

Hero Creation

The heroes of the **Dark•Matter** campaign setting are drawn from all walks of life. Though they seem no different from those who live alongside them, these heroes have skills, powers, or experiences that set them apart. Players should create heroes for **Dark•Matter** in the same way they would for any other **ALTERNITY** game, using the rules in the *Player's Handbook*. In addition, the campaign setting adds many new elements, including skills, perks and flaws, careers, psionic powers, and Arcane Magic and Faith FX abilities.

New Broad Skill: Lore

The arcane secrets of the ages and the mindless ravings of fools are both the province of this broad skill, which covers all the forms of hidden, secret, and privileged knowledge. In earlier times, much of this knowledge was the property of shamans, wise men, witches, and state religions. Even in modern times, telling the gold from the dross is difficult because so much of the information available is bogus.

Lore grants a hero a broad overview of parapsychology, believers' accounts and skeptics' rebuttals, occult beliefs and practices, psychic research, ghost stories, important documents and finds, and the major personalities involved in the pursuit of Greater Truths beyond conventional science. Most of all, the hero understands the arguments against conventional scientific explanations.

Below are two of Lore's five specialty skills.

New Specialty Skill: Conspiracy Theories

The hero with this skill has a working knowledge of the most widely known and most frequently postulated conspiracy theories. Whether it's the JFK assassination, the Bavarian Illuminati, the Freemasons, or the CIA, he knows who they are and what they are suspected of. A simple success is usually enough to provide some basic information, unless the topic is particularly obscure.

Researching in this field requires a great deal of time, and *conspiracy theories* skill checks cannot be made to acquire information more than once per game session or once per game week, at the Gamemaster's discretion.

The Gamemaster should also consider using conspiracy dice when determining success with this skill (see *Chapter 9: Running a Dark•Matter Campaign*).

- *Seeing the Puzzle*: At rank 4, a conspiracy theorist can put together some of the pieces some of the time. Once per adventure, the player may make a *conspiracy theories skill* check at a +3 step penalty (this check requires no special research or time commitment). With a success, the hero learns a piece of useful (and not particularly apparent) information from the Gamemaster.
- *Clarity of Vision*: At rank 8, a hero with this skill has a pretty good idea of who's who, and who's a fraud. On a successful skill check, he gains one valuable insight into a single conspiracy being investigated or uncovers a previously overlooked connection.

New Specialty Skill: Occult Lore

This skill provides a hero with background knowledge of myths, monsters, urban legends, astrology, numerology, folklore, and the basic facts of the world of the supernatural. It also provides knowledge of the history of supernatural events, what forms ghosts and hauntings take, and how spells of various traditions are usually cast and manifested. In many cases, no skill check is required for the basics of the paranormal. A successful skill check allows a hero to identify a particularly unusual creature, person, legend, or book, at the Gamemaster's discretion, or at least to relate it to similar legends. A Good or Amazing result on a skill check simply provides more information.

Prediction: At rank 4, the hero may use *occult lore* to make predictions about the future of himself or others. This can take the form of astrological horoscopes, numerological analysis, tarot readings, or any other ritual of the player's choice. A simple skill check is required, modified by the time period to be predicted. If the hero attempts to predict events within the next few hours, a +1 step penalty applies. Events within a few days apply a +2 step penalty. Events a week or more into the future result in a +3 step penalty or worse, at the Gamemaster's discretion.

An Ordinary success results in vague but generally accurate information (much like a typical newspaper horoscope). A Good result is either accurate or specific (at the Gamemaster's option), while an Amazing success is both accurate and specific. Of course, even the best predictions tend to be cryptic and sometimes misleading or difficult to interpret. In any case, the attempt requires d4+1 hours to complete.

At higher ranks, the hero becomes more skilled in predicting the future. At rank 8, the hero receives a -1 step bonus to *occult lore* skill checks used for the purpose of prediction. This bonus improves to -2 at rank 12.

New Perk: Well Traveled

Cost 4, PER, Conscious

The hero has acquaintances in many remote locations that might act as contacts for him. Whenever he travels to a remote or foreign location, he may make a perk check to "remember" one of these acquaintances. With any success, he locates an individual who serves as a contact (Information, Resource, or Expert, at the player's choice), though a +1 step penalty applies to any skill check used to solicit assistance. The acquaintance may only be utilized in this manner once, though he may be "remembered" again in subsequent visits with another successful perk check. The hero may only attempt to "remember" one contact in any given location in any single adventure or game session (Gamemaster's discretion).

If the perk check results in a Critical Failure, the hero's familiarity with the location backfires and he suffers a +1 step penalty to all Personality-based skill checks until he leaves the area (similar to the Infamy flaw).

New Flaw: Rampant Paranoia

+2 Bonus Skill Points, PER

The hero suffers from frequent bouts of persecution complex and paranoia and suspects even other heroes of working against him. In cases where the hero must trust someone else, the player must roll a Personality feat check. If the check succeeds, the hero overcomes his doubts and can act rationally. If the check fails, the hero is suspicious and suffers a +1 step penalty to all actions for d6 hours. With a Critical Failure, the hero falls into a delusional state and becomes convinced that "everyone is out to get him" until he makes a successful *Resolvental resolve* skill check (one attempt per day).

