

## 3 Skills

Characters in **Tales of the Iron League** are distinguished from ordinary citizens by their expertise in the skills required to succeed as an adventurer. Peasants usually know a great deal about working the land, and a silk merchant doubtless has the experience to recognize the finer points of different fabrics, but these skills are unlikely to improve an Iron League member's chance of survival.

This chapter describes the skills available to characters and how they are used while adventuring. A future supplement will cover rules for skills that NPCs may be able to use; for instance, an adventurer may have a difficult time crafting a suit of armor, but for the right expert, such work would be routine.

### Skill Checks

When a character attempts to perform a skillful task, the player rolls 1d20 and compares the result to the relevant ability score. Rolling lower is better; rolling higher is worse. To determine success, subtract the result of the die roll from the ability score; this number is called the **number of successes**. A negative number of successes means the attempt fails, but in some cases there are degrees of failure, so knowing how much you failed by may be important as well.

Positive numbers of successes fall into the following success categories:

# of Successes	Category	Description
0-1	Minimal	Can perform most basic tasks
2-4	Good	Succeeds for all but the most difficult tasks
5-9	Great	Performs complex tasks with high proficiency; excels at basic tasks
10+	Fantastic	Accomplishes the nigh-impossible; passes lesser tests with flying colors

**IMPORTANT:** Very basic, elementary tasks shouldn't require a skill check. The Game Moderator (GM) should ask for a check only if they think a competent person might fail and that there is a reasonable chance of this happening.

Having a good ability score is important, because the higher the score, the easier it is to roll below it. However, it's also important to have training, because a highly skilled character with an average ability score can succeed at tasks that an unskilled and novice adventurer cannot. You don't have to be proficient in a skill to attempt actions related to that skill, but it helps!

The skill checks described above apply when the character is unopposed by any other being; their success or failure depends only on how well they perform. Sometimes, however, success or failure will depend on another creature, where the character's efforts are countered by an opponent. This is called an **opposed skill check**, and it works a little differently.

Both the character and the opposing creature make skill checks and count successes. The one with the greater number of successes prevails. Degrees of success are dictated by how many more successes the character achieves than their opponent; degrees of failure are determined by how many fewer.

Some opposed skill checks use the same skill (e.g., a muscular Fighter struggles to free themself from the coils of a *giant constrictor snake*, so character and monster each makes a **Feats of Might** check). Other times they may use different skills (e.g., a slippery Halfling tries to squeeze out of the same monster's embrace, but they use **Feats of Agility** while the snake still uses Feats of Might). As a general rule, if neither individual achieves any successes, the status quo persists – but refer to the specifics of the attack being made.

Each character class begins the game with proficiency in certain skills. Players can also customize their characters, both during character creation and during advancement at higher levels, to gain additional skill proficiencies.

There are four levels of skill proficiency. Having a skill at proficiency level 1 grants a +4 bonus to any ability score for the purpose of making skill checks. As a character's proficiency increases, so does their skill bonus, according to the following table:

Skill Level	Skill Bonus	Minimum Character Level
1	+4	1 <sup>st</sup>
2	+7	4 <sup>th</sup>
3	+9	7 <sup>th</sup>
4	+10	10 <sup>th</sup>

Normally when a character learns a new skill, they begin at proficiency level 1; however, if they are advancing to the necessary level and have enough custom points available, they may buy multiple skill levels at a cost of 2 custom points per level.

### Helping

Some tasks can be performed by more than one person. If two characters work together to attempt to disable a trap, they may pool their expertise to try for a better chance of success. The GM determines how many people can assist with a task. Some jobs are so small and focused that they can only be done by a single person, while large projects could potentially involve the entire party of adventurers.

For group efforts, the players designate one of their number as the primary; anybody else who wants to pitch in is a helper. The helpers each roll the skill check. For each helper who achieves a minimal or better success, the primary adds +1 to their ability score for the skill check. For each helper who achieves a fantastic success, the primary adds +2 to their ability score. But if a helper fails by five or more, the efforts to help get in the way, and the primary subtracts -1 from their ability score for the purpose of the skill check.

All helpers roll their checks at the same time; other characters cannot join in if the results of the helpers are poor. Once the final adjustments to the primary's ability score are determined, the primary makes the final skill check roll.

One exception to group efforts may be using Feats of Might. If two or more can effectively work on a task that requires brute force, the GM may decide that nobody is a helper or a primary; everybody pitches in equally. Each participating character makes the skill check, and the GM adds up their successes to determine if the task was a success. The GM may rule that up to two characters may attempt to add their successes to get the five needed to force open a reinforced door. However, shifting a huge stone sarcophagus lid may require twenty successes or more, demanding a true team effort and possibly the use of tools!

### Skills and Ability Scores

The skills commonly used in this game are detailed in the next section. Each skill has a default ability score; most checks will use that score when a character attempts a skill check. However, in some cases a different ability score is more appropriate for the roll.

For instance, Stealth skill checks are typically made using Dexterity, because being agile and body-aware is an essential part of hiding and being quiet. However, suppose an adventurer is fleeing through a dinner party and attempts to avoid pursuing constables, not by ducking down behind furniture, but by blending in with the other guests and attempting to insinuate themselves into a conversation. This arguably should be a Charisma check, even though it is still a Stealth skill check.

The GM and players should discuss this as situations come up. In general, the GM should allow the player wide latitude when they argue that a particular ability score is most appropriate for any given skill check. If a player thinks their character's Strength ability score is the most appropriate for attempting to Intimidate a goblin, and

they argue that dramatically bending an iron bar into a pretzel is about as intimidating as it gets, let them roll the dice! The player needs to make a convincing case, however, and the GM is the final arbiter.

In many cases, more than one skill could apply to a task. The act of climbing up a rope, for instance, is commonly defined as a Feat of Agility, but a character with a **Profession** of sailor could argue that they had to climb the rigging every day at sea, and that skill should apply to this particular task.

Just as with which ability score to use, the GM should also offer leeway for players to define what their skills allow them to do. The players should make a reasonable argument for which skill they think should apply, and if that argument passes the smell test, the GM should allow it.

**Example:** *Dondra the Dwarf and Theezil the Thief are crouching in a horizontal ventilation shaft, looking down on an evil temple through an iron grating high in the wall. They have hatched a plan to rescue Prince Purefoy, who is strapped to the altar and nervously awaiting his ritual slaughter by wicked chanting priests.*

*First, Theezil will quietly creep up to the grating and use their skill with tools to quietly unlock it. Then both Theezil and Dondra will sling their belts around a nearby cable and zipline down, dropping among the evil cultists and taking them by surprise! They put this plan into action.*

*Theezil worms their way right up to the edge of the grating. The GM decides this requires a Stealth check. Theezil's Dexterity is 14, but Thieves are proficient in Stealth 1. For this skill check, Theezil's effective Dexterity is  $14 + 4 = 18$ . Theezil rolls an 18 – not a great roll, but it equals the target ability score for 0 successes. This is a minimal success.*

*Under other circumstances, the GM might decide that a watchful enemy in the temple might see Theezil and sound the alarm. However, the cultists are distracted by their chanting and the ongoing ritual, so Theezil reaches the grating undetected and starts to work. They pull out their thieves' tools and start to work on picking the lock that secures the grating. They roll a 12 this time.*

*Fortunately, this is another skill in which Theezil is proficient – Mechanisms 1 – but it's based on Intelligence instead of Dexterity. Theezil's Intelligence is 11, to which they add the +4 bonus for skill proficiency level 1. They only needed to roll under a 15, so they have beaten the check by 3 – a good success. Theezil manages to unlock the grating and quietly swings it out of the way.*

*Next, the ziplining. Theezil loops their belt around the cable and leaps out into space, letting their body weight slide them down the line towards the terrible ritual going on down below. The GM decides this is a Feat of Agility, another Dexterity-based skill, so Theezil's target number is again 18. This time they roll a 5, succeeding by 13!*

*This is a fantastic success. The GM rules that Theezil has nimbly zipped down the line and let go at the perfect moment, landing with catlike grace atop the altar itself, carefully not stepping on the bewildered prince, with dagger drawn and at the ready!*

*Now it's Dondra's turn. They also loop their belt around the cable and swing down the line. The player argues to the GM that as Dondra is so muscularly built and their weight is a strain on their arms and shoulders, this check should really be a Feat of Might – a skill in which Dondra is proficient.*

*The GM allows this. Dondra has a Strength of 13 and has the skill at level 1, so their target number is  $13 + 4 = 17$ . Dondra rolls the check, and... oh no, a 20! Dondra fails to zipline down the cable, and the GM must quickly decide what the consequence of failure will be.*

*The GM rules that rather than causing Dondra to lose their grip and fall, their belt snags on the cable midway down, and poor Dondra is left dangling twenty feet above a mob of furious cultists. Just as bad,*

*Theezil is on the altar, all by themself, surrounded by evil priests whose surprise will not last for long! What to do?*

The available skills are summarized in the table below:

Table 3-1: TOTIL Skill Summary

Skill	Default Primary Attribute	Secondary Attributes
Build	Intelligence	Strength, Dexterity
Convince	Charisma	Intelligence
Deceive	Charisma	Wisdom
Feats of Agility	Dexterity	
Feats of Might	Strength	
Healing	Wisdom	Intelligence
Hearing	Wisdom	
Intimidate	Charisma	Strength
Intuition	Wisdom	
Knowledge	Intelligence	
Mechanisms	Intelligence	Dexterity
Perform	Charisma	Dexterity
Profession	varies	
Seacraft	Intelligence	Wisdom, Strength, Dexterity
Seeing	Wisdom	
Shenanigans	Dexterity	
Stealth	Dexterity	Charisma
Stonecraft	Intelligence	Wisdom, Strength
Streetcraft	Intelligence	Dexterity, Charisma, Wisdom
Turn Undead	Charisma	
Woodcraft	Intelligence	Wisdom

## Skill Descriptions

This section provides a description of each skill and examples of how to apply levels of success. Where the use of a skill may apply to the fast-moving action in an encounter, guidelines are provided for the GM to adjudicate how this might work; the GM is the final arbiter. Refer to Chapter 7 for more information on how encounters work.

