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## technological requirements HERO/Diced vs. Low Mechanics/Diceless

Posted by Jaana Heino - 2010/02/09 05:19

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This brings up a related problem. What do you do when your player rolls a critical success for the social situation and then proceeds to roleplay the interaction in the worst possible way, i.e. acts like a jerk during a seduction, etc.? I think there are generally three ways I have used to handle social situations in a diced game. 3 used to be the norm earlier in my life, nowadays I think we use mostly 1 and often 2... 1. Roleplay, don't roll. Works when the player's skills are a match to the characters, and is way cool...:) 2. Describe&roll. In this one the player gives general idea about what the character is trying to do (like: I'll offer him more wine, and even more wine, and try to get him to talk about his family again) and then rolls dice. Works also when player's social skills are not as good as the character's, but is boring more often...:) Goes for me if the situation is not very important for story or the character, or if the skill difference is great, or if I just want to get it done and go on to play what follows...:) 3. Roleplay&roll. In this case, the roleplay and the dice are worked into the final result: if the player roleplays a total jerk but rolls a success, the people around her consider the character a jerk, but for some reason the consequences are not as bad as they could have been, for instance. Works, mostly, but demands more from the GM (\*why\* did they not get as angry as they should have?).

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Posted by russell wallace - 2010/02/09 05:19

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(BTW, I'm surprised at Valentine's long skill list being so expensive; I would have thought the high-stat=cheap-skills anomaly would have been of aid here, i.e. just buy up his IQ?) Eek! Sure, but then he ends up being smarter than Valerie, which I know he isn't, and arguably a genius, which he \*certainly\* isn't. It also feels very wrong for a character to have 1 point into his core professional skills. I'd hope for the investment-into-skill to tell me a bit about character history, but high-IQ GURPS characters aren't like that. Again, different priorities. I'd like as few false, misleading things on the sheet as possible (for example, high point investment into a peripheral skill and low point investment into a core skill) because during that early campaign struggle these can really cause me grief. If I were describing an already solidly defined character, I wouldn't care nearly as much. And again, this now makes perfect sense given what you use the system for.

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## technological requirements HERO/Diced vs. Low Mechanics/Diceless

Posted by Jeff Stehman - 2010/02/09 05:19

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: : What action could possibly short-circuit the plot? : : Almost any action in the wrong place at the wrong time. : Can't think of one that would happen at the wrong place at the wrong time. I go home, leaving the entire matter behind me.

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## technological requirements HERO/Diced vs. Low Mechanics/Diceless

Posted by Psychohist - 2010/02/09 05:19

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This has been moved from the HERO/Low Mechanics thread because it seems more appropriate for this subject line. Regarding the amount of detail to be communicated, Sarah Kahn posts: I like to hear some extraneous detail, though, because, to my mind, this does reduce the chances of assumption clash

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Posted by Kedamono - 2010/02/09 05:19

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A game rule is a guideline to the regulation of actions by PCs during a gaming session, or the post/pre game session regarding modification/creation of the Player Character. Are you referring to the previous version or Tri Tac's take on the definition? I like mine better. Yeah, I think so. But it needs narrowed down a little. I don't think the word guideline is exactly right, for one thing. And I don't think it's just a PC thing, either. Hmm, yes, I agree, this is too broad, but we narrow too far. By choice, I left it vague to be able to consider and not to consider something as a rule. But I think we've hit upon something above, that might just fit the bill. Rules consist of quantitative descriptions of how PC and NPC actions are resolved by the players and/or the GM, in a RPG. These quantitative descriptions are

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also applicable to meta-game actions, such as character creation, adventure design, and other aspects of the RPG in question. Too Narrow? Too Broad? Completely out in leftfield?

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Posted by David P. Summers - 2010/02/09 05:19

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All I can say is they work well for me, in both my Fantasy campaigns and in my modern day/SF stuff. It true that an engineer in my GURPS Traveller campaign needs 1/2 dozen or so skills, but they are fairly cheap and defaults offset this. Could you do me an example? This is an honest request, not a rhetorical one; I keep trying to do Valentine and drowning in skills. Valentine is a Jumpship engineer, though his first love (as a teenager and later in college) was lifesupport and environment engineering. Things he knows how to do really well:

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## technological requirements HERO/Diced vs. Low Mechanics/Diceless

Posted by David P. Summers - 2010/02/09 05:19

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And would that really matter? Magic systems are all baseless (appologies to those wiccans and neo-pagans reading this), yet we have fun with their bogosity. They are based on a concept of how magic works and consitently applied to the concept (if they are any good).

