

Deadlands 1876

HOUSE RULES

**Last Revised
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Introduction

This document details clarifications, tweaks, and alterations to the *Savage Worlds* rules system.

Systems of Chance

The following rules pertain to systems of chance, such as rolling dice or drawing cards.

Critical Success

If a Wild Card rolls “boxcars” on a Trait roll it is considered a “Critical Success.” Boxcars are defined as both dice turning up maximum value—for instance, a player with a Shooting skill of d10 makes a Trait roll, casting a d10 along with the usual d6 Wild Die. If the d10 comes up “10” and the Wild Die comes up “6,” a Critical Success is achieved.

By its very nature, a roll of boxcars also produces two Aces; however, a Critical Success implies an extra degree of achievement beyond the prospect of multiple raises. For instance, if the Critical Success was for a Shooting roll, the player sets his damage dice to their maximum value and then Aces additional damage from there; on a Knowledge roll, the character learns something unexpectedly helpful; on a Persuade roll, the character wins over a new friend. If no reasonable reward seems appropriate to the situation, the Marshal may award the player with a bonus Fate Chip for the duration of the session.

Critical Failure

If a Wild Card rolls “snake-eyes” on a Trait roll it is considered a “Critical Failure” or a “fumble.” This means that both dice turn up their minimum value—for instance, a player with a Shooting skill of d10 makes a Trait roll, casting a d10 along with the usual d6 Wild Die. If the d10 comes up “1” and the Wild Die comes up “1,” a Critical Failure occurs. A Fate Chip cannot be expended to re-roll a Critical Failure.

Some rules describe specific results of a Critical Failure; for instance, a spell can backlash, a magic item can become drained, or a pistol may chain fire. For Trait rolls with no specific penalty, however, a Critical Failure reflects a high degree of misfortune. Perhaps a Shooting roll goes wild and hits an ally, a Language roll produces a dangerous mistranslation, a Notice roll denies other players the opportunity for careful observation, a Healing roll inflicts additional damage, and so on. If no reasonable penalty seems appropriate to the situation, the Marshal may confiscate a Fate Chip from the unlucky player for the duration of the session.

Dice Modifiers

Any numerical bonus or penalty to a Trait roll is applied to the trait die *only*. The Wild Die is always unmodified. This includes Edge bonuses, Action penalties, etc.

Natural One

When a Trait roll is made and the trait die comes up “1,” it is considered a “natural one,” and cannot be modified to a higher result. In other words, the associated Wild Die must be relied upon to meet the Target Number. For instance, a character with a Fighting skill of d10 using an Improved Trademark Weapon rolls a d10 and a d6 to attack a foe with a Toughness of 3. If the d10 comes up “1,” he may not apply his +2 to make it “3.” He must rely on the Wild Die to be 3 or higher. Of course, unless the roll is a Critical Failure, he may spend a Fate Chip for a second attempt.

Unskilled Attempt

A player making an unskilled attempt does not get a die roll at all—she simply flips a coin. Tails are interpreted as a “1” and heads are a “2.” Although heads may successively Ace, no Wild Die is permitted on an unskilled roll. So an unskilled character wishing to perform emergency surgery better hope she’s about to re-enact the opening of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead!* If the unskilled player actually gets a *raise* by flipping coins, the Marshal may award her with a permanent d4 in that skill.

Serial Rolls

Some actions require a “serial roll.” This means a particular roll must be repeated until it is successful. For instance, breaking down a door may call for a “serial Strength roll,” which means the character must make a Strength roll each turn until he achieves success or gives up. A Critical Failure brings the usual misfortune, but also negates any additional attempts—by any character. (Perhaps the door has become irrevocably jammed.)

Some tasks may call for a “compound serial roll.” This is a serial roll that grows more difficult on each attempt. After each failed roll, the Target Number increases by 2, until it maxes out at TN-12. If this “Last Chance” roll is failed, the action cannot be executed, and the appropriate consequences are applied. For instance, a character may need a compound serial Agility roll vs. TN-8 to keep her balance on a ledge during an earthquake. Her first failed roll results in her flailing her arms wildly, which makes the next roll Agility vs. TN-10. This roll is also failed, which results in a final panicky roll vs. TN-12. Failing this Last Chance, the character falls!

