THE LAUNDY
A roleplaying game based on the ‘Laundry Files’ novels by Charles Stross

Written by Gareth Hanrahan, Jason Durall and John Snead
Based on the Laundry Files novels by Charles Stross.

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-- Good morning, Bob. I do hope I'm not interrupting your game of Minesweeper?
-- Yes, Bob, this is more important than the cable fault in room D14. I've got a little job for you ...
-- Oh all right then. If you must. Yes, I'll sign it off for you. Send a memo to Facilities and let them fix the network. It can come out of the departmental infrastructure maintenance budget -- I'll square it with accounting. Yes, I'm afraid so. This task needs your undivided attention.
-- No, I don't think that will be necessary. It's a desk job; perfectly safe.
-- No, Bob, nothing's going to eat you.
-- All right, here's the briefing document and the material we want you to prepare a report on. You'll notice it's security coded CUBICLE SEVEN. It's clearly a job for a young fellow like you who grew up playing Dungeons and Dragons and Space Invaders or what-not. I don't understand these fads, I'm afraid. When I was a lad ... yes, that was a very long time ago. You understand this stuff better than I do ...
-- It's a huge embarrassment. CUBICLE SEVEN went to press and sold hundreds of thousands of copies of this so-called game before anybody noticed, much less thought to stop them. It's out there and out of control, in the wild as it were. We can't track down everyone who's bought one: it's a fait accompli. I'm told it's framed as some kind of fantastic fiction, but it's full of highly dangerous classified material and the portrayal of how we work and what we do is ... well, uncharitable barely begins to describe it. If we were a public department we could contract the spin control out to some PR firm, but we aren't so we can't.
-- To make matters worse, it mentions various codeword classified operations.
-- Yes, it's at least as bad as the "Spycatcher" case. When we catch whoever spilled the beans, Thaumaturgic Forensics will want to examine them very carefully to establish exactly how they broke their Oath of Office, before we throw the Official Secrets Act at them. The Board are absolutely livid. Questions are being asked at their Oath of Office, before we throw the Official Secrets Act at them. The less said about that the better, yes, but if you can see your way to burning a couple of gross it would be appreciated.

-- Someone has to read it. And that someone has to be both the kind of nerd who understands these Role Playing Game thingies, and an officer who is cleared for all the codewords in the game book. Which means you, Bob.
-- Your job is to read this "Laundry RPG" and, if necessary, play-test it to determine whether the procedures documented therein are a threat to our national security, not to mention the sanity of any civilians who may have been exposed to it. If you spot any errata, please send me a memo immediately -- what they got wrong will be as important as what they got right in helping Internal Affairs to track down the source of the leaks. Oh, and you may need to inform the GAMMA YELLOW committee if you run across summoning rituals or occult lore encoded in the documentation, in case we have to send the Plumbers to mop up after so-called games. I'd appreciate a full report on my desk next Friday morning ...
-- What? What on earth do you need that for?
-- Dice? Paper? Players?
-- I told you I don't know anything about these new-fangled role playing games. Are you sure? If so, fill out a stationery request for the office supplies and submit it in triplicate to the departmental secretary. Players ... I don't know where you're going to get them.

Have you thought about asking Personnel if they'll loan you some Residual Human Resources?
-- What, the players have got to be alive?
-- Oh, I see. It's not like lawn chess, then.
-- Ask HR. If you encounter any push-back I'll provide top cover.

Three RPG players with security clearance for at least eighteen hours? Ouch. We're under a hiring freeze, in case you hadn't noticed: I've no idea where we're going to get a budget line for ... Three RPG players with security clearance for at least eighteen hours? Ouch. We're under a hiring freeze, in case you hadn't noticed: I've no idea where we're going to get a budget line for ... Three RPG players with security clearance for at least eighteen hours? Ouch. We're under a hiring freeze, in case you hadn't noticed: I've no idea where we're going to get a budget line for ...
-- That's an excellent idea. I seem to remember there's a disused level two containment grid in basement room B6 that you can probably use: check with Facilities. Black candles are easy, we're still overstocked thanks to that ordering mix-up in your first week on the job. The less said about that the better, yes, but if you can see your way to burning a couple of gross it would be appreciated.

The "free beer and pizza for volunteers" idea sounds promising, and I'll definitely see if HR have a line item I can use to cover it. But you're going to have to recruit and vet the volunteer "players" yourself.
-- Remember: report by next Friday! And don't let anything eat your soul.

