

# Engagement Roll

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Once the players choose a plan and provide its detail, the GM cuts to the action— describing the scene as the crew starts the operation and encounters their first obstacle. But how is this established? The way the GM describes the starting situation can have a huge impact on how simple or troublesome the operation turns out to be. Rather than expecting the GM to simply “get it right” each time, we use a dice roll instead. This is the engagement roll.

The engagement roll is a fortune roll, starting with 1d for sheer luck. Modify the dice pool for any major advantages or disadvantages that apply. Not counting the possible extra factors you might consider, there is a possible 3d to be gained (for a total of 4d).

## Major Advantages / Disadvantages

- Is this operation particularly bold or daring? Take +1d.
- Is this operation overly complex or contingent on many factors? Take -1d.
- Does the plan’s detail expose a vulnerability of the target or hit them where they’re weakest? Take +1d.
- Is the target strongest against this approach, or do they have particular defenses or special preparations? Take -1d.
- Can any of your friends or contacts provide aid or insight for this operation? Take +1d.
- Are any enemies or rivals interfering in the operation? Take -1d.
- Are there any other elements that you want to consider? Maybe a lower profile target will give you +1d. Maybe a higher profile target will give you -1d. Maybe there’s a situation in the district that makes the operation more or less tricky.

The engagement roll assumes that the PCs are approaching the target as intelligently as they can, given the plan and detail they provided, so we don’t need to play out tentative probing manoeuvres, special precautions, or other ponderous non-action. The engagement roll covers all of that. The PCs are already in action, facing the first obstacle—up on the rooftop, hacking the lock on the window; kicking down the door of the bounty’s safehouse; manoeuvring to speak with an executive at the masquerade party; etc.

Don’t make the engagement roll and then describe the PCs approaching the target. It’s the approach that the engagement roll resolves. Cut to the action that results because of that initial approach—to the first serious obstacle in their path.

*The first obstacles at the Black Lodge’s drug lab are their maglocks. The engagement roll puts us on the roof outside a window, as the PCs attempt to silently and carefully open the lock.*

*The PCs have kicked down the door and swarmed into the front room of the Halloweeners’ hideout, gun muzzles flashing, into a vicious melee with the first of his bodyguards.*

*The PCs have socialised politely at the party, manoeuvring into position to have a private word with the CEO. As a group of young department managers leave her side, the PCs step up and engage her in conversation.*

If the players want to include a special preparation or clever setup, they can do so with flashbacks during the run. This takes some getting used to. Players may balk at first, worried that you're skipping over important things that they want to do. But jumping straight into the action of the score is much more effective once you get used to it. When they see the situation they're in, their "planning" in flashbacks will be focused and useful, rather than merely speculations on circumstances and events that might not even happen.

- **Critical:** Exceptional result. You've already overcome the first obstacle and you're in a controlled position for what's next.
- **6:** Good result. You're in a controlled position when the action starts.
- **4/5:** Mixed result. You're in a risky position when the action starts.
- **1-3:** Bad result. You're in a desperate position when the action starts.

## Outcomes

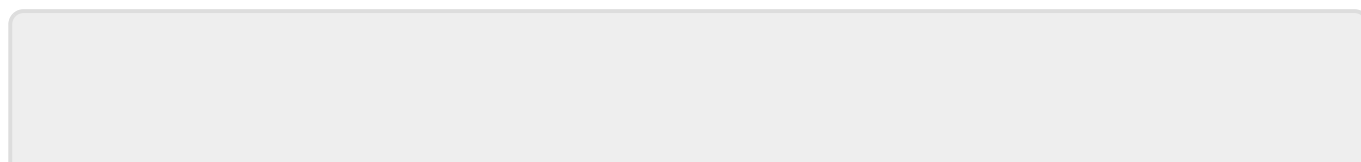
The outcome of the engagement roll determines the position for the PCs' initial actions when we cut to the score in progress. A 1-3 means a desperate position. A 4/5 is a risky position. A 6 yields a controlled position. And a critical carries the action beyond the initial obstacle, deeper into the action of the score.

No matter how low profile or outmatched you are, a desperate position is the worst thing that can result from the plan + detail + engagement process. It's designed this way so the planning process matters, but it doesn't call for lots of optimisation or nitpicking. Even if you're reckless and just dive in and take your chances, you can't get too badly burned. Plus, you might even want those desperate rolls to generate more xp for the PCs, which helps to bootstrap starting characters into advancement.

When you describe the situation after the roll, use the details of the target to paint a picture of the PCs' position. How might the strange syndicate present a desperate position for burglars? How might the violent and ruthless spy present a risky threat to assaulting thugs? How might the exceptionally rich and calculating executive present a controlled opportunity for a manipulative cyberpunk? Use this opportunity to show how the PCs' enemies are dangerous and capable—don't characterise a bad engagement roll as a failure by the PCs, or they won't trust the technique in the future. Sure, things are starting out desperate here against the creepy occultists, but you're just the type of characters who are daring enough to take them on. Let's get to it.

## How long does it last?

The engagement roll determines the starting position for the PCs' actions. How long does that hold? Does the situation stay desperate? No. Once the initial actions have been resolved, you follow the normal process for establishing position for the rest of the rolls during the score. The engagement roll is a quick short-hand to kick things off and get the action started—it doesn't have any impact after that.



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