

# Characters

Characters make up the core of Ancient Aetherium. This chapter covers all of their traits, how to decide on them during character creation, and how to level them up. To make a character, go through the sections in order and follow the directions.

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# War Patterns & Casting Styles

Each bear has been around the block by now. Over the course of months, years, decades, or centuries they have learned how to survive their environment. This is represented through their abilities from the material world, known as their War Pattern, and their abilities from their arcane origins, known as their Casting Style. The descriptions of War Patterns and Casting Styles are meant to be suggestions or purposefully vague in style, as bears have all learned their own spins and styles on common abilities.

## Creating a Character

When making a new character, they start with any one of the three War Patterns and any one of the three Casting Styles. Each will give access to unique abilities. When taking a War Pattern or Casting Style, note down their stat (STR, SKL, or DEX for War Patterns, and BRV, SAN, or ABS for Casting Styles) for later. Additionally, your character will immediately gain the first ability, marked with a level 0 requirement. After that, they gain one of the three level 1 abilities. Your character gets a level 1 from both their Casting Style and their War Pattern.

## Leveling Up a Character

When your character levels up, they can choose to take one new ability from their War Pattern and Casting Style. They must meet the level requirement, and have the required other abilities, but other than that there are no restrictions. A character may take abilities lower than their level, for instance. Alternatively, they may choose to not gain an ability in their War Pattern or Casting Style to Multi-Pattern or Multi-Style instead.

## Multi-Patterns & Multi-Styles

During a level up, a character may take the level 0 ability of a new War Pattern or Casting Style. If they gain a new level 0 War Pattern ability, they cannot get any other War Pattern ability until they level up again. During their future level ups, they will have access to both War Pattern or Casting Style tables, and a new table unique for each combination of 2 Casting Styles or 2 War Patterns. These hybrid tables will list which War Patterns or Casting Styles are required to use them. When leveling up, your character can gain one ability, but may choose from all 3 respective tables. This may only be done once. You cannot have both a Multi-Pattern and a Multi-Style.

## Reading War Patterns & Casting Styles

Each of the War Patterns and Casting Styles are represented in their chapters as large tables of abilities. Each row represents a single ability one can take when creating or leveling up their bear. These can have some nuances to how they read, so reference this section if you're confused.

## Prereq

All abilities require the character be at, or above, a specific level in order to take it. Some abilities will also list another ability that has appeared above it in the table. This means that taking that ability requires the ability higher up.

## Type

This is the style of usage the ability has. Actions are things the character can do, reactions are things your character can do in specific situations, and passives are things that your character is always doing.

## Cost

The cost that the ability has in time-stressed events, either in Stamina Points (SP) or Arcane Points (AP). Casting Styles may also show a negative cost for passive spells. This means those passives subtract that much AP from your characters max AP. Passives with an AP cost like this can be deactivated at will whenever the caster wishes to gain their max AP back, but passives can only be activated again when resting near a source of Arcana (usually an Outpost or Campfire Kits).

# Attributes

Attributes are a bears characteristics. Lower numbers in an attribute means that when they must use that aspect of themselves they are more likely to end up in trouble. On the flip side, higher numbers in an attribute can allow your character to things they never thought possible. Attributes come in 4 categories: Core Attributes, Exploration Attributes, Profession Attributes, and Summary Attributes. All of these act a little differently during character creation and leveling up.

## Core Attributes

Core attributes make up the main 6 traits that a character can be defined by. During character creation, all core attributes start with a 1, except the stats under a bear's War Pattern and Casting Style, which start at 2. The player can then assign 3 extra attribute points across their 6 Core Attributes. Each time they level up afterwards, they may assign 1 more attribute point to one of their 6 Core Attributes. The Core Attributes consist of the following:

**STR - Strength** is not how buff they are, but how much they can push the strength of their husk to its limits. To be physically strong is to be smart enough to find the proper methods of exerting force, and the proper capacity to maximize the amount of force ones husk can exert. STR measures these characteristics, and can be thought of as a characters ability to physically push, pull, damage, and throw the world around them.

**SKL - Skill** is your character's ability to use their mind to its full calculating potential. SKL mainly represents a character's ability to think quickly and effectively for ways to solve their problems. It's not book smarts, nor is it wisdom and experience. Skill is ones raw ability to process and apply information.

**DEX - Dexterity** represents how well one can handle their own body. How it twists and moves. It's speed, it's fine movements, it's broad elegance. That is DEX in it's purist form.

**BRV - Brave** is how well a character can swallow their fear and jump head first into certain danger. Fear of death, fear of risk, and fear of failure. It's knowing that dread and uncertainty that takes hold when facing oblivion, and being able to face it head on.