Opposed Rolls vs. Contested Rolls

The official *Savage World* rules for “opposed rolls” are ambiguous and difficult to adjudicate. Sometimes the Marshal may wish to substitute a more simple “contested roll.” When two characters are vying against each other, the one initiating the action rolls the appropriate Trait roll using the other’s relevant Trait as their Target Number. For instance, a character must match her d8 Spirit against a sorcerer’s d12 Spirit in order to break his hold on a fellow adventurer. She therefore needs to roll d8 vs. TN-12.

Drawing a Joker for Initiative

The Joker provides a player with a +2 on *everything* during the round in which it was dealt. This includes all Trait rolls, Damage rolls, Soak rolls, etc. If two Jokers are drawn, the Black Joker beats the Red Joker. (Known as the “Wesley Snipes Rule.”)

Luck Draw

Occasionally, the Marshal may allow a character a “Luck Draw.” To make a Luck Draw, a player names any card except a Joker or the Ace of Spades. He then draws a random card from a shuffled deck. If his named card—or a Joker—comes out, the Luck Draw is successful. If the Ace of Spades is drawn, the Marshal rules a twist of *bad luck*. On rare occasions, the Marshal may broaden the Luck Draw by requesting a specific type of card, a suite, or a particular range. For instance, a character jumps from a train right before it explodes, and the Marshal allows a Luck Draw to grant him a free Soak roll if he draws a Queen or higher. (Though an Ace of Spades is *always* bad luck!)

Fate Roll

Related to a Luck Draw, a Fate Roll allows a character to “tempt fate,” making a Trait roll against a random Target Number determined by the draw of a card, with face cards representing TN-10 and aces TN-11. The red Joker represents an automatic critical success, the black Joker an automatic critical failure. As should be obvious, a Fate Roll favors a high Target Number, so should only be used for unusually difficult tasks that involve a certain degree of luck or randomness. For instance, the outlaws Ben Wade and Charlie Prince decide to evade the law by jumping off a 50’ cliff into a rock-strewn river. The Marshal calls for Agility Fate Rolls—a success lands the character safely in the water, a failure brings 5d6+5 damage. Ben draws a 3 of Clubs, permitting him an easy Agility roll vs. TN-3, but Charlie draws a Jack of Diamonds, giving him a much more difficult Target Number of 10. Sorry, Charlie!

Additional Tokens of Fortune

Certain rewards may be granted to players which allow them to temporarily affect gameplay. These are always single-use items, and are usually represented by a physical token.

Luck Charm

A Luck Charm is a single-use Fate Chip awarded during gameplay for some extraordinary act. Some Charms carry stipulations that reflect their nature; for instance, a Shooting Charm that may only be used to reroll a failed Shooting attempt, or a Soak Charm that may be used as a free Soak token.

Burn Cards

A Burn Card is a playing card which may be spontaneously substituted for an Action Card. For obvious reasons, Burn Cards are usually face cards, and may carry stipulations. For instance, an Ace of Spades that may only be played when another party member has been Incapacitated, or a Suicide King that may only replace a deuce. Burn cards cannot be jokers.

Hole Card

A Hole Card is a single-use token that substitutes for a normal Skill roll. They are especially helpful if the player is “unskilled” at a particular Trait. For instance, a player who spends a few hours conversing with a rugged pioneer might be granted a d6 Survival Hole Card. Even if this player is unskilled in Survival—or perhaps has only a d4 Survival Skill—he may play this Hole Card once in lieu of a normal Survival Skill roll. The Marshal is encouraged to write up Hole Cards on index cards and physically present them to players.

Kicker

A Kicker is a single-use bonus on a specific Trait roll. For instance, reading a book on engineering may grant a player a “+1 Repair Kicker.” Kickers are rarely higher than +2, and

must be played before the roll is made. If the roll is a failure, the Kicker is lost—unless, of course, the player spends a Fate Chip to reroll the result.

