

# **Suspension of Disbelief**

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## Introduction

*Suspension of Disbelief* is a role-playing system designed to emulate the story, characters and pacing of a good action film. Character creation is heavily tied to creating character concepts, and gameplay involves setting those characters loose in a short goal-oriented sandbox environment.

The game master (heretofore referred to as the Director) introduces a scenario that has a clear plot hook and allows the players to develop and complete the story in one session. Although the skills and abilities of the characters are not extraordinary, due to the mechanics of the game they will be able to accomplish extraordinary things. Essentially suspending disbelief.

This rulebook will go over the actual rules of character creation and gameplay. It assumes you know the basics about what a role playing game is and how to run a standard game with a Game Master and players.

## Suspension Chips

The heart of *Suspension of Disbelief* lies in the Suspension Chip mechanic. Its place in the first chapter of this rulebook is to emphasize the importance of this mechanic to the game. To truly understand it you can come back to this section after you read the Character Creation and Gameplay chapters.

### Using Suspension Chips

Suspension chips can be used to give the characters an advantage. They can be used at any point, but they must be declared before a die roll. More than one suspension chip can be used at once.

Suspension Chips decrease the level of a skill check by one (Formidable -> Daunting, etc)

Players cannot spend Fate Chips to help another player.

### Getting Fate Chips

Every player starts with 3 Fate Chips, and the GM gives out fate chips to the players during the game:

- 1) Whenever a character attempts a skill check and fails.
  - a. The skill check must be relevant to gameplay. Players just can't constantly have their characters trying to climb walls for no reason
  - b. The skill check must have a chance of being successful
- 2) Whenever the player stays true to the character's crux by role-playing it in a significant way.
- 3) Whenever the player stays true to the character's injuries by role-playing them in a significant way.
- 4) Whenever a character does something awesome

The GM can also take away suspension chips from the players if they play the character in a direction opposite their qualities.

The trick to a good game is Suspension Chip turnover! The player's should use them and earn them often!

## Character Creation

The Director should have a scenario ready and should announce the location and character creation requirements before character creation starts. This will give the players an idea of what type of character to create. Some examples of what the scenario might say:

- a) Sci-fi: A character who is on their way to the new Mars colony aboard a passenger ship.
- b) Western: A character who is travelling through a middle-of-nowhere town in order to get to another destination.
- c) Modern: A character that has been chosen to be on a Survivor type TV show.

Once the Director makes clear the genre and requirements of the current game, the players can develop what sort of character they want to play.

First, come up with a concept. This is small phrase that describes your character. Then come up with a small backstory to explain your character and why he is in this scenario.

You can follow along with our example below.

Adventure: Sci-fi - A character who is on their way to the new Mars colony aboard a passenger ship.

Name: John Brock

Concept: A hot-headed ex-soldier

John Brock is an ex-soldier who was dishonorably discharged for attacking his senior officer and wants to start a new life on Mars. He is strong, willful, and very hot-headed. He doesn't make friends easily.

### Qualities and The Crux

These are keywords that define your character's personality. They should not be tied to specific stats or skills on your character sheet. They can be anything from physical descriptions, personality quirks, occupations, secrets, phobias, manias, etc. This is where you would put more abstract things that aren't based on numbers or levels. The more fun you have with these, the more fun the character will be to play.

The most important one will be your Crux. This is the thing that is most important to your character. The trick is, it has to be something that you can bring into the game. Something that defines how your character behaves.

Qualities, and especially the Crux, are the most important things about character creation. Take your time and don't skimp!

John Brock chose the Crux “Hot-headed”. That should be fun to bring into the game.

His qualities are: Soldier, Dishonorable Discharge, Gun Nut, Scarred, Angry, Has Killed Before, Loner

## Stats

Statistics shows how good or bad a character is in each area.

- **Brains** – How intelligent a character is
- **Brawn** – How physically strong a character is
- **Confidence** – How mentally strong and eloquent a character is
- **Coordination** – How deft, quick and agile a character is

Next to each stat is “d6 d6”. This shows how many dice you would roll for tasks in that area.

Next to one of them of your choice, add a third d6.

On another one, cross out a d6.

John Brock adjusts his stats in the following way:

Brains d6

Brawn d6 d6 d6

Coordination d6 d6

Confidence d6 d6

## Skills

Because the characters don’t know what is going to happen to them and what skills are going to be useful they will leave them blank for now. These can be filled in during gameplay. (See below)

## Props

The scenario will determine what starting items the characters have or what items they have to choose from.

# Gameplay

Normal Role playing style applies to this game. The Director sets the scene and facilitates the action. When conflicts arise, rules are needed to determine the outcome.