(ENDS)
Dear Sir/Madam/Other,

As a newly transferred employee, it is necessary for you to acquaint yourself with the structure and operational methods of this organisation as soon as possible. Your supervisor will provide you with the documentation pertinent to your position; this general orientation is intended for the consumption of all employees. As a reminder, this and all other documentation is classified under Section III of the Official Secrets Act (1916) and hence is bound under the terms of your service.

You now work for a branch of Her Majesty's civil service known as the Laundry – the name derives from our original offices during WWII – tasked with monitoring and containing entities and phenomena that would be termed ‘supernatural’ by the general population. This is a misnomer; all phenomena are natural to this or another universe. Reality is a considerably more porous medium than is commonly suspected.

You are required to observe security and safety precautions at all times. Keep your warrant card and employee badge on your person at all times. Use of your legal or true name is to be kept to a minimum; use your assigned soubriquet for all non-essential forms, records, oaths and social interactions. Report all significant unusual phenomenon, blood spills or bleeding, unusual temperature shifts, electrical or computer faults to a supervisor immediately. Do not enter any secure areas without permission. Do not repeat any unusual phrases three times. Do not summon up anything you cannot put down. Review the Basic Health, Safety and Security Protocols document at least once per month.

In the course of your duties, you may be called upon to serve in the field. Such duties include, but are not limited to, investigating illegal or dangerous use of magic, containment and/or banishing of supernatural entities, testing or investigation of new magical phenomenon, providing occult support to other civilian (police, counterterrorism, customs, Home Office, Foreign Office) or military organisations, enacting or participating in rituals (ensure you have signed Form CF/432 before doing so) and protecting the sanity and stability of Reality As We Know It in general and the United Kingdom in particular.

Secrecy is paramount in the field. Never discuss the nature of your work or the existence of the Laundry without permission. Your warrant card is enchanted to deflect suspicion and ensure your authority – use of the warrant card outside of official Laundry business is not permitted and suspected abuses will be Audited.

Before any field operation, a budget plan must be approved by your superior and on file with Financial Control. Expenditures outside of the approved operational budget allocation are the responsibility of the department and/or the individual. Similarly, use of any assets or office equipment (including wards, mobile telephones, charms, storage devices, stationary including pens, pencils and so forth) for non-standard purposes without prior approval is not permitted and costs will be extracted from the relevant department. Repeated offences may be Audited.

The Laundry is an ISO9001-certified organisation, emphasising quality record keeping and formalised management and problem-solving procedures. Maintaining this level of certification should be a high priority for every employee.

The near future promises exciting challenges for the Laundry. With hard work, diligence, attention to detail and a modicum of luck, we are confident that the majority of you may survive in some form.

Welcome to the Laundry!
We are a very minor infestation of organic life, clinging precariously to a small pebble of cooling rock. This little pebble orbits a brief candle of burning hydrogen, one of millions of similar wisps of hot gas that make up 100,000 lightyear-wide splotch called the galaxy. That galaxy is one of billions of galaxies in the universe and the universe itself is a) largely empty and b) 13.7 billion years old.

For the most part, we have got it all worked out. There is no God out there and precious few little green men. It is all just hydrogen and a light sprinkling of heavier elements bouncing around in the aftershocks from the Big Bang. Reality is deterministic and meaningless; life is a cosmic accident. As that bus said – stop worrying and enjoy your life.

It is the bits we cannot see that the Laundry worries about. There are sections of space-time where the physical laws are very different to the ones in our neck of the galaxy, impossible regions where reality gets squamous. There are other universes out there, other dimensions above and below this one where the many-angled ones live. You can call them gods if you want and you probably should.

Pray that they do not notice you.

Since we crawled out of the primordial ooze, a lot of very stupid people have tried worshipping such entities. 99% of the time, this had as much effect as most prayer, although Cthulhu cultists were less interested in selling you copies of the Watchtower than they were in sacrificing you to their squiddy deity. Sometimes, very, very rarely, some madman would actually manage to produce a genuinely supernatural effect (usually the effect known as ‘opening himself to possession by the brain-eaters’). Magic is mostly garbage and even the spells that worked (for a given value of ‘worked’, see brains, eaters of) were packed full of cruft and nonsensical ritual elements.

There has always been a strong association between espionage and sorcery. They are both occult, in that they are hidden from public view. Here in the UK, you had people like John Dee and the Wizard Earl of Northumberland hanging around with Walsingham; later on, Dashwood’s Hellfire Club was packed with spies and more recently, you had people like Jasper Maskelyne running around with Military Intelligence making the Suez Canal disappear. It is hardly surprising, then, that the modern age of sorcery began in the secret depths of British intelligence… more or less.

The greatest wizard of the 20th Century was Alan Turing.