Combat Spec Career: Soldier of Fortune

This individual may once have belonged to a military organization but is now a mercenary, selling his skills to the highest bidder. He's no high-paid assassin, though he probably has few compunctions about killing, if it pays the bills.

The soldier of fortune should consider additional combat skills to improve his value in a fight, while training in the Stealth or Investigate specialty skills opens up the possibility of high-paying network. More ranks in Interaction-*bargain* can help negotiate a fair price for his talents. He might also consider Teach-*combat spec* if he's looking for some quieter, less dangerous work.

Signature Equipment: 9mm pistol, 9mm SMG, survival gear.

Skill Package: Unarmed-*brawl*; Modern-*pistol*, *SMG*; Stamina-*endurance*; Movement; Survival; Interaction-*bargain*, *intimidate*. Cost: 33 points.

Suggested Perks: Reputation.

Suggested Flaws: Code of Honor, Infamy, Old Injury.

Diplomat Career: Psychic

The psychic has only limited psionic powers but supplements them with deft Interaction and Deception skills. Though there are plenty of frauds in the field, psychic heroes have real power. Of course, to the average observer, such individuals appear no different from the majority of so-called "psychics." After all, smart psychics learn to hide their gifts.

A psychic begins the game with limited ESP skills; improving these skills is a good idea for the psychic hero's first few achievement points. The hero should remember that he has only a limited number of psionic energy points to spend, and relying too heavily on mindwalking skills could be dangerous. Therefore, improvement of Personality-based skills is also advised—all the better to talk your way out of a fight when your psionics fail you.

Signature Equipment: Tarot cards, runes, crystals.

Skill Package: ESP-*empathy 2*, *precognition*; Lore-*occult lore*; Deception-*bluff*; Interaction-*bargain*, *interview*. Cost: 33 points.

Suggested Perks: Observant, Psionic Awareness, Superior Talent.

Suggested Flaws: Wild Talent.

Free Agent Career: Field Agent

While policymakers and secret societies may plot and plan all they like in the comfort of their offices, someone has to actually go out into the world, find out what's going on, and report back. The agencies and conspiracies to which these agents report have a vested interest in learning about and manipulating the events of the modern world—and that's the other half of the field operative's work. Field agents are the men and women who travel, interrogate, and pursue the facts on behalf of a government or other patron organization. (Note that merely having this career does not automatically elevate a hero to the Institute rank of the same name.)

A field agent should expand into the remainder of the Investigate skills, namely *interrogate* and *track*, as well as Knowledge-*deduce*. Depending on how much time an operative spends trailing suspects, Vehicle Operation-*land vehicle* and *air vehicle* may be worthwhile, or Stealth-*shadow*. Some field agents pick up Medical Science-*psychology* and work as profilers, creating descriptions of criminal suspects based on the agent's knowledge of human behavior. Those who work in codebreaking should learn Investigate-*cryptology* and Computer Science-*programming*.

Signature Equipment: 9mm pistol, profession identification papers, rental car, handcuffs, cell phone, flashlight.

Skill Package: Modern-*pistol*, Knowledge-*computer*, *deduce*; Law-*enforcement*, Admin-*bureaucracy*; Investigate-*interrogate*. Cost: 35 points.

Suggested Perks: Powerful Ally (employer).

Suggested Flaws: Powerful Enemy (enemy of employer).

Tech Op Career: Xenoengineer

The xenoengineer has formal training in physics, engineering, and reverse engineering, the process of re-creating a machine's schematics from a working example of the finished product. He takes apart technology captured or stolen from others, whether those others are national enemies or alien species, or both.

A xenoengineer needs to improve his *xenoengineering* skill as quickly as possible, since the skill checks involved in examining such devices often require stiff situation die penalties. In addition, he might want to pick up Computer Science, Physical Science-*chemistry*, and further Technical Science-*technical knowledge* ranks. System Operation specialty skills can also come in handy. If an employer or a contact can teach him Knowledge-*language (alien)*, so much the better.

Signature Equipment: Voltmeter, ammeter, batteries, fireproof suit, protective goggles, chemical analysis kit, metallurgical analysis kit.

Skill Package: Knowledge-*computer*, *deduce*; Physical; System-*engineering*, Technical-*repair 2*, *knowledge*, *xenoengineering 2*. Cost: 37 points.

Suggested Perks: Alien Artifact, Gearhead, High Tech.

Suggested Flaws: Alien Artifact, Obsessed.

FX in Dark•Matter

The **Dark•Matter** campaign setting includes brand-new rules for using Arcane Magic and Faith FX in your game. These rules, taken from the upcoming **ALTERNITY** product *Beyond Science: A Guide to FX* (by Sean Reynolds), integrate FX into the core **ALTERNITY** skill mechanic.

The six broad skills of FX in **Dark•Matter** are Diabolism, Enochian, Hermeticism, Monotheism, Shamanism, and Voodoo. Each broad skill has a selection of specialty skills (called "spells" or "miracles") appropriate to the theme, from Diabolism-*tongue of the damned* to Voodoo-*ayza's juju*.