Markers

Throughout the course of play, characters may perform actions that benefit certain influential individuals, or perform favors for various agencies and companies. Such actions may be rewarded with a “Connection Marker.” A Marker represents a potential favor, and is rated from d4 to d12. When a character wishes to call in a Marker, she must outline the proper scenario and explain who this could be reasonably accomplished. If the Marshal approves, she rolls the value of the Marker against TN-4. No Wild Die is permitted on this roll, and the Marshal has full discretion to determine the results of a success. Once a Marker has been used—either successfully or unsuccessfully—it decreases a level in value. After a d4 Marker is used, it is depleted, and the character cannot rely on any more favors. (Unless they earn another Marker!)

For instance, Webb Traverse helps out a railroad executive named Cullen Bohannon, and the Marshal awards him a “Connection: Cullen Bohannon d8 Marker.” A few months later, Webb finds himself in a railroad jail, and calls in his Marker by requesting a telegram be sent to Bohannon for help. The Marshal agrees, and Webb rolls a d8, beating TN-4 with a 6. The Marshal decides that Bohannon springs him from jail, but that Marker is now d6. Later that week, Webb tries to wrangle free passage on the Union Pacific, but fails with a 2, reducing his Marker to d4. Finally, Webb asks Bohannon “to borrow” a few sticks of dynamite. He rolls d4, getting a solid 4 that aces for a total of 7. Bohannon gives him the dynamite, but that’s the last time he’ll do Webb a favor—enough’s enough, already!

Note: a Connection Marker is different from the Edge “Connections.” The Edge is more powerful, and offers a character a lifelong connection that must be role-played.

Dramatic Tasks

For clarity, Dramatic Tasks are divided into two categories: Action-Based, and Attempt-Based. Action-Based Dramatic Tasks (Or “Round-Based”) are exactly as described in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook, and require the character to draw Action cards to complete a task in a fixed number of rounds—perhaps they have five rounds to defuse a bomb, or three rounds to save a bleeding patient. An Attempt-Based Dramatic task allows more flexibility, as the character is given an unlimited number of rounds, with success defined as making a certain number of successful rolls. No Action Cards are drawn; however usually there is some Bad Thing happening each round that causes physical damage, spiritual decay, etc. Per the Marshal’s discretion, a raise may count as an additional success, while a critical failure may actually *discount* previous successes!

For instance, Professor Edward “Leviathan” Mallory is attempting to climb out of a burning museum, during which time he takes 1d10 DAM each round until death. The Marshal declares it a 5-Attempt Dramatic Task, with the relevant skill being Climb. Each round Mallory must make a Climb roll verses whatever Target Number is set by the Marshal; in this case, TN-6. The first round, Mallory takes 1d10 = 3 DAM, and makes his Climb Roll. The second round he takes 7 DAM and misses his Climb roll! The third round Mallory takes 5 DAM, but aces his Climb roll with two raises, so the Marshal gives him three successes for a grand total of four, and narrates some awesome feat of daring—a dramatic leap to the suspended skeleton of a pteranodon! The next round he takes only 1 DAM, and makes his Climb roll, so the Marshal declares that the 4-Attempt Dramatic Tasks has been fulfilled!

General Rules

These adjustments have been made to bring a better sense of balance to the game.

Face Cards

Currently, NPCs are considered either Extras or Wild Cards. Wild Cards are treated much like PCs, whereas Extras have no Edges and are slain by a single Wound. I am adding a new class of NPC into the mix—the “Face Card.” Like a Wild Card, a Face Card NPC may possess Hindrances, Edges, and suffers multiple levels of Wounds. However, like an Extra, a Face Card cannot use Fate Chips, and upon Incapacitation is generally considered slain. In keeping with the *Savage World* labeling system, their symbol is a spade: ♠

Grit

Determined by a player’s Rank, Grit is used according to the *Deadlands Reloaded* rules. It adds additional cards to a Huckster’s hand when “dealing with the devil,” it modifies a Guts check, and it occasionally helps when assessing a character’s sanity.

