

CALL of CTHULHU

QUICK-START RULES

CALL of CTHULHU
40th Anniversary
1981 - 2021

Sandy Petersen, Mike Mason,
Paul Fricker, and Lynn Willis



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"The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear."

—H. P. Lovecraft



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WELCOME TO CALL of CTHULHU

DO YOU HEAR THE CALL OF CTHULHU?

Interested in Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu*? You are not alone! *Call of Cthulhu* is Chaosium's tabletop roleplaying game of mystery and horror, where ordinary people delve into weird events and lore, and confront the terrifying and alien forces of the Cthulhu Mythos.

The game has won many awards for gaming excellence and is published by Chaosium Inc., one of the oldest roleplaying game companies in the world. Chaosium is famous for publishing engaging games—including *Call of Cthulhu*, *RuneQuest*, *Pendragon*, *7th Sea*, and many more.

All you need to play *Call of Cthulhu* for the first time is this Quick-Start Rules guide, some polyhedral dice (or a dice-rolling app), plenty of imagination, and your friends. Welcome to the worlds of *Call of Cthulhu*!

INTRODUCTION

Call of Cthulhu is a game full of secrets, mysteries, and horror. Playing the roles of steadfast investigators, you and your friends will travel to strange and dangerous places, uncover foul plots, and stand against the terrors of the night. Within strange and forgotten tomes of lore you may discover secrets that humanity was not meant to know. Along the way, sanity-blasting monsters and insane cultists work to bring about your demise. You and your companions may well decide the fate of the world!

Call of Cthulhu is a horror-themed roleplaying game concerning both horrors from beyond and from within. The game is inspired by the 20th century horror and weird fiction written by H. P. Lovecraft and other writers like Frank Belknap Long, Lin Carter, and August Derleth, as well as contemporary writers like Ramsey Campbell (to name but a few). The game draws upon the fictional invention of what has become known as the "Cthulhu Mythos," a selection of stories sharing common plot elements—such as mythical books of arcane lore and alien god-like entities. The game draws on the imaginative ideas and creations arising from the Cthulhu Mythos, while avoiding Lovecraft's own distasteful personal views and racism, which have no place in the game. If you have not read any Cthulhu Mythos stories we encourage you to do so—there are many to be found alongside Lovecraft's own, including modern reinterpretations of the Cthulhu Mythos seen through the eyes of differing cultures and heritages.

These *Quick-Start Rules* gives you all the information you will need to begin playing and having fun with the *Call of Cthulhu* roleplaying game, and include a brief overview of the core rules and how to play the game. If you enjoy the experience, we recommend you consider moving on to the *Call of Cthulhu Starter Set*, which includes the full basic rules, a simplified investigator creation system, and four introductory adventures. Once you have mastered and played through the material in the *Starter Set*, you'll be ready to use the *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, which contains the full rules and a complete investigator creation system, as well as a plethora of game information. You can purchase these products from good game and hobby stores, large bookstores, online, and directly from chaosium.com.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE GAME

The aim of playing *Call of Cthulhu* is to have fun with your friends as you explore and create a story of mystery and horror. One player takes the role of game moderator, known as the Keeper of Arcane Lore (“Keeper” for short), whose role is to run the game for the rest of the players and apply the rules as necessary. Everyone else takes the parts of intrepid Investigators of the Unknown (“investigators”)—the heroes of the story—attempting to seek out, understand, and eventually confront the horrors, mysteries, and secrets of the Cthulhu Mythos.

As you are the person reading this book, we will assume that you are going to take on the role of Keeper for the first few games you play. The Keeper picks a story to run—these are known as “adventures” or “scenarios.” You can find an introductory adventure at the back of this book—a scenario called **The Haunting** (page 17). Each adventure provides the Keeper with the structure of a story (the plot) to present to the players. The Keeper’s role is a little like that of a director making a movie in which the actors don’t know how the story will develop. The players are like actors, who have the freedom to improvise their own scripts and actions within the game.

The investigators need not be anything at all like the people who play them. Indeed, it is often more rewarding and enjoyable for players to create characters entirely unlike themselves—such as tough private eyes, wisecracking journalists, or learned academics. Most of the game play is a verbal exchange. The Keeper sets the scene, describing the environment, the individuals, and encounters to the players. The players tell the Keeper what they intend for their investigators to do, how they interact with people and things, and so on. The Keeper then tells the players what happens. In play, the game takes the form of a group conversation, with many twists and turns and fun along the way. Together, everyone tells the group’s story—their version of how their characters overcame (or not) the challenges of the adventure.

The game’s rules use polyhedral dice to determine if an investigator’s action succeeds or fails when a dramatic “conflict” presents itself—for example, whether the investigators are able to leap out of the way of a giant statue about to crash down upon their heads! The rules in this *Quick-Start* describe how to decide the outcome of such conflicts.