### *Build*

**Default Attribute:** Intelligence – for planning and designing.

**Alternative Attributes:** Strength – for forging, hauling, and working with tools. Dexterity – for intricate work that requires a steady hand.

**Description:** The Build skill is used to create and repair objects worked from stone, brick, wood, metal, leather, cloth, or other building materials. It applies to creating or repairing large structures, weapons and armor, simple machines, garments, and any object with few moving parts. It generally does not involve small and intricate moving parts; these are covered by the **Mechanisms** skill.

The GM determines the tools and materials needed to do the job as well as the time required. Exceeding the necessary success level reduces the time taken to complete the task and may also increase the quality of the product. Most uses of the Build skill take too long to perform in encounters, but when a GM rules that a short duration usage might apply – removing a crucial pin that might weaken a structure, for instance – the character

would use a standard action that triggers **attacks of opportunity**. If this skill is used as a perceptive sense, it is a basic action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity. Refer to Chapter 7 for more information about attacks of opportunity.

**Example Difficulties:**

- Minimal Success: Building a fence; mending a brick wall; sharpening a dagger; cutting and piecing together a simple robe; throwing a functional pot
- Good Success: Building a simple bridge; crafting a shield; making simple shoes; repairing a windmill shaft; blowing a glass bottle
- Great Success: Making a new mace; creating a new gown; building a sturdy cottage; forging a working plow blade; carving a dugout canoe
- Fantastic Success: Making a new suit of chainmail; creating a new tiara; building an ornate chapel; carving a marble bust; building a rowboat

*Convince*

**Default Attribute:** Charisma – for using charm and personality to win people over.

**Alternative Attributes:** Intelligence – for laying out well-reasoned arguments.

**Description:** A character uses the Convince skill when they try to sway the actions or opinions of others by using their likeability to appeal to reason. This skill applies to diplomatic negotiations, earnest bartering, or just making a good first impression.

Paladins can also use the Convince skill to try to employ magic items with the *cleric* property. In this case, as a standard action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity, the Paladin rolls a Convince check, and if their number of successes is equal to the **magic tier** of the item (see Chapter 9), they can activate one of the item's functions. For this to succeed, the Paladin must have explored and understood the item's properties. If the item is a scroll, the Paladin must be fluent with the language in which the scroll is written.

This process is not without risk. If this check fails by 3 or more, a charge or use of the item is wasted without any effect. If the check fails by 6 or more, some random, backwards, otherwise unfortunate effect occurs. This effect may be harmful to the Paladin and their associates, as determined by the GM.

When used in encounters, a character may attempt to use this skill to **reason** with an opponent. This would be performed as a basic action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity, but the communication must be able to occur within six seconds, and effectiveness will be very limited if the individuals involved do not share a common language. The GM may rule that a successful Convince check could trigger a morale check in their opponent – but if the other individual is hostile, this check might be very difficult or even impossible!

**Example Difficulties:**

- Minimal Success: Making a successful diplomatic introduction to those already positively inclined; negotiating a good deal with plenty of evidence to support your side; swaying an ally to support your cause when mutual interests are served
- Good Success: Making a successful diplomatic introduction to those neutrally inclined; negotiating a good deal with some evidence to support your side; swaying a neutral party to support your cause when mutual interests are served
- Great Success: Making a successful diplomatic introduction to those negatively inclined; negotiating a good deal with minimal evidence to support your side, or some evidence supporting both sides; swaying a rival to support your cause when mutual interests are served

- Fantastic Success: Making a successful diplomatic introduction when hostilities have already begun; negotiating a good deal with plenty of evidence to support the other side; swaying an enemy to support your cause when it is not clear how they would benefit

### Deceive

**Default Attribute:** Charisma – for lying with aplomb.

**Alternative Attributes:** Wisdom – for intuiting a strategy of deception that takes advantage of the victim's weaknesses.

**Description:** A character uses the Convince skill when they attempt to influence another by telling the truth; the Deceive skill employs deception instead. When using this skill, instead of merely rolling to attempt to achieve a particular target number of successes, the subject of the deception rolls an **Intuition** check as well. Subtract the number of successes for the Intuition skill from the number of successes for the Deceive skill and use the adjusted result to determine success.

**Example:** *Scheming Sal is a flim-flam artist who is trying to con a wandering group of pilgrims into donating to a fake charity. Sal is pretty good at this; they have a Charisma of 14 and are proficient in Deceive 1. Their effective Deceive score is  $14 + 4 = 18$ . They roll an 11, for a result of 7 under their attribute.*

*Unfortunately, the pilgrims are led by Westrella the Wise, whose Intuition ability score is 15. Westrella rolls a 9 for their Intuition check – 6 under their attribute. For the Deceive check, Sal has achieved  $7 - 6 = 1$  under their attribute, for a minimal success. The GM might rule that Westrella is somewhat convinced but is guarded and needs to see some proof of good faith before they donate.*

Thieves can also use the Deceive skill to try to employ magic items that they could not normally use. In this case, the Thief rolls a Deceive check as a standard action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity, and if their number of successes is equal to the **magic tier** of the item (see Chapter 9), they can activate one of the item's functions. For this to succeed, the Thief must have explored and understood the item's properties. If the item is a scroll, the Thief must be fluent in the language in which the scroll is written. If the user's caster level is necessary to determine chances of failure (such as in casting a scroll), the user's effective caster level is equivalent to their Thief character level.

This process is not without risk. If this check fails by 3 or more, a charge or use of the item is wasted without any effect. If the check fails by 6 or more, some random, backwards, otherwise unfortunate effect occurs. This effect may be harmful to the Thief and their associates, as determined by the GM.

One potential use of the Deceive skill in combat is to make a **feint**, in which a character uses misdirection to allow them to move freely. The character makes head-fakes and otherwise employs body language to make opponents think they're going one way while actually doing something else entirely. This skill check is performed as a move action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity. The character selects one creature that threatens them in melee, and the character makes a Deceive skill check. If the number of successes on the check exceeds the target's hit dice, the target loses their interrupt action until the end of their next turn. The character does not automatically know if the feint has succeeded, although the GM may allow an Intuition check to give them a hint. There is no penalty to a failed feint apart from the target still having their interrupt action.

When used in encounters, a character may attempt to use this skill to **bluff** an opponent. This would be performed as a basic action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity, but the communication must be able to occur within six seconds, and effectiveness will be very limited if the individuals involved do not share a common language. The GM may rule that a successful Deceive check could cause an opponent to act in ways the character desires – but if the other individual is very suspicious, this check might be very difficult or even impossible!

**Example Difficulties:**

- Minimal Success: The target believes a simple lie with circumstantial support; a more complex deception is received positively, but multiple results at this level are needed to achieve success
- Good Success: The target believes a relatively complex lie, particularly if circumstances make it believable; the target believes a simple lie without any supporting evidence
- Great Success: The target believes a simple lie even in the face of contravening evidence; more complicated deceptions are believed at face value
- Fantastic Success: Even the most elaborate tales become plausible, despite evidence and testimonials to the contrary

*Feats of Agility*

**Default Attribute:** Dexterity – for nimble movements of the body and limbs.

**Description:** This skill governs the use of gross body coordination, including nimbleness and speed. In general, if a character attempts to do something with their entire body, and the precision of their actions is more important than their manual strength, the Feats of Agility skill applies.

Balancing, juggling, and bodily contortions are often activities for which this skill is applicable. When two individuals engage in a contest of agility, such as log rolling, each one makes a Feats of Agility check; the one who succeeds by more wins. Most tests of coordination that require a skill check are resolved as a standard action that trigger attacks of opportunity.

Climbing a rope is considered to be a skill that all members of the Iron League are proficient at; provided one is not rushed, it is not necessary to make any kind of skill check to climb a rope. Climbing more difficult surfaces, or climbing anything while in an encounter situation, requires Feats of Agility skill checks. The character uses a move action to make this **climb** check; climbing requires concentration so this movement triggers attacks of opportunity. If the skill check is successful, using the guidelines found before for difficulty, the character has a climbing movement allowance of 15'. If the skill check is unsuccessful, the character fails to make any climbing progress but the move action is still expended; if the skill check fails by 5 or more, and the character is already off the ground, they fall.