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Posted by David P. Summers - 2010/02/09 05:19

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: Not quite. It, at least for me, harms SOD if I know that : the source of the detail is just making it up. Then almost all rule systems would blow my SOD. I'm not sure what you are trying to say here except to try and make a general unsupported slam against rule systems (other than Theatrix :-). Can you even support the claim that almost all rule systems just make up details without regard to reality? And even if you could, then why not just use a good game system rather than abondon all hope of details that actually add to the sense that you character is really there?

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## technological requirements HERO/Diced vs. Low Mechanics/Diceless

Posted by JENKINS ROBERT - 2010/02/09 05:19

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In my campaign we never rolled for social interactions when I was using formal mechanics, and eventually we dropped any formal mechanics whatsoever. I think a situation like the one you've just described would lead me to throw away either the dice or the roleplayed interaction, since they obviously don't match. My preference would be to throw away the dice, for social interactions. (I \*love\* this particular debate <sharpens claws) Okay. So you've just limited characters to perzackly what the \*player\* can do. Why not LARP? Do you really think that what Shazemar described above must lead to a character-with-only-player's-abilities style of play? To me, the obvious way of coping with Shazemar's sort of style would be for the players to mirror the other people that their characters meet during play. For example, if Jack has been described as an intimidating thug, then keep that in mind when interacting with him. How would your character deal with this potentially brutal person? (Note: I don't mean to suggest that now everyone must act as if Jack was Hell on two legs, but to play up to an important character detail). There are obvious drawbacks with this - if Jack's player is hopelessly inoffensive then this could well be a strain on SOD. My own experience with this, however, has been that this sort of technique can help a player to feel that they really are being who their character is meant to be, which in turn leads to a better portrayal, which leads to the other players accepting the character more readily, etc. A kind of synergism, if you will. It can be quite effective sometimes, although of course not everyone's cup of tea. It does sound like the sort of thing which could hamper someone'e attempt to remain IC, but it hasn't been much of a problem when I've remembered to mirror. It's also a lot easier if you know either a) the type of character or b) the player quite well. I tend to end up thinking Ah, that's the sort of thing you're getting at. Of course, the whole point is dependant on whether one calls mirroring a formal mechanic. I'll have to start paying more attention to the what is a mechanic? discussion now. Rob

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## technological requirements HERO/Diced vs. Low Mechanics/Diceless

Posted by russell wallace - 2010/02/09 05:19

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Too realistic. Not realistic enough. It doesn't matter. All I know is that the game is more alive and lively for me when the detail is there, and the players seem to enjoy it when results are based on their actual descriptions. So that's what I do. And I, and most of the players I know, enjoy it more when the results are not so based when the player has no basis of knowledge about the task involved with which to construct such a description. So that's what I do.

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## technological requirements HERO/Diced vs. Low Mechanics/Diceless

Posted by Mary K. Kuhner - 2010/02/09 05:19

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: : What action could possibly short-circuit the plot? : : Almost any action in the wrong place at the wrong time. : Can't think of one that would happen at the wrong place at the wrong time. I go home, leaving the entire matter behind me. Hm, I think David is of the problem follows you home persuasion. How about I ignore the opportunity to surrender, as it is obviously a trap? Seems to me, David, that that one broke your Star Trek scenario completely

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## technological requirements HERO/Diced vs. Low Mechanics/Diceless

Posted by Frank Pitt - 2010/02/09 05:19

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(Well, actually, you could set up non-natural wormhole configurations of the type discussed by Morris, Thorne, or Visser, but any character in a RPG discovering them would have to assume they were evidence of an extremely advanced alien race, or God, depending on their persuasion) There are other possibilities. But if you had such a story as you suggest above, and assuming that all other aspects of the story were Hard SF, would this be a Hard SF story? I'd think so. It could be.