Winners and Losers

In *Call of Cthulhu* there are no winners and losers in the standard competitive sense—play is cooperative. The participants work together to attain a common goal—usually to discover and then foil a nefarious plot being perpetrated by the minions of a dark cult or some devious monster. The opposition that the investigators face can often be an alien or hostile situation controlled by an impartial Keeper, not another player. The

Keeper takes on the roles of all the supporting characters and monsters in the adventure, while each of the players just plays one role—that of their investigator.

“Winning” in such a situation depends on whether the investigators succeed in their goal, and “losing” is what happens if they fail to achieve it (though they may be able to try again later). During the game, investigators may become injured, suffer sanity-shattering experiences, or even die! However, someone has to make a stand against the cosmic horrors of the Cthulhu Mythos, and the death of a single investigator matters little if it means repulsing Cthulhu’s master plan to enslave the Earth! In the game, investigators are mostly ordinary people forced into heroic roles, but they are still fragile humans and prone to injury and death. If an investigator must “retire” from play, their player can pick up or create a new investigator to join the team and continue the story.

Investigators who survive gain knowledge of horrendous monsters, power from arcane volumes of forgotten lore, and advancement in their skills as they become more experienced; thus, the players’ investigators continue to progress until their demise or retirement—whichever comes first.

ROLEPLAYING DICE

The Keeper and players use a set of roleplaying dice in the game. These polyhedral dice include: percentile dice (D100), a four-sided die (D4), a six-sided die (D6), an eight-sided die (D8), and a twenty-sided die (D20). Such sets can be purchased from game hobby stores—only one set is needed, although players often like to have their own dice sets; alternatively, you may prefer to use a dice-rolling app instead. The letter “D” stands for “dice.” The number after the D is the range of numbers available: 1D8 generates random numbers 1 through 8, for instance, while 1D100 generates the numbers 1–100. In an adventure, the text will call for different dice rolls using this terminology. So, if the text says a monster delivers 1D8 damage, then roll the 8-sided die once to determine how much damage is actually caused.



NEVER PLAYED A ROLEPLAYING GAME BEFORE?

If you've never played a roleplaying game before you may be wondering what this is all about. To set you on the right track, it may be useful to describe an average session of play, which can take place in person around a table or online over a video conference.

Debbie and their partner Alex, along with their two friends Morgan and Susan, meet up at John's house on Friday evening at around seven o'clock. After catching up on the week's news and getting some drinks and nibbles, they sit down in the lounge, ready to play. John hands out some ready-made investigators along with some paper and pencils, and everyone is ready to start.

It's now about eight o'clock. John kicks off the game by describing the opening scene from the adventure they have chosen to play, telling how the investigators find themselves talking with a man who wants them to check out an old property he owns; rumor has it that it might be haunted! One of the players immediately

responds to this, putting on the voice of their investigator to say that such things are "Complete hokum." As the story unfolds, everyone becomes involved, describing what their characters are doing or saying. Some of the players decide to speak in the manner of their characters, such as with a New York accent, while others prefer not to "act" out their character and just speak normally. Dramatic conflicts arise and dice are rolled to determine the outcome, with John being the referee of the rules.

Sometimes the players get their way, while at other times events appear to conspire against them. It is all played out simply by talking and rolling dice to determine the outcome of certain situations; people aren't getting out of their chairs to act it out, neither are they donning costumes.

Everyone ceases play at around ten-thirty, and then chat for a while before calling it a night at around eleven o'clock. Everyone is looking forward to meeting up again next week to find out how the story develops.

Percentile dice usually consist of two 10-sided dice, which are rolled together at the same time. One die (units) is numbered 1 to 0, the other die (tens) being numbered 10 to 00. Both dice are rolled and should be read together—e.g. "30" on the tens die and "05" on the units die is read as 35%. A roll of "00" (tens die) combined with a "0" (units die) indicates a result of 100%, while a roll of "00" on the tens die combined with any other roll on the units die indicates a roll of under 10%; for example, a roll of 00 on the tens die and 3 on the units die is read as 3%.

Dice Roll Variations

Sometimes, a dice notation is preceded by a number other than "1"—this means that more than one such die should be rolled, with their results added together. For instance, 2D6 means that two 6-sided dice are rolled and totaled (or roll a D6 twice and add the results together).

You might also see 1D8+1 or 1D6+1, for instance. This means that the number following the plus sign should be added to the result of the die roll. For 1D6+1, the result must be 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, or 7. If a monster claws for 1D6+1+2D4 damage, find the result of the attack by rolling the two requested dice, totaling the results, and adding 1 (rolling 1D6 and 2D4, then adding 1 to the total rolled across all of the dice).

