# Sorcerer Quick Reference    v2.6.4  8/01/05

1.0    Rule of Currency: **1 point = 1 die = 1 victory = 1 bonus = 1 penalty.**

    1.1    **Currency is Algebraic!**

2.0    **Basic Rolls:** <u>Rolls represent CONFLICT Resolution, NOT Task Resolution.</u>

    2.1    Rolls are always opposed, whether by a character or GM decreed difficulty.

    2.2    Rolls are made openly, and fudging is *not* permitted.

    2.3    Rolls are only made for opposed or notably difficult actions. If a stated action is consistent with a character's Cover, Descriptors, or established background, it simply succeeds.

    2.4    XdZ vs. YdZ, where X and Y are the respective scores and Z is the size of the dice.

    2.5    The highest individual die face rolled by each is compared. The highest succeeds (wins).

    2.6    Tied faces cancel out completely. In case of a tie, compare the next highest pair of individual dice, etc.

    2.7    The number of individual die faces in the winner's pool that are higher than the highest individual die face in the loser's pool are considered "victories". (IE. the loser's high die becomes the "target number" the winning pool rolls against. Each die result over this number is a victory.)

    2.8    If one player's pool consists of only one die, and their result is equal to the high result of the opponent's pool, the opponent with more dice succeeds with one victory.

    2.9    **Total Victory:** If *every* individual die face in the winner's pool is higher than the highest die showing in the loser's pool, it is considered a Total Victory (IE. Critical Success).

    2.10    It is important to note that a failed roll does not have to mean a "whiff", even in combat. The penalties can be translated into any linked circumstance or situation, even if it does not occur immediately following the failed roll, or even during the same scene.

3.0    **Bonuses:** At GM's discretion, rolls may be awarded bonus dice for any reason, including:

    3.1    **Descriptor:** The GM may grant a bonus die if the player role-plays an appropriate Descriptor.

    3.2    **Good Play:** The GM may grant bonus dice to any roll for good role-playing, description, cleverness, ICness, plot advancement, strategy, etc.

    3.3    **Roll-Over:** When an action logically or thematically follows the success of a prior action, victories from the prior action may be added as bonus dice to the following action.

        3.3.1    Example: Shelly tries to sweet talk the security guard into letting her into the closed wing of the museum. She succeeds with 3 victories- she's managed to thoroughly gain his trust. Shelly may then add 3 dice to any immediate logically connected action, such as convincing the guard to lend her the keys, or even to stab him in the back with a letter opener once he turns around.

        3.3.2    Characters may also pass on roll-over bonuses for cooperative actions, such as distracting an enemy so a comrade can sneak past them, or hit them from behind with a tree branch.

    3.4    **Cover Crossover**: When both Cover and a score Descriptor apply to a given roll, the GM may permit the player to roll one score, and then use any victories from that roll as bonuses when rolling the other.

4.0    **Humanity:** The thematic nature of this score depends on the thematic premise of the game. Mechanically, it represents how close a character is to losing self-determination, whether through damnation, insanity, or simple disembowelment. So guard it closely- Humanity, more than survival, is what keeps a character in the game.

    4.1    <u>Current Humanity score does NOT define character behavior. All actions and choices that are allowed at Humanity 10 are equally available at Humanity 1, and vice versa.</u>

    4.2    **Perceiving:** Any sorcerer may attempt to perceive the current Humanity of any other character by rolling their Lore vs. the target's Humanity.

    4.3    **Losing:** Each time a sorcerer Contacts, Summons, or Binds a demon, or *makes a decision* which constitutes a betrayal of Humanity as defined by the chosen premise, the player must make a Humanity loss check. *This cannot be inflicted on the character, it comes as a result of their* **choices**. Ritual checks are vs. Power, Thematic checks are vs. Humanity.

    4.4    **Gaining:** Whenever a sorcerer Banishes a demon with Power higher than their Humanity, or *makes a decision* which reinforces the definition of Humanity according to the current premise, the player may make a Humanity gain check. *This also cannot be imposed on the character, it comes as a result of their choices.*

    4.5    Banishment check is Humanity vs. Power, otherwise Humanity vs. Itself (basically 50%) for gain or loss.

    4.6    Only one point of Humanity is lost or gained, regardless of the number of victories or penalties.

    4.7    <u>Humanity changes are PERMANENT.</u>

    4.8    **Zeroing Out:** The result of a character's Humanity dropping to zero depends on the thematic definition of the score as determined by the premise of the game. Often this will involve the character coming under GM control, whether temporarily or permanently depends on the game.

    4.9    **As a Stat:** Humanity can be rolled as an ability score just like Stamina or Will. What uses it has will largely depend on the definition according to the current premise, but mechanically it operates exactly as any other score.

# Sorcerer Character Creation

1.  Allocate 10 points between Stamina (physical), Will (mental/social), and Lore (sorcerous knowledge and prowess).
2.  Choose Descriptors for Stamina, Will, and Lore. Choose an additional Descriptor for any score of 5 or higher.
3.  Set Humanity equal to the higher of Stamina or Will.
4.  Choose Cover and set equal to either Stamina (for primarily physical) or Will (for primarily social or mental).
5.  Create starting Demon.
6.  Choose appropriate Telltale.
7.  Choose Price and set to -1.
8.  Write Kicker. Often this is best to do along with the other players in your group (including the GM).
9.  List Background elements using Lore/Price/Cover/Kicker chart.
10. Flesh out appearance, personality, etc. Check for protagonism, and combat readiness. Clean up loose ends.

## Descriptors

Descriptors tell both the GM and other players why your character has that strapping 5 Stamina, or that paltry 1 Lore. They also provide opportunities for roll-over bonuses when combined with an appropriate Cover. It's important to note that both Stamina and Will combine mental and physical elements. They represent influence OVER the physical and social.

Stamina:    Athletic, Chemically Heightened, Clean Living, Military Regimen, Natural Vigor, Scrapper, Special Combat Training.

Will:    Belief System, High Self-Esteem, Rageful/Vengeful, Social Competence, User/Manipulator, Zest for Life.

Lore:    Apprentice, Coven Member, Lone Adept, Mad, Naïve.

