



FRENZY

FRENZY: FAST ACTION

A ROLEPLAYING GAME SYSTEM



Inspired by John Woo's *'The Killer'* and other action movies, **Frenzy: Fast Action** is the roleplaying game of high-octane adventure. It is designed as an engine to power the short scenarios and split-second encounters that most roleplayers thrive upon.

CREDITS

Frenzy (1995)

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Frenzy: Fast Action (2003)

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FRENZY: FAST ACTION

Frenzy: Fast Action is a roleplaying game (RPG) that was specifically designed to cope with actions and adventures where conventional systems break down. These other games are unable to cope with the speed of narration and declared actions of the participants.

Frenzy uses dice and features a game mechanic termed the 'Reverse Roll.' This simple and quick mechanic requires two ten-sided dice, available online or from your friendly local games shop.

WHAT IS ROLEPLAYING?

Put simply, it is 'interactive storytelling.' Roleplaying is like a dramatic play – a narrated experience – with a small number of participants (this is usually four to seven in total). Think of it like an improvised radio play, there is a rough outline of the story but there is no set 'script.'

Most of the participants are called 'players,' each of whom roleplays a 'character' (a player character, PC). One of the participants is the 'referee,' who plays all the incidental characters (non-player characters, NPCs), controls the direction of the plot and the pacing of the story.

Oral exchange forms the main part of any roleplaying game, and most stated actions are automatically successful. For example, PCs can talk, walk and perform other simple tasks if the player declares it. More difficult tasks may require a test using the game rules to see whether the attempt is successful or not. The referee has the final approval on whether tasks are carried out – there may be a reason unknown to the players why an apparently simple task is unsuccessful.

This guiding role of the referee is vital to the success, or failure, of a roleplaying session. The referee hosts the game's ongoing story and it is the referee's task to bring to life the friends and foes the characters encounter in their actions and travels. When the players have questions about what their PCs can see or hear, about events in the past, or about NPCs they encounter these questions are directed at the referee.

The referee paints the world and its inhabitants, presenting exciting challenges and adventures for the players. The best games are those where the players work in concert with each other and the referee, and create an enjoyable experience for all. Gaming is all about enjoying yourself.

THE FRENZY CONCEPT

These rules were written to give fast game play, making it ideal for games of action and high-octane adventure. The system allows rapid decision making for all settings.

In 1994 after watching John Woo's oriental gangster classic *The Killer* (1989) it occurred to William E. Worthey and myself that no RPG available could allow us to play out the events we had seen. Most had too many rules that would disallow much of what occurs in the film. They also would slow down the rapidly unfolding action sequences. So we came up with the ideas that you now see before you. We were pleasantly surprised at just how easy, flexible, and exciting the results were.

Since then (**Frenzy** was first published in 1995) other games have come along but **Frenzy** still holds its own.

The main points of **Frenzy** are that

- confusion should be kept to a minimum
- the rules should be simple and straightforward
- clear and rapid communication should be easy
- it has to be fast
- it has to have 'character'

Frenzy does not have a lot of rules and charts. This does not make it any less a 'real' or 'proper' roleplaying game. I believe that the bits that are 'missing' are not particularly necessary. For this type of game they are an extra burden and get in the way. **Frenzy** has it all it needs to have.

However, if you feel short-changed that there are no graded skills, subtle language rules and the like, then please add them yourself. While I don't think they are needed, I won't stop you adding them. It is now your game after all, so please do with it what you will.

Note that there is only one throw of the dice to work out combat and other tasks in **Frenzy**. This makes it near-impossible to misinterpret the outcome of actions and speeds up the game to a massive degree.

The rolled result has a clear meaning that all the players of the game will understand. Furthermore the rules are simple enough to be picked up quickly by new players – and that is one of the great advantages of **Frenzy**.

Gregor Hutton, Edinburgh, 2004





CHARACTERS

Frenzy characters are described by characteristics, skills and special abilities, and are fleshed out with descriptions and a sketch drawing or photograph. Opposite is a character sheet for making a record of your **Frenzy** PCs. Permission is granted to duplicate this sheet for personal use only.

Note that the true making of a character is in your imagination and you should always strive to make each PC more than just a list of numbers and words.

MAIN CHARACTERISTIC

Characteristics are abstract measures that can be 'tested' (using a Reverse Roll) to see if the character is successful at a task, and if necessary by how much. Characteristics range in value from 1 to 10. Typically a characteristic is 5, with 3 and 8 being normal limits to their range in game. However, legendary characters can have ratings of 9 or 10.

The six **Frenzy** characteristics are as follows.

AIM

AIM is the measure of a character's ability to target and successfully use firearms and projectile weapons, and accurately throw objects. It also gauges how well a character can notice fine details, for example spotting a small object or clue when examining a crime scene.

STRIKE

STK is the quality associated with prowess at hand-to-hand or melee combat. It is a measure of how well a character can attack or defend themselves in such situations. It also is used for tasks of general agility, balance and deftness. Physical reaction time is tested with STK.