EQUIPMENT REQUIRED

When you are ready to begin playing *Call of Cthulhu*, you'll need a few things to start:

- This *Quick-Start Rules* guide.
- A set of polyhedral ("roleplaying") dice or a dice-rolling app.
- Some notepaper.
- Some pencils.
- At least one other person to game with.
- A quiet place to play, such as around a kitchen table or lounge.
- Two to four hours in which to play.

Of course, playing online is possible too. Instead of a set of real dice you could use an online dice roller, and you could share investigator sheets as PDFs (you can download writable PDF sheets at chaosium.com). Any video conferencing platform could be used—you just need to make sure everyone can see and hear everyone else in the game.

INVESTIGATORS

This *Quick-Start* guide does not include the rules for creating investigator characters from scratch—those rules are included in the *Call of Cthulhu Starter Set* and the *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*. Instead, at the back of this book you will find four ready-to-play investigators—note that PDF versions of these characters are available to download from chaosium.com. The players can pick from these pre-generated characters and use them when playing the included adventure, *The Haunting*. To help understand the investigator sheet, here's the lowdown on what everything means.

Players record the details of their character on an investigator sheet, which holds all the information they need in the game. Each sheet is divided into sections:

- 1. About Your Investigator:** your investigator's name, age, gender, and occupation, as well as their birthplace and current residence. In *Call of Cthulhu*, an investigator's occupation determines the skills they are most proficient with.
- 2. Characteristics:** there are eight characteristics used to measure Strength (STR), Constitution (CON), Size (SIZ), Dexterity (DEX), Appearance (APP), Education (EDU), Intelligence (INT), and Willpower (POW). Each of these has a "Regular" percentile value between 1 and 100; thus, STR 60 means Strength 60%. Note that there are two smaller boxes to the edge of each characteristic—the upper small box is half value (or "Hard" value, i.e. the Regular value divided by 2), while the lower small box is the one-fifth value (or "Extreme" value, i.e. the Regular value divided by 5). E.g. with STR 60, the upper

box would be "30" (half of 60) and the lower box would be "12" (one-fifth of 60). See **Skill Rolls and Difficulty Levels**, page 10, for what these values mean in play.

Each of the characteristics measures a certain attribute:

- **STR:** the raw physical power your investigator can bring to bear.
- **CON:** the health and hardiness of your investigator.
- **SIZ:** an abstracted value of your investigator's height and weight.
- **DEX:** physical agility and speed.
- **APP:** the physical appeal or how "good looking" your investigator is.
- **EDU:** a measure of the knowledge that your investigator has accumulated through formal education or the venerated "school of hard knocks" (i.e. street smarts).
- **INT:** a measure of your investigator's cunning, problem solving, and ability to make leaps of logic and intuition.
- **POW:** a combination of force of will, spirit, and mental stability.

In addition, there are four key values for an investigator—Hit Points (HP), Magic Points (MP), Luck (Luck), and Sanity (SAN). These values may go up and down in play.

- **Hit Points (HP):** when your investigator suffers damage, deduct damage points from hit points—at zero hit points your investigator falls unconscious and may die—see **Hit Points, Wounds, and Healing**, page 14.
- **Magic Points (MP):** used to cast a spell or some other magical effect. When spent, magic points regenerate at a rate of 1-point per hour. If a character uses up all of their magic points, any further expenditure is taken from their hit points (becoming physical damage)—see **Corbitt's Spells**, page 31, in *The Haunting* for an example of how magic points are used.
- **Luck:** used to determine whether external circumstances are with or against your investigator (whether your investigator can find a lantern in a dark barn, and so on)—see **Luck Rolls**, page 12.
- **Sanity (SAN):** measures your investigator's ability to deal with the shock and corruption from exposure to alien and mind-bending horrors of the Cthulhu Mythos. Sometimes, when such things overcome your investigator, they lose Sanity points, reflecting the lingering effect of such trauma—see **Sanity**, page 12. Note that "Starting" SAN begins equal to POW, but may later rise or fall through play, and the "Insane" box is used to write in one-fifth of the "Starting" SAN value.

Running along the bottom of this section are Temporary Insanity, Indefinite Insanity, Major Wound, Unconscious, and Dying—these are checked when certain events happen during the game.

3. Skills:

this section lists all of the common skills available. Your investigator can attempt to use most of these skills using the “base value” noted in parentheses next to the skill, e.g. “Accounting (05%)” means that everyone has a 5% skill in accountancy. On the ready-made investigator sheets you can see that each character has increased values for certain skills (these higher values supersede the base values). The ones with increased values are the skills your investigator is relatively proficient in; the higher the value, the more skilled they are.

Note that there are two boxes to the right of each skill box—the middle box is half value (or “Hard” value, i.e. the Regular value divided by 2), while the box on the right is the one-fifth value (or “Extreme” value, i.e. the Regular value divided by 5). E.g. with a Charm skill of 50%, the middle box would be “25” (half of 50) and the box to the right would be “10” (one-fifth of 50). See **Skill Rolls and Difficulty Levels**, page 10, for what these values mean in play.