## Skill Checks

In gameplay, when the character wants to do something that may or may not be successful, use a skill check. This could be anything from hacking a computer to climbing a castle wall. Follow the below steps:

- 1) The Director chooses the task difficulty using THE CHART (see below). This is a hard and fast choice. No arguing is allowed. For help in scaling see Appendix 1.
- 2) The appropriate Stat dice are chosen.
  - a. Brawn – Tasks requiring muscles and not much else (Lifting, Breaking, Pushing, Pulling)
  - b. Coordination – Tasks requiring grace, balance and reflexes (Stealth, Pick Pocketing, Jumping, Climbing)
  - c. Brains – Tasks requiring the power of memory and problem solving (Knowledge, Recall, Search, First Aid)
  - d. Confidence – Tasks requiring poise, charm, or determination (persuasion, seduction, disguise, intimidation)
- 3) If the character has a skill that will help in this task, add in those dice as well.
- 4) If the character has an item that will help in this task, add in the item's dice as well.
- 5) The player rolls all of the dice and compares the result against the target difficulty.
- 6) If the total meets or beats the target, the task succeeds. If not, it fails.
- 7) The GM narrates the outcome based on the difference between the roll and the target number.

THE CHART

Easy	4
Troublesome	6
Hard	8
Tough	12
Difficult	16
Challenging	20
Daunting	26
Formidable	32
Improbable	40
Unobtainable	50

After the passenger ship crashes at the space dock, John Brock tries to lift a large piece of burning rubble off of another passenger. The GM says that this task is Hard (Target = 8). John Brock rolls his strength dice (3d6) and rolls a 10. He succeeds because he rolled greater than the target.

John Brock wants to intimidate an NPC into doing following his orders. The Director determines the NPC (a Macho Tough Guy) would be Tough (Target=12) to intimidate. John rolls his Confidence dice + his Intimidate skill, and he also wants to use his Military ID to Intimidate the guy further, so he adds that item's power as well. He rolls  $d6 + d6 + d6 + d4 = 17$ , which is greater than 12, so he succeeds.

Rosalie, another player's character, is a smooth-talking con-artist. She is trying to convince an NPC that the best course of action is not to fight. She rolls her Confidence dice plus her Persuasion skill. ( $d6 + d6 + d12$ ) against a Challenging target. She rolls a 23 vs. the target of 20. She easily convinces him to follow her course of action.

John Brock wants to hack into a computer in order to turn off the security system at the space station. The scenario says the computer security is Formidable. John has no skills or items to help, so he is just rolling straight Intelligence. ( $d6+d6$ )

John really wants to succeed so he decides to spend 6 Fate Chips before he rolls. That brings the Target down six levels from Formidable (32) to Troublesome (6). The Director explains this by saying that he searches the desk around the computer and finds a bunch of sticky notes with all of the user's passwords written on them.

He rolls a  $2d6 = 6$ , so he succeeds and manages to turn off the security system.

John wants climb up the turbo-lift chute to the next floor because the lift isn't working anymore. His Coordination is  $2d6$  and the target is Hard (8). He rolls a 7. The GM says he starts to climb but can't get a good grip and slides back to where he started. He didn't get very far.

Because he failed, and this was a legitimate task that he could have succeeded at, the GM gives him a Fate Chip.

## Blank Skills

If there is a situation in the game where you want a certain skill and you still have a slot open you can write it on the character sheet in an empty slot. This would be just like your character always knew it. You can roll skill checks as normal with it from now on but it cannot be changed.

The only rule is that the skill must make sense in relation to all of your character's qualities.

John Brock needs to convince the military ship on the other end of the radio to bomb an escaping shuttle. (It's a long story). The Target is Challenging (20). He would have to roll his Confidence (d6 + d6) with no added skills.

He adds Military Cryptology to his d12 skill slot. That makes sense based on his character concept, and now he can add those dice to his roll in order to spout out some military codes to sound more official. He adds in 2 fate chips to help. That brings the target to Tough (12). He rolls a  $d6+d6+d12 = 14$  and the military ship agrees to blow up the shuttle thinking they are under orders.

## Combat

Each NPC in the scenario is given a Mental Difficulty (used for intimidation, persuasion, etc.) And a Physical difficulty, which is used for combat.

In this system Combat is treated just like a skill check. Some of these situations include punching someone, stabbing someone, shooting someone, etc.

If the order of who gets to act first is unclear, then both actions happen simultaneously. Both my hit or miss.

When the player acts against the NPC, he rolls against the NPC's physical difficulty.

When the NPC attacks the player, the player rolls against the NPC's physical difficulty.

If the NPC has a weapon, his physical difficulty is increased by one level.

If there is a situation that will give a combatant an advantage, the difficulty is bumped up or down one level. (Prone, surprise, etc.)