## Telltale

A telltale is a detail of appearance or behavior that is noticeable by those who know what to look for, that is evidence of their dealings with demonic forces. Telltales can be, but are not always supernatural in nature. They may be subtle or obvious, but once spotted, they are often unequivocal. A sorcerer or demon can try to spot a Telltale by rolling Lore vs. Cover, Power, or Lore, whichever is appropriate.

## Price

**The Rule of Price:** A character's Price must incur a minimum one-die penalty for a set of actions or circumstances. It may be physical, mental, social, some combination, or anything that will hinder the character. Valid examples include:

Lame:    -1 to running, balance, etc.

Paranoid:    -1 to all actions when the character is not in immediate peril.

Arrogant:    -1 to all perception checks.

In Denial:    -1 to first interaction with any Demon.

Sheltered:    -1 to first roll in any scene.

Scarred:    -1 to social situations.

Cynical:    -1 to all Humanity checks.

You may choose one of these, or anything else you can think of as a Price as long as the GM agrees it is valid.

## Kicker

The Kicker is what sets the character in motion. A situation that forces the character (and thus the player) into choosing and executing a course of action, not just a reaction to an immediate threat or circumstance. Consider the opening to an episode of Buffy, or the first scene of an action movie before the title comes up. Usually, something happens that sets the tone and drives the plot of the whole rest of the show. That's the Kicker. Examples:

The Shocker: You wake up one morning and stumble into the bathroom to find your next door neighbor skinned and hanging from the showerhead.

The Opportunity: You pick up your suitcase at the baggage carousel after a transatlantic flight. Later, in your hotel room, you open it to find your clothes and toiletries replaced by a half million dollars.

The Mystery: A friend on the local police force has tipped you off that a series of unsolved homicides in your neighborhood have all been signed with your initials.

Your Kicker may be similar to one of these, or completely new and different. Often players in the same group will tie their Kickers together to give their characters a reason to interact. And if they don't, the GM just might do it once the game starts.

# Demon Creation

1. Choose Type and appropriate Telltale.
2. Choose Abilities and set Lore equal to the number of Abilities.
3. Set Stamina to whatever you desire (anything higher than Lore will raise Will).
4. Set Will one higher than the highest of Stamina or Lore.
5. Set Power equal to Will, or higher if the Summoning or other conditions warrant.
6. Choose Need and Desire. (Player may request specific Desire when Contacting. GM sets Need).
7. Roll for and set Binding strength and favor.
8. For beginning demon, check for Humanity loss for Binding ONLY, otherwise check for each Ritual.
9. Give the demon a name. Clarify its appearance and general behavior. Make any adjustments.

## Type & Telltale

Demons can come in almost any size, shape, and form imaginable, but they fall into five basic categories. All demons have a telltale that any suspicious person might wonder at, but that a sorcerer can unequivocally identify as a demonic by rolling Lore vs. the demon's Cover, or against 1 die if the demon has no Cover. All demons will strenuously avoid being recognized as such by any non-sorcerer they do not plan to eat, dismember, or otherwise dispose of.

**Inconspicuous** demons are hard to perceive. They may be small enough to hide easily, or may have insubstantial forms, or be invisible. Inconspicuous demons may not commit any obtrusive action without risking being noticed, however. Even an invisible demon will be noticed tearing someone's arms off.

**Object** demons are bound or invested into (or merely taking the form of) a physical object, such as a sword, an amulet, a book, a mask, or whatever. They usually must be carried around, but some can move when nobody is looking at them. Generally they cannot carry out physical acts independently, but there are exceptions.

**Parasite** demons must live inside a host, usually the sorcerer who bound them but not necessarily. They may be actual biological parasites, or psychic nomads, or replacement body parts, or anything at all that requires a host body to survive. Their Abilities almost always confer onto the host rather than themselves. Parasite demons have the additional Need to be hosted. If deprived of a host, they go into immediate Need withdrawal.

**Passing** demons look just like (or almost like) a normal human or animal, and can pass unnoticed in everyday society. They nearly always have the Cover Ability. Their Abilities nearly always confer on themselves.

**Possessor** demons differ from Parasites in that they completely supplant a being from its body, taking over control of the host more or less fully. A Possessor can possess a host by rolling Power vs. the target's Stamina (or Will or Humanity for psychic or spiritual types, etc). If the Possessor rolls more victories than the target's Humanity, the host's personality is lost forever- effectively dead. But as long as there is some Humanity left, some flickering mote of the host's consciousness remains and can try to affect the actions of their body. Possessor demons' Abilities only confer to themselves. Many Possessors are limited to a specific type of host. Finally, Possessors have the additional Need to be hosted. If deprived of a host, they go into immediate Need withdrawal.

## Abilities

- For each Ability, the User, Target, and effects must be set when the Ability is chosen.
- All Abilities are considered to have dice equal to the demon's Power.
- A demon can use its Abilities as many times in a single scene as its Stamina score before tiring. For each successive use beyond this point, they will suffer a one-die penalty. Once the number of penalties meets the demon's Stamina, they will be unable to use any Abilities until it has had a chance to recover.

## Needs and Desires

Every demon has Needs and Desires without which it will become increasingly intractable and rebellious. Demons suffer greatly when their Need goes unmet for long periods of time, and do not appreciate being bound by sorcerers who do not take responsibility for their care and feeding. A demon's Need can be anything, from the bizarre and disturbing to the merely irritating or curious. It may be something the demon must do, or that the sorcerer must do for it, or to it. Likewise a demon's Desire can be any sort of "special interest". Desires tend to be more general and more thematic, such as Mayhem, Mischief, Corruption, Power, Competition, Creativity, Gratification, Knowledge, etc. Demons like having their Desire pandered to, and dislike having it ignored for long, especially if much is asked of them.

**The Rule of Need:** A demon whose Need goes unmet for any length of time (with the duration depending on the paradigm set of the current game) will start to go into withdrawal. The same goes for a Parasite or Possessor without a host, or an unBound demon. *All demons share the Need to be Bound to a human sorcerer.*

- A demon in withdrawal will lose 1 Power per day until it is down to zero.
- A demon whose Power has been reduced to zero must use it's Will to use any Abilities just like a human with 0 Stamina.
- Once reduced to zero Power, the demon must **roll 1 vs. its current Stamina + 1** each day. If it does not succeed, it loses 1 point of Stamina *per withdrawal source* (Need, Host, Binding). The GM should allow separate rolls for each withdrawal source.
- Once a demon's Stamina reaches zero, it is Banished automatically.