Guts Check vs. Fear Check

Although both types of “check” are based on a character’s Spirit, they are different. A Guts check allows Grit to be used as a modifier, and is generally used to gauge a character’s mental fortitude. The results of a failed Guts roll are determined by the Marshal; but it usually means that a character is Shaken. A Fear check does not get modified by Grit, and usually has magical origins. The results of a failed Fear roll are usually determined by using the Fright Table.

Reading Books

Certain books bestow advantages when studied, usually in the form of learning Powers, acquiring new Knowledge skills, or earning Kickers for Trait rolls. When a particular book confers an advantage, it contains a description as such: “English, 20 hours, +1 Repair Kicker.” The first characteristic is the language of the book, the second is the baseline of how much study time is required, and the third is the benefit bestowed. The study time is always modified by subtracting a roll of the character’s Smart die from the baseline. For instance, a book with a baseline of 20 hours takes a character with d12 Smarts only 20 – 1d12 hours, or 8 to 19 hours, depending on the roll. A book with a baseline of 16 weeks takes a character with a d4 Smarts 12 to 15 weeks. These Smart rolls are made without a Wild Die. Some very complicated or arcane books require a particular baseline Trait to be beneficial. In this case, that prerequisite Trait is listed first: “Analytics d8, English, 24 weeks, +1 Analytics Kicker.”

Skills: Modifications

Knowledge

Knowledge skills for “academic” fields of study such as history, the sciences, the occult, and the humanities should be fairly specific. For instance, Knowledge (Chemistry) rather than Knowledge (Science); or Knowledge (Mormonism) rather than Knowledge (Religion). However, when making a Trait roll for something within that general field of study, the Marshal may allow the Trait to be used at a lower level. Say Dr. Moreau has Knowledge (Biology) d12, and encounters a situation where he needs to make a Chemistry roll. The Marshal may allow this at d10; whereas an Astronomy roll might only be permitted at d6. When advancing, a character may buy a new *related* Knowledge skill at d6 rather than d4. For instance, Dr. Henry Armitage has Knowledge (Voodoo), and wishes to purchase Knowledge (Astrology). Because they are both occult skills, the Marshal allows the new skill to be purchased at d6 rather than the traditional d4.

This bonus only applies if the existing Trait is d8 or higher. This rule applies to languages only if they are related—such as Spanish and Italian, or German and Dutch.

Edges: Modifications

Combat Reflexes

The standard “Combat Reflexes” Edge confers a +2 bonus to recover from being Shaken. The new version simply allows a player to use his Grit as a modifier on the Shaken roll. However, a “natural one” still results in a Shaken character.

Hard to Kill

Because the House Rules have discarded Wound penalties, “Hard to Kill” now confers a +2 bonus on all Incapacitation rolls. “Improved Hard to Kill” remains the same.

Wild Card Rank

Rank Levels

While I have no issue with the idea of an Advance every 5 Experience Points, I believe that the upper levels of Rank are too quickly obtained. I originally thought to simply reduce the amount of XP rewarded for each game to 2 XP/session, but I like the idea of gaining new Advances every other session. So, I simply increased the number of XP to reach the higher levels.

This is the new Rank Table:

XP	Rank	Grit
0–19	Novice	0
20–39	Seasoned	1
40–69	Veteran	2
70–99	Heroic	3
100+	Legendary	4

Increasing Attributes

Once per Rank a player may use an Advance to increase an Attribute by one die. This is described in the standard rules. However, a player may also increase an Attribute by “saving up” and “cashing in” two normal Advances (10 XP).

Damage & Healing

These rules pertain to the bloody aftermath of combat.

