for 1D10 rounds.

4. Paranoia: the investigator suffers severe paranoia for 1D10 rounds. Everyone is out to get them! No one can be trusted! They are being spied on; someone has betrayed them; what they are seeing is a trick.

5. Significant Person: review the investigator's backstory entry for Significant People. The investigator mistakes another person in the scene for their significant person. Consider the nature of the relationship; the investigator acts upon it. This lasts 1D10 rounds.

6. Faint: the investigator faints, recovering after 1D10 rounds.

7. Flee in Panic: the investigator is compelled to get as far away as possible by whatever method available, even if it means taking the only vehicle and leaving everyone else behind. They flee for 1D10 rounds.

8. Physical Hysterics or Emotional Outburst: the investigator is incapacitated laughing, crying, screaming, etc. for 1D10 rounds.

9. Phobia: the investigator gains a new phobia, such as claustrophobia (fear of confined spaces), demonophobia (fear of spirits or demons), or katsaridaphobia (fear of cockroaches). Even if the source of the phobia is not present, the investigator imagines it is there for the next 1D10 rounds, and all actions suffer a penalty die while the bout continues.

10. Mania: the investigator gains a new mania, such as ablutomania (compulsion for washing oneself), pseudomania (irrational compulsion for lying), or helminthomania (an excessive liking for worms). The investigator seeks to indulge in this new mania for the next 1D10 rounds, and all actions suffer a penalty die while the bout continues.

INSANITY SUMMARY

When a Sanity roll is made, the Sanity loss is shown as XX/XX (e.g. 1/1D6). The number before the slash is the Sanity points lost if the roll is successful, the number or dice roll after the slash are the points lost if the roll is failed.

Involuntary action: any Sanity points loss results in a momentary involuntary action, determined by the Keeper (such as a scream, fainting for 1 round, or pulling the trigger on a gun).

If 5 or more points are lost at any one time: ask the investigator to make an Intelligence (INT) roll: if failed, the character remains sane; if successful (they rolled equal to or lower than their INT value), they have become temporarily insane for 1D10 hours. The Keeper may apply the following as they see fit:

1. Bout of madness: choose or roll on the **Bouts of Madness Table** and apply the result for 1D10 rounds.

2. (Optional) Take the investigator sheet and add a suitable backstory entry or change an existing one based upon the nature of the investigator's bout of madness or cause of their insanity.

3. (Optional) Add a phobia or mania to the investigator's backstory.

4. Apply delusions, which the player may attempt to see through with a successful reality check (Sanity roll). Delusions can only affect the character within the 1D10 hour period of their insanity.

COMBAT

When you are confronted with the horrors of the Cthulhu Mythos, it is generally a better idea to run away, or avoid confrontation altogether, as such entities are very powerful and often resistant to bullets! However, sometimes there is no other choice than to go in, guns blazing, and make the best of it.

When a combat occurs, all investigators, as well as characters and monsters controlled by the Keeper, act in order of their DEX values. The investigator, character, or monster with the highest DEX acts first and then the others go in descending order from there.

Example: Billy is facing a cultist who has summoned a monster. Things are about to turn ugly. Billy has DEX 50, the cultist DEX 45, and the monster DEX 70. Thus, the monster has the highest DEX and will act first in the combat round, followed by Billy and then the cultist.

The duration of a combat round in *Call of Cthulhu* is best described as “long enough for everyone to take one significant action.” The Keeper controls the flow of the round. On each character’s DEX turn, the Keeper decides or asks (if an investigator) what action is being taken; usually this is something as simple as, “I attack the monster,” “I pull out my revolver,” or “I run away!” The Keeper should give everyone a chance to do something quickly, while being aware of the narrative flow of the events taking place.



Investigators have three combat skills: Fighting, Dodge, and Firearms. Two of these skills are made up of multiple specializations, such as Fighting (Brawl) or Firearms (Rifle/Shotgun)—each player will have decided which specializations their investigator has (if any) during character creation, when skill points were allocated for occupation and personal interest skills. Note that the Fighting (Brawl) skill includes unarmed combat and the use of simple weapons like knives and clubs; however, wielding a sword requires the Fighting (Sword) specialization.

You make a combat roll using the appropriate skill, just like any other skill roll; however, you don’t get to “push” combat rolls—you simply make another attack next round.

CLOSE COMBAT

On a character’s turn in the DEX order, they may choose to initiate an attack against an opponent. In addition, each time a character is attacked, they get to choose how they will respond, be it by dodging (attempting to avoid the attack completely) or fighting back (attempting to avoid, block, or parry an attack while also making one of their own).