While in an encounter, a character may find themselves in a situation where opponents are barring the character's ability to move through the battlefield unobstructed. In part this may be because the opponent's position would trigger attacks of opportunity to move past them; in some cases, the opponent may so thoroughly block passage that one cannot pass through at all. Refer to Chapter 7. By using their athletic prowess, however, a character may **tumble** through an area, using gymnastics and clever footwork, dodging and weaving their way through safely. This move action can be performed in conjunction with half the character's walk movement allowance (it cannot be combined with running movement). The character makes a Feats of Agility skill check without triggering attacks of opportunity. The number of successes on the skill check determines the hit dice of monsters who may not use attacks of opportunity due to the character's movement, and whose presence does not block movement across the battlefield. The character may move through this area without triggering attacks of opportunity from monsters with those hit dice or less, but monsters with more hit dice may still make attacks of opportunity or block movement. A tumbling character may not stop in the same location as an opponent, and if any creature successfully makes an attack of opportunity during this movement, the tumbling character must immediately stop and lose any remaining movement allowance. On a failed initial tumbling skill check, the character does not trigger an attack of opportunity but their move action is lost.

When in an encounter, a character may find themselves lying prone on the ground and in a dangerous situation. Typically standing up from prone is a basic action that triggers attacks of opportunity. However, a character may instead attempt a **kip up**, which is a basic action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity. The character makes

a Feats of Agility skill check, and if they achieve a minimal success, the character stands up. If the skill check fails, the basic action is wasted.

Whether in an encounter or not, a character may need to leap across a chasm, gap between buildings, pit, or other void space. Any gap less than 10' wide doesn't require a skill check and it can be crossed as part of taking the character's full walk or run movement allowance. For wider gaps, the character may use a move action to perform a **long jump**, which triggers attacks of opportunity, and if any such attack succeeds, the character takes a -4 penalty to their skill check. This move action can be performed in conjunction with half the character's walk or run movement allowance. The character makes a Feats of Agility check, with difficulty guidelines described below. On a success the character makes the jump; on a failure they do not cross and fall in, although a desperate grab may apply (see Feats of Might below).

Whether in an encounter or not, a character may need to jump over an obstacle. Any vertical leap less than 4' high doesn't require a skill check and it can be crossed as part of taking the character's full walk or run movement allowance. For higher jumps, the character may use a move action to perform a **high jump**, which triggers attacks of opportunity, and if any such attack succeeds, the character takes a -4 penalty to their skill check. This move action can be performed in conjunction with half the character's walk or run movement allowance. The character makes a Feats of Agility check, with difficulty guidelines described below. On a success the character makes the jump; on a failure they do not make the jump and they lose their remaining movement allowance. For obstacles higher than 7', the character may need to climb instead of jump.

Whether in an encounter or not, a character may find themselves needing to quickly drop a distance safely, perhaps jumping down a cliff, or dropping off a building roof to the ground below. For falls less than 10', this does not require a skill check and no damage will be taken by a character that falls this distance. For all other falls, a character typically will suffer 1d6 hp of untyped damage for every full 10' of falling, plus their inventory must be checked to see if *fragile* items break. However, as a move action that triggers attacks of opportunity, a character may attempt a **controlled fall** to take less damage. If an attack of opportunity succeeds, the character takes a -4 penalty to their skill check. If they succeed at a minimal skill check, the falling damage is calculated for 10' less falling distance, and no check for *fragile* breakage is required. If they succeed at a fantastic skill check, the falling damage is calculated for 20' less falling distance, and no check for *fragile* breakage is required.

Whether in an encounter or not, a character confined by manacles, a monster's grasp, or some other entangling effect may wish to escape. As a standard action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity, the character can make an **escape bonds** check using their Feats of Agility skill. The difficulty of this check is described in the entry for the equipment, monster, or magic that confines the character. On a success the character is free, but on a failure they have lost their standard action.

#### Example Difficulties:

- Minimal Success: Scrambling up a steep slope; hurriedly climbing up a knotted rope; jumping a 10' gap; leaping over a 4' obstacle; climbing a cargo net
- Good Success: Scaling a wall with plenty of handholds; hurriedly climbing up a smooth rope; jumping a 15' gap; leaping over a 5' obstacle; walking across a narrow balance beam
- Great Success: Scaling a relatively smooth vertical surface; hurriedly climbing up a greased pole; jumping a 20' gap; leaping over a 6' obstacle; walking across a tightrope
- Fantastic Success: Climbing while hanging below a horizontal surface; hurriedly climbing up a greased pole while in manacles; jumping a 20' gap blindfolded; leaping over a 7' obstacle; crossing a river by leaping from rolling log to rolling log

*Feats of Might*

**Default Attribute:** Strength – for bursts of explosive power or steady forceful action.

**Description:** Just as the Feats of Agility skill governs the fine control of a body, Feats of Might comprises the body's gross muscular power. Slow, steady exertion of force is part of this skill, but so is the ability to explosively generate short impulses of muscular performance.

This skill commonly applies to activities like lifting heavy weights, bending iron bars, forcing doors open, ripping books in half, throwing massive objects, and toppling bookcases. When two characters have a contest of strength, such as a tug-of-war or an arm-wrestling match, each character makes a Feats of Might check, and the winner is the one who succeeds by the greatest amount. Most tests of strength that require a skill check to resolve are standard actions that trigger attacks of opportunity.

While in an encounter, a character may find themselves in a situation where opponents are barring the character's ability to move through the battlefield unobstructed. In part this may be because the opponent's position would trigger attacks of opportunity to move past them; in some cases, the opponent may so thoroughly block passage that one cannot pass through at all. Refer to Chapter 7. By using their physical might, however, a character may **bull rush** opponents, shoving them out of their position and potentially opening up the battlefield to the advantage of the character and their allies. This move action can be performed in conjunction with half the character's walk movement allowance (it cannot be combined with running movement). While in melee range of an opponent, the character makes an opposed Feats of Might check which triggers attacks of opportunity; if such an attack hits, the character takes a -4 penalty to their skill check. For every five successes or fraction thereof, the character may push the opponent 5' in a direction where they will not be blocked by another creature or an obstacle. The character must follow the opponent's movement and must have sufficient walking movement allowance to move this distance. The push is always in a straight line, and if the character exceeds their movement allowance both creatures must stop. If the Feats of Might check does not achieve any successes, or if the character does not exceed their opponent's Feats of Might check by at least one success, no movement results and the move action is lost.

While in an encounter, some opponents may have magic or special powers that force a character to move. As a reaction, the character may make a **resist movement** action. The character makes a Feats of Might skill check, which does not trigger attacks of opportunity, and they refer to the listing for the magic or special power to determine the results. The character is not obliged to make a resist movement action and may choose to be moved without resisting.

Whether in an encounter or not, a character who is within melee range of an ally may find their friend falling into a pit or into a slide trap. As an interrupt, the character may make a **desperate grab** to reach out and attempt to arrest the movement of their ally; this does not trigger attacks of opportunity. The character makes a Feats of Might skill check, and for every 5 full successes, they may stop the fall of one creature. Creatures that are larger or smaller than a human may require a larger or smaller number of successes. This is also the action used when characters are roped together while climbing and one of them starts to fall; the characters closest to the falling party member make desperate grabs first to see if the string can avert disaster. In this case, characters who fail their desperate grab begin to fall as well.

Characters may make long jump and high jump moves by using their Feats of Might skill just as is described in the Feats of Agility skill entry above.

Whether in an encounter or not, a character confined by manacles, a monster's grasp, or some other entangling effect may wish to escape. As a standard action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity, the character can make an **break bonds** check using their Feats of Might skill. The difficulty of this check is described in the entry for the equipment, monster, or magic that confines the character. On a success the character is free, but on a failure they have lost their standard action.

**Example Difficulties:**

- Minimal Success: Battering down a flimsy door; throwing a grappling hook up to 50' away; upending a human-sized stone statue; crushing a clay or wooden object with bare hands
- Good Success: Battering down a sturdy door; throwing a barrel of oil through an open doorway; lifting a closed portcullis; bending an iron bar
- Great Success: Battering down a reinforced door; throwing a strong opponent through a closed flimsy door; ripping the lid off a sea-chest; tearing a thick spellbook in half
- Fantastic Success: Battering down a sealed tomb door; toppling the pillars supporting the temple roof; dragging a large boat by its anchor chain; keeping a beam supporting a mineshaft's ceiling from collapsing in an earthquake

*Healing*

**Default Attribute:** Wisdom – for intuitively understanding where a patient hurts and how to ease pain.

**Alternative Attributes:** Intelligence – for identifying curative herbs.

**Description:** There are many magical means for healing wounds and curing various maladies, but the mundane arts of first aid and applying herbal remedies are still important. Having one or more party members who are skilled in the Healing arts can spell the difference between success and failure for an adventuring expedition.

Healing is usually not practiced quickly; the checks for this skill are generally made after a full night's rest. One person may treat up to six other characters plus themself using this skill. The healer need not be awake for the entire Full Rest but must spend at least 4 hours actively treating their companions.

The following effects can be produced using the Healing skill:

- With a minimal success, the healer can restore an additional 1 hit point (hp) to those treated after a Full Rest. This stacks with all normal resting healing effects; refer to Chapter 6. However, if they fail their check by 5 or more, 1 fewer hp is recovered.
- A healer can help treat the effects of diseases and poisons. When a healer makes a Healing check with minimal success at the end of a Full Rest, the patient receives an additional **recovery** roll. Additionally, when the diseased or poisoned character makes this additional recovery roll, the healer can help as if that roll were a skill check, applying their bonuses to the patient's recovery bonus. See the *diseased* and *poisoned* conditions in Chapter 7 for more information.
- By achieving a great success with a Healing check, at the end of a Full Rest a healer restores one lost ability score point in addition to any ability score damage healed naturally by resting.