**SAN - Sanity** is how well a character can keep their head on their shoulders. It's the ability to think straight and cut through the noise. Avoiding temptations, handling bad news, and swallowing ones ego. One must stay sane in the face of an absurd set of circumstances if they wish to survive.

**ABS - Abuse** is your ability to ignore your physical limits limits. Many things might require someone to push further than they should, threatening to break down their physical or mental state as a result. ABS ignores them, pushing past to an uncertain victory. Breaking the unbreakable, stopping the unstoppable, that's one's ABS.

## Exploration Attributes

Exploration Attributes are the general survival skills all bears have learned. Those without good Exploration Attributes have already passed away, usually from unnatural causes. All exploration attributes start at 1, and 1 extra point can be added to any one attribute during character creation. When leveling up, add 1 more point to one Exploration Attribute.

**Knowledge** is all of the information a bear has learned in their lifetime. Rumors, books, underground movements, mechanics of society, instruction manuals, all of these count as a bears knowledge. Knowledge is used when asking if a character can remember a fact that it may make sense for them to recall.

**Perception** is your bear's ability to notice things in their environment. Whether they are trying to find something specific, or there's a check to see if they can notice someone sneaking up on them, perception is their eyes, ears, nose, and arcane senses.

**Speechcraft** represents a bears ability to sway others in a social context. Gaining trust, lying through your teeth, bolstering confidence, or trying to read intentions of another bear. Speechcraft is anything and everything social.

## Profession Attributes

Bears all have something they know how to do that's uncommon. Some can conduct trains, some know how to brew a mean drink, and others may have survived on their own to know the ruins like the back of their hands. Professions represent all of these things. Unlike other Attributes, there are no actual Profession Attributes provided by this book. Instead, when assigning a profession point, you may chose to either add it to an existing profession or, make a new profession with 1 point in it. Professions are some field or interest that is applicable to some checks as a bonus. For instance, a bear with a vehicle mechanic profession would probably do well with a few types of machines, but they would gain a boost from their profession points if the machine is a train.

There is no strict list or strict definition of what can and cannot be a profession. Instead, work with your Ruin Master to come up with a fitting concept for your bear. Both of you should try to make sure that you find something that is agreed to not overlap with a majority of checks, but is also not too niche to not see much use in the campaign. A car mechanic is a good profession in a campaign in the ruins, but if the whole story is in a guild complex, that profession might feel neglected. You have 1 profession point on character creation, and gain 1 extra profession point every time you level up.

## Summary Attributes

Summary attributes are not attributes that points can be put into. Instead they are all derived, meaning that their value changes depending on other attributes, gear, or conditions. Because of this, these attributes do not change during level ups, but should be recalculated anyway as most parts of a level up will change the value of a summary attribute.

**MOV - Move** is your bears speed when crossing familiar terrain. Movement is mostly concerned with how far a bear can go in a single turn during time-stress, but is otherwise not super impactful. Most skill checks should refer to DEX instead. Calculated using: *The lower of SKL and STR, added to*

*double DEX.*

**DMG - Damage** is mostly used during time-stress to see who wins a fight, or breaks an object. For melee weapons, damage is *STR + Weapon Damage*. Ranged Weapons use *DEX + Weapon Damage*.

**AR - Armor Rating** represents how hard it is to hit your bear. It factors in their ability to dodge, parry, and their armor's protection. This is also mostly used in time-stress. Calculated using: *the lower of SKL and DEX, added to the higher of your BRV and ABS, added to the AR bonus from Armors, Shields, and Gear.*

**SP - Stamina Points** are used during time-stress to signify the amount of things one can pull off in the tiniest of moments. Calculated as *2 higher than ABS, subtracting Void Strain*. When regenerating stamina at the start of a turn, regain *DEX* stamina points.

**AP - Arcane Points** are spent during time-stress to signify the amount of power one can pull from the aether in short time spans. Calculated as *2 higher than SAN, subtracting Void Strain*. When regenerating arcana at the start of a turn, regain *SKL* arcana.

**LP - Life Points** signify how much damage a character can shake off in a battle. Unlike the previous two this is a per-battle measurement, and acts as a sponge to prevent damage from creating long-lasting impacts. Calculated as *2 higher than BRV, subtracting 1 for each Lethal Wound.*

**Lethal Wounds** are the maximum amount of damage a bear can take before Cracking. When they exceed the maximum LP of a bear, that bear becomes Cracked.

**Void Strain** is a bear's capability to survive their life force being extracted from their body. When Void Strain exceeds the higher of a bears SP or AP, the bear becomes Dormant. If Void Strain becomes higher than the sum total of SP and AP, the bear Enters the Valley.

## Exploding 6's

Regardless of any bonuses or disadvantages to a roll 6's will always explode. when you roll a 6 you may roll an additional six sided die and possibly gain an extra success or roll another 6 which will explode again.