# Sorcerous Rituals

Any character with a Lore of 1 or higher can perform any and all of the rituals described here. These rituals include Contacting, Summoning, Binding, Punishing, Banishing, and Containing. A sorcerer with a Lore of 10 is better at them than a sorcerer with a Lore of 1, but they both have the full range of rites available *at any time* during the game.

Non-sorcerers cannot perform sorcery, in the sense that anyone performing a sorcerous ritual, even for the first time, becomes a sorcerer at the moment they begin. More importantly, demons cannot perform sorcery, under any circumstances. Although a Passer or Possessor may look human enough, they cannot perform sorcery. They may go through the motions, but nothing will happen. Demons are attracted to Humanity, in whatever form, and demons have none.

In some settings it may be possible to use drugs, sacrifices, or other means to enhance relevant stats for Contacting or other rituals, but they will usually have risky side effects. Good role-playing, however, risks nothing and will almost always net a bonus die or two. Each ritual takes about an hour to perform properly. Taking longer may be worth bonus dice, while performing them on the fly (known as a "snap-shot") reduces the relevant stats down to 1 die each, with the exception of Humanity. Sorcerers always get the full benefit of their Humanity in any situation.

## Contact

Contacting a demon requires expanding one's mind well outside the commonly acknowledged boundaries, entering a state of nightmarish delirium that brings them to the brink of madness- or beyond if they are careless. The sorcerer (player) describes the Type, Abilities, and Desire of the demon they wish to contact (or calls it by name, if they know it). The GM is not necessarily bound by these requests, however- the demon that actually appears may differ significantly.

**Roll the sorcerer's Lore vs. the Power of the demon they wish to Contact.**

- If the Contact *fails*, the sorcerer may attempt it again, with a cumulative 1-die penalty to both Stamina and Lore for each successive attempt.
- If the Contact *succeeds*, the GM may freely change one detail (Type, Ability, Desire) of the actual demon for each of the demon's Power dice that is higher than the sorcerer's LOWEST Lore die.
- In addition, the GM may raise the Power of the Contacted demon by one for each of the sorcerer's victories. This does not alter any other element of the demon's Abilities or scores.
- Contacting a demon by name may ensure that you get the exact one you want, or perhaps the same demon manifests differently each time it is Contacted, depending on the setting.
- Once a Contact is open, it lasts one hour, unless the sorcerer rolls again to keep it open. The victories from the first Contact roll may be used as roll-over bonuses for the second. Succeeding on the second (or later) Contact roll simply prolongs the existing Contact, it does not give the GM any opportunity to alter the demon again.
- Victories from the Contact may be rolled over into a Summon performed immediately following.
- Snap-shot Contacts are possible, but the sorcerer may only roll one die of Lore. Augmentary effects may be accounted for normally, or changed due to the setting..

**Example:** Fenster is a reasonably adept sorcerer with a Lore of 4. He attempts to Contact a huge, nasty demon to help take out the mob boss that killed his sister. He specifies an Inconspicuous demon with the Armor, Big, Fast, and Shapeshift Abilities and a Desire for Carnage. Four Abilities gives the demon a minimum Power of 4, giving Fenster a 50/50 chance to get exactly what he wants, assuming he gets no bonus dice (which in this example, he won't).

Fenster rolls his Lore (4) against the demon's assumed Power (4) with the following results:
**Fenster: 11, 5, 4, 2.   Demon: 9, 9, 4, 2.**

Fenster wins the Contact roll with 1 victory, and the Contact is successful. However, the demon has three dice (9, 9, 4) that are higher than Fenster's low roll of 2. The GM may change up to three details of the demon that Fenster actually makes Contact with right off the bat. Also, the GM may give the demon a Power of 5, bumping it up by one point for Fenster's one victory. Let's say the GM does raise the demon's Power to 5, and also changes three elements- say Type, and two Abilities. The demon Fenster Contacts is an Object demon with Power 5 and the Abilities Armor, Cloak, Fast, and Shadow. Whether Fenster decides to "keep" this demon (by Summoning it) is up to the player.

**Contacting a demon represents a challenge to Humanity, regardless of its definition. The sorcerer must roll their Humanity vs. the demon's Power. Failure costs the sorcerer one point of Humanity regardless of victories.**

Once a demon is Contacted, it can be perceived and communicated with. Any kind of information may be exchanged- but that's all. Neither the demon nor the sorcerer may affect the other in any way until a Summoning has been initiated, nor may the demon affect physical reality in any way (there may be psychedelic effects, but they have no permanence). Essentially, the demon isn't "real" until it has been Summoned. A Contact stays "open" for approximately an hour, unless the sorcerer terminates it (this is usually automatic, no roll needed, unless otherwise defined by the setting), or makes another Contact roll to prolong it. Depending on the setting, it may be possible to Contact demons that have already been Summoned or Bound to this reality.

# Contain

A Contain is a special rite used to limit one or more demons' movement or actions, whether to a certain location or relative to a particular person or object. A Contain is special in that there is no roll made for it when it is established. The roll occurs when a Contained demon tries to break it.

**Roll the demon's Power vs. the Contain Strength**

- Contain Strength is automatically equal to the Lore of the executing sorcerer at the time the Contain is established, plus any victories gained from bonus rolls.
- When preparing the Contain, whether the focus or the ritual itself, the sorcerer may make a roll of **Lore vs. their own Stamina** to represent the extreme level of concentration necessary, with victories becoming bonuses added to the Contain Strength.
- The parameters of the Contain must be defined when it is created, including boundaries, Type of demon affected or specific demon affected, or just a general purpose all-demon Contain, etc.

Contains may take many forms, depending on the setting, with the details and nuances dependent on the style or method. Contains always have a focus of some kind that represents the actual boundaries of it, whether it be a pentagram on the floor, a clay urn, or whatever.