**Brawn** – Used for all melee attacks.

**Coordination** – Used for all ranged attacks.

John Brock has encountered an alien monster alone in a hallway. He thinks he can take it so he decides to try to attack it. But the monster also wants to attack.

### Alien Monster

Physical: Challenging    Mental: Daunting    Damage: d8

John Brock attacks it with a wrench (d6), and the alien lashes out with scary tentacles. John Brock rolls his Brawn and the Wrench. So he rolls  $3d6 + d6 = 18$ . That does not beat the alien's Challenging (20) defense so he misses his attack. He gets a fate chip for missing his roll.



The creature attacks at the same time. John throws in 1 fate chip to bring the alien's Offense from Challenging to Difficult. He wants to block with his wrench so he rolls  $3d6 + d6 = 10$ . He fails and gets hit with a tentacle. He takes  $d4$  damage (see below) and gets a fate chip for failing his roll.

## Damage and Dying

During the game the characters will take damage and become injured. This can happen in a variety of different ways, from combat to non-combat injuries.

In an attack, each weapon has a damage score that the Director rolls when the character is hit. This is always set in the scenario. When a character receives damage he marks it on the first row of his injury chart. When he checks off all 3 circles, any additional damage falls into the next row.

When a character marks off all the circles on a shaded line they receive an injury that will give them a penalty to their stats. The penalty is listed on the chart in dice. The character must subtract the total dice (in any increment) from his Stats only.

He then writes the injury on his character sheet:

**Light Injury** - Bruised arm, sprained ankle, bump on the head, etc.

**Medium Injury** - Broken bone, concussion, etc.

**Heavy Injury** -, Missing digit, collapsed lung, hideous bleeding gouge

**Severe Injury** - Missing limb, broken neck, intestines falling out

Role playing these injuries should be rewarded with Fate chips, because they can bring a whole new level to the game.

If a character checks off all 3 Death circles, he or she dies.

Body	Injury	Penalty
<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Hurt	-
<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<b>Minor:</b>	d6
<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Lacerated	-
<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<b>Medium:</b>	d6
<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Mangled	-
<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<b>Major:</b>	d6
<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<b>Severe:</b>	d6
<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<b>Dead</b>	

John Brock gets hits by the Alien's tentacle so he takes d4 damage. John rolls a 4 so he marks off 3 circles in the first row and 1 in the second. His next injury will be taken off of the second row.

## **Healing**

Because of the cinematic and short length of the scenarios there is no healing in this game. Once you are injured, you stay injured.

## **Rolling Against another Character**

For physical attacks, the same rules apply. Every character is assumed to have a Challenging difficulty which can be moved up and down using the same rules: chips, situational effects (prone, surprise, etc).

To convince a character of something, the player who is being convinced chooses the difficulty. The GM and other players can guide him if necessary. The idea is to pick a difficulty that accurately states how hard it would be for that character to be convinced of that fact at that moment. The roll then happens as usual.

## **Weapons**

Weapons are considered props. They have a die value just like any other item in the game. The die is used when rolling to attack or defend with that weapon.

The damage of the weapon is determined at the beginning of the scenario. Generally, damage is:

- Blunt = d4
- Sharp = d8
- Projectile = d12
- Explosive = d20

So a small knife may be an extra d4 when you roll, but it will still do d8 damage. The same as a d10 sword. The sword is just much easier to hit with.

**NOTE:** Before you start playing go back and read the Suspension Chips chapter!

## Creating and Running a Scenario

*Suspension of Disbelief* is geared towards scenarios that only last one session. The idea behind this game is to put the characters in a story and let them provide the ending.

Here are things you need to create in order to have a scenario:

- 1) **Genre:** What style of world does this story take place?
- 2) **Character creation rule:** What binds the characters together and gives them a starting point in character creation?
- 3) **Introduction:** How do you set up the scenario and get the characters into the story? This introduction should provide a clear direction for the character's to start out.
- 4) **Location:** Where does this story take place? The confines of the location should be clear to the GM. You want to keep the story confined so that the characters have complete freedom in their surroundings without getting lost in the world.
- 5) **NPCs:** Who else inhabits this location? These NPCs should have motivations and stats so that you can easily make decisions for them as the players change the game
- 6) **Timeline:** What would happen if the characters did nothing? The story should come to some sort of end naturally if the characters didn't change things.

### Ending the Game

Do not force the characters to a particular ending! Let them do whatever they want within the confines of the scenario. This is their story and they will end it themselves, for better or worse.

Try not to let the character's die too early, but don't make it look like you are taking it easy on them. And remember that sometimes a character death at the end of a session may not be a bad thing if it happens naturally.

The game is over when the objective in the introduction has been reached, or if the characters have pushed the story to an ending of some sort. As a reward for completing the scenario, each remaining character gets to narrate their characters own epilogue.