

WARPTONE

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ADVANCED SKILLS

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Fevered Rationale

The WFRP skill system clearly shows what a character does and does not know. Like so many rules systems, though, it doesn't bear close scrutiny. An assassin who decides to settle down and become a physician (moral turnaround anyone?) could become more skilled at healing than his experienced teacher as a result of intelligence increases taken in his earlier profession. Granted, this is a fairly extreme example, but it illustrates the point.

Now the last thing we want to do is to rewrite every rule in the book in an attempt to make WFRP more realistic, but I believe the system outlined below will give characters more depth, whilst remaining simple to use. It has the added advantage of making it hard for players to develop super-powered characters. Gaining an advanced skill will show the character is an expert in his field, that he has expertise and knowledge, gained from long experience. It means that natural ability, while important, is no longer paramount.

Advanced Skills

"Having no more questions to ask does not make you a master. It means you are a fool."

Earning an advanced skill is no easy task. Such mastery requires at least a year's full-time work, or for those only working part-time, at least three years' worth of practice. At the end of this period, players can choose to spend 300 experience points and take a relevant skill test (e.g. Dex for Pick Locks, or Int for Heal Wounds). Failure means that the experience points have been wasted, and another year's worth of full-time practice is required before another test can be made.

Gaining an advanced skill gives characters two advantages. Firstly, characters are assumed to have mastered the basics of that skill, so there is no need to take tests for normal tasks. (It is up to the GM to decide whether or not a task is normal, but as a general rule, this will include all tests without penalties.) In more difficult situations, a test is required, but the player gains a 10% bonus to their rolls.

Advanced skills should be shown in a character's profile as follows; Smithing (Advanced), Heal Wounds (Advanced), etc. This will show clearly that the character is an expert in their chosen field.

Not every skill is suitable to improvement in this way. The following list details which can and cannot be taken at an Advanced level, and is based on the categories of skills from chapter one of Apocrypha Now.

Innate: None of these skills can gain advanced status.

Intellectual: To gain advanced status in these skills, a character must already have the skill at a normal level, and must then spend the period of time required studying with someone who can teach them the advanced knowledge.

Personal: All skills can be gained at an advanced level.

Practical: Flee! and Strike Mighty Blow cannot be taken at an advanced level. Frenzied attack (Advanced) gives the character a bonus to their tests for entering frenzy, making it harder/easier (as desired) for them to succumb.

Training

"Give me a pupil, and I will show you a future teacher."

Learning advanced skills from tutors who have already acquired this status gives a +20 bonus to the test required to gain the skill. However, such tutelage does not come cheap; the normal costs for training should be doubled to reflect the scarcity of such exceptional individuals.

Combat Skills

"The greatest swordsmen in the Empire are those that know when the blade should remain sheathed."

He had trained for twenty years with the finest teachers his father could buy. He could name every manoeuvre, execute a perfect parry and deliver the most exquisite of sword thrusts. His first real fight was against Klaus. Real short it was. Klaus used the oldest trick in the book, throwing a handful of dust in the kid's eyes followed by a dagger into the throat. Real messy it was.

Fortunately, there aren't many skills which directly increase characters' combat ability. Specialist Weapon Skills can be bought at an advanced level, giving a +10 to WS, but make characters pay for the privilege. Their weapon will have to be tailor-made for them, at around ten times the cost of a normal weapon, and they will become an immediate target for every thief and bravo in the district. Advanced Marksmanship will increase BS, but will never give more than a +20 bonus, even if characters are using specialist weapons. Skills such as Dodge Blow, Strike to Stun and Disarm aren't really suitable for full-time practice, but can be acquired if used frequently in real combat situations.

Conclusion

"There is no more left to teach you my child Go make use of this knowledge."

This (hopefully simple) system should add an extra dimension to characters, without forcing any changes. It's the sort of thing you can opt in and out of, throwing interesting 'specialist' NPCs into the PCs' path every now and again. It can also help PCs overcome poor initial profile rolls, if the GM is feeling generous.

It also means that the PCs may have more call to visit the regular practice of the local physician next time they stop off in a town, rather than trusting to the bright but erratic adventurer in their party who just happens to have learnt the Heal Wounds skill somewhere in his wanderings...