*Example: Rebar, a mage, wants to break down a door and rolls his STR which is 2 dice but he needs 3 successes. he rolls a 4 and a 6 so he may roll an additional die. he rolls a 5. since he has 3 successes he breaks down the door.*

# Picking Gear

No bear survives anywhere on this god forsaken island without at least a scrap of armor and a sharp stick to fight with. Gear is listed in the gear section, along with more specific examples. This section will be closer to a primer and some instructions on initially picking starting gear.

## Using Gear

Gear is all items a bear can carry on them. Survival kits, tools, weapons, armor, shields, medical supplies, 3 bottle caps, or 15 loose screws can count as a piece of gear. Each piece of gear serves a different purpose, but there are some commonalities to keep in mind.

## Proficiency

Each piece of equipment requires some proficiency to use it. These are provided by a bear's War Pattern by default. Gear that requires a higher proficiency is still usable, but at a heavy penalty based on the type of gear it is. Additionally, some addendums may provide a Specialization, which is an alternative set of proficiency that includes a 5th category. These can be taken instead of the normal proficiency from a War Pattern, and allows some gear to be used as proficient if regardless of it's requirement if it falls under the specialization.

## Equipping & Storing

Quite a few pieces of gear can be equipped. Weapons and tools will have a paw count, most bears have 2 paws. Armor will list what it covers, with most armor unable to be worn on the same area. Items that are equipped are in active use, and do not factor into any kind of storage like Bag Slots. Gear can be unequipped, which will require it to be stored.

All gear has some amount of Bag Slots listed. This is the capacity of items a bear can hold. A Bag Slot is not a single measurement, and instead factors in weight, volume, and how cumbersome the item is to store. This means a small item and a larger item may take up the same amount of Bag Slots.

## Traits

Items may have traits unique to that item. These can be something like "Heavy" which requires extra strength, or "Ruckster" which means the fuel explodes. These are additional game rules that can be added or removed to items when the narrative calls for it. These cannot be added to items or removed from items without the option being provided in the story by the RM.

## Rarity

Items have a listed "Rarity," which is mostly just a balancing based suggestion. These can be ignored when it would be more fun to ignore them. The rarity scale includes the following

- Standard: the item is mass produced for wide distribution
- Common: the item can be practically given for free
- Uncommon: The item must be sought out or bought
- Valuable: The item is semi-rare, most easily being found in market stalls run by scavengers
- Rare: The item is hard to come by and must be sought out, or requires a lot of luck to find
- Scarce: the item is in such high demand or limited supply it would require serious dedication to obtain
- Elusive: The item should be treated as non-existent outside of miraculous circumstances

## Invented vs Engineered

Bears have 2 fields of mechanical production: invention and engineering. Invention concerns one-of-a-kind or hand made items, while engineering concerns mass production and resource efficiency of a design. Due to this there are 2 methods of describing gear: the invented gear and the engineered gear.

Invented Gear is broken into stat blocks and restrictions, tied to rarity. This allows one to make a piece of gear that closely fits their specific character, or a specific story beat. The rarities signify how valuable and hard to make this specific piece of gear is.

Engineered Gear is more standardized. It is often less rare than invented gear, though out-of-production items or items seized by Greedo would still be rare. Engineered Gear has unflinching stat blocks that describe an existing and well known type of item.

## Picking Gear

This is a suggested method for picking gear for a new character. Specific campaigns may increase or decrease these numbers to fit their story. These are based on levels, as some campaigns will start with bears more experienced than level 1.

**Level 1** - 1 Uncommon item, 1 Common item, 4 Standard items. 1 item may be invented.

**Level 2** - 1 Uncommon item, 2 Common items, 3 Standard items. 1 item may be invented.

**Level 3** - 2 Uncommon items, 2 Common items, 2 Standard items. 2 items may be invented.

**Level 4** - 1 Valuable item, 1 Uncommon item, 2 Common items, 2 Standard items. 2 items may be invented.

**Level 5** - 2 Valuable items, 2 Uncommon items, 2 Common items. 3 items may be invented.

**Level 6** - 1 Rare item, 1 Valuable item, 2 Uncommon items, 2 Common items. 3 items may be invented.

**Level 7** - 2 Rare items, 2 Valuable items, 2 Uncommon items. 4 items may be invented.

**Level 8** - 1 Scarce item, 1 Rare item, 2 Valuable items, 2 Uncommon items. 4 items may be invented.

**Level 9** - 2 Scarce items, 2 Rare items, 2 Valuable items. 5 items may be invented.

**Level 10** - 1 Elusive item, 1 Scarce item, 2 Rare items, 2 Valuable items. 6 items may be invented.