4. Weapons:

notes any weapons possessed by your investigator. Each weapon has an entry for its Regular, Hard, and Extreme skill values, the damage it can inflict (usually a die roll), and the number of attacks (per round) it can be used; and, for firearms, its range, ammunition, and its malfunction number—see **Combat**, page 12, for more details.

5. Action Reference:

this is a quick reference area showing Move (the human average is Move 8), Build, Damage Bonus (DB), and also a duplicate of your investigator’s Dodge skill value—all useful during combat and other dramatic events!

6. My Story:

use this to write in the personal history of your investigator. You might add to and develop this during play.

7. Backstory:

each entry is a way to further describe your investigator, whether it’s a short description of how they appear, their ideology and beliefs, or their traits and mannerisms. You can also make a note about any significant people in their life, treasured possessions, and locations that are important to them. Most times, filling in two or more of these sections helps to round out your character. Note that Injuries & Scars, Phobias & Manias, Arcane Tomes, Spell & Artifacts, and Encounters with Strange Entities are usually filled out during play rather than beforehand.

8. Gear and Possessions:

record important items, equipment, and weapons carried on your investigator’s person. As a rule of thumb, an investigator would be carrying the items they would use day-to-day in their occupation, so there’s no need to write every single thing down—only the important and relevant stuff.

CREDIT RATING

Credit Rating is a skill on the investigator sheet, and can be used as a means to exemplify your investigators wealth (or lack of it) and social status.

- **Credit Rating of 0:** Penniless, living on the streets.
- **Credit Rating of 1–9:** Poor, has the bare minimum.
- **Credit Rating of 10–49:** Average, a reasonable comfort level.
- **Credit Rating of 50–89:** Wealthy, some degree of luxury.
- **Credit Rating of 90–98:** Rich, great wealth and luxury.
- **Credit Rating of 99–100:** Super rich, money is no object.

9. Wealth:

don’t worry about this section—it’s just for advanced games, where a character’s money on hand and savings might be important (these are covered in the *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*)—see the nearby box about Credit Rating.

10. Fellow Investigators:

record the names of the other players in your game, as well as their investigators’ names.

11. Quick Reference Rules:

a handy rules reminder and something you might refer to once you have more experience of playing the game.

GAME SYSTEM

“Skill rolls” may be called for during dramatic situations in the game. Walking down a well-lit hallway is not a dramatic situation, whereas running down a rubble-strewn corridor while being chased by monsters most definitely is! Only make a skill roll when the outcome is uncertain and dramatic.

When attempting a skill roll, you should first agree a goal with the Keeper—what is your investigator trying to achieve? If your skill roll is successful, you achieve your goal. Additionally, when you successfully roll a skill, put a check mark in the box next to it on your investigator sheet. You can only get one check per skill at a time. At the end of the scenario, that skill could increase due to experience—your Keeper will ask you to “roll for skill increases,” if you roll over a checked skill’s value, you gain +1D10 points to that skill (with a checked Climb skill of 40, you roll 1D100 and get 58, as this is above 40, you get to add 1D10 points to Climb). In other words, the more you know, the harder it is to learn something new or to get better.

On occasion, you may need to roll a test that is not covered by the skills on your sheet. If so, look at your investigator’s characteristics and determine which one of them is best to use and treat it like a skill.

SKILL ROLLS AND DIFFICULTY LEVELS

Your Keeper will tell you when you should attempt a skill roll and how difficult the task is—you just describe what your investigator is doing, and the Keeper will advise you if a skill roll is needed.

- A regular task requires a roll of equal to or less than your skill value on 1D100 (a **Regular** success).
- A difficult task requires a 1D100 roll result equal to or less than half your skill value (a **Hard** success).
- A task approaching the limits of human capability requires a 1D100 roll equal to or less than one-fifth of your skill value (an **Extreme** success).

If you can justify it through your investigator’s actions, you can “push” a failed skill roll. Pushing a roll allows you to roll the dice a second time; however, the stakes are raised. If you fail a second time, the Keeper gets to inflict a dire consequence upon your character—you might partially succeed in your goal or not, depending on the Keeper’s determination, but either way, your investigator will pay some sort of price for failing the roll. Before a pushed roll is made, the Keeper has the option of foreshadowing what might happen if the pushed roll is failed; the player can then decide whether it’s worth the risk to take the second roll or not.