Wound Levels

The Regulators do a lot of fighting, and if the *Savage Worlds* damage system were realistic, few characters would make it to Veteran Rank! Because I prefer *Deadlands* to retain a heroic flair, tabulated damage is considered less severe than established in the rules, and injuries are more readily healed. In other words, the three “Wound levels” represent fatigue, bruises, palpable hits, bullet grazes, and so forth. With this in mind, there are no penalties associated for Wound levels. They are to be treated more like standard “hit points.” However, the Marshal may still inflict penalties depending on the circumstances—for instance, a successful called shot to a character’s hand may incur a –2 Action penalty for the remainder of the combat session. Additionally, NPCs

may have more than the standard five “S/W3/I” Wound levels. For instance, a very large beast or a supernatural demon may have additional Wound levels, indicated thusly: “S/W6/I.”

Incapacitation, Injury & Death

Serious damage is marked by Incapacitation, which requires a Vigor roll to gauge the severity of the Injury and whether or not the character is Bleeding Out. This table replaces the standard Incapacitation table used in the *Savage Worlds* system.

Vigor roll	Result
Critical Failure	Immediate death! No Healing permitted. Welcome to Heaven, Hell, or Harrowed.
Failure	Bleeding Out. Consult “Bleeding Out” table in <i>Savage World</i> rules. If character survives, receives a permanent Injury.
Success	Unconscious. Receives a temporary Injury. Must have successful Healing performed to regain consciousness.
Raise	Last Stand! Remains in the fight at W3, but receives an immediate temporary Injury.
Critical Success	Avoids the killing blow! Remains in the fight at W3!

In order to determine the nature of the Injury, a card is drawn from a full deck and the Revised Injury Table is consulted. A permanent Injury is exactly that, and may only be mended by Greater Healing or Marshal’s discretion. A temporary Injury persists for 14 days minus 1dVigor. For instance, a character with d8 Vigor receiving a temporary Injury heals in 14–1d8 days.

Soak

Although it makes sense that a Soak roll would favor a character with a high Vigor score, the expenditure of a Fate Chip to permit such a roll seems unfair for characters with low Vigor, who must essentially “luck out” to Soak even a single Wound level. Therefore the expenditure of a Fate Chip on a Soak roll *automatically* reduces one Wound level. After the Soak is declared and the Wound level subtracted, a Vigor roll is made against a Target Number of 8. A success Soaks a second Wound level, with every raise Soaking an additional level. This compromise makes Soak more beneficial to all, but still favors vigorous characters with a higher chance of Soaking more damage.

Healing

Healing Skill vs. Healing Power

The Healing Skill represents a character’s skill in administering first aid. It may only be used during the “golden hour” after a Wound is received. However, the arcane Power of “Healing” may be used at any time before Natural Healing occurs.

Related Skills

A character may take additional skills in the arts of healing. “Medicine” allows a character to treat long-term injuries, fosters the Natural Healing process, and grants a basic understanding of common ailments and general physiology. “Surgery” represents traumatic procedures and operations, which are judged on a case-by-case basis. Both are detailed under “*Deadlands* Rules—New Skills, Edges, & Hindrances.”

Successive Wounds

A character's current Wound level is considered cumulative, and must be treated with a single Healing roll. For instance, a character receives a single Wound from a bullet. That Wound may be Healed individually, as long as no other Wounds are received prior to the Healing attempt. However, if that character receives an additional Wound during the same round—or another Wound prior to being treated for the first—the Healer must address the overall condition with one attempt. Of course, the infliction of a fresh Wound always permits a new Healing roll.

Multiple Healers

An injured character is allowed a single Healing attempt each Action round. A failed Healing roll disallows a second try from the same Healer—unless, of course, a Fate Chip is expended for a re-roll. Multiple Healers may make individual attempts to Heal the same target, one attempt per round; but once the injury has been successfully Healed, it cannot be improved by additional treatment.

Natural Healing

At the start of each day, a wounded character is permitted a Vigor roll. A success heals one Wound level, with each raise healing another. If the character is being treated with the Medicine skill, a single practitioner may assist the Healing process by making a Medicine roll. Each success/raise adds +1 to the wounded character's Vigor roll.

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