A healer can produce only one healing result per patient per Full Rest. This means that a patient can receive additional hit points **or** treatment of a disease **or** a poison **or** restoration of an ability score – but if the patient needs several forms of care, the healer must choose which service to provide. The service is chosen before the skill check is made.

Most uses of this skill cannot be performed quickly enough to be useful in encounters, but when a GM rules that a short duration usage might apply – removing giant bee's stinger from an enraged bear, for instance – the character would use a standard action that triggers attacks of opportunity. If this skill is used as a perceptive sense, it is a basic action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity.

### *Hearing*

**Default Attribute:** Wisdom – for sensitive acquisition and interpretation of auditory input.

**Description:** In *Tales of the Iron League*, all characters are assumed to have normal hearing for their species unless otherwise specified. However, some characters have trained themselves to efficiently use their auditory sense, picking out faint or subtle sounds and making sense of what they are hearing. Dwarves, who originated deep below ground, have a well-developed sense of hearing born of the need to gather information about passageways outside their visual range, and all Thieves receive training in how to use their sense of hearing to warn them of dangers.

As a rule, the GM should not require characters to make Hearing skill checks to detect sounds that a person with normal auditory senses ought to be able to hear. Hearing skill checks are only made when the sounds are subtle, of very low volume, or hard to discriminate from background noise. In encounters, a character will not detect things by hearing that are hidden by stealth or magic unless they choose to make Hearing checks to try and locate them. During encounters, making a Hearing skill check is a basic action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity.

When a Hearing skill check is used to detect somebody who is hidden by stealth or magic, a minimal skill check will generally reveal the presence of a suspicious noise but not necessarily reveal its location, a good skill check will give clues regarding what has made the sound, a great skill check will reveal the rough direction that the sound came from, and a fantastic skill check will pinpoint the location of the source of the sound. Hearing is not a targeting sense, however, so an invisible creature that has been heard may still be hard to attack.

#### **Example Difficulties:**

- **Minimal Success:** Hearing sounds of conversation down the hall; perceiving footsteps on the floor above in a wooden building; making out normal conversation on the other side of a closed door; knocking on a wall and detecting a hollow space on the other side
- **Good Success:** Hearing sounds of conversation across the street; understanding words spoken down the hall; hearing whispered conversation on the other side of a closed door; identifying the sound of a gurgling stream across several fields
- **Great Success:** Hearing sounds of conversation a block away; understanding words across the street; identifying the breathing of a living creature on the other side of a closed door; perceiving the ticking of a clockwork trap inside a closed box
- **Fantastic Success:** Hearing sounds of conversation across a working sawmill; understanding words spoken a block away; hearing tumblers fall when the dial turns on a combination lock; recognizing the sound of *undead* creatures on the other side of a closed door

### *Intimidate*

**Default Attribute:** Charisma – for using a forceful personality to disconcert enemies.

**Alternative Attributes:** Strength – for threatening displays of physical might.

**Description:** The Deceive and Convince skills appeal to the brain's higher functions, but Intimidation is much more primal. A character who uses the Intimidate skill harnesses the power of fear to motivate others to do what they want.

Intimidate is always an opposed skill check. Both the skill's user and their target roll Intimidate checks. The target's number of successes is subtracted from the intimidator's number of successes to determine the effect.

When an Intimidate check is made against a group, it affects all who can potentially see or hear the attempt. Only one roll is made for the group, using the score of the target with the best Intimidate score, which increases by one point for every member of the group above one.

**Example:** Devilish Darien, a Thief, has decided to Intimidate a group of five kobolds who are rummaging through their tent. They are assisted in this endeavor by Formidable Farlah, a Fighter. Darien will be the primary, and Farlah will be the helper.

The two decide that Darien will shout threats at the kobolds, warning them of the doom that will befall them if they do not confess who sent them and what they're after. Meanwhile, Farlah will punctuate this sermon by crushing a clay statuette with their bare hands and growling.

As the helper, Farlah rolls first. The player chooses to use their Strength attribute when rolling their Intimidate check. Farlah isn't proficient in this skill, so they're just rolling using their Strength of 16. They roll a 1 – a fantastic success! This amazing show of raw strength allows Darien to add two to their number of successes.

Next, Darien makes an Intimidate check, using their Charisma of 14 as the base attribute. Devilish Darien is proficient in Intimidate 1, so they must roll under  $14 + 4 = 18$ . They roll an 11, for 7 successes of their own, plus 2 more from Farlah, for a total of 9 successes – not bad.

However, Intimidate is an opposed check. Darien is counting on kobolds being basically cowardly creatures, but they don't know that one of the kobolds is Grommorg, a sub-chieftain. Grommorg is an exceptional kobold, used to bossing their underlings around; they have a Charisma score of 14 and are proficient in Intimidate 1.

To resist Darien and Farlah's frightening display, Grommorg makes their own Intimidate check, aiming for under  $14 + 4 = 18$ , and they roll a 12. That's 6 successes, but since there are four other kobolds in the group, the success total rises to 10. That exceeds the number of successes Darien achieved, so although most of the kobolds are individually timid, their backbones firm up behind Grommorg's example. The kobolds growl and attack!

When used in encounters, a character may attempt to **bully** animals or monsters that are incapable of communication. This would be performed as a basic action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity, but the intimidating action must be able to occur within six seconds. Success in this case may trigger a morale check. The GM should take the degree of success into account when determining the outcome of any morale failures; a minimal success might result in hesitation, which a fantastic success could lead to the creature fleeing, never to return. Some kinds of creatures are simply too dim to push around in this way.

When the Intimidate skill is used in encounters against monsters or characters capable of reasoning and communication, the results are more flexible. This is also performed as a basic action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity, but sharing a language may be important, and the communication must be able to occur within six seconds. If the intent was only to generate a morale check, the results are the same as those for unintelligent creatures. However, if the intimidation is coupled with an attempt to extract information or compel action or inaction, the GM must make a judgment call.

When used outside an encounter, provided the character and their opponent share the ability to communicate, more nuanced intimidating is possible. In general, extracting simple information that is basically harmless to the target and its associates requires minimal success. More complicated information, or information that the target knows would be bad to reveal, requires a good or great success. Compelling a guard to stand by and do nothing while a vault's contents are stolen requires a great success; intimidating a Goblin into going into its lair and luring its fellows out into an ambush would need a fantastic success, if it is possible at all.

### *Intuition*

**Default Attribute:** Wisdom – for sensing things difficult to detect by tangible means.

**Description:** The two most important senses of perception, Hearing and **Seeing**, have their own skills. All other senses, including an elusive sixth sense that defies scientific explanation, and the brain's ability to pull the input of all these senses together, fall under the umbrella of Intuition. An intuitive character can draw conclusions about the world that others cannot, often without being able to put into words exactly how they arrived at their findings.

Intuition is the skill used to **sense magic** in a physical item and perhaps understand some of its properties. This requires close and prolonged contact with the item, and generally cannot be done during an encounter. The character must physically touch the item to feel its vibrations, sense its warmth, and note its effect on their nervous system. After ten minutes of contact, a minimal success on an Intuition check reveals whether the item has magic properties. If the character fails this check, they can try again (taking another 10 minutes), but if they fail the second Intuition check by five or more, they will never succeed at discerning that item's magical properties until they gain another level of proficiency.

Even longer contact is required to intuit a magic item's specific properties. After four hours of contact, if a character makes an Intuition check by successes equal to the item's **magic tier** (see Chapter 9), they can learn one property of that item. A failed check can be retried after another four hours, but again, if the check fails by five or more, the character will never succeed until they gain another level. Spells exist that can achieve the same result in a much shorter time; see Chapter 4.

Whether in an encounter or not, Intuition can also be used to attempt to **penetrate illusions**. Illusion spells perfectly mimic sights and sounds; Seeing and Hearing skills cannot pierce them. It is context and intangibles that foil illusions. If a character suspects that what they are seeing or hearing is not real, they can make an Intuition check to disbelieve their senses. If they succeed by an amount equal to or greater than the caster's level, they can perceive the illusion for what it is. Most illusions are not automatically disrupted if a character physically touches an apparent visual manifestation, but touching the illusion grants a +4 bonus to the Intuition check to disbelieve. Characters can make multiple attempts to disbelieve, but each attempt is a standard action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity.

Whether in an encounter or not, Intuition can be used to piece together multiple clues into a coherent picture, but the GM should not allow characters to overuse this. If the GM presents a puzzle or riddle encounter that they expect the players to use their own brains to solve, they should communicate that expectation clearly and not allow the players to defeat it by making an Intuition roll. This use of Intuition, if allowed, is a basic action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity.

Whether in an encounter or not, Intuition can be used to perceive things using senses beyond the auditory and visual. As a rule, the GM should not require characters to make Intuition skill checks to detect vibrations, smells, variations in hot and cold, tastes, or other perceivable stimuli that a person with normal senses ought to be able to sense without difficulty. Intuition skill checks are only made when such stimuli are hard to perceive. In encounters, a character will not detect such subtle things by Intuition unless they choose to make Intuition skill checks to try and locate them. During encounters, making an Intuition skill check is a basic action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity.

### *Knowledge*

**Default Attribute:** Intelligence – for book learning or accumulated lore in a specific area of knowledge.

**Description:** Knowledge is not a single skill, but a set of skills – knowing all things that can be learned and recorded by scholars. It is assumed that those proficient in this skill are generally knowledgeable on a wide variety of topics, possibly because they have read many books, or because they have received a formal education at the feet of sage teachers.