***Example:** your investigator is trying to open the heavy stone door of a crypt—the goal is “open the crypt.” The Keeper decides this is very difficult and asks for a STR roll, specifying that a “Hard success” is required. Your investigator’s STR is 60, so a Hard success requires a roll of 30 or below. You roll the dice but the result is 43—you have failed, as you rolled above half your investigator’s STR. You ask if you can push the roll, saying that your character is picking up and using a spade to help lever the door. The Keeper permits a second roll, but warns that if you fail this roll, not only will the door still be closed but “something” may hear you and could be coming for your blood! Note that we used the STR characteristic here, as opening the door is feat of strength rather than a specific skill; if the door had a lock on it, you might instead use the Locksmith skill at Regular difficulty or a Mechanical Repair roll at Hard difficulty.*

OPPOSED SKILL ROLLS

If two investigators are opposing one another, or if an investigator is in a conflict with a significant Keeper-controlled character (a monster or NPC, i.e. one for whom statistics are listed in the scenario), the Keeper may require an “opposed roll.” To resolve an opposed roll, both sides make a skill (or characteristic) roll and compare their levels of success. A Regular success beats a Fail, a Hard success beats a Regular success, and an Extreme success beats a Hard success. In the case of a draw, the side with the higher skill value wins—if both skills are equal, then have both sides roll 1D100, with the lower result winning.

LEVELS OF SUCCESS

(worst) FAIL — REGULAR SUCCESS — HARD SUCCESS — EXTREME SUCCESS (best)

Bonus and Penalty Dice

Sometimes, the prevailing conditions for the investigators, their environment, and/or the time available can hinder or benefit a skill or characteristic roll. Under certain conditions the Keeper may grant a “bonus” or a “penalty” die to a roll. One bonus die and one penalty die cancel each other out. Such bonuses and penalties operate in a similar way to raising the difficulty of a roll, and can be used instead of, or in addition to, an increased difficulty. Normally, though, bonus and penalty dice are used primarily with opposed rolls.

For each bonus die: roll an additional “tens” die alongside the usual pair of percentile (D100) dice when making a roll. You are now rolling three separate dice: one “units” die and two “tens” dice. To take the benefit of the bonus, use the “tens” die that yields the better (lower) result.

***Example:** two rival investigators, Malcolm and Hugh, are vying for the affection of Lady Greene. Only one can gain her hand in marriage, so the Keeper decides that an opposed roll is needed to determine the outcome of their wooing. It is decided that an opposed Charm roll should fit the scene. The Keeper reviews the events of the scenario so far: Malcolm has visited Lady Greene twice, each time lavishing expensive gifts upon her, while Hugh has only visited once and brought no gifts at all. The Keeper states that Malcolm has an advantage and receives a bonus die in the opposed roll.*

Hugh's player rolls first against his Charm skill of 55, getting 45—a Regular success. Malcolm's player rolls against his Charm skill with one bonus die, rolling one units die and two tens dice

(see fig 1.) The units die reads 4 and can be paired with either of the two tens dice to give scores of 44 or 24. Malcolm's player takes the lower result 24—a Hard success. Malcolm wins the opposed roll, and his proposal of marriage to Lady Greene is accepted.

For each penalty die: roll an additional “tens” die alongside the usual pair of percentile (D100) dice. You're now rolling three separate dice: one “units” die and two “tens” dice. For a penalty, use the “tens” die that yields the worst (higher) result.

***Example:** in a dire turn of events, two investigators—Felix and Harrison—have been captured by the cultists of the Scarlet Smile. The cultists decide to have some “fun” at the investigators' expense, decreeing that both must undertake the Ordeal of Pain, from which only one can survive as the loser will be sacrificed to the cultists' foul god.*

The Ordeal of Pain involves lifting a huge rock and holding it aloft. Whoever holds the rock up the longest wins. This requires an opposed STR roll from each of the investigators; however, the Keeper rules that Harrison must take a penalty die, as he recently suffered a major wound (he received an injury when he was captured by the cultists) and is still recovering. Felix's player rolls 51 against STR 65—a Regular success. Harrison's STR is 55. His player rolls 20 and 40 on two tens dice and 1 on the units die (see fig 2.), which can be combined to read 21 or 41. The extra die was a penalty die, so Harrison must take the higher result—a Regular success

Both players have achieved a Regular success; Felix wins because he has the higher STR value. Felix is able to hold the rock above his head for longer than Harrison. The cultists jeer and lead Harrison off towards their altar...



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

LUCK ROLLS

Luck rolls may be called for by the Keeper when circumstances external to an investigator are in question, and also when determining the fickle hand of fate. If, for example, an investigator wants to know if there is an item lying nearby that could be used as weapon, or if the flashlight they have found has any juice left in it, then call for a Luck roll. Note that if a skill or characteristic is more appropriate to a situation, then it should be used rather than Luck. To succeed with a Luck roll, the investigator must roll equal to or under their current Luck value.

If the Keeper calls for a “group Luck roll,” the player whose investigator has the lowest Luck score (among those present in the scene) should make the roll on behalf of the group.

