

WITCHCRAFT

Second Edition - FAQ

Qualities and Drawbacks

Q: Our group objects to the cost of the Luck Quality/Drawback. Three points is just too high. Given that you can only use the Luck bonus a limited number of times a game, and it only grants +1 to one die roll per level, one point per level seems about right. What was your reasoning behind 3 points per level?

A: Good question. Our feeling was that WC was generally a "lower power" Unisystem game in the supernatural sense. The supernatural was unusual and dangerous, and groups that engaged in too much blantant combat, as opposed to investigation and intrigue, were bound to get hurt -- bad. Thus, a bonus to a die roll that may be used every game session was a big deal.

That said, three points may be a bit too much. If you like, modify the cost down and allow the Luck Quality/Drawback to play a larger role. We have adopted this view for Armageddon -- a much more action oriented game in which the supernatural is much more common and blantant. As always, it's your game. Play it as you wish.

Q: The text of the Status Quality lists only the extremes. Could you provide some values for what each Status level actually represents, and just as importantly, what tangible benefits are gained by a given Status level. Also, how exactly is Status _used_ ?

A: Status does not have as much weight in, say, 20th century American as it does in Medieval Europe (or Feudal Japan), but its still comes into play. Most U.S. citizens are Status 0, unless they have enough money, which confers them some measure of status. Respected

professionals (doctors, attorneys -- the latter maybe less respected than they used to be, but still considered to be knowledgeable in an important field) would have +1 or +2, frex. Local political figures, well-known journalists, and minor celebrities would have a Status of +2 or +3. And so on. People with unconventional professions (street performer, carnie) could have a -1 Status; anybody with a criminal record would have a -2 to -3 status in our society.

As to how it is used: Status may affect some rolls (like Smooth-Talking, Intimidation or Seduction -- the "Do you know who I am?" factor). But it's largely a background tool. Low-status people have considerable more problems functioning in society. They are more likely to be harassed by the authorities. Doors are closed to them. High status people can get away with more; their word carries more weight.

Skills

Q: Could you provide a bit more detail on the meaning of certain skill levels?

A: Sure, here's a handy reference table:

Level 1-2: beginner, amateur, part-timer.

Level 3-4: proficient, competent, professional.

Level 5: All the basics have been mastered.

Level 6+: Varying levels of mastery.

Combat

Q: One thing I'm unclear on with the standard duck for cover. Do you make one roll which lasts the whole Turn, or do you make repeated rolls against each attack at normal multi-action penalties?

A: Whichever works best for you. If you want more detail at the expense of time, allow for multiple rolls; otherwise, use one roll result against all the attacks. Multi-action penalties apply only if the circumstances warrant them -- if the character is ducking for cover from a volley of fire coming from the same direction, no penalties should apply -- the character is effectively dodging once. If the character is "dancing" around multiple shots, a la Matrix, then penalties should apply. You could have a single roll, then apply the penalties to the result, rather than rolling multiple times.

Q: I'm a bit confused about the multiple action rules and the rules for multiple shots in a round. For example, if a character fires 3 shots at a zombie with his semi-auto pistol is this 3 separate actions (no penalty on the first then -2 then -4 on the others) or is it one action but with -1 on the second shot and -2 on the third. How do you guys approach a multiple shots per round situation?

A: The multi-action rules on WC, page 134 are intended for actions other than semi-automatic fire. Running and throwing, swinging from chandeliers while reloading and scanning the room for targets, screaming coherent instructions for defusing the boom while grappling with a zombie -- those are the kind of things that involve multi-action rules.

Semi-automatic fire has its own set of rules, those found on WC, page 136. Successive pulls of a trigger involve much less activity, and thus suffer a lower cumulative penalty (barring the whole recoil thing). The basic intention is that each trigger pull requires a separate Task roll. You can play it with a single roll and successive penalties, but that may result in some meta-gaming where the player squeezes off more shots if his Task roll is a high one, and less if his roll is lower (and thus shots start missing sooner). That can be countered by strictly enforcing the Intentions phase of the sequence of combat (see AFMBE, page 98), and requiring the number of shots be specified there, but I know some folks don't like that approach.

Q. Given the multiaction rule (0/-2/-4/etc.), there is no incentive to declare a lower number of actions. No matter how many you declare, the first one remains at full strength (no penalty). This seems like it would encourage serious multi-action attempts and a near super-hero type combat result. What is your experience and do you have any suggestions for curtailing multiaction declarations?

A. One attack and one defense action per turn is the average in our experience. Few players go for more than that, except for things like gunplay, which allows for multiple shots more easily. On the other hand, we are fairly unforgiving -- if you fail a Task or Test badly enough (say total result of 0 or less) something very bad happens to you. That discourages taking on Tasks or Tests with significant negative modifiers on a regular basis. The Rule of 1 is a particular killer in those situations.

The reason for the multiaction rule is that determining how many actions one is going to perform in advance is unrealistic. Nobody (including the GM) knows how many times a character is going to have to defend against attacks, for example (the enemy might go down after the PC's attack, for one). An alternative rule, say one that penalizes the first attack based on how many are being taken (as some systems have employed), proves unworkable in the face of that.