Practice of the Knowledge skill does not guarantee omniscience. A character can only use the Knowledge skill to recall a fact if somebody has already gathered that information and written it down. Some information may not be available to a character no matter how well they roll.

In an encounter, as a rule, the GM should allow characters to make Knowledge skill checks as basic actions that do not trigger attacks of opportunity, but remember that a turn lasts about 6 seconds, so only a limited amount of flogging one's memory should be allowed.

#### Example Difficulties:

- Minimal Success: Knowledge that can be established through a minimum of research or asking experts. (What is the name of a particular nation's greatest queen? What is the longest river on the continent? What kind of animals do Orcs use as mounts? What is the name of the brightest star in the southern sky?)
- Good Success: Knowledge that would normally require substantial research in an extensive private library, or the help of a specialized sage. (What were the names of the generals on both sides of a battle from hundreds of years ago? What are the names of the closest forests to the headwaters of a particular river? What monsters are known to haunt the slopes of a particular mountain? What deities are the kobolds known to worship?)
- Great Success: Knowledge that would normally require substantial research at the best libraries of the land, or the assistance of the people that the experts commonly ask for help. (Which plants are favored by highland gorillas for making their nests? What is the shape of the egg casings laid by giant water beetles? At what coordinates did an ancient treasure ship sink in shallow waters? What is the exact name of a powerful angel who is said to have saved a remote village from a century-old famine?)
- Fantastic Success: Knowledge that perhaps no other individual in the world knows. (Was Ardemore, the legendary archer of a millennium ago, left- or right-handed? When the Tower of the Ebony Archmage burned, which books survived the fire? What does a demon lord smell like? Are there planets around any of the stars in the sky, and if so which ones?)

#### Mechanisms

**Default Attribute:** Intelligence – for understanding complex moving parts.

**Alternative Attributes:** Dexterity – for work requiring steady hands.

**Description:** This skill governs the manufacture, service, analysis, manipulation, and breaking of mechanical constructions with small working parts. It is distinct from the Build skill, which relates more to static and simple objects; however, crossover applications may exist subject to the GM's judgment.

Some magical spells effectively create magical devices, using conduits of magical energy instead of physical wires and pulleys and gears. While these can only be created using spells, the Mechanism skill is also used to manipulate, analyze, or disable them. This is a difficult use of the skill – magical runes are hard to manipulate with physical tools, although it can certainly be done. Note that a perceptive skill, often but not always Seeing, is the skill used to detect a hidden trap, magical or mundane; once found, Mechanisms is the skill used to do something about it.

As with the Build skill, the GM determines the tools and materials required to do the job, as well as the time required. Exceeding the required success level reduces the time needed to complete the task and may also increase the quality of the product.

When this skill is used in encounters, it requires sufficient focus and concentration that a standard action that triggers attacks of opportunity must be used. However, since each turn lasts only about six seconds, the task must be something that can be completed during that time. Some tasks may take multiple turns to accomplish; others may require such a long duration that they cannot be completed during a typical encounter. Picking simple locks or disarming simple traps can probably be done in a single round, but the GM is the final arbiter.

**Example Difficulties:**

- Minimal Success: Pick a simple lock; create a deadfall trap; jam a portcullis mechanism; build a block and tackle
- Good Success: Pick a complicated lock; disarm a trap triggered by a floor pressure plate; build a music box; create a pitfall trap with a locking lid
- Great Success: Solve a combination lock; disarm a magical alarm; build a poison needle trap; repair the rusting crank mechanism on an ancient weapon of siege warfare
- Fantastic Success: Pick a legendary lock; disarm a magical exploding trap; reset a gas trap to go off when a different combination is used on a lock; build a clockwork escapement

*Perform*

**Default Attribute:** Charisma – for the expressive and emotive practice of an art form.

**Alternative Attributes:** Dexterity – for graceful dancing or nimble playing of an instrument.

**Description:** The Perform skill is a set of skills, encompassing art forms in which the practice of the skill is the art itself. This skill covers disciplines such as dramatic acting, oratory, singing, the playing of a musical instrument, dancing, tumbling, painting, drawing, mimicry, or comedy.

Adventurers can use the Perform skill in several ways.

Firstly, a performance can be used as a distraction. A minimal success with Perform will draw the attention of a non-hostile crowd. To regain their ordinary level of alertness, an onlooker must make a successful Intuition check by at least the same number of successes achieved by the Perform check.

Secondly, performing in public in a city or town can provide a modest income. If a character uses the Perform skill in well-traveled public streets and squares of an urban area (see Chapter 10 for how these areas are defined), they can earn the following revenue for a full day's activity:

- Minimal Success: 1 silver piece (sp) in a small town; 2 sp in a large town; 3 sp in a city
- Good Success: 2 sp in a small town; 3 sp in a large town; 5 sp in a city
- Great Success: 3 sp in a small town; 5 sp in a large town; 8 sp in a city
- Fantastic Success: 5 sp in a small town; 1 gold piece (gp) in a large town; 2 gp in a city, as well as possible discovery by a performance company or wealthy patron

Most uses of the Perform skill take too long to perform in encounters, but when a GM rules that a short duration usage might apply – providing a short distraction, for instance – the character would use a standard action that triggers attacks of opportunity.

*Profession*

**Default Attribute:** varies

**Description:** This skill is different from others; it can only be chosen at the beginning of an adventurer's career, and each character can have only one Profession. A Profession is a skilled trade that the character had before they became an adventurer. This means that the Profession skill cannot be advanced beyond skill level 1; the character's level of accomplishment will never improve, because the character is no longer actively practicing that Profession.

Most skills focus on a related set of abilities and task types across a broad range of applications. A Profession gives the character experience with a broad set of abilities and task types, but only as applied within the narrow scope of their work. Accordingly, the character must choose a career specialty when they select the Profession skill.

The GM should allow a character a Profession skill bonus for a skill check roll provided the player can make a reasonable argument that the task their character is performing is similar to something they would have done as part of their profession.

**Example:** Hannevar Hoopbender is a Halfling who has the profession of Sailor. For many years before they chose a life of adventure, Hannevar worked on sailing ships across Uroth, gaining an understanding of the many tasks that the crew of a masted vessel must perform. While sailing probably has little bearing on their new life as a member of the Iron League, they still might benefit from experience with:

- *Strength checks, for swaying heavy bags of flour up through a trap door using a block and tackle;*
- *Dexterity checks, for climbing rope ladders that resemble rigging;*
- *Constitution checks, for holding their breath while swimming underwater;*
- *Intelligence checks, for knowing what fashions are worn in various ports of call;*
- *Wisdom checks, for seeing a water disturbance and intuiting the existence of submerged rocks; and*
- *Charisma checks, for remembering and singing old sea shanties to amuse a crowd.*

The difficulty level of each check will vary for different Professions. Minimal successes will suffice for straightforward and basic tasks that a common practitioner of that job ought to be able to perform. Good and great successes are required for more complicated or less common tasks – jobs that only a very experienced and specialized professional would be able to complete. Fantastic successes should result in an outcome that even the most experienced member of that profession would be proud of, and that lesser practitioners would doubt the truth of unless they witnessed it with their own eyes.

The range of uses for Professions is quite broad, and some uses may apply in encounters or other stressful situations. The GM must decide what type of action must be employed to use a Profession each time it applies.

### Seacraft

**Default Attribute:** Intelligence – for amassing lore about navigating waterways and living on and near water.

**Alternative Attributes:** Wisdom, for noticing currents or strange aquatic plant life; Strength, for hauling up a heavy sail or reeling in a massive fish; Dexterity, for maneuvering a canoe through turbulent waters or splicing two cables together.

**Description:** The Known Lands of Uroth are surrounded by ocean, but there is also a wealth of freshwater lakes and rivers that adventurers may need to navigate during their explorations. Many species live near the water; in fact, almost all creatures need water to survive, and therefore many beings on Uroth have found it beneficial to learn the lore of the seas and the streams.

Seacraft is the skill used to know one's way around boats and ships, including how to maintain them, operate them, and navigate them. It is also a skill that can be used to understand currents and tides, to catch fish, to weave nets and tie knots, and to identify plants and animals native to the water.

Most uses of the Seacraft skill take too long to perform in encounters, but when a GM rules that a short duration usage might apply – patching a sinking boat, for instance – the character would use a standard action that triggers attacks of opportunity. If this skill is used as a perceptive sense, it is a basic action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity.

#### Example Difficulties:

- Minimal Success: Row a boat in calm waters; identify a common maritime creature; catch a small fish in a well-stocked stream; know whether the tide is high or low
- Good Success: Sail a small sailboat in mild weather conditions; identify a rare maritime creature; catch a large game fish on the open water; tell whether currents in a stream are dangerously rapid

- Great Success: Pilot a canoe through whitewater rapids; identify a maritime creature only found in legends and tall tales; catch a salmon in a mountain stream bare-handed; tell whether a shore bottom is too shallow for one's boat
- Fantastic Success: Captain a sailing ship through gale-force winds; know the properties of plants and animals only found in the depths of the sea; wrestle a crocodile and drag it onto shore; tell whether a dangerous storm will arrive in 24 hours

### *Seeing*

**Default Attribute:** Wisdom – for keen eyesight, and the wits to use the sensory input.

**Description:** Almost without exception, members of the Iron League have at least normal vision and can see things both far away and up close. However, some individuals are specially trained to make sense of what they see and piece together subtle visual cues to notice much that others do not.