He is better known, of course, as the father of computing theory. The Church-Turing thesis basically states that anything computable can be done by a Universal Turing Machine, aka a computer, and that is not as recursive as it sounds. It puts limits on what computers can achieve within the lifetime of this universe; it means certain problems are unsolvable by calculation. In computer science, it is one of the fundamental tenets.

The trouble is, in 1941, Turing himself came up with a theorem that disproved the Church-Turing hypothesis and here is where things get messy. Put simply, the Turing Theorem… no, it is too complicated to put simply. Let me anallogise wildly. Imagine the platonic realm of mathematics, the infinite plane of numbers. This plane exists in all possible realities. You do a calculation in our universe and it, well, echoes in that wholly imaginary platonic realm. Assuming that it is the right calculation – technically, all spellcasting is a variation on the Dho-Na curves, popularised by certain long-dead star-headed sea cucumber civilisations.

Now, assume there is another universe, a whole stack of them in fact, extending above and below ours. (Don’t try to imagine this; it will give you a headache.) In a vanishingly small number of these universes, there are Things. These Things have Minds and these minds can also imagine the platonic realm of mathematics. You do the right calculation, cause the right ripples and you attract the attention of Things. You can even get the Things to do Stuff. Stuff starts off with blowing every form of cryptography out of the water, moves onto raising spirits from the vasty deep and zapping your enemies with boils and goes right up to Opening The Way for bigger, nastier Things to crawl into your skull, or worse, our universe.

And to Them, our universe tastes good with ketchup.

1. Invisible, too, until NASA gets around to launching Tillinghast One.
2. Or were created by the Elder Things, as certain carvings from the Antarctic darkly hint.
3. At least, we hope they are long-dead.
4. If you are lucky. If not, it will not be your head anymore.
Deep breath. If your eyes glazed over about three paragraphs back, that is fine. Just remember that spells are a form of abstruse computation, which means you can warp reality by running the right program on your laptop.

Turing came up with his hypothesis back in 1941, when he was working at Bletchley Park and foiling dastardly Nazi encryption with two-fisted British cryptanalysis. The practical side of the whole ‘the right computation can summon demons’ theorem got turfed over to the Special Operations Executive (SOE). The SOE was the offensive, hell-raising side of intelligence, a bunch of cowboys who were looked down on by the refined, upper-class spies of Special Intelligence Services (SIS). Churchill had told SOE to ‘set Europe ablaze’ by training spies, saboteurs and sorcerers in England and parachuting them into occupied territory.

By the end of the war, SOE was also heavily involved in taking down the Nazi occult warfare sections. The SS’s Ahnenerbe picked up a lot of tricks from the old Thule-Gesellschaft and while they were behind the Allies in terms of efficient computational sorcery, they were a lot more willing to use… sacrifices. There’s power in death and the Final Solution was part of a vast incantation that – if it worked – would have changed the course of history. Hitler spent a lot of time in the bunker ranting about the wonder-weapons that could still win the war and even with the Russians marching into Berlin, he could still have won if his sorcerers cracked the problem. The power of the Elder Gods dwarfs the power of the atomic bomb.

The Special Operations Executive was dissolved after the war, ostensibly because of pressure from SIS, which mutated into MI6 and spawned a thousand spy novels and sexed-up dossiers. In truth, there is a small part of Whitehall that is forever SOE, and that is the Laundry.

The Laundry – the name comes from the organisation’s original offices, which were above a Chinese laundry in Soho – is the remains of SOE’s old occult warfare department, now with authority over all occult espionage and weird sorcery in the United Kingdom. It has suffered a sea-change into something… well, terminally underfunded and very, very strange.

Today, the Laundry is:

- One of the pre-eminent occult espionage organisations in the world
- A dumping ground for people who saw too much and who now get a sinecure and a state pension in exchange for not screaming ‘Iä! Iä! Shub-Niggurath’ to the News of the World.
- An asylum where the crazies are given a budget and a summoning grid to play with.

You work for the Laundry. Most of the time, this means going to meetings, filling out forms, filing reports, arguing capitalisation budgets and enduring the Machiavellian machinations of Human Resources. It combines the thrilling excitement of a menial office job with the dazzling action of ISO9001 certification and a bureaucracy that’s not so much Byzantine as it is cyclopean. Sometimes, they send you on missions, which combines the thrilling excitement of Things Trying To Eat You with the dazzling action of Running Away.

Still, the alternative is far, far worse. They call it CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN.