# Summon

Summoning a demon may only be attempted if one has been Contacted, whether by the Summoning sorcerer or someone else. All demons want to be Summoned (and Bound) and will not resist. The sorcerer must only overcome the demon's intrinsic Power and the inherent reluctance of his own mind to commit such an act as he attempts to pull the demon into our reality through force of Will.

**Roll the sorcerer's (Will-Humanity) vs. the demon's Power.**

- If the Summoning *fails*, the sorcerer may attempt it again, with a cumulative 1-die penalty to Stamina for each successive attempt.
- If the Summoning *succeeds*, the demon is brought into physical existence in the form specified by the Contact.
- A Summoned demon is not automatically Bound, and is free to do whatever it wishes until it is- unless held in a Contain.
- Summoning properly takes approximately one hour, but an existing Contact is automatically sustained during the Summoning rite, and need not be renewed as long as the Sorcerer continues trying to Summon.
- Depending on the setting, sacrifices (human or otherwise) may grant bonus dice for Summoning, but will almost certainly entail an additional Humanity check.
- Snap-shot Summoning is possible, but the sorcerer may only roll 1 die, ignoring any extra penalties from Humanity. Other elements may have effects depending on setting.

**Summoning a demon represents a challenge to Humanity, regardless of its definition. The sorcerer must roll their Humanity vs. the demon's Power. Failure costs the sorcerer one point of Humanity regardless of victories.**

Contrary to what popular fiction would have you believe; IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO SUMMON A DEMON "ACCIDENTALLY". The universe is not going to leave the means to break its laws just laying around for someone to stumble over. Sorcery is based in **meaning it**, more than you've ever meant anything in your life. If you're willing to Summon and Bind a demon, it is because you need something accomplished that you are willing to risk *everything* for. There is no "oops, I summoned a demon, what should I do now?" No. It's more like "Yes, great Zzzraharn, I have summoned thee. Here are thirteen vestal virgins, and here is a list of people I want turned inside out by morning." Get the picture?

# Bind

Binding a demon is the essential act of sorcery. A sorcerer may Contact and Summon a demon in order to Bind it, or more rarely the sorcerer may encounter an unBound demon in reality and Bind it. An unBound demon is automatically in severe withdrawal, and usually will not resist being Bound. However, the demon still pits its Will against the sorcerer's efforts to determine the strength and favor of the Binding.

The means of binding can vary from setting to setting, from demon to demon, even from sorcerer to sorcerer. The sorcerer will roll whatever score is appropriate to the means being applied. If more than one score would seem to apply, you may use the one with the higher score. One may challenge a demon, or seduce it, or negotiate with it, or whatever is appropriate given the sorcerer's style and the demon's Need and Desire. Failing to meet the demon's Need when Binding it is always going to have a severe negative impact.

**Roll the sorcerer's appropriate score vs. the demon's Will.**

- The Binding roll gets a **5 die penalty** if the demon's Need is *not* fulfilled as part of the Binding ritual.
- The Binding roll gets a 2 die *bonus* if the demon's Desire *is* fulfilled as part of the Binding ritual.
- Examples of Binding with Stamina: wrestling the demon, self-mutilation, dancing, chanting, or sexual exhaustion.
- Examples of Binding with Will: asserting authority, exchange of services, negotiating a contract, emotional seduction, animalistic dominance.
- Examples of Binding with Lore: tattooing, painting, or carving arcane images or runes, creating or forging a talisman, intoning a blasphemous incantation or mystic formula.
- A Bound demon cannot be Bound by another sorcerer unless it is first freed from the original Binding. A sorcerer may Bind any number of demons, but each demon may only be Bound to one sorcerer.
- Snap-shot Binding is possible, but the relevant score is reduced to one die.
- An unBound demon is automatically in a state of withdrawal.

**Binding a demon is the ultimate challenge to Humanity, whatever its definition. The sorcerer must roll their Humanity vs. the demon's Power, with failure costing the sorcerer one point of Humanity regardless of victories.**

## Binding Subtleties

**Binding a demon ALWAYS WORKS.** The Binding is in favor of whomever wins it, the demon or the sorcerer, and the strength of the Binding is equal to the number of victories on the winning side. For this reason, Binding is all-important. Whoever wins the Binding roll will have the upper hand in the relationship thereafter. Unless the setting specifically allows it, a demon CANNOT be bound to someone against that person's will. One must consciously choose to accept- nay, *welcome* the Binding, or it will not succeed. Demons *can* be Bound against their will, but they like being Bound, so this is unlikely.

- A demon may rebel at any time, by rolling **the demon's Will vs. the sorcerer's Will**, with the Binding Strength as a bonus for whomever it favors. Success means the demon may freely disobey a command. A badly Bound demon may disobey frequently, or it may bide its time waiting for the worst moment to do so. **This does NOT break the Binding.**
- If the demon's Need and Desire are frequently indulged, it may cut its master some slack. Conversely, if a demon is kept in Need it will start gaining bonuses for rebellion. Even a well-Bound demon will grow fractious if it is neglected.
- Need and Desire are not the only factors in demon care and feeding. Demons that are arbitrarily Punished or used as nothing more than a convenient tool will become resentful as well.
- A demon that is mistreated long enough will probably go a step beyond merely rebellious and become vengeful, applying itself subtly or openly to the humiliation, injury, or demise of its master.
- Demons are not required (unless commanded) to tell the truth, or to reveal anything at all about their actions on their own time. A demon's intentions are its own business, and anything it does reveal may be as much misdirection as truth.
- Banishing a demon does **not** affect any Binding it may be subject to. A Bound demon that is Banished remains Bound. Furthermore, the Binding strength acts as a bonus to Contacting and Summoning, regardless of whom it favors.

## Breaking the Binding

At the most extreme stage, a demon may attempt to break the Binding. This will occur only once the demon cannot stand being Bound to the sorcerer- breaking a Binding is extremely hard and unpleasant for the demon. The demon gets bonus dice for being in Need according to duration based on the setting paradigm. The sorcerer gets the full Binding Strength as a bonus, regardless of whom it favors. Any situational bonuses decreed by the GM may also apply.