It is known that the elvish species has exceptional eyesight, and all Elf characters are proficient in Seeing. Additionally, Thieves make their living by staying one step ahead of pursuit and one inch below the executioner's blade; a keen sense of sight is a prerequisite for that class.

As a rule, the GM should not require characters to make Seeing skill checks to detect visible things that a person with normal sighted senses ought to be able to see. Seeing skill checks are only made when the thing to be seen is hard to notice, blends into the background, or is very subtle. In encounters, a character will not detect things by sight that are hidden by stealth or magic unless they choose to make Seeing checks to try and locate them. During encounters, making a Seeing skill check is a basic action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity.

When a Seeing skill check is used to detect somebody who is hidden by stealth or magic, a minimal skill check will generally reveal movement or a deeper shadow without revealing what the thing looks like, a good skill check will give clues regarding what the hidden object is, a great skill check will reveal more or less the appearance of the hidden thing, and a fantastic skill check will pinpoint its location. This is subject to the limitations of invisibility; at best, detecting an invisible creature using Seeing will reveal a shimmer around its location, but penalties for attacking unseen creatures will still apply.

#### **Example Difficulties:**

- Minimal Success: Spotting movement atop a nearby battlement; noting a hairline crack in a wall that could indicate a secret door; identifying dark shapes in the fog as the approach of the city watch; noticing a low point in the fallen leaves ahead that may be a covered pit trap
- Good Success: Observing irregularities on the horizon that might be the sails of ships many miles distant; recognizing evidence of wear on one brick in a fireplace that suggests a secret mechanism; noticing that a nearby 'dead tree trunk' is trembling; identifying a slight discrepancy between two signatures indicating one is a clever forgery
- Great Success: Noticing that the wheeling 'birds' above a distant mountain may be much bigger than birds ought to be; recognizing that two tiny rivets in a chest's lock are actually a tiny needle trap; detecting subtle scratches on the inside of a lock, indicating it has recently been picked; spotting close-fitting joints in a staircase, warning that it might turn into a slide
- Fantastic Success: Noticing a faint shadow in broad daylight indicating the presence of an unseen person; detecting a faint tracery of glowing lines around the crown jewels – the mechanism of a magical trap; discerning that a blotch on the edge of the horizon is seven pursuing horsemen; despite the most cunning of workmanship, finding the secret bottom in a hidden drawer of the concealed writing desk in the Mad Mage's workroom

*Shenanigans*

**Default Attribute:** Dexterity – for fine control of the fingers.

**Description:** Feats of Agility applies when gross body coordination is required. Shenanigans is a skill of fine motor control, particularly when it comes to trickery – if fast finger-work or perfect timing is required to gull the gullible and confuse the gendarmes, then Shenanigans is probably the proper skill.

This skill involves such tasks as picking pockets, making small objects seem to appear or disappear, lifting things undetected, escapology, and making quick switches. Thieves, of course, must all be proficient in Shenanigans, but Halfling characters also are famous for being quick and nimble, and all are gifted with a light touch. Many such functions require a standard action to perform, and these trigger attacks of opportunity – provided the character is noticed doing what they're doing!

One potential use of the Shenanigans skill in an encounter is to make a **furtive move**, in which a character uses clever subtlety to allow them to perform certain actions freely. The character performs complex actions in such a way that enemies might not see what they are doing and be able to react appropriately. This skill check is performed as a basic action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity. The character's Shenanigans check is opposed by any threatening creature's Intuition check (or other perceptive sense as relevant). If the character wins, any skill checks that are standard actions (but not attacks) made near those creatures will not trigger attacks of opportunity. Naturally, if the GM rules that such actions are too obvious to be concealable with Shenanigans, or if the opponent is too stupid to be bamboozled, a furtive move may not be possible. The only penalty to a failed furtive move is that any actions still trigger attacks of opportunity as normal.

Characters may make escape bonds moves by using their Shenanigans skill just as is described in the Feats of Agility skill entry above.

**Example Difficulties:**

- Minimal Success: Slitting the coin purse of an unaware mark; palming a key left out on an open table; dealing cards off the bottom of the deck; freeing yourself with your hands bound behind your back
- Good Success: Removing a bracelet from the arm of a wealthy noblewoman; stealthily drugging a plate of food on a banquet table; swapping a card in your hand for another one up your sleeve; escaping when your entire body is tied to a chair
- Great Success: Removing the belt from the trousers of an alert watchman; carefully swapping the golden idol from the altar with a sandbag of equal weight; switching an entire deck of cards while cutting; slipping out of manacles and shackles
- Fantastic Success: Stealthily removing a bone from the jaws of a dozing guard dog; switching an heiress's diamond necklace for a paste forgery while she's wearing it; swapping a card in your hand for another one in your neighbor's hand; escaping after being wrapped in chains and padlocks and thrown into the river

*Stealth*

**Default Attribute:** Dexterity – for quiet, furtive movement of the body.

**Alternative Attributes:** Charisma – for hiding in plain sight.

**Description:** Stealth is the art of foiling the ability of others to perceive you or something else. This skill is commonly used to avoid detection by either visual or audible means. Stealth can also be used to conceal an object, build a camouflaged nest for others to hide in, follow somebody without being noticed, and even wear a disguise to avoid recognition (although either Deceive or Perform could also be used for this).

Thieves and Halflings are always proficient in Stealth, but the Ranger subclass of Fighters and some Elves are also talented at remaining unseen and unheard.

When used in an encounter, the Stealth skill can be used as a move action, which does not trigger attacks of opportunity, to **hide**. Characters attempting to hide must not be actively making noise, and they must have at least partial cover – it is not possible to hide in plain sight. If the character achieves at least a minimal success, they have successfully hidden: they will not be detected unless potential observers make skill checks using perceptive senses to detect them. When a character is hidden, opponents do not know where they are or what they are doing; if those opponents aren't forewarned in some way, they may have no idea that the character is there at all.

Characters except Thieves who attack from hiding gain a +2 bonus to hit, plus other bonuses described in Chapter 7 if the target is unaware of their presence; Thieves gain a +4 bonus to hit. Hidden characters may also take advantage of their Backstab special ability as described in Chapter 2. The benefits of being hidden last until the end of the character's next turn, until they make an attack, or until they void their hiding by making noise or otherwise revealing their presence. It is otherwise possible for a hidden character to break cover, move across open terrain to attack a target, and gain the benefits of being hidden for the first attack only – any additional attacks made on that turn do not receive the benefit of being hidden.

When making a Stealth skill check, although simply making a minimal success is enough to become hidden, it is nevertheless still important to note how many successes were obtained with that roll. Should creatures use actions during their turn to make perceptive skill checks, the number of successes obtained by the hiding character is equal to the number of successes that an observer must exceed in order to detect them. See the entries under the perceptive skills for guidelines on what can be learned when detecting a hidden character.

Circumstances may be favorable or unfavorable for using the Stealth skill. Use the following guidelines to apply modifiers for any perception roll used to find a stealthy individual:

Environment	Modifier
Dim light or shadow	-1 to Seeing
Dark or moonless	-2 to Seeing
Broad daylight or bright light	+1 to Seeing
Hiding character cannot remain perfectly still	+4 to Seeing or Hearing
Continuous background noise	-1 to Hearing
Loud and distracting environment	-2 to Hearing
Uninterrupted quiet	+1 to Hearing
Echoing walls	+2 to Hearing
Resilient floor can transmit vibrations	+1 to Intuition
Hiding character has a strong odor	+2 to Intuition

Some Stealth skills checks are unopposed, particularly those made when not in an encounter. Use the following guidelines to determine if a character can avoid being detected under such circumstances:

- Minimal Success: Open a normal door quietly; part a bead curtain unobtrusively; open a normal window quietly; open a closed chest without being noticed by a merchant across the room
- Good Success: Open a heavy door quietly; avoid spooking horses; unlock a chain and padlock without alerting a bored guard; muffle the sound of breaking a glass window
- Great Success: Open a squeaky door without a sound; pick a lock quietly; row a boat without attracting attention; cut a hole in a glass window right next to a sleeping merchant
- Fantastic Success: Quietly raise a portcullis; climb a cathedral bell's pull-rope without ringing the bell; throw a grappling hook without inviting notice; force a door without attracting the attention of a butler

### *Stonecraft*

**Default Attribute:** Intelligence – for amassing lore about stone and how to use or manipulate it.

**Alternative Attributes:** Wisdom, for noticing unusual stonework or sloping passages; Strength, for tunneling or digging.

**Description:** One of the environments in Uroth is the network of caverns, underground rivers and interconnecting passages that riddles the earth miles below the surface. So extensive is this labyrinth that it has its own ecology, and many forms of life have adapted to living there. These include humanoid species; in particular, Dwarves and Shadow Elves have an intuitive understanding of stone constructions that serves them well as they navigate their ancestral homelands. This skill is called Stonecraft, and while it applies to stonework or rocky surfaces found in any context, it can be very useful for any character who spends a significant amount of time underground. It is also useful for understanding natural stone formations or stone constructions above ground.

Stonecraft is the skill of understanding rock in both its natural state and its worked form. It is used to intuit where natural passages are likely to lead, and to instinctively maintain one's bearings without external reference points. It is a substitute for the Seeing skill when used to look for traps and secret portals in stone construction. It is also the skill used for digging and mining; refer to rules for this in Chapter 5.