Both attacker and defender roll percentage dice (1D100) and compare their levels of success:

- If you are fighting back, use your Fighting skill. You need to achieve a higher level of success than your attacker.
- If you are dodging, use your Dodge skill. Your attacker needs to achieve a higher level of success than you.

It’s a simple matter: the winning side avoids receiving any damage and will inflict damage (unless dodging) on their opponent.

When fighting back, the best a person can achieve is “regular” damage, whereas the character initiating the attack (if successful) could achieve “extreme damage” (see below).

Example: a ghoul swings a clawed hand at Susan, who elects to dodge. The Keeper rolls 03—an Extreme success (below one-fifth of the ghoul’s skill). Susan rolls 20 for her Dodge roll—a Hard success. The attacker has achieved a better level of success than the dodger, so Susan is hit, automatically taking the maximum of 10 damage (1D6+1D4) because the attack was an Extreme success.

The ghoul is a monster with 3 attacks per round (all of its attacks take place simultaneously on its DEX). On its second attack it tries to bite Susan, who fights back. Susan achieves a Hard success; the ghoul achieves a Regular success. Susan has a better level of success than the ghoul, so she successfully fights back—not only does she avoid injury, but she also inflicts 1D3 points of damage on the ghoul.

Remember, if the person dodging equals the level of success of their attacker, they succeed in avoiding the attack (as the attacker must achieve a higher level of success than the dodger). Whereas, if fighting back, equal levels of success mean the initiating attacker wins the combat.

Extreme Damage

Attacks that achieve an Extreme level of success deliver increased damage:

- Blunt weapons deal maximum damage plus maximum damage bonus (if any).
- Impaling weapons (blades and bullets) deal maximum weapon damage plus damage bonus (if any) plus an additional dice roll for the weapon's damage (1D10 + 10 points of damage in the case of a handgun, for example).

Example: Billy wins a combat round with an Extreme success; he is wielding a club (blunt weapon), and has damage bonus of 1D4. The attack inflicts $6 + 4 = 10$ damage. If he had used a knife (impaling weapon) instead, the damage would be $4 + 4 + 1D4$.

FIREARMS RULES

The person firing the gun makes a percentile roll and compares the result with their Firearms skill.

- Readied firearms act at DEX +50 for the purpose of determining the DEX turn order.
- If firing 2 or 3 shots from a handgun in one round, apply one penalty die to each shot.
- If at point-blank range (within one-fifth of DEX in feet), the shooter gains one bonus die on the skill roll.

The target of the shot cannot fight back (you can't dodge a bullet) but may "dive for cover," by rolling against their Dodge skill. If the Dodge roll is successful, the attacker's rolls to hit are made with one penalty die. A character that opts to dive for cover forfeits their next attack (regardless of whether they were successful or not). If they have already used their attack this round, they forfeit their attack in the following round.

Example: Billy has his revolver ready in his hand when he spots a sword-wielding cultist running towards him. Billy's DEX is 50, but his readied firearm grants +50 DEX, making his DEX 100 for determining when he acts in the round; the cultist's DEX is 45, so Billy is firing first.

WEAPONS AND DAMAGE

- Unarmed attacks (human): 1D3 + damage bonus
- Small knife: 1D4 + damage bonus
- Machete: 1D8 + damage bonus
- Small club: 1D6 + damage bonus
- Baseball bat: 1D8 + damage bonus
- Handgun: 1D10
- Shotgun: 4D6 (at close range*, otherwise 2D6; does not impale)
- Rifle: 2D6+4

*Close range: within DEX in feet (i.e. if DEX is 60, close range is 60 feet).

The cultist sees the gun and dives for cover (making a Dodge roll) and is successful. Billy rolls to hit but applies a penalty die to the roll, failing to hit the cultist. As the cultist has lost his next action due to diving for cover, the round ends. A new round starts, giving Billy another chance to hit before the cultist attacks him.

FIGHTING MANEUVERS

If a player describes a goal in combat that is something other than simply inflicting physical harm then it can be resolved with a "Fighting Maneuver." A successful maneuver allows the character to achieve one thing, such as:

- Disarm an opponent.
- Knock an opponent to the floor.
- Seize and hold an opponent, whereupon the opponent must apply one penalty die to their actions until they can break free.

A maneuver is treated the same way as a regular Fighting attack, using the Fighting (Brawl) skill. The opponent may dodge or fight back as usual. Compare the Build of the two combatants. If the character performing the maneuver has a smaller Build than their opponent then they take a penalty die for each point of difference (to a maximum of two penalty dice). If an opponent exceeds the attacker's Build by three or more points, any fighting maneuvers are ineffective; the attacker may be able to lay hands on their opponent, but lacks the strength and size required to take advantage of their grip.