Example: finding a cab doesn't require a dice roll, but getting one before the investigators lose sight of the car that they wish to pursue could. Credit Rating could be a factor in attracting the attention of a cabdriver on the lookout for a well-dressed fare who may tip generously. However, quickly getting a ride at two o'clock in the morning on the undesirable side of town might not be so easy. Would there even be a cab to hail? No skill is going to make a cab appear at that moment. It is a matter of chance whether a cab may be driving down that road, hence a Luck roll is required.

SANITY (SAN)

Whenever an investigator encounters the horrors of the Cthulhu Mythos or comes across something mundane yet horrific (such as stumbling across a friend's mutilated corpse), make a percentile roll against the investigator's current Sanity score. If you roll over your current Sanity, you lose a greater amount of Sanity points. If you roll under, you will lose less or none. The Sanity loss is generally described for an event as something like “0/1D6” or “2/1D10.” The number before the slash mark tells you how much Sanity your character loses if the roll is equal to or under their current Sanity score; the number after the slash is how much your investigator loses if you roll over their current Sanity score (the worst result).

When you fail a “Sanity roll” the Keeper gets to momentarily dictate your investigator's next action as the fear takes hold; perhaps they unwittingly scream, freeze, or squeeze the trigger of the gun they are holding.

If an investigator loses 5 or more Sanity points as the consequence of a single Sanity roll, they have suffered major emotional trauma, and the player must roll 1D100. If the result is equal to or less than their Intelligence (INT), the investigator fully understands and comprehends what has been seen and goes temporarily insane (for 1D10 hours). If they fail the roll, their mind is closed to the horror and they remain sane (for now).

In addition, when falling insane, an investigator suffers a “bout of madness”—roll 1D10 and refer to the **Bouts of Madness Table** (page 29). If the investigator is in the presence of other investigators, play out the result round by round (the player has, more or less, control of their character, but should be guided by Keeper in terms of their investigator's portrayal of madness). If the investigator is alone you may use the result to describe how the investigator is found sometime later in a bad way, perhaps hiding in a cupboard, drunk in a gutter, or unconscious under a tree.

If your investigator is temporarily insane, the Keeper may decide to add a phobia or mania to your sheet (such as “fear of the dark,” “fear of confined spaces,” or “kleptomania, an irrational compulsion to steal things”). Alternatively, they may decide to rewrite one of your existing backstory entries, perhaps corrupting it in some way (where you wrote “Trusting” under Traits, the Keeper corrupts this to “Fearful.”)

While temporarily insane, the Keeper may present your investigator with “Delusions” (hallucinations)—is that a zombie creeping up on you or is it just a homeless person asking for spare change? You can only be certain by asking to make a “reality check”—electing to make a Sanity roll; if you're successful, you see through the hallucination, but if you fail, you fall deeper into the madness and believe the delusion!

Once 1D10 hours have passed, the investigator is sane once more and cannot be affected by more delusions; however, altered backstories or phobias or manias gained while insane remain in effect.

Unfortunately, regaining lost Sanity points can be a long and arduous process. Checking characters into some form of care while they take a break from the action, or undergo some form of psychotherapy, are ways to recover small amounts of Sanity. Successfully completing investigations also provides a way to gain Sanity points. But, such gains often do not outweigh the steady loss of Sanity, which tends to be a downward spiral. As Sanity slips away, investigators become less stable and their ability to deal with new horrors diminishes. Full rules for Sanity and Insanity in the game are more fully explained in the *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*.

COMBAT

When you are confronted with the horrors of the Cthulhu Mythos it is generally a better idea to run away or avoid confrontation altogether, as such entities are very powerful and often resistant to bullets! However, sometimes there is no other choice than to go in, guns blazing, and make the best of it.

When a combat occurs, all investigators, as well as characters and monsters controlled by the Keeper, act in order of their DEX values. The investigator, character, or monster with the highest DEX acts first and then the others go in descending order from there.

The duration of a combat round is best described as “long enough for everyone to take one significant action.” The Keeper controls the flow of the round. On each character’s DEX turn, the Keeper decides or asks (if an investigator) what action is being taken; usually this is something as simple as, “I attack the monster,” “I pull out my revolver,” or “I run away.” The Keeper should give everyone a chance to do something, while being aware of the narrative flow of the events taking place.

Investigators have three combat skills: Fighting, Dodge, and Firearms. Two of these skills are made up of multiple specializations, such as Fighting (Brawl) or Firearms (Rifle/Shotgun)—each investigator may have different specializations (or none at all). Note that the Fighting (Brawl) skill includes unarmed combat and the use of simple weapons (like knives and clubs); however, wielding a sword requires the Fighting (Sword) specialization.

You make a combat roll using the appropriate skill, just like any other skill roll; however, you don’t get to “push” combat rolls—you simply make another attack next round.