Most uses of the Stonecraft skill take too long to perform in encounters, but when a GM rules that a short duration usage might apply – starting an avalanche, for instance – the character would use a standard action that triggers attacks of opportunity. If this skill is used as a perceptive sense, it is a basic action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity.

**Example Difficulties:**

- Minimal Success: Find a secret door recessed in a stone wall; find a trap door concealed in a stone floor; know the approximate age of stonework and who might have built it; dig through earth without a collapse
- Good Success: Find a stone block trap recessed in a stone ceiling; find a hidden compartment in the base of a stone statue; know whether a stone construction is stable or where it might be vulnerable; dig through soft rock without a collapse
- Great Success: Sense subtle sloping in an underground passage; sense movement in underground rooms or 'elevator' chambers; know which direction leads to moving water or air; dig through sand or gravel without a collapse
- Fantastic Success: Sense approximately how far you are below ground; sense approximately what your orientation is below ground; know which direction leads to naturally occurring mineral deposits; dig through solid stone without a collapse

### *Streetcraft*

**Default Attribute:** Intelligence – for knowing the ins and outs of urban environments.

**Alternative Attributes:** Dexterity – for eluding pursuit; Charisma – for interacting with locals; Wisdom – for following quarry.

**Description:** A character used to life in urban centers may sometimes find themselves feeling like a fish out of water in a more naturalistic environment. The reverse is also true: a city is also an environment, and those unused to navigating its complexities and hazards are at a disadvantage. Streetcraft is the skill used by city natives to make their way safely and efficiently through an urban setting.

Streetcraft is used to infer knowledge of how and where to go in a city to find what you need. It also substitutes for interactive Charisma-based skills when seeking information from the inhabitants of a town or city. It is a skill that can be used both to follow persons through a crowd while remaining unnoticed and to elude pursuers that you have detected.

Most uses of the Streetcraft skill take too long to perform in encounters, but when a GM rules that a short duration usage might apply – provoking a riot, for instance – the character would use a standard action that triggers attacks of opportunity. If this skill is used as a perceptive sense, it is a basic action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity.

**Example Difficulties:**

- Minimal Success: Know how to find the town's important entrances and exits; elude pursuit in a crowded market; imitate the local customs and speech; tail a contact unnoticed through a crowded market
- Good Success: Know how to find the town's important leaders; elude pursuit along a main street; extract commonly known information from locals; tail a contact unnoticed down a busy street
- Great Success: Know how to find the town's important businesses; elude pursuit in a public building; extract uncommonly known information from locals; tail a contact unnoticed down a sparsely populated street
- Fantastic Success: Know how to find the town's important criminals; elude pursuit in a narrow alley; learn carefully guarded secrets from locals; tail a contact unnoticed through a public building

*Turn Undead*

**Default Attribute:** Charisma – for exerting the force of will to thwart the *undead*.

**Alternative Attributes:** none.

**Description:** It is known that all forms of *undead* creatures are sensitive to the power of deities, and these monsters may be affected when confronted by a holy symbol presented by a person with a strong personality. The person wielding the holy symbol need not be a Cleric but being skilled in the art of channeling the force of one's will through a holy symbol is helpful when attempting to effectively Turn Undead.

This skill is generally used in encounters. To use this skill, the wielder of a holy symbol holds it in one hand and presents it in the player's chosen direction. A holy symbol has the potential to affect all *undead* that can see it within a cone that is 30' long and 30' wide. Holy symbols supplemented by other equipment may have larger areas of effect; see Chapter 5.

The wielder uses the force of their will to **turn** *undead* creatures, invoking the power of the deity the symbol represents. As a standard action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity, they make a Charisma-based skill check. The number of successes generates equals the total number of **Hit Dice (HD)** of *undead* creatures successfully affected by the Turn Undead check. For example, a character with an effective Charisma of 13 who rolls an 11 on a Turn Undead check can affect up to 2 HD of *undead* creatures. These creatures are affected in order of lower HD creatures first, and then creatures closest to the character, so in a mixed group of *skeletons* and *zombies* (see Chapter 8), the preceding example would affect only two *skeletons* (the ones closest to the character) and none of the *zombies*. Partial results have no effect, so achieving a turn of 2 HD on a 3 HD *undead* creature has no effect.

Within the area of effect, *undead* that are affected take **1dx** damage. The dx notation is described in more detail in Chapter 4; it means that for characters of levels 1-3, the damage die is a d4; for characters of levels 4-6, the damage die is a d6; for characters of levels 7-9, the damage die is a d8; for characters of levels 10-12, the damage die is a d10. The damage is rolled one time and applied to all monsters affected by the Turn Undead check.

In addition to inflicting damage, each creature affected must make a morale check at the beginning of their next turn. This applies even for mindless *undead* creatures that ordinarily would not make morale checks. It is up to the DM to decide what the results of a morale check might be; it might cause the *undead* to retreat, or it might hold them at bay, or it might allow the turning character to convince intelligent undead to pursue a particular course of action. Regardless of the results of the morale check, *undead* creatures backed into a corner with no means of safe escape will fight.

**Example:** Clybin of the Icy Veil, a first level Cleric, confronts a group of five skeletons (1 HD each) and a shadow (3 HD). They hold out their holy symbol and attempt to turn. Their Charisma score is 12, but since they are proficient in Turn Undead 1, their effective Charisma is  $12 + 4 = 16$ .

They roll a 14 on the turn check. They rolled 2 under their Charisma, so 2 HD worth of undead creatures are affected. Two of the skeletons are affected, but since the shadow has 3 HD, the shadow is not turned. Clybin's player rolls 1d4 for the damage inflicted against the two skeletons, and a morale check is made for those creatures as well.

It is possible to botch a turn check. If a character rolls a natural 20 on a turning attempt, the corrupting power of the undead pushes back. Holy symbols burst into flames and are destroyed; sensible Clerics always carry spare holy symbols. Refer to Chapter 5 for the effects on devotional cords or chains. The only time this botched check is not a risk is when the Turn Undead check is made using holy water (Chapter 5).

Characters with Holy Orders that serve the *evil* alignment have another option when using the Turn Undead skill: instead of turning *undead* creatures, they may attempt to **compel** them. The skill check is made as a standard action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity; if the number of successes exceeds the HD of any mindless *undead* creatures in the area of effect, those monsters follow the verbal commands of the wielder of the holy symbol, exactly as if that person had cast the **animate dead** spell (see Chapter 4). This compulsion may be short in duration, or the Cleric may gain longer term *undead* followers, at the GM's discretion.

This power also allows *evil* characters to attempt to compel intelligent *undead* creatures. If the Turn Undead check would affect that creature's HD, the creature makes a morale check; on a failed check, the creature obeys the turning character's commands. If their morale check succeeds, they may or may not choose to follow commands, but they certainly will not attack the wielder.

### Woodcraft

**Default Attribute:** Intelligence – for knowing the lore of green spaces and how to employ it.

**Alternative Attributes:** Wisdom – for tracking a creature's footprints through the wilderness.

**Description:** Woodcraft is the skill of knowing how to survive in a natural environment on the surface of Uroth, particularly in a woodland setting. The unquestioned masters of Woodcraft are the Sylvan Elves, who were forced to flee their settlements and live in the deep forest during the time of the Great Blight. However, Country Halflings and Rangers are also proficient at Woodcraft, and characters of all other types can learn this skill.

Woodcraft is the skill that gives characters knowledge about how to live in the wild: how to find food and water, how to locate shelter, or even how to build traps and structures. It is the skill used to find the tracks of creatures moving through the woods or to erase tracks that you and your companions have made. Woodcraft can be used to identify what other creatures exist in the environment from their leavings or other signs of their passage.

Most uses of the Woodcraft skill take too long to perform in encounters, but when a GM rules that a short duration usage might apply – putting out a brush fire, for instance – the character would use a standard action that triggers attacks of opportunity. If this skill is used as a perceptive sense, it is a basic action that does not trigger attacks of opportunity.

#### Example Difficulties:

- Minimal Success: Know animals indigenous to a given habitat; know how to create simple shelter; track a creature that passed by recently; identify the spoor of a common creature
- Good Success: Know edible roots and berries native to a given climate; know how to build simple structures; track a creature that passed by several days ago; identify the spoor of an uncommon creature
- Great Success: Know useful or medicinal herbs found in nature; know how to build or dig traps; track a creature that passed by several weeks ago; identify the spoor of a rare or unique creature

- Fantastic Success: Know about fey creatures likely to live in a territory; know how to improvise functional weapons; track a creature whose tracks have been partially erased by rain or snow; intuit unusual facts about quarry from its spoor

## Languages

Speaking a language is also a skill, but the rules for speaking, reading, and writing in different languages work a little bit differently from other skills.

Every character begins the game with one or more native languages at the highest level of proficiency it is possible for them to have. However, characters can also begin to learn other languages. They speak and understand poorly at first, but in time they can improve their linguistic skills by gaining steps of language proficiency, possibly even to the point where they speak the language as well as their native tongue.

There are four steps of language proficiency as described below.

### *Smattering*

A character with this level of proficiency speaks only a few words of the language and understands very little of what is said. They can slowly understand and convey crude concepts, but complex ideas are probably beyond reach, although spending time drawing pictures and using sign language may eventually be effective.