BUILD

BLD measures a character's physical strength and stamina. A character with a low BLD rating will be weak and sickly, while a high BLD would indicate a healthy athlete with a strong constitution. BLD also determines your maximum number of Health Points (see below).



GUTS

GUT is the measure of courage, determination and coolness under fire and stress. Characters with a low GUT rating will turn away from danger or psychological threats (both real and imagined). A character with a high GUT rating is mentally resilient: a resolute protester or a tough fighter displaying endless courage.

INTUITION

INT measures a character's general awareness of the events around them. It encompasses such factors as feeling when something is wrong or out of place, and gauging emotions and reading body language. A low rating in INT is possessed by those who are poor judges of character, and who do not relate well to others. High INT characters are astute and sharp, with a keen grasp of changing moods.

LUCK

LCK is the quality of chance. It is the measure of how well a character does when facing an irrational situation. While players may be lucky or unlucky in their dice rolls, some characters are luckier than others. A character with high LCK is renowned for their ability to survive dangerous scrapes, even when the odds are stacked against them. Characters with low LCK live short, mundane and often desperate lives. Fortune favours the brave.

INITIAL RATINGS

A starting character has 35 points distributed among these six characteristics (*initially* none rated below 3 and none higher than 8). It is possible for a PC to start with a rating of 9, but this requires taking a **DISADVANTAGE** first (p. 11).

A 'weak' PC (roughly at the level of an 'ordinary' NPC) has 30 points in ratings, while a 'strong' PC has 40 points. A very powerful PC has 45 points, and may have ratings as high as 9 to start play. These characters will have many more strengths and far fewer weaknesses than NPCs.

The referee and players should discuss which level of character is most appropriate for the game session that is planned, and which level of character they are most interested in playing. For most games 35 points is a good starting point.

Characteristics can increase with **EXPERIENCE** (p.23).



CHARACTERISTICS

AIM	<input type="text"/>	AIM	<input type="text"/>	HP	<input type="text"/>
STK	<input type="text"/>	STRIKE	<input type="text"/>		
BLD	<input type="text"/>	BUILD	HEALTH POINTS		
GUT	<input type="text"/>	GUTS	SHOCK POINTS		
INT	<input type="text"/>	INTUITION	<input type="text"/>		
LCK	<input type="text"/>	LUCK	<input type="text"/>	SP	<input type="text"/>

Circle your **Prime Characteristic**

THE FRENZY CHART

Reverse Roll	Result	Effect	Wound
01–05	Catastrophe	Self-injury	Special
units > target number	Failure	None	–
06–30	Limited Success	1 SP	Light
31–60	Moderate Success	1 HP	Medium
61–85	Significant Success	2 HP	Serious
86–95	Complete Success	4 HP	Critical
96+	Fantastic Success	8 HP	Fatal

The World of **Frenzy** has a million faces and behind each face there is a story, uniquely sculpted by Fate.

This is the story of _____

CHARACTER PORTRAIT

SPECIAL ABILITIES

GEAR, KIT & POSSESSIONS

SKILLS

WEAPONS

NOTES

ARMOUR

PLAYER'S NAME:
 CHARACTER POINTS:
 EXPERIENCE POINTS:

DERIVED CHARACTERISTICS

Characters also have **Health Points** (HP) and **Shock Points** (SP) that describe their current state of health. These are derived from two of the main characteristics.

HEALTH POINTS

HP is initially equal to BLD. When a character sustains a Medium, Serious, Critical or Fatal wound then their current HP rating is reduced – you can show this by crossing off the necessary number of boxes on the character sheet with a pencil.

SHOCK POINTS

SP is initially equal to GUT. When a character sustains a Light wound then their current SP rating is reduced – again, this can be shown by crossing off the boxes on the character sheet using a pencil.

You may also sustain SP loss from witnessing shocking events, or from stress and fatigue.

RECOVERING HP AND SP

The HP and SP ratings can go back up (to a maximum of their initial values) with healing and rest (see WOUNDS AND HEALING later).

If the rating of SP falls to 0 then further SP damage is subtracted from the HP total. If the rating of HP falls to 0 then the character *may* die.

INCREASING HP AND SP

If a character's BLD (or GUT) rating increases then their HP (or SP) also increases.

EXAMPLE

ABelle has GUT 8, BLD 5, so she has 8 SP and 5 HP. Should her BLD increase to 6 then she would have 6 HP.

PRIME CHARACTERISTIC

All PCs have one characteristic at which they are most adept. This is their **Prime Characteristic**. The main game effect is that it allows a player to 'switch' a roll on the dice (use the units die as the tens die and vice versa).

You may only switch on tests directly related to the Prime Characteristic, i.e. tests which use its value as the target number. You can easily mark your Prime Characteristic on the character sheet by circling it.

SAMPLE PC: ABELLE, STREET TOUGH

ABelle has 35 points distributed among her characteristics. Her player allocates them as follows.

AIM	STK	BLD	GUT	INT	LCK
5	7	5	8	