... read more »

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## technological requirements HERO/Diced vs. Low Mechanics/Diceless

Posted by Frank Pitt - 2010/02/09 05:19

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You *must* admit that it is *possible* that humans might one day be able to do this. And if the storyteller could make it seem plausible enough, and understandable enough, then such a story could be written involving human-created wormholes for interstellar travel, and it would be Hard SF. By your own definition of Hard SF it would only be hard sf if you can also come up with a scientifically plausible way of generating the required energy that has a basis in real science. Frankie

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## technological requirements HERO/Diced vs. Low Mechanics/Diceless

Posted by Psychohist - 2010/02/09 05:19

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Alain LaPalme posts: I agree with Warren that inconsistencies are nowhere near as critical in a short term game. However, I'm unclear as to what the link is between inconsistencies and mechanics. In my experience, a long term game is very effective in pointing out all the weaknesses of the mechanics used (said weaknesses often leading to inconsistencies). Let me give an example from my most recent session. The player character group is setting up a camp in the mountains near an ancient underground city. They are planning to stay there for a year or two, digging a new tunnel into said city; their purpose is to drain it so they can explore parts that are currently under water. They've brought along a group of hunters to provide food from the nearest available location. It's critically important, however, just how 'near' that location is, since that distance will determine how much of the time the hunting group spends hunting, and how much they spend carrying the food to the camp, and thus whether or not the amount of food will be sufficient. Now, it turns out that the last time I ran player characters through this area was about ten (player) years ago. I cannot for the life of me remember how long it took the characters to get through the mountains to the base camp location on that occasion. I can't ask the players, either, since it was a different group of players. Fortunately, I have a

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mechanic for how far characters travel in a day in various types of terrain. This allows me to confidently rederive a consistent travel time. If I didn't have this mechanic, I would probably end up providing an inconsistent travel time - and one or the other group of players would eventually complain, hey, it took way longer for us! Note that consistency is not the same thing as accuracy. Mechanics that are frequently used do, as Alain points out, show their weaknesses more in long term games. Sometimes, this is enough to require a change in the mechanics - giving up some consistency in exchange for gaining some accuracy. Warren Dew

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Posted by Psychohist - 2010/02/09 05:19

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Me: I see - Vikki has a higher aerobic rate and better developed gastrocnemius muscles, used in running, while Chernoi has better developed flexor longus and brevis muscles, which control static balance. Mary Kuhner: And one could easily go too far in \*that\* direction for me to grasp as a player. That's why I really like the FUDGE-style handling of stats, which allows detail where the player needs it, but doesn't force consideration of a bunch of irrelevant stats. I'd better clarify. I can infer that amount of detail just from the two stats you gave and your definitions for them. No additional stats are required. My point is that fewer stats would be required if the game designers did their research better. Stats start to proliferate only when the designers don't really understand what they represent, and start throwing in new stats which are really only combinations of old ones. Warren Dew

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Posted by Mark Apolinski - 2010/02/09 05:19

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If we are to talk about the differences between games using mechanics and those not using mechanics, we need some kind of definition. It is a given that no definition will be airtight. Language is like that. However, a definition which can cover most of the game styles discussed in this forum would, in my view, be a good thing. Actually, we \*could\* produce a definition for mechanics that is airtight, \*if\* everyone didn't insist on making sure that their personal idea of what mechanics are was included in the definition. We just get to a point and say, OK, \*this\* is the definition we are going to use for mechanics. If you have a 'mechanic' in your game that doesn't fit this definition, find another word. Mark

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Posted by Mark Apolinski - 2010/02/09 05:19

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Now, Theatrix has mechanics. You may have stripped those mechanics away and, really, that is your decision and no business of mine. However, when you discuss Theatrix in this forum, people will think of the published version (ie the official version) of the game, not the version you are playing. It's good that they're thinking of the official version, because \*that\* is the version that I am playing. I haven't stripped any mechanics away at all. Yes, Theatrix has mechanics. I've never claimed otherwise. I have claimed that Theatrix is low-mechanics. And I also have claimed that the flowcharts are not mechanics. If you want to argue about what is official, why not ask the representative of the company, David Berkman. He has stated that the flowcharts were intended as a guide for helping gamemasters switch to diceless decision making, not as a mechanic. Mark

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Posted by Mary K. Kuhner - 2010/02/09 05:19