**Roll the demon's (Power+Withdrawal Bonus) vs. the sorcerer's (Binding score+Binding Strength)**

- Success means the Binding is broken and the demon is free to act as it pleases. It also places the demon into an immediate state of withdrawal, which will eventually begin to wear on it if it does not become Bound again.
- If a Bound demon's master dies, the demon *remains Bound*. Usually this means its Need will go unmet long enough that it will have enough rebellion bonuses to break the Binding and seek a new master.

## Banish

Banishing a demon is similar to Summoning, except the demon will almost certainly resist with its Will, and the sorcerer gets their Humanity as a bonus. If the demon is Bound, the binding strength also acts as a penalty, regardless of whom it favors. A Banished demon is *gone forever* unless it is Contacted and Summoned again. The location of the demon relative to the sorcerer attempting to Banish it may or may not be important, depending on the setting. Banishing a demon may give the sorcerer an opportunity for a Humanity gain.

**If the sorcerer is Banishing an unBound demon, roll the sorcerer's (Will+Humanity) vs. the demon's (Power+Will).**

**If the sorcerer is Banishing a Bound demon, whether Bound to themselves or to another, roll the sorcerer's (Will+Humanity) vs. the demon's (Power+Will+Binding).**

- If the Banishment *fails*, nothing happens, although the sorcerer will likely have a very pissed off demon on their hands.
- The sorcerer may attempt again, with a cumulative 1-die penalty to Stamina per successive attempt.
- If the Banishment *succeeds*, the demon is Banished from reality, never to be heard from or seen again- unless Contacted by the same or another sorcerer.
- Snap-shot Banishing is possible, but the sorcerer may only roll 1 die of Will. Humanity still counts in full. Other augmentary effects may count, depending on setting.

  **Banishing a demon is an affirmation of Humanity, whatever its definition. If the demon's Power was greater than the sorcerer's Humanity, and the demon was not Summoned by that sorcerer in the first place, the player may make a Humanity gain roll (Humanity vs. the demon's Power). Succeeding raises the sorcerer's Humanity by one point regardless of the number of victories.**

# Punish

Punishing a demon weakens it by temporarily diminishing its Power. Demons may or may not experience pain or fear the same way humans do, but they undoubtedly find being Punished extremely uncomfortable, and a weakened demon is more susceptible to Banishment. Demons really hate being Punished. Sorcerers may punish their own demons automatically, but Punishing unBound demons or those Bound to other sorcerers is a bit different.

**If a sorcerer is Punishing a demon bound to them, no roll is needed**. The sorcerer may automatically remove Power from the demon up to the sorcerer's full Will score.

**If the sorcerer is Punishing an unBound demon, roll the sorcerer's Will vs. the demon's Stamina.**

**If the sorcerer is Punishing a demon Bound to another, roll the sorcerer's Will vs. the demon's (Stamina+Binding).**

- If the Punishment *fails*, the demon is merely pissed off, not weakened. This is bad.
- The sorcerer may attempt again, with a cumulative 1-die penalty to Will per successive attempt.
- If the Punishment *succeeds*, the demon loses Power equal to the sorcerer's victories.
- Punished demons regain Power by rolling their Stamina vs. the strength of the Punishment, and restoring Power equal to their victories, if any. How often a demon may attempt this depends on the setting. It may be tied to Need or some other mechanic, or to thematic elements in play, or simply to a set duration of time.

Punishing a demon shows it you mean business, and may under certain circumstances be the only way to get a recalcitrant demon to obey your commands. Remember that any sorcerer can command, Banish, Contain, or Punish *any* demon, regardless of whether it is bound to them, to someone else, or to no-one at all.

# Group Rituals

Cooperative sorcery can be very effective, and is the reason why covens exist and why adepts take on apprentices. Also, performing rituals with the aid of others is the safest way to gain bonuses without risking serious consequences. While Binding and Punishing are always one-on-one activities, Contacting, Summoning, Containing, and Banishing can all be performed in groups.

1) **Designate one sorcerer as the Primary.** This character will make the Humanity check for the ritual. Each participant will incur Humanity loss as appropriate for any ritual-related activities (sacrifice, etc), but the Humanity risk for the ritual itself is borne by the Primary.
2) **Each ancillary participant makes the appropriate roll for the ritual.** Any victories for these rolls become bonus dice for the Primary's roll. Failures confer no penalties.
3) **Primary makes the appropriate roll for the ritual.**

Never under any circumstances can a demon be Bound to more than one individual, unless specifically allowed by the setting paradigm being played.

# Demonic Communication

Communication with demons varies by Type and setting. There is no telepathy in Sorcerer. Passers, Possessors, and some Inconspicuous demons may have human speech. Parasites can probably communicate in whatever fashion their host can, at the least. Objects, however, and any Type if so defined, may only communicate by conferring or using their Abilities, or by failing or refusing to do so. These Types of demons can't really talk back, but it can also be harder to figure out what they want or Need if they start getting ornery and holding out on you.

# Conflict

Combat is the most common form of conflict in most role-playing games, and usually the situation needing the most adjudication by rules or mechanics. However, complex conflicts of any kind can be resolved using this system, whether they involve actual violence or not. Any time characters are performing interactions that are in opposition, whether it be two pugilists brawling, six people in a library all scrambling for the crucial page of a manuscript, or one group of sorcerers trying to complete a ritual while another tries to disrupt it. As in most role-playing games, conflict scenarios in Sorcerer are divided into rounds. How long a round is will depend on the situation, but in general terms it is long enough for any given character to do one thing. Like the camera in a movie, focus shifts from one character to the next as appropriate to the dramatic resolution of the scene. Physical combat in Sorcerer is generally quick and brutal. Sorcerer characters have the advantage of being able to override pain and physical damage with pure Will, allowing them to act decisively even though their guts may be spilling onto the floor.