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5. Literally.
6. To which the Laundry tends to mutter ‘Cambridge Five’ under its collective breath, ignoring the fact that Kim Philby was involved in SOE.
7. Also Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man.
8. You may fall under multiple categories.
9. Ironically, not always human themselves.
10. If you fail, you may end up as a Residual Human Resource.

PICK UP DRY CLEANING!!!
ACTION THIS DAY:


2. SO3 is also to investigate and counter enemy use of same.

3. As per our discussion of report 443/10 on the work of Mr. Turing, SO3 will liaise with Bletchley Park and determine the full scope of the theorem’s implications.

4. All unconventional assets and files relating to same are to be reclassified and transferred to SO3.

5. Execute this on extreme priority and report to me that this had been done.

— Winston Churchill
How To Use This Book

Welcome to The Laundry roleplaying game!

Using this book as a guide, you and your friends can create your own Lovecraftian espionage adventures, inspired by Charles Stross’s Laundry Files books.

What is the Laundry Files series?

The Laundry Files is a series of books and short stories by Charles Stross, chronicling the life and times of Bob Howard, network administrator by day and computational demonologist by night. If you have not read them, you probably should. This game is based on them, after all. You can play the game without reading the books, but the Game Master should at least be familiar with The Atrocity Archives.

What is a Roleplaying Game?

Welcome to the hottest and fastest-growing hobby of, er, 1977.

We will assume that you are familiar with computer roleplaying games, where a bunch of sword and/or laser-wielding thugs with personality issues smite monsters for loot and XP in a variety of colourful locales. (Tabletop) roleplaying games are just like that, only instead of a computer, one of the participants is the Game Master. The GM describes the scene for the other players and adjudicates the results of their actions, often by throwing some dice.

So, it goes something like this:

Player: I open the door into the next room.
GM: You see an orc armed with a battleaxe guarding a chest.
Player: I enter into a frank and meaningful dialogue with the orc, validating his right to guard chests but not pigeonholing him into a stereotype, in the hopes of restructuring the traditional adventurer/monster antagonistic relationship into something more positive and mutually beneficial.
GM: Roll 1d20 against your Charisma skill.
Player: I succeed.
GM: The orc is moved by your rhetoric. Casting his battle-axe aside, he sits down on the chest and invites you to join him in a brain-storming session about ways to revitalise the decaying subterranean infrastructure and society of the dungeon, perhaps with a –
Player: While he is distracted, I stab him with my sword.

What is Capital Laundry Services: The Roleplaying Game?

Why, it is the very book that you hold here in your mortal hands (or that you read here on the screen). Prospective players should read through the Player’s Section starting on page 157; Game Masters should skim the Player’s Section, then delve into the arcane mysteries of the GM’s domain, starting on page 163.

What Do I Need?

Other than this book and a few friends, you need a character sheet (photocopied from the back of the book), or downloaded from www.cubicle7.co.uk), some dice (at least 1D4, 1D6, 1D8 and 2D10), pencils and notepaper. A single session of play usually lasts between two and four hours.

How Do I Play The Game?

Firstly, you will need to create a character. The rules for generating characters can be found in Chapter 4: Character Creation. Your Player Character is an employee of Capital Laundry Services, the UK’s premier – ok, only – counter-occult intelligence agency. For one reason or another, you have joined the Laundry and been placed on the active service roster. You and the other Player Characters will be sent on missions by the Laundry, to investigate weird events and thwart evil cultists. Between missions, you will fulfil some vital role in the Laundry’s bureaucracy.

The basic rules are in Chapter 3: Basic Rules; players should be familiar with these. Later chapters (5: Skills, 6: System and Combat, 7: Damage and Healing, 8: Sanity) contain special-case rules, which you can consult as needed.

The Laundry’s structure is described in Chapter 9: The Laundry. Your equipment is listed in Chapter 10: Tools of the Trade and rules for getting equipment are in Chapter 11: Budgets, Requisitions and Training. Chapters 12 and 13, The Directory and Counterparts and Other Powers describe other organisations and agencies you may encounter. Chapter 14: Sorcery describes computational demonology.

Chapter 15: Security Best Practises is an in-character guide to Laundry operations; Chapter 16: Expectations of Play is a guide on how best to roleplay your character.

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1. Either on the table, to provide a random number as part of a non-deterministic way of determining the success or otherwise of a player’s action, or at the player if he suggested something stupid.
How Do I Game Master?

Start by turning to Chapter 17: Expectations of Game Mastering, which describes the role and techniques of GMing. There is a list of characters from the novels in Chapter 18: Laundry Personnel to use as a ready-made cast, while chapters 19, 20 and 21 (The Archives, Known Threats and CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN) describe the dangers facing the Laundry.