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Storyteller does do this, and there are times when it can be fun (the supplement for the Virtual Adept mages gives some details about how VAs sometimes settle their differences with Corewars-style duels in the Digital Web, for which the roll is Computers+Avatar. The book notes dryly that yes, this is an unusual combination.) Still, I find that this is rare enough that I'm happy handling it ad-hoc when the situation arises. What do you think is badly broken about the Storyteller implementation? Badly broken was an overstatement, sorry, but I don't like the fact (also true of GURPS) that there is no mechanical difference between a character with high stats and one with high skills (thereby, in general, horrendously favoring the former as stats are more broadly useful). I have been playing for years in systems that \*do\*

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differentiate highly skilled from highly talented characters, and I'm spoiled

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## technological requirements HERO/Diced vs. Low Mechanics/Diceless

Posted by Paul Andrew King - 2010/02/09 05:19

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Of course, you're even better off talking to the biologists who study the human brain. How about a philosopher who has done exactly that? Paul K.

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## technological requirements HERO/Diced vs. Low Mechanics/Diceless

Posted by David Berkman - 2010/02/09 05:19

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: I think maybe my disbelief is harder to suspend than most peoples'. For example, in your extension of David's engine example, you had transmission : fluid running through hoses, which would have me questioning what kind of : hose could take the fluid pressures that are generated in a transmission. The answer is, any. Just because a hose delivers oil doesn't mean that it is under any greater pressure than the delivery system pump is generating. Pistons produce high pressures. They are lubricated. The hoses which carry the oil to the engine are not under the same pressure as generated by the piston. Yet, this detail would set off your SOD alarm. I once had an argument with a friend trying to convince him that water pressure, although great, is delivered evenly across a volume of reasonable size, from all directions (yes, there is a slight difference along the vertical axis, if you want to do the calculus and figure it, but it's a small variation over reasonable lengths), and would not string a body out like the gravitational field of a black hole. That's why a sphere is such a good shape for withstanding underwater pressures. Now, he just wouldn't buy it, and it really bothered him. Now I don't know what 'transmission fluid' is, but synthetic oils are sometimes green. I have no clue if the delivery system for oil to a transmission is generally separate from that used for the rest of the engine. I would expect that loss of oil to a transmission would be signaled by increasing grinding sounds when attempting to switch gears, or maybe a stall in an automatic transmission, and possibly worse with a CVT (if they are even being produced yet). Do I wish to look up anything more to handle engines in a more realistic fashion in my games? No. I have other things I would rather do with my limited time. Do I care if a player gets bunged up because I'm not using a mechanics manual when describing these problems? Not really. Maybe that makes me a bad GM, but I like the detail, so I'll live with the monicker. David

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## technological requirements HERO/Diced vs. Low Mechanics/Diceless

Posted by David Berkman - 2010/02/09 05:19

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: I go home, leaving the entire matter behind me. Happens all the time. Has yet to bother me. Certainly doesn't throw a plot in the trash. I almost count on it. David

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## technological requirements HERO/Diced vs. Low Mechanics/Diceless

Posted by David Berkman - 2010/02/09 05:19

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: : Not quite. It, at least for me, harms SOD if I know that : : the source of the detail is just making it up. : : Then almost all rule systems would blow my SOD. : I'm not sure what you are trying to say here except : to try and make a general unsupported slam against : rule systems (other than Theatrix :-). What I'm saying is that the charts, tables, odds, etc., in rule systems are mostly made up. They are what sounds and feels right. Most systems give a single result distribution for all skills outside of combat. How can that be realistic? How do you accurately measure skill level and task difficulty, and collect research... O.K. That stuff is done, but for specific tasks, mostly by companies interested in time/motion studies, and hiring measures. Even looking at long jump distances, gun accuracy tests, and car performance measures, does you no good. That all condenses down to some simple, single, easy distribution, that can be reproduced on a few dice with a modifier or two, that works for all areas of expertise. No way, I just don't buy it. It's bogus. Even the combat stuff is mostly bogus. It feels O.K., and roughly represents the genre. That's all it needs to do to be useable, that's all it does. : Can you even support the claim that almost all rule : systems just make up details without regard to reality? Yeah, I think so. Think of a way to test any of them against reality. It's pretty difficult to actual design and do such tests. I don't think RPG companies are in the position to be doing that research. Often, they would