## Conflict Resolution

1) **Everyone states their intended actions or goals in no particular order. Declarations may be amended freely until everyone is satisfied.** Each character, PC or NPC, gets a single action per round. A single action can be an attack, an evasive or defensive maneuver, moving to a strategic position, etc. It is perfectly acceptable to state a more general action or goal, as long as the intended **results** are explicit. There is no mechanical difference between *"I try to knock the gun out of his hand!"* and *"I do a spinning back-kick to his gun hand!"* Note that it is allowable to state that you are waiting for an opening, for a certain condition to occur, or to get a better handle on the situation, but "waiting" takes up your full action for the round. In fact, biding your time can be a valuable pursuit. If you are trying to perceive a weakness in someone's fighting style, or spend a moment watching your sister being tortured just to get yourself good and pissed; the GM may allow a roll for the action which can provide bonuses if you parley it into an exceptionally appropriate proactive declaration on the next round. Also, Commanding a demon or performing any dialogue that will affect the outcome of something also takes up an entire round. Just as in non-conflict situations, simple or easily performed actions are automatically successful unless opposed by another character or some kind of obstacle (in which case they aren't simple or easy). However, in a conflict scenario, even a character planning to take a simple action should roll the appropriate dice. This places their action chronologically relative to everyone else's, and helps maintain narrative flow even if nobody opposes the action.

2) **Relevant scores for each action are determined, and any bonuses or penalties assigned by the GM, so that everyone knows how many dice are in their pool for this round.** There are a number of ways to improve the chances of success for any action.

- **Good Role-playing.** The GM has carte blanche to hand out bonus dice for anything that positively contributes to the story and enhances everyone's enjoyment of the game.

- **Roll-over bonuses.** When one stated action leads smoothly and logically into another, the GM may allow victories from the first roll to be used as bonus dice for the next. Now, this doesn't mean that punching someone twice in a row is going to get bonus dice- the second action has to be dramatic and unique as well. Redundancy is definitely NOT rewarded.

- **Descriptors / Crossover.** A third way to glean some extra dice is when a Descriptor is specifically applied to a stated action, which is usually worth a bonus die. Or even better, if *both Cover and a Descriptor* apply, the GM may allow *both* scores to be rolled, with victories for the first becoming bonuses for the second. The order in which to roll the scores will depend on the situation and is at the GM's discretion. These techniques, especially the good role-playing, are not just for fun- learn them well and apply them liberally, or plan on getting shot, burned, dismembered, or eaten often.

- **Full Defense.** Finally, any character has the option of taking a **2 die bonus** for a *completely defensive action* that will not accomplish anything except protecting the character from the effects of another action or effect.

3) **Every character rolls at once.** Initiative is determined, highest to lowest (IE. three 10s would go before two 10s, but one 10 would go before five 9s). Stated actions cannot be changed at this point regardless of turn order.

4) **All actions are resolved in order.** Players may describe their actions in detail at this point, laying on as much coolness and relevant role-playing as possible to rack up additional bonus dice. Use the Rule of Currency to full effect here, adding bonuses and/or penalties as appropriate. Also, this step includes the rolling of any difficulty dice against character actions that are not opposed by another character. Often, the actions of one character will target another with a negative effect, such as an attack or distraction, etc. How this resolves depends on the Initiative order:

- If a character's action targets someone who's turn has already resolved, the target may roll their full Stamina dice to defend against the attack/action.

- If a character's action targets someone whose turn has NOT already resolved, the target has two options. They may choose to **abort** their unresolved action in favor of defending against the attack/action, in which case they would lose their current roll results and re-roll their full Stamina to defend. Or, if they wish to **maintain** their unresolved course of action, the GM will roll a Difficulty die (almost always just one) against the assailant's attack/action. The target keeps their full roll results for their upcoming action, but any victories against them from the attack will be rolled-over into bonus dice for whomever or whatever is opposing their unresolved action.

**5)** Record all damage and penalties, both temporary and lasting, according to the chart below.

| Damage Type | Penalties (where X = victories against target)* | |
|---|---|---|
| Fists / Bludgeon | X temporary | 1 lasting |
| Edged Weapon / Small Handgun | X temporary | X lasting |
| Powerful Handgun / Rifle | 2X temporary | X lasting |
| Automatic Weapon | 3X temporary | 2X lasting |
| Special Non-lethal Damage | X + Power temporary | X lasting |
| Special Lethal Damage | 2X temporary | X + Power lasting |
| **Total Penalties** | **Effects of Temporary Penalties**\*\* | **Effects of Lasting Penalties**\*\*\* |
| Less than or equal to Stamina | Nose bopped, ears ringing, seeing stars. Minor disorientation. | Abrasions and contusions. Bandages or ice packs will suffice. |
| Greater than Stamina | Nerve center struck, joint twisted. Pain incapacitates movement or action. | Bones broken, injury requiring stitches, slings, etc. Medical attention needed. |
| Greater than Stamina x2 | Stunned into helplessness, no dignity or composure. | Compound fracture, internal bleeding, etc. Need immediate intensive care. |

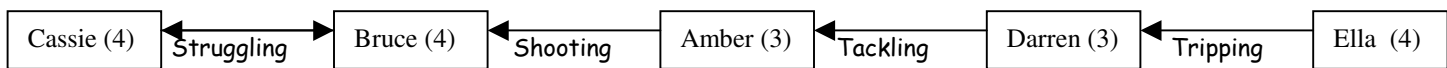| |
|---|
| **\* Penalties apply to ALL scores and actions**. Temporary penalties *only* apply to the next round, while lasting penalties apply to the rest of the scene. |
| **\*\* BOTH temporary and lasting penalties** come into play during the next round. |
| **\*\*\* At the end of the conflict scenario**, assuming the characters have a chance to rest, any lasting penalties are halved before assessing them on the Effects chart above. |
| **STUNNING:** Stun damage is special, used when a character is specifically attempting to incapacitate rather than injure, or when calculating the effect of a demonic Ability designed to stun rather than harm. **Simply flip the "Temporary" and "Lasting" columns for calculating Stun damage.** |
| **GUNS:** Drawing a weapon takes 1 full round, as does aiming at any kind of range, changing targets, or reestablishing aim after losing it. Yes, this means a potential delay of two rounds before being able to fire during a melee. Firing without aiming is possible but will incur one or more penalties at the GM's discretion. Furthermore, characters attempting to use a firearm with no Cover or Descriptor that justifies proficiency will get a penalty, again, at the GM's discretion. |

Also figure out where everyone is at for the start of the next round. Any unused actions are lost. Players may re-attempt the same action during the next round, but they are not "held over" or "saved", they are entirely new actions.