Players may read those chapters too, if they wish, but remember that your character does not know everything that you know – and you will have more fun by discovering secrets in play than by reading them in this book. Even if you succumb to temptation and read the GM’s section, do not read Chapters 22, 23 or 24 – these are sample missions and should be not be read by prospective players.

Glossary

Basic Roleplaying (BRP): The rules system used in the Laundry roleplaying game.
Check: A checkmark placed next to a skill, to show that the player may try to improve it.
CHA: Charisma.
Characteristic: Any of CHA, CON, DEX, EDU, INT, POW, SIZ, STR – see page 11 for details.
CON: Constitution.
DEX: Dexterity.
d6, d8, d10: The ‘d’ means dice – a d6 is a six-sided die, a d8 is an eight-sided die and so on. See page 11.
EDU: Education.
Game Master (GM): The participant who sets the scene, runs the mission and plays the Non-Player Characters.
HP: Hit Points.
INT: Intelligence.
Non-Player Character (NPC): A character run by the GM; one of the villains or supporting cast.
Player: A participant who portrays a Player Character.
Player Character (PC): A character run by a player; one of the protagonists and heroes.
POW: Power.
Roll: A test of a characteristic or skill; to make a roll, throw the appropriate dice (usually D100) and try to get under the relevant characteristic or skill.
SAN: Sanity.
SIZ: Size.
Skill: A learned ability – see page 15 for details.
STR: Strength.
‘I’m no James Bond, with a sexy KGB minx trying to seduce me in every hotel room. That’s about the first thing they drum into you at Capital Laundry Services (‘Washes cleaner than clean!’): life is not a spy movie, work is not romantic, and there’s nothing particularly exciting about the job.’

— The Atrocity Archive

Now that you’re familiar with the world that the Laundry operates in, it is time to become familiar with the rules that determine what your characters can and cannot do, how well they succeed… and, unfortunately, how badly they screw up. The Laundry Roleplaying Game uses Basic Roleplaying (BRP), a percentile-based game system behind several of the world’s most popular game systems, including the Lovecraftian horror-based Call of Cthulhu and many other games. Because of the decades-long connection between the horror works of H.P. Lovecraft and the Basic Roleplaying system, it is the ideal system for handling the exploits of Bob Howard and his peers… your Player Characters.

This chapter familiarises you with the rules you will be using while playing in the world of the Laundry, while later chapters go into more depth about how the rules work in a variety of situations. Some information may be repeated, though the second time around it will be in more detail. This way, you will understand enough about how the rules work for you to create a character and the further you read in the rulebook, the more you will know about how different aspects of the rules come into play.

The d100 System

Though it uses several other types of dice, BRP uses percentile dice as the primary means of determining success or failure for a task. In BRP, percentile dice (abbreviated as d100) are rolled whenever you or the Game Master need to determine whether an action succeeds or fails. Just as someone might say that there is a 60% chance of rain, actions such as skills, attacks, or other activities are rated by percentages.

Rolling Dice

Percentile dice (d100) are two 10-sided dice (d10s) rolled together, with one representing the tens digit and the other representing the ones digit. You can roll the same die twice to get a percentile result, or roll them together, paying attention to which d10 is the tens and which d10 is the ones. Some specialty d10s are even numbered 10, 20, 30 and so on, making this much easier. Other dice that you use in this system are four-sided (d4), six-sided (d6) and eight-sided (d8), as well as using the d10 by itself. When the rules call for you to roll percentile dice, roll d100 as described and you will be fine. The d100 roll handles almost every action that your characters will attempt.

Other types of rolls may call for multiple dice, such as three six-sided dice (3d6), a six-sided die plus a four-sided die (d6+d4), or a die roll modified by another number, such as d6-1. In other cases, you may be asked to divide a roll in half (such as rolling a d6 and dividing the result by 2), or double a roll, such as 2d6 x 2. You should always round up to the next whole number if the result is a fraction and if a dice roll has something added to or subtracted from it, add the modifier to the dice total before dividing or multiplying. If you are doing multiple tasks, such as d4+1+d6 x 2, add the dice results together, add the modifier and then multiply (or divide).

When Do You Roll Dice?

Though there is an element of uncertainty in almost anything a person does, with a chance of success and of failure, this does not have to be simulated through these rules. These rules assume that rolls are made when it is dramatically important, such as whether success or failure will have an impact on the outcome of the mission.