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be hard hypothesis to even test. So how'd they come up with the numbers? : And even if you could, then why not just use a good : game system rather than abandon all hope of details : that actually add to the sense that you character is : really there? I don't wish to abandon all hope of details. The game systems have to. The only way to get easy distributions you can apply to a broad range of skills is to hopelessly abstract. You have to make up the details no matter what you do, diced or diceless, if you're going to use them. So what do the dice do? They provide an objective basic result decision. By randomizing one. The one thing I can do easiest on my own, in the way I lest want it done. That's why I don't use most of them. David

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## technological requirements HERO/Diced vs. Low Mechanics/Diceless

Posted by Christopher Beattie - 2010/02/09 05:19

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I've just started going back to the advocacy group recently and so I haven't read the entire thread on this, but a curious question comes to my head. Why have any FTL at all? Do you need to have FTL in a Hard SF? To answer that you have to ask and answer the question of why you need to go faster than light in the first place. A photon can travel the entire universe in precisely 0 time. (According to the photon.) Although it is possible to view relativity in numerous ways, (space contracts or time slows) given a high enough velocity near c, it is possible to cross, a galaxy, even a galaxy cluster, in a lifetime. On the other hand, it takes a lot of energy to do this. The problem, as Tolken's Frodo, would point out, is There and Back Again. True, you can visit a star 100 light years in a day, and then a day back but slightly over 200 years have passed for the planet you left. Considering Hard SF, I don't think that this is a major problem, one at least we have to stretch or break the Hard boundary to reach. An even more interesting problem, (one which I would have gleefully done the math fifteen years ago when I was in college) is without artificial gravity, and baring a race of space fairing dwarves, a one G acceleration is needed to maintain sutiable gravity. Long term exposure of higher gravity does a body just as much harm as the long term exposure of no gravity. Then there is the simple method pf power. The most extreme hard core SF starship to date, which used atomic bombs as a power source had a potential of 0.10c. That speed is still mostly ecludian, and on a stellar scale a crawl. Thus it can also be said that FTL represents not as much a problem in speed, but as a magic solution at the energy problem. It tries to re-create relativity without the nasty twins paradox problems at a fraction of the energy involved.

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## technological requirements HERO/Diced vs. Low Mechanics/Diceless

Posted by John H Kim - 2010/02/09 05:19

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: If no one has it, and no one's bothered to get it, I can't see : that guesstimating's going to ruin anything. : : To be honest it really doesn't ruin anything. But simply making : up details that everyone knows to be baseless adds nothing to the : SOD and just takes up time. If no one has them, and no one cares, then how does anyone know they are baseless? And would that really matter? Magic systems are all baseless (appologies to those wiccans and neo-pagans reading this), yet we have fun with their bogosity. Hmmm. I'm not a wiccan or a neo-pagan, but I don't think that all magic systems are baseless. I've spent a fair amount of time in research on magic systems. The T'ang dynasty China games, for example, were run by someone who was at the time working on his PhD in ancient Chinese conceptions of magic. (cf. Witchcraft, by the way, which was written in heavy consultation with Wiccans). I agree that most published RPG magic systems are baseless, made up by the game designer on nothing in particular. However, I have a preference for one's which are based in an understanding of real-world beliefs. (The \*beliefs\* are real, even if you don't believe in the phenomena themselves). And even if I'm not an expert in the field, I can tell fairly well the difference between baseless magic systems and researched magic systems.

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## technological requirements HERO/Diced vs. Low Mechanics/Diceless

Posted by Doug Dawson - 2010/02/09 05:19

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: Our homebrew, which is derived from Storyteller, uses skill to determine : number of dice and stat to determine a modifier to target number. This : is a rather fragile system with nasty edge effects, but it does give : both stat and skill a definite role to play without allowing one to : be substituted indifferently for the other. I'm curious as to what your opinion of the Silhouette game system (from Dream Pod 9) would be, as it's fairly similar. Skill gives you number of 6-siders to roll, taking highest roll (if you get multiple 6's, each additional 6 becomes a +1 to your roll). Attribute (ranging from -5 to +5) is added to your roll. (As a sidenote, I've only ever used the system once, but I liked it.) I'm particularly curious about the nature of the edge effects you noted... do you mean for extreme attributes/skills or difficulties? Doug Dawson