Close Combat

On a character’s turn in the DEX order, they may choose to initiate an attack against an opponent. In addition, each time a character is attacked, they get to choose how they will respond, be it by dodging (attempting to avoid the attack completely) or fighting back (attempting to avoid, block, or parry an attack while also hitting back). Both attacker and defender roll percentage dice (1D100) and compare their levels of success.

- **If you are initiating the attack:** roll your Fighting skill and compare the result to your opponent.
- **If you are responding—fighting back:** use your Fighting skill. You need to achieve a higher level of success than your attacker (you inflict damage instead of your opponent).
- **If you are responding—dodging:** use your Dodge skill. Your attacker needs to achieve a higher level of success than you (if you equal or exceed your attacker’s level of success, you successfully dodge and avoid taking damage).

The winning side avoids receiving any damage and inflicts damage (unless they are dodging) on their opponent. Note that, when fighting back (responding to an attack on you), the best a person can achieve is “regular” damage, whereas a character initiating an attack (if successful) could achieve

“extreme damage” if they win the combat with an Extreme success—if a blunt weapon, extreme damage deals maximum damage plus damage bonus (if any); if an impaling weapon (like a knife), extreme damage deals maximum damage (of the weapon) plus an additional dice roll for the weapon’s damage and also damage bonus (if any). E.g. when a knife with 1D4 damage causes extreme damage, it deals 4+1D4+damage bonus (if any).

***Example:** a ghoul initiates, swinging a clawed hand at Susan, who elects to dodge. The Keeper rolls 03—an Extreme success (below one-fifth of the ghoul’s skill). Susan rolls 20 for her Dodge roll—a Hard success. The attacker has achieved a better level of success than the dodger, so Susan is hit, automatically taking maximum damage of 6+1D4 (1D6+1D4 damage bonus) because the attack was an Extreme success.*

The ghoul is a monster with 3 attacks per round (all of its attacks take place simultaneously on its DEX). On its second attack it tries to bite Susan, who fights back. Susan achieves a Hard success; the ghoul achieves a Regular success. Susan has a better level of success than the ghoul, so she successfully fights back—not only does she avoid injury, but she also inflicts 1D3 points of damage on the ghoul.

Fighting Maneuvers

If a player describes a goal in combat that is something other than simply inflicting harm, it can be resolved with a “Fighting Maneuver.” A successful maneuver allows the character to achieve one thing, such as:

- Disarm an opponent.
- Knock an opponent to the floor.
- Seize and hold an opponent, whereupon the opponent must apply one penalty die to their actions until they can break free with an opposed STR roll.

A maneuver is treated the same way as a normal Fighting attack, using the Fighting (Brawl) skill. The opponent may dodge or fight back as usual. Compare the Build of the two combatants. If the character initiating the maneuver has a smaller Build than their opponent, they take a penalty die for each point of difference (to a maximum of two penalty dice). If an opponent exceeds the attacker’s Build by three or more points, any fighting maneuvers are ineffective; the attacker may be able to lay hands on their opponent, but lacks the strength and size required to take advantage of their grip.

***Example:** Susan attempts to push a ghoul out of a window (a Fighting Maneuver). Susan’s Build is zero and the ghoul’s Build is 1, so Susan suffers one penalty die on her attack roll. Susan rolls 02*

and 22; as she had a penalty die, she must take the higher result—a Hard success (under half Susan's Fighting skill). The ghoul is fighting back, and it rolls a Regular success on its Fighting skill. Susan has achieved a better level of success and so her maneuver is successful—she shoves the ghoul through the window.

Outnumbered

A character outnumbered by the opposition is at a disadvantage. Once a character has responded to an attack (either fought back or dodged) in the present combat round, all subsequent melee attacks on them (in the same round) are made with one bonus die. This does not apply to attacks made using firearms.

Firearms

You may shoot a firearm on your turn in the DEX order to initiate an attack (usually, firearms cannot be used in fighting back reactions). Make a percentile (1D100) roll and compares the result with the Firearms skill.

- Readied firearms act at DEX+50 for the purpose of determining the DEX turn order.
- If firing 2 or 3 shots from a handgun in one round, apply one penalty die to each shot.
- If at point-blank range (within one-fifth of DEX in feet), the shooter gains one bonus die on the skill roll.

The target of the shot cannot fight back (you can't dodge a bullet) but may instead "dive for cover" by rolling against their Dodge skill. If the Dodge roll is successful, the attacker's roll(s) to hit are made with one penalty die (i.e. make the Dodge roll before the Firearms roll). A character that opts to dive for cover forfeits their next attack or action (regardless of whether they were successful or not), or if they have already used their attack this round, they forfeit their attack in the following round.

HIT POINTS, WOUNDS, AND HEALING

Points of damage are deducted from a character's hit points. Hit points cannot fall below zero, so do not record a negative value. When a character's hit points reach zero, they fall unconscious and, in some situations, may die.