Your character should not have to make a Language roll to see if they are able to talk to their boss, a Drive roll to commute normally to work or a Computer Use skill roll to check daily email. On the other hand, your character should have to make a Language roll to see if they can decipher a message spoken in ancient Enochian, a Drive roll when fleeing a carload of angry cultists at reckless speeds on the Autobahn or a Computer Use skill roll to hack into a heavily-encrypted mainframe from an outside line.

The Game Master should inform the players when rolls are required. The rest of the time, it can be assumed that your character’s successes and failures reflect their general level of competency and do not have life-changing results.

Characteristics

Characters (and some objects) are measured in a few different ways: the most important being characteristic values. Characteristics are measured in a linear scale (4 is better than 3, 18 is better than 17 etc). They describe how strong, tough, large, smart, wilful, agile, charming and even how well educated your character is. Generally, human characteristics have a range of between 3 and 18, with the average at 10 to 11. You will learn how to determine your character’s primary characteristics in the next chapter.
The primary characteristics and their uses are:

**Strength (STR):** Strength is the measure of how much physical effort your character is able to put into a task. Someone with a high STR is not necessarily covered in muscles; they could be lean and well-able to use leverage. You can use STR to pick up or move heavy things, to force open doors, carry a lot of stuff and to put an extra bit of hurt into punches or grapples.

**Constitution (CON):** Constitution is how tough your character is when it comes to resisting pain, injury and disease. Someone with a high CON is healthier than someone with a low CON: they generally get sick less and are harder to kill. Constitution is used to determine how much damage your character can take before dying, how easily they resist becoming sick or poisoned and how much exertion they can perform before becoming tired.

**Size (SIZ):** Size is less straightforward than other characteristics, as it can be interpreted in a few different ways. A character with high SIZ can be extremely tall, or can be very broad. Size is used in determining how much damage a character can take (larger people have more mass to hurt) or inflict (bigger characters can often hit harder), among other things.

**Intelligence (INT):** Intelligence is a measure of how smart your character is. It is not about how much they know but how able they are to use what they know. A character with a high INT generally learns faster and has likely picked up the basics of a large number of skills. INT can also represent how quick-thinking your character is in a pinch. You use INT to figure out things, make educated guesses where no applicable skill jumps to mind and while learning.

**Power (POW):** Power represents a few intangible aspects of your character, from willpower, internal drive, magical potential, to simple dumb luck. A character with a high POW is usually luckier than everyone else and is usually more ‘connected’ to the ebb and flow of the universe than someone with a low POW characteristic. You use POW to determine how much magical ‘juice’ your character has (more on this later) and how lucky they are.

**Dexterity (DEX):** Dexterity measures hand-eye coordination, raw speed and general physical agility. A character with a high DEX is catlike and may be a natural athlete, while someone with a low DEX is probably clumsier, slower and all thumbs. Dexterity determines when you character is able to act in a round, it figures into your character’s starting Dodge skill and it affects other skills and actions requiring physical speed or agility.

**Charisma (CHA):** Charisma is a measure of personal magnetism, an intangible measure of force of character and appeal. Like many characteristics, it can be described in a few ways: how likeable or attractive your character is, how authoritative and compelling or even how influential they are in personal relationships. A character with a high CHA is very noticeable in a crowd, regardless of how they look, while someone with a low CHA does not attract much attention.

**Education (EDU):** Education covers formal schooling, roughly equating to one EDU point per year of education. It can also cover knowledge gained through a well-lived life, representing knowledge gleaned from experience, reading or general observation about life. A low EDU represents someone essentially unschooled, such as a small child or amnesiac, while a high EDU score indicates years of school and even higher education. The EDU characteristic determines how many points your character has in their professional skills and can serve as a general guide to how sophisticated and worldly they can appear.

### Characteristic Rolls

Characteristic rolls are based on all but one of the primary characteristics described above (SIZ does not have an associated characteristic roll) and they are used frequently when your character attempts an action that is not represented by a specific skill or a resisted roll. You will learn more about skills and resistance rolls later but characteristic rolls are almost as important.

**Effort (STR x 5):** The Effort roll is an easy way to determine if your character is able to do something relating to physical strength that is not addressed by a skill or a resistance roll. For an example of a suitable Effort roll, your character might need to pull their body up into a ventilation shaft by their hands.
Endurance (CON x 5): Endurance rolls are used to determine whether or not an activity tires your character out. If they are doing something that might involve a lot of effort, such as running a great distance, the Game Master might call for an Endurance roll.

Idea (INT x 5): The Idea roll is used to determine if your character is inspired to make a guess about something that is not obvious, such as an intuitive leap based on existing facts. The Game Master may ask you to make an Idea roll for your character to determine if they know something that you, the player, do not know. Similarly, you may be required to succeed in an Idea roll if the Game Master thinks that your character would not easily be able to recall something.