If you find multiactions are getting abusive, here are some solutions we've used in the past:

You fail, you stop: If an action is a failure (i.e., the result is less than 9 after modifiers), no more actions can be attempted on that Turn.

Off-balance: If a character attempts more than three actions in one Turn, he starts the next Turn with the penalty for four actions (-8) to represent the fact that his flurry of movement has left him off-balance. Until he stops and catches his breath, no more actions are possible.

Success Level: The maximum amount of actions possible is equal to the Success Level of the initial roll. This doesn't help much for highly skilled characters, but it prevents some players from rolling multiple times hoping they are lucky.

One-Roll Rule: The player makes one roll, and any follow-up actions use that roll for default, modified as per the multiple action rules. So, if Joey Kung-Fu rolls a 6 (before adding skill, Attribute and/or modifiers), his next action works off a roll of 4, the one after that a 2, and the third one a roll of 0. This reduces die-rolling and keeps the game going. Clearly, the number of actions should be declared before the roll is made to keep the player from parleying a high initial roll into more actions.

Magic

Q. What, exactly, can a Gifted person "see"? Can Magician A look at Magician B and see and that Magician B has an Essence Pool roughly three times the size of Magician A's?

A. The Gifted can sense (not really "see") Essence in all its forms. Since the universe in WitchCraft is made up of Essence, only unusual or intense manifestations are apparent. Usually, how much detail the Gifted can see should be determined by a Simple Perception Test, adjusted by Success Level. A character could be a sense of the "soul strength" of a person ("normal," "weak," "roughly as powerful as your own," or "more powerful than any you've seen," frex), but he shouldn't get an exact "Essence-meter" reading, no matter how good the Perception Test was.

Q. The Gifted "sense" supernatural, does this mean that when a Gifted walks into a room can he scan the crowd and pick out the non-humans (my player's favorite thing to do: walk into a club, find the non-human, walk up and say "So, supernatural huh? How's that working out for you?", usually followed by a crap-load of Soulfire).

A. Yes. Of course, the patrons may find it funny that somebody is intently staring at them (it requires con-

centration, and it's not something that can be done casually). Any supernatural being would also have a chance to see the build-up of Essence that a Soulfire blast would require (unless the character's Channeling was so high he could do it instantly). That kind of habit would get the PC killed in a lot of situations...

Q. The text of the Gifted quality also says that emotional states can be "seen" in a person's aura, how precise is this? Would it give a character the equivalent of Empathy in GURPS, or does it only give a very broad overview (i.e. only extreme emotions would show)? In the description of the Soulfire Invocation it is implied that these senses are exact enough to allow a Gifted character to dodge an otherwise invisible attack.

A. Extreme emotional states cause enough of a flare-up to be detectable. Fury, despair, terror, etc. Mild unease or sadness would not. Soulfire is the Essence equivalent of a flamethrower, Essence in raw form. Unobtrusive it is not.

Q. In the WitchCraft rulebook, it mentions under the Shielding Invocation that "A shield can be woven around another person, but at great Essence cost." Has anyone come up with a rough guesstimate or equation to determine just /how/ much Essence shielding another person costs, or am I missing something (always a possibility)?

A. There is no secret formula. The difficulty arises here from the sloppy use of an adjective. Essentially, shielding someone else costs the same as shielding the Mage herself and it carries the same drawback: any Essence spent cannot be recovered until the shield is dropped/used up. Thus, the "great" cost is the fact that the Mage must use Essence from her own personal source rather than consecrated items or the like. If the Mage is also maintaining a Shield around herself, she will have little "free" Essence to use for Invocations, etc.

Q. What does a creature with Gifted/supernatural senses "see" when he looks at a an Invisible Essence Shielded character? Does he see nothing (which is a dead giveaway that there's a shield

there), does he see through the shield like it wasn't there (negating the benefit of blocking Essence-based senses) or does he see a "false" aura which makes the shielded character look mundane?

A. An Invisible Shield comes off as a normal human being's aura. Deeper scans (like the Insight Invocation) may reveal the existence of a shield, but Gifted senses would not.

Q. How does the crowd's inability to dismiss the successful use of the Invocation factor into a mage's use of the Shielding Invocation?

A. Shields are both ongoing and "active" -- when repelling an attack, they "flare up," working in effect as a newly cast spell. That's where the Crowd Effect can ruin the mage's day. The event is simultaneous -- if the bullets bounce off in front of a crowd, the first reaction is going to be "I can't believe it!" which results in an influx of negative Essence that will drain the magician. If he's got enough Essence to survive the draining, then it's all over -- the crowd "accepts" the event, and usually gets scared, which is just dandy. It's the initial drain that gets you.

Monsters

Q. Are Vampyres able to sniff out Essence to at least get a general idea of how large a person's Essence pool was, so that they could spend their time going after Artists, Old Souls, Dreamers, and the occasional Seer.

A. Vampyres have the same senses as Gifted humans, which includes a rough measure of the Essence pool of people. They can gauge how "nutritious" a person is likely to be (within a 10-Essence "margin of error").