Characters who only know a smattering of a language cannot read or write it. This is the highest possible step of language proficiency for a character with a -3 Intelligence modifier, meaning that those with an Intelligence ability score of 3 can do little more than grunt simple words and point!

In game terms, if a character with a smattering of a language wants to convey a simple concept, they must make a successful Intelligence or Convince check (the player chooses which). To understand a straightforward idea, they must make a successful Intelligence or Intuition check (again, the player chooses which). Anything more complex will take additional checks and considerable time.

### *Halting*

Halting proficiency in a language means that the character is beginning to understand how words and phrases are strung together. They still don't know much of the vocabulary, and the rules of syntax remain elusive. They can verbally convey and understand simple ideas, but complex ideas may be misinterpreted. The player must make a successful Intelligence or Intuition check to understand, and an Intelligence or Convince check to be understood.

Such a character is learning to read and even write a few words in the language, but they can correctly express or interpret only the simplest of verbs and nouns in written form, using the same checks described above. A character with an Intelligence modifier of -2 can never exceed halting proficiency in any language.

### *Working*

A character with a working language proficiency can verbally express themselves clearly but may stumble over the correct words and speak with an accent. They must make a successful Deceive check to convince a native speaker that they are fluent.

They can understand other speakers very well, provided they do not speak too quickly. They are somewhat less capable with reading and writing; simple concepts are easy, but they may misunderstand complex words and structure sentences confusingly. Simple written language is easy, but complex written notions require Intelligence or Convince checks to write and Intelligence or Intuition checks to read. A character with an Intelligence modifier of -1 cannot progress beyond this level of linguistic proficiency.

*Fluent*

This is the highest level of language proficiency. Those who have reached this level have no trouble communicating with fellow fluent speakers; no checks are required to read or write, to speak, or to understand, and speakers have no discernible accent.

*Advancing Languages*

Characters first learn a new language at the smattering level and develop their proficiency by spending **custom points** on additional language steps. At first level, characters get three custom points to spend (see Chapter 2).

It costs one custom point to advance a language one step along the track towards fluency. However, learning a language takes time and practice – unlike skills, characters cannot improve any language proficiency by more than one step in any given level, apart from the expenditure of custom points at character generation.

- At 1<sup>st</sup> level, a character may learn a smattering of the Goblin tongue and know that the phrase “bree yark” is a particularly offensive insinuation about a goblin’s parentage.
- At 2<sup>nd</sup> level, our linguist might improve their understanding of Goblin by one step to halting; they could then question a goblin captive, asking simple questions about where they have laid ambushes along a trail.
- At 3<sup>rd</sup> level, having raised their Goblin proficiency by another step to working, the character could pose as a merchant who trades with goblins, and might even pore over Goblin hieroglyphs to understand a treasure map.
- Finally, at 4<sup>th</sup> level our character could complete their training in Goblin and be able to write a cunning missive to the Goblin King himself to lure him into a trap.

If a character with a negative Intelligence modifier spends custom points to increase their Intelligence score during level advancement, and this improves their Intelligence modifier, they immediately upgrade their proficiency in their native languages to their new maximum language step. They do not need to spend custom points for these improvements.

This is not true for any other languages that character may know. However, when their Intelligence modifier improves to a positive number, they instantly gain one free language step for each positive bonus which they can allocate to any of their non-native languages.

**Note:** There are some magic items that provide a bonus to the Intelligence ability score but using such items does not grant any additional language abilities.

*List of Languages*

The table below lists the languages commonly used in the world of Uroth. Starting or advancing characters can choose any of them as a language in which they can learn and improve. It is up to the player to determine how the character managed to advance a language skill; they might imagine finding a book that provides translation, or perhaps they encountered an NPC who tutors them.

Language	Description
Ancient Poldaran	A dead human language used in the Poldaran Empire over a thousand years ago.
Ancient Savar	A dead human language used in the Savarharad Desert thousands of years ago.
Angelic	The language of <i>angels</i> , used in the practice of Divine spellcasting.
Attainu	A human language spoken in Attapoor and its neighbors.
Common	A trade language spoken by many creatures, especially in the western half of Uroth.
Daemonic	The language of <i>demons</i> , used in the practice of Divine spellcasting.
Daraban	A human language spoken in the Daraban Empire and its neighbors.
Diabolical	The language of <i>devils</i> , used in the practice of Divine spellcasting.
Draconic	The language of <i>dragons</i> .

Dwarvish	The language of <i>dwarves</i> .
Elemental	The language spoken by the rulers of the Elemental planes.
Elvish	The language of <i>elves</i> .
Far Gaolaran	A human language spoken on the Beast Isles.
Fey	The language of forest spirits.
Giantish	The language of all types of <i>giants</i> , including ogres and trolls.
Gnollish	The language of <i>gnolls</i> and <i>flinds</i> .
Goblin	The language of <i>goblins</i> , <i>hobgoblins</i> , and <i>bugbears</i> .
Handspeak	The language of some species without vocal cords, adopted by Thieves.
Kobold	The language of the <i>kobolds</i> .
Lizard People	The language of <i>lizard folk</i> , <i>bullywugs</i> , <i>firenewts</i> , and other reptilian humanoids.
Magic	The language used in the practice of Arcane spellcasting.
Merfolk	The language common to species that dwell under the sea.
Orcish	The language of <i>orcs</i> and <i>ogrillons</i> .
Undercommon	A trade language spoken by dwellers in the underworld of Uroth.

## Weapon and Armor Proficiencies

It requires skill to wield weapons successfully, use a shield in combat, and be able to move effectively while wearing armor. Just like languages, these skills work differently from others. When a character or creature attacks in combat, they roll 1d20 to attack as described in Chapter 7. This roll is modified by the attacker's proficiency (or lack thereof) with the weapon they are using.

All character classes, and in some cases subclasses, receive starting weapon proficiencies during character creation. Players may use custom points to gain additional weapon proficiencies. A character who is not proficient with a weapon can still wield it; they just don't use it as well as a character who is proficient. A character using a weapon with which they lack proficiency rolls their attacks at -4, while those who are proficient receive no penalty.

Similarly, a character must have special training to use a shield in combat. If a character is not proficient with shields, they can still use one and gain its benefit to AC, but they attack with a non-proficiency penalty of -4. If a character wears a type of armor with which they are not proficient, they also receive a -4 non-proficiency penalty.

All non-proficiency penalties stack. If a Thief character chooses to masquerade as a knight in plate armor, carrying a shield and a longsword, and they are forced to attack somebody, they do so at a severe penalty of -12 to attacks because of the stacking non-proficiency penalties! These penalties can be reduced or even eliminated if the character spends custom points to learn how to use these items better.

In addition to non-proficiency with armor or weapons, other penalties may apply for their use. A Magic-user can choose to wear armor and use a shield, but they will never be able to cast spells while doing so. A Cleric who uses a weapon in violation of their holy orders soon finds themselves in trouble with their faith and deity, and they will likely suffer real consequences as a result.

### Special Weapon Proficiencies

There are three additional weapon proficiencies that are not linked to the use of a specific weapon.

#### *Improvised Weapon Fighting*

Characters without proper weapons may need to improvise. Any heavy object can be used as a makeshift club; any tool with a metal head can penetrate armor; any pole that adds to an arm's reach can multiply the force a character can produce by bare hands alone. A character without proficiency in **improvised weapon fighting** makes each attack using an improvised weapon with a non-proficiency penalty of -4.

*Two-Weapon Fighting*

Wielding a weapon in each hand is possible but difficult. **Two-weapon fighting** is a specific weapon proficiency. With this proficiency, every attack a dual-wielding character makes with each weapon receives a -2 penalty. Without this proficiency, every attack a dual-wielding character makes with each weapon receives a -4 penalty. This penalty stacks with all other penalties, such as other non-proficiency penalties.

*Unarmed Fighting*

An adventurer may sometimes find themselves without a readily available weapon. In this case, they may attack by striking with their bare hands and feet. A character without proficiency in **unarmed fighting** makes each unarmed attack with a -4 non-proficiency penalty, which stacks with any other penalties. Note that most types of monsters have proficiency in fighting with their natural weapons, but characters are members of species that do not have this proficiency by default.

*Advancing Weapon and Armor Proficiencies*

When using custom points to add weapon proficiencies (as described in Chapter 2), each weapon counts as a separate proficiency. Therefore, a character whose class gives them proficiency with all standard weapons could spend two custom points to learn to fight with a longsword. Other martial weapons would still be unfamiliar. Characters may find exotic weapons that are not described in Chapter 5; no character starts with proficiency in such a weapon, and such unfamiliarity means all wielders would suffer a -4 non-proficiency penalty. But a character could practice with this unusual weapon and spend custom points to gain proficiency in its use.

**Note:** It is not possible for a Halfling character to become proficient with weapons that have the *big* property.

Characters may also gain special weapon proficiencies, such as two-weapon fighting, improvised weapon fighting, or unarmed fighting, by spending custom points.

When using custom points to add armor proficiencies, each upgrade of one point of Armor Class counts as a separate proficiency. For instance, if a Thief character is proficient with AC 11 armor types, that character could use two custom points to become proficient with AC 12 armor. They must spend another two custom points to become proficient with AC 13 armor, and so on.

**Note:** Magic-users with armor proficiency have no non-proficiency penalties when using armor, but they are still unable to cast spells while wearing it. This limitation is specific to Magic-users; other classes with spellcasting abilities may cast their spells while wearing any proficient armor.