Luck (POW x 5): The Luck roll is used to determine if fortune favours your character in any instance where luck, not skill, is an option. If your character was flipping a coin to determine heads or tails, or guessing the answer to a multiple choice question when they had no idea what the correct answer was, the Luck roll would be used. Luck has additional uses, explained in Chapter 6: System and Combat.

Agility (DEX x 5): Though many physical tasks are covered by more specific skills, the Agility roll may be used for simple situations, like catching something that was dropped, or running on an icy surface.

Influence (CHA x 5): The Influence roll is used in simple situations where communication has not occurred and appearance is the primary factor. Your character might use the Influence roll to be noticed in a crowd among a number of other people, or quickly impress (and bypass) a doorman with a confident stare and purposeful stride.

Know (EDU x 5): The Know roll is used to determine whether your character knows some piece of basic information about the world, ranging from current events, general etiquette, common cultural history to even trivial information. Your character might need to make a Know roll to recognise the name of a minor villain on an episode of Star Trek or the name of the current Prime Minister of Bulgaria. The Know roll may also be used for current events, such as knowing that there was a recent robbery in the rare books collection at Miskatonic University.

When Do You Use a Characteristic Roll?
Characteristic rolls are not as commonly used as skill rolls or resistance rolls and generally are only used when a simple task is being accomplished that does not have an immediately obvious skill or resistance value associated with it. The most frequently-used characteristic rolls will likely be the Idea roll, the Luck roll and the Know roll. Characteristic rolls can sometimes also be used temporarily in place of an actual skill roll, such as using an Agility roll to juggle two items, even though the Sleight of Hand skill would represent actual training with juggling.

Derived Characteristics

The primary characteristics (STR, CON, SIZ, INT, POW, DEX, CHA, EDU) define the backbone of your character. Other characteristics are derived from those values as shown below. Derived characteristics (other than SAN) may be affected if the associated characteristics are altered, so if this happens, you should recalculate the derived characteristic values.

Hit Points (HP)

For humans, Hit Points are determined by averaging CON and SIZ (adding them together and dividing by two) and rounding up. When you determine your character's Hit Points (HP), you should circle that number on their character sheet. Hit Points are a measure of how much damage your character can take through injury, poison and so forth, before dying. When your character has all of their Hit Points, they are uninjured and are (more than likely) healthy. When they lose all of their Hit Points, they are dead. You will read more about Hit Points, damage and healing in Chapter 7: Damage and Healing.

When Do You Lose Hit Points?
Your character loses Hit Points (HP) through injury, whether it comes from combat or physical mishaps. Additionally, poisons, disease or exposure to radiation can also cause Hit Point loss. A healthy and uninjured character has all of their Hit Points. When your character reaches 1 or 2 Hit Points, they are unconscious and at 0 Hit Points your character will die. If your character loses more than ½ their normal total Hit Points in a single injury, they may suffer a major wound, a condition with unpleasant physical results. Characters regain lost Hit Points through medical attention and natural healing.

Major Wounds

Your character's major wound threshold is equal to half their Hit Points, rounded up. If it is not immediately obvious, major wounds are bad news. If your character loses this many Hit Points in damage from a single source, the Game Master should roll on the Major Wound table on page 65 to determine what sort (if any) of major wound has been suffered. Major wounds are usually pretty nasty and may have other unfortunate side effects, such as loss of characteristic points through specific injury.

Damage Bonus (DB)

The bigger and stronger your character is, the harder they are able to hit other people with bare hands or weapons. Similarly, smaller and weaker characters do not do as much damage when they strike an opponent. The Damage Bonus (abbreviated as DB) is an extra die, added to or subtracted from damage, normally rolled for a hand-to-hand attack. You will determine your character's Damage Bonus in the next chapter, Chapter 4: Creating Your Character.
Sanity (SAN)

Sanity Points (abbreviated as SAN) are a reservoir of your character’s stability, a pool of psychological fortitude that enables them to withstand the mind-shattering effects of experiencing horrors from the lower reaches of the Mandelbrot set. Your character’s initial Sanity Points are equal to POW x 5.

To make a sanity roll, you must roll d100 and try to get below or equal to the character’s current Sanity Point total. If the roll fails, your character loses Sanity Points and in cases of extreme threats to sanity, a successful roll sometimes only means that fewer Sanity Points are lost. Losing Sanity Points represents a chipping away at mental fortitude, causing your character to slowly lose their grip on reality. Sudden loss of a significant number of Sanity Points can cause temporary or permanent insanity.