## Conflict Mapping

One useful tool for keeping track of complex conflicts is *conflict mapping*. It's pretty simple, really. You just draw boxes for each character or force involved in the conflict, and then draw arrows from each one to the target of their action. Write the attempted action by the arrow, and/or what roll is being made, etc. This way you can more easily determine the outcomes of complicated scenes where a lot is going on. For example:

- **Amber** is holding a gun, with which she intends to shoot Bruce for double crossing her earlier in the game. Alice is rolling her Stamina of 2, +1 for the handgun, for a total of **3 dice**.
- **Bruce**, oblivious to the threat Alice and her gun pose, it struggling with Cassie for control of an important book. Bruce is a fairly buff guy with a Stamina of **4 dice**.
- **Cassie** isn't letting go of the book, and is prepared to fight dirty to keep it. She only has a Stamina of 3, but her player described the way her high-heels would gouge Bruce in the junk so well, she's rolling **4 dice**.
- **Darren** has just arrived on the scene, and doesn't know what's going on- but he sees Alice aiming a gun at the other two as they scuffle and decides taking her down is the first priority to getting things under control. Darren's Stamina is **3 dice**.
- **Ella** has been hanging back, waiting for Alice to even the odds before making her own bid for the book- she doesn't want Darren stopping her from taking someone out, so she's going to toss a chair in his way and trip him. Ella has 3 dice of Stamina, and the GM gives her a bonus for tactical use of furniture. She's rolling **4 dice**.
- **In addition** to this, the GM rules that because Bruce and Cassie are struggling over the book and thus are in very close proximity, Amber's gunshot, should it go off, has a chance of hitting Cassie, or even the book, should it miss Bruce. This doesn't affect the initial rolls, since it may or may not come into play depending on how the scene pans out. If this situation comes up, it will be resolved at that time.

**The conflict map would look something like this:**

| Cassie (4) | ←Struggling→ | Bruce (4) | ←Shooting | Amber (3) | ←Tackling | Darren (3) | ←Tripping | Ella (4) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

This is a very simple map, most scenes for which mapping would be useful would probably be more complex than this.

**The Roll Results:** Amber: 10, 8, 3   Bruce: 9, 9, 6, 4   Cassie: 10, 6, 6, 5          Darren: 10, 10, 4   Ella: 12, 9, 3, 1

Ella's chair flies into Darren's path. He decides to take the hit and try to stop Amber anyway, so Ella's attack is vs. 1 die, which comes up 8, leaving Darren with 2 penalties. These aren't Damage, they're just going to interfere with his intended action. Darren stumbles over the chair but still manages to get to Amber before she fires. Amber sees him coming but wants to try to get the shot off anyhow, so his tackle is vs. 1 die *plus the penalties from Ella's victories*, which brings it to 3. Those dice come up 11, 9, 3- good enough to stop Darren from affecting Amber- Darren gets his feet tangled in the chair and goes down just out of reach of her. She gets off the shot after all. Bruce wants the book, but he can't use it if he's dead, so he aborts his struggling action to fling himself out of the way. His new roll comes up 11, 6, 1, 1. Bruce is a lucky guy- he manages to duck out of the path of Amber's shot. Unfortunately for Cassie, this means that she is now at risk, as is the book. Since Bruce let go of the book, Cassie has no need of her existing roll, so naturally she aborts and rolls full Stamina to avoid the bullet. Also, the GM rules that the book gets 3 dice to "avoid" being hit, because it's a small moving target. Cassie's roll comes up 11, 9, 4. The book's dice show 8, 8, 6. Cassie's roll is good enough to avoid Amber's bullet, but the book's is not. Cassie lets go of the book at the same moment Bruce does, they both tumble in opposite directions, and the book, hanging in midair for a brief instant, takes a shot to the spine. The round ends with Darren, Bruce, and Cassie on the floor, the book's pages fluttering to and fro, Amber holding a smoking gun, and Ella gritting her teeth. Everybody's pretty peeved because nothing worked out the way they wanted. Just like real life.

## Force of Will

So you're injured. It's pretty bad. You've lost a lot of blood, and that nasty compound fracture is really starting to hurt. Most people in your position would be either screaming "Call 911!" or finding an inconspicuous place to lie still and whimper until things quieted down. But then, *most* people haven't summoned a slavering, slime-coated, virgin-eating, nine-tentacled horror from the abyss and made it heel like a dog. *You have.* So you tie your shattered bones together with what's left of your shirt, grit your teeth, and start drawing the sign of Akkarshamon the Pale on the wall in your own blood. You're a sorcerer, and nothing in the universe is going to prevent you from accomplishing what you came here to do.

Once a character has taken more Damage penalties than their Stamina score, they are effectively incapacitated. After all, if you have 4 Stamina and 4 penalties, you're rolling zero dice, right? Well… maybe not. As long as you haven't taken more than double your Stamina in penalties, you may still be able to act through sheer force of Will.

**Roll the sorcerer's full Will vs. the number of Stamina dice they wish to use for their next action.**

- If the sorcerer succeeds, they may use the full dice they rolled against, regardless of the number of victories.
- If the sorcerer fails, they remain incapacitated for that round, but may make a new Will roll on the next round.
- EG. If a character has 5 Stamina, 4 Will, and 6 penalties; they may roll 4 Will dice vs. 1-5 Stamina dice. Say they choose to roll against 3 Stamina dice, and succeed with 1 victory. They may then use 3 Stamina dice for their next action, **temporarily ignoring the 6 penalties entirely.**
- The "Will override" roll and the actual Stamina roll for the action are made on the same turn, IE the Will roll does not take up any "in game" time, it just represents the character steeling themselves to act despite the pain.

We've all seen movies where the hero (or the villain) seems down for the count, with nothing left in the moment of crisis. And we've all seen them steel themselves and do what needed to be done just the same. That's what Will overrides are all about. Piling on the role-playing bonuses is key to making Will overrides happen. You're a lot more likely to pull yourself together and act when you're acting decisively and with meaning supported by the story, after all.