When a character takes damage of greater than or equal to half their full hit points in a single blow, they have received a "major wound"—they must make a CON roll or fall unconscious. If a character with a major wound falls to zero hit points they are close to death (dying). They must make a successful CON roll at the end of the following round and every round thereafter or die. Only successful use of the First Aid skill can alleviate the dying condition,

through stabilizing the character. If a character suffers points of damage greater than or equal to their maximum hit points in a single blow, they die instantly.

- Characters without a major wound naturally heal 1 hit point per day.
- Characters with a major wound must make a healing roll (rolling equal to or under their CON) at the end of each week—if successful, they regain 1D3 hit points, or 2D3 points for an Extreme success. The major wound condition is removed if either an Extreme success is rolled or current hit points are healed to half their maximum value or greater. Thus, it may take a number of weeks for a major wound to heal.

Successful First Aid can heal 1 hit point, as well as rousing a character from unconsciousness. If First Aid is used on a dying character it, extends the character's life so that the Medicine skill can use used. The Medicine skill can heal 1D3 hit points, but takes at least one hour and appropriate equipment and supplies. If Medicine is used on a dying character, it allows a healing roll at the end of one week.

***Example:** Brian starts with 12 hit points. On Monday he gets in a barroom brawl, taking damage from three separate slugs to his jaw of 4, 2, and 4 points. This is a total of 10 damage, reducing his hit points to 2. He has not taken a major wound (as no single attack delivered significant damage) and recovers at the rate of 1 hit point per day. On Thursday, Brian (now at 5 hit points) clumsily falls out of a window, suffering 7 hit points of damage. This is a major wound (7 damage is more than half of Brian's*

WEAPON DAMAGE

- Unarmed attacks (human): 1D3 + damage bonus
- Small knife: 1D4 + damage bonus
- Machete: 1D8 + damage bonus
- Small club: 1D6 + damage bonus
- Baseball bat: 1D8 + damage bonus
- Handgun: 1D10
- Shotgun: 4D6 (at close range*, otherwise 2D6; does not impale)
- Rifle: 2D6+4

***Close range:** within DEX in feet (i.e. if DEX is 60, close range is 60 feet).

maximum 12 hit points). A friend administers First Aid and rushes him to hospital. After seven days have passed, a successful CON roll is made for Brian and he regains 2 hit points on a 1D3 die roll. At the end of the second week, Brian's player rolls an Extreme success on the CON roll and regains 4 hit points on a 2D3 roll of the dice, and his current hit points now stand at 6. This erases his major wound marker (he has regained half his maximum hit points), after which he heals at 1 hit point per day.

OTHER FORMS OF DAMAGE

Often the Keeper will be forced to judge the amount of damage caused by some random event. Whatever the cause, consider the likely injury and rate it against the left-hand column on the **Other Forms of Damage Table**. Each injury type is for one incident or one combat round (one round of being punched by an attacker, one bullet, one round of drowning, one round of being burned, etc.). The character takes further damage on each successive round that they are exposed to the source of the harm.

ABOUT THE READY-MADE INVESTIGATORS

The four ready-made investigators are designed to be used with The Haunting. Give these to your players and get them each to pick whichever one they prefer. Each player can decide the name and gender of their investigator, and write these details in the top left-hand box on their character's sheet. The four characters are a team, brought together to solve a case, although it's ok if you have less than four players—every player takes on the role of one of these characters.

- A weary private detective
- An enthusiastic graduate student
- An open-minded academic
- An author with an interest in the occult

OTHER FORMS OF DAMAGE

Injury	Damage	Examples
Minor: a person could survive numerous occurrences of this level of damage.	1D3	Punch / kick / head-butt / mild acid / breathing smoky atmosphere / a thrown fist-size rock / falling (per 10 feet) onto soft ground.
Moderate: might cause a major wound; it would take a few such attacks to kill.	1D6	Falling (per 10 feet) onto grass / club / strong acid / breathing water / exposure to vacuum / small-caliber bullet / arrow / fire (burning torch).
Severe: likely to cause a major wound. One or two occurrences would render a person unconscious or dead.	1D10	.38 calibre bullet / falling (per 10 feet) on to concrete / axe / fire (flamethrower, running through a burning room) / being 6 to 10 yards from an exploding hand grenade or stick of dynamite / mild poison.
Deadly: the average person has a 50% chance of dying.	2D10	Hit by a car at 30 mph / being 3 to 6 yards from an exploding hand grenade or stick of dynamite / strong poison.
Terminal: outright death is likely.	4D10	Hit by a speeding car / being within 3 yards of an exploding hand grenade or stick of dynamite/lethal poison.
Splat: outright death is almost certain.	8D10	Being involved in a high-speed head-on collision, being hit by a train.

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