Sanity Point loss, sanity and insanity are covered in more detail in Chapter 8: Sanity and Insanity and the Cthulhu Mythos skill is covered in Chapter 5: Skills.

When Do You Make a Sanity Roll?

You need to make a sanity roll for your character whenever they come face-to-face with graphic scenes of bloodshed or carnage, are put in horrific situations, suffer personal trauma, commit violent acts, encounter supernatural phenomena or creatures or encounter other similarly challenging situations or occurrences. When your character fails a sanity roll, they lose an amount of Sanity Points (SAN), usually based on how horrible the experience was. More powerful experiences or especially horrifying beings may even cost Sanity Points if the roll was successful.

Move (MOV)

Move (MOV) represents how far your character can move in a 12-second period (a ‘round’). All humans have a Move of 10, though this may be adjusted by injury or special conditions. Unlike most characteristics, Move has a flexible value of 1 to 5 metres, though typically each point of Move represents one metre, meaning that the average human can move 10 metres in a round, normally. Movement is covered in more detail in Chapter 6: System and Combat but the Move characteristic is rarely used outside of resolving chases.

Experience Bonus (½ INT)

Generally, a high intelligence means that learning new skills and improving existing ones comes easily. To determine your character’s experience bonus, divide their INT by 2, rounding up. When you check to determine if your character learned from successfully using a skill, add the experience bonus to the learning roll. Experience is covered in Chapter 6: System and Combat.

When Do You Use Derived Characteristics?

You will probably use derived characteristics more often than the primary characteristics themselves. Derived characteristics come into play when your character: gets injured (Hit Points); is really injured (major wound threshold); hits someone (Damage Bonus); sees or experiences something horrific (Sanity Points); runs or walks while in a combat situation (Move); or tries to improve their skills through experience.

So, realistically, your character can count on hitting most or all of these circumstances during or immediately after a field assignment!

As Hit Points and Sanity Points are all temporary values and are lost, spent and gained throughout the course of an assignment, the character sheet has these values listed in fields of numbers. It is a good idea to draw a box around the normal maximum and lightly circle your current total, or lightly cross off the values as the points are lost, erasing the cross-marks when the points are regained.
Skills

Most of the tasks that your character will attempt are based on skills. A skill is a particular kind of expertise representing a combination of learned knowledge, natural ability and general aptitude. Your character’s skills can improve through experience, practice and study. Every skill is rated on a scale from 0% to 100%. This percentage is called the skill rating. Just as you might say about the weather that there is a 40% chance of rain, you would say that your character has a 40% chance of hiding or a 70% of sneaking through a cultist-infested house. Determining whether a skill succeeds or not is done with a roll of the dice, as described previously. Skills and their use are covered fully in Chapter 5: Skills.

When Do You Use a Skill Roll?

The majority of dice rolls that you will make are skill rolls. In the world of the Laundry, your character’s value is not measured by who they are but by what they can do. This is best demonstrated through the use of skill rolls. Your character will use skill rolls when attempting to use computers, pick locks, research hidden secrets, bluff their way past a surly guard, spot the visual irregularity that may signify an illusion or ward or when trying to put the hurt on another being.

The Resistance Table

The heart of the system is the resistance table, a cross-referenced table providing the chances of success for each party and action where the two parties are working against one another. These are usually described as ‘active’ and ‘passive’ characteristics. The resistance table is based on the concept that equal forces should have a 50/50 chance of success, while numerical superiority or inferiority will alter the chances. The resistance table and resistance rolls are covered fully in Chapter 6: System and Combat.

When Do You Use the Resistance Table?

You would use the resistance table whenever you have a clear case of one characteristic opposed to another at a dramatically appropriate point in the game. There is no point in rolling to determine if your character can successfully use his STR to pick up a coffee cup or stack of files but if it is a case of a chase (DEX vs. DEX) or dragging a fallen coworker to safety (STR vs. SIZ), you would use a resistance roll.

SUCCESS OR FAILURE

Whenever you roll percentile dice, you are determining whether your character succeeded or failed in whatever they were trying to accomplish, whether it be a characteristic roll, a skill roll or a resistance roll. The chance of success is the chance that you have of succeeding with a roll of percentile dice. The higher the chance of success, the better. Depending on circumstances and the action being attempted, the chance of success may be modified by a number of factors. All of these are described in detail in Chapter 6: System and Combat.

Cleromancy - casting of lots as divinatory tool. Sufficiently powerful observer can alter probability. Multiple unlikely dice rolls in succession = presence of extradimensional entity.