HIT POINTS, WOUNDS, AND HEALING

Example: Susan attempts to push a ghoul out of a nearby window (a Fighting Maneuver). Susan's Build is zero and the ghoul's Build is 1, so Susan suffers 1 penalty die on her attack roll. Susan rolls 02 and 22; she had a penalty die so must take the higher result—a Hard success (under half Susan's Fighting skill). The ghoul is fighting back, and it rolls a Regular success on its Fighting skill. Susan has achieved a better level of success and so her maneuver is successful—she shoves the ghoul through the window.

Outnumbered

A character outnumbered by the opposition is at a disadvantage. Once a character has either fought back or dodged in the present combat round, all subsequent melee attacks on them (in the same round) are made with one bonus die. This does not apply to attacks made using firearms.

Example: the ghoul has 3 attacks, whereas Susan has just 1. On the ghoul's first attack roll, Susan gets to fight back or dodge and the combat is normal. But, on the ghoul's second and third attacks, it gets a bonus die to each of these attacks, as Susan is effectively outnumbered.

In another situation, Billy is facing two cultists alone, so he is outnumbered. The first cultist's attack against Billy is normal, but the second cultist receives a bonus die when attacking.



Points of damage are deducted from a character's hit points. Hit points cannot fall below zero, so do not record a negative value. When a character's hit points reach zero, they fall unconscious and, in some situations, may die.

When a character takes damage of greater than or equal to half their full hit points in a single blow, they have received a "major wound"—they must make a CON roll or fall unconscious. If a character with a major wound falls to zero hit points they are close to death (dying). They must make a successful CON roll at the end of the following round and every round thereafter or die. Only successful use of the First Aid skill can alleviate the dying condition, through stabilizing the character. If a character suffers points of damage greater than or equal to their maximum hit points in a single blow, they die instantly.

Note that if a character is reduced to zero hit points but has not suffered a major wound, they will not die: death is only a possibility if a major wound has also been suffered.

- Characters without a major wound naturally heal 1 hit point per day.
- Characters with a major wound must make a healing roll (rolling equal to or under their CON) at the end of each week—if successful, they regain 1D3 hit points, or 2D3 points for an Extreme success. The major wound condition is removed if either an Extreme success is rolled or current hit points are healed to half their maximum value or greater. Thus, it may take a number of weeks for a major wound to heal.

Successful First Aid can heal 1 hit point as well as rousing a character from unconsciousness. If First Aid is used on a dying character it, extends the character's life so that the Medicine skill can use used. The Medicine skill can heal 1D3 hit points, but takes at least one hour and appropriate equipment and supplies. If Medicine is used on a dying character, it allows a healing roll at the end of one week.

Example: Brian starts with 12 hit points. On Monday he gets in a barroom brawl, taking damage from three separate slugs to his jaw of 4, 2, and 4 points. This is a total of 10 damage, reducing his hit points to 2. He has not taken a major wound (as no single attack delivered significant damage) and will recover at the rate of 1 hit point per day. On Thursday, Brian (now at 5 hit points) clumsily falls out of a window; suffering 7 hit points of damage. This is a major wound (7 damage is more than half of Brian's maximum hit points). A friend administers First Aid and rushes him to hospital. After seven days have passed, a successful CON roll is made for Brian and he regains 2 hit points on a 1D3 die roll. At the end of the second week, Brian's player rolls an Extreme success on the CON roll and regains 4 hit points on a 2D3 roll of the dice, and his current hit points now stand at 6. This erases his major wound marker (he has regained half his maximum hit points), after which he heals at 1 hit point per day.

OTHER FORMS OF DAMAGE

Often the Keeper will be forced to judge the amount of damage caused by some random event. Whatever the cause, consider the likely injury and rate it against the left-hand column on the **Other Forms of Damage Table**. Each injury type is for one incident or one combat round (one round of being punched by one attacker, one bullet, one round of drowning, one round of being burned, etc.). The character will take further damage on each successive round that they are exposed to the source of the harm.

OTHER FORMS OF DAMAGE TABLE

Injury	Damage	Example
Minor: a person could survive numerous occurrences of this level of damage.	1D3	Punch, kick, head-butt, mild acid, breathing smoky atmosphere*, a thrown fist-size rock, falling (per 10 feet) onto soft swamp.
Moderate: might cause a major wound; it would take a few such attacks to kill.	1D6	Falling (per 10 feet) onto grass, club, strong acid, breathing water*, exposure to vacuum*, small caliber bullet, arrow, fire (burning torch).
Severe: likely to cause a major wound. One or two occurrences would render a person unconscious or dead.	1D10	.38 caliber bullet, falling (per 10 feet) onto concrete, axe, fire (flamethrower, running through a burning room), being 6 to 9 yards from an exploding hand grenade or stick of dynamite, a mild poison**.
Deadly: the average person has a 50% chance of dying.	2D10	Hit by a car at 30mph, being 3 to 6 yards from an exploding hand grenade or stick of dynamite, a strong poison**.
Terminal: outright death is likely.	4D10	Hit by a speeding car, being within 3 yards of an exploding hand grenade or stick of dynamite, a lethal poison**.
Splat: outright death is almost certain.	8D10	Being involved in a high-speed head-on collision, being hit by a train.

**Asphyxiation and Drowning: a CON roll should be made each round; once a CON roll is failed, damage is sustained each round thereafter until death or until the victim is able to breathe. Death occurs at zero hit points (ignore the major wound rule).*

***Poisons: an Extreme CON roll halves damage from poisons.*

REWARDS OF SUCCESS

While many *Call of Cthulhu* scenarios can be played as a single night of horror, much like a movie, some games can see the investigators developing their skills and going on to tackle other mysteries and challenges. At the end of a scenario or gaming session, the Keeper should say, "Roll for skill increases." At this time, each player rolls percentage dice (1D100) against any skills that were checked (i.e. skills used and rolled successfully)—if you roll over the current value of the skill (i.e. you fail the skill roll), you get to add 1D10 points to the skill's value. In other words, the more you know about something, the harder it is to learn anything new or get any better.

Example: Anna (Sarah's investigator) makes successful use of her Spot Hidden skill during play and so Sarah ticks the box next to that skill on the investigator sheet. After the scenario is completed, the Keeper asks Sarah to roll for skill increases. Anna's Spot Hidden skill is 45%, and Sarah rolls 43 on the percentage dice. No improvement is made. If she had rolled higher than 45, she would be gaining 1D10 Spot Hidden skill points to raise her ability in that skill. Once she has rolled to check skill increases, Sarah rubs out the ticks on her investigator sheet so it's now ready for the next game, where she can record new skill successes to check against later.



NEXT STEPS

Now you have read over the starter rules of the game you are ready to run your first adventure for your friends. **Book Three** contains starter scenarios; each contains advice and guidance for new Keepers. We suggest you begin with **Paper Chase**, the first adventure in the book.

Once you have played through all of the scenarios in **Book Three** you will be ready to move on to the full *Call of Cthulhu* game. Here's a brief overview of the game's core books, available from Chaosium.com or any good hobby games store:

- ***Call of Cthulhu Keeper Rulebook***—contains everything you need to play and create player characters for mystery and horror roleplaying. The full game rules, packed with examples and advice, a bestiary of monsters, and two starter scenarios.
- ***Investigator Handbook***—aimed at players who will be taking on the roles of investigators, and contains in-depth player character creation rules, a range of investigator organizations, tips and advice for uncovering clues and dealing with mysteries, equipment and weapon lists, plus setting material for the Roaring Twenties.
- ***Keeper Screen Pack***—a utility for Keepers running *Call of Cthulhu*, and includes a special and sturdy 3-panel Keeper's Screen detailing key rules for when running games, a resource booklet of key tables for quick reference, two exciting and mysterious adventures with a cast of ready-to-play investigators, and a set of three poster-sized maps.
- ***Doors to Darkness***—an award-winning collection of five introductory adventures for beginning Keepers and players, each designed to help guide those new to the game, as well as a special chapter of advice and tips for playing *Call of Cthulhu*.

QUICK REFERENCE CHART FOR HALF AND FIFTH VALUES

Find the characteristic or skill value under the Base Number column,
and read across to determine the half (Hard) and fifth (Extreme) values.

Base Num- ber	Half Value (½)	Fifth Value (⅕)	Base Num- ber	Half Value (½)	Fifth Value (⅕)	Base Num- ber	Half Value (½)	Fifth Value (⅕)	Base Num- ber	Half Value (½)	Fifth Value (⅕)
1	0	0	26	13	5	51	25	10	76	38	15
2	1		27			52	26		77		
3			2	28		53	27		78	39	
4	29			54		28	79				
5	3	1	30	15	6	55	11	80	40	16	
6			31			56		28			81
7	4		32	16		57		29	82		41
8			33			58		83			
9	5	2	34	17	7	59	12	84	42	17	
10			35			60		30			85
11	6		36	18		61		31	86		43
12			37			62		32	87		
13	7	3	38	19	8	63	13	88	45	18	
14			39			64		33			89
15	8		40	20		65		34	90		47
16			41			66		35	91		
17	9	42	21	67	36	92	49	19			
18		43		68		93					
19	10	44	22	69	37	94	50		20		
20		45		70		95					
21	11	46	23	71	38	96	51				
22		47		72		97					
23	12	48	24	73	39	98	52				
24		49		74		99					
25		5	50	25	10	75	40	15	100	50	