## Recovery

After a conflict scenario has ended, if the character has a chance to rest a bit (with "a bit" depending on the setting and situation), any remaining Lasting penalties from the scenario are halved. Whatever is left after this is translated into actual effects, as per the chart above. Then if any special action, medical attention, etc. is needed, it will be up to the players what they wish to do to handle it.

**Example:** Frank has a Stamina of 3 and takes 5 penalties during one round of a fight, from a thug with a switchblade. According to the **Edged/Handgun** row on the chart, this puts him at 5 Temporary penalties and 5 Lasting. That means he's at a whopping TEN penalties for the next round. Clearly, he is down for the count. Not even a Will roll could get him up off the floor. However, the following round, assuming the thug turned his attention elsewhere, he's at a mere *five* penalties. Just under double his Stamina, which means he can try for a Will override. Let's assume he succeeds and manages to pull the fire alarm before collapsing behind a desk. Not only have the sprinklers ruined the ancient map the thugs were after, but the authorities will be here soon, and the thugs know it. They bail, leaving our hero Frank bleeding on the floor. EMS arrives and Frank's wounds are tended to. At this point the GM could rule that Frank is fully healed and back on his feet after a night in the ER. However, let's say Frank happens to be wanted by the police for that unfortunate incident with those tourists in the occult wing of the museum last night. Overcoming the pain with a few good Will rolls, Frank crawls down to the basement and is overlooked by the authorities. One fitful night of sleep on a stack of tarps in the mechanical room later, Frank's injuries don't look quite so bad in the morning light. The two remaining penalties translate into some painful scars on his abdomen, but it looks like his thick sweater actually saved him from any serious damage. If he can find a first aid kit in the janitor's office, he'll probably be fine.

# Demons and Conflict

Demons are NPCs. They act and roll during conflict scenarios just like any other characters, regardless of whether they are acting at their master's bidding or of their own accord. Further, commanding a demon requires an action, so if your demon is faster than you are, there's a good chance it will already be doing something by the time you tell it what to do. Unless maybe it's irritated with you and won't act until you make it. Either way can be an advantage or disadvantage, depending on the situation and your relationship with your demon(s). Keep in mind that since demons don't exist, anybody who isn't a sorcerer has never seen one, and is likely to be quite startled, to say the least, upon their first meeting. If this meeting occurs during a conflict scenario, it's pretty likely the person will be extremely surprised and possibly discommoded when a demon suddenly shows up or acts openly. Even sorcerers may be shocked the first time they run into a particular type of demon, or under unexpected circumstances.

**The first time a character faces a demon, the GM <u>may</u> roll the demon's Power vs. the character's Will.**

- If the demon wins, the character has penalties to their first action equal to the demon's victories.
- Officially, these penalties last until the end of the scene, but the GM may reduce them if they so desire or it seems appropriate. Optionally, penalties are reduced by 1 per round until the character has "adjusted", or the GM may require a roll to overcome the penalties, either a one time roll or each round, or whatever the GM decides according to setting.

# Demonic Abilities

Many demons will have Abilities that will be useful in conflict situations. And as long as using them isn't going to betray their existence to the world at large, they may or may not be shy about it, depending on the setting. Regardless, demon Abilities aren't unlimited, or free.

**A demon can use Abilities a number of times per scene equal to its Stamina before reaching its fatigue threshold.**

- This means if a demon has a Stamina of 6, it may use any 6 of its Abilities in any combination or order, *not* six times for *each* Ability, before growing fatigued.
- Once the demon's fatigue threshold has been reached, it starts to weaken. For each use of an Ability beyond its Stamina score, one penalty is assigned. These are cumulative, so a demon with a Stamina of 6 that has used 9 Abilities in the same scene is working with 3 penalties, and the 10$^{th}$ Ability used will have 4 penalties, etc.
- Once a demon has accumulated penalties equal to its Stamina (IE. used Abilities equal to double its Stamina), it has burned out and can no longer use Abilities until it has had a chance to rest.

Recovery rate for fatigue penalties depends on the setting. Generally it's safe to assume a demon is back to full strength within 24 hours after burning out, unless the setting or situation suggests otherwise.

# Demons and Death

Demons can be damaged and injured, and even killed, just like humans (unless otherwise specified by the setting). Whether or not demons feel pain, fear, or death anxiety is dependent on the setting as well. Damage effects may be tailored to the type of demon, especially if it is incorporeal or otherwise unable to sustain ordinary physical injury.

**If a demon suffers more than twice its Stamina in lasting damage, it is slain.**

- Demons leave no forensic evidence when they expire, unless determined by the setting. They explode into nothingness, or evaporate, or get sucked into a black hole, or whatever, leaving no trace that they ever existed- because of course they don't.
- The results of killing a demon depend on whether it was Bound or not when it expired.

**If the demon was unBound,** it has been Banished, just as if it had been the subject of a successful Banishing ritual. If the demon was killed by a character, the character may be subject to a Humanity gain check according to the rules of Banishing. The demon may be re-Contacted and Summoned again just as any other Banished demon.

**If the demon was Bound**, it has been utterly annihilated. It can never again be Contacted or Summoned. A sorcerer might contact a demon with identical scores and Abilities, but it would be a new entity. Once annihilated, a demon is forever gone.

## * * * * * NOTES * * * * *

- **GM: Scene Framing!**
- BOOST rules for Stamina, Will, Lore, either from Demonic Abilities or Drugs (make consequences similar?)
- GM PROPOSES, PLAYER DISPOSES
- BANGS are about CHOICES, not just mayhem. Bangs are like mini-Kickers, prompting the PCs to do SOMETHING, as opposed to a puzzle or fight scene that, while potentially exciting, only provides for one course of action.
- NOTES in FOLDER
- Just recently, I posted an important point about Sorcerer score values: they are not "body" and "mind." Not at all.
    - Stamina and Will are both physical and mental phenomena.
    - When your character looms physically to intimidate someone, that's Will.
    - When your character calls up memories of childhood abuse to draw upon hate in order to heft that portcullis, that's Stamina.
    - Stamina = impact on, influence over physical motion.
    - Will = impact on, influence over personalities.
    - Both draw on whatever physical and mental reserves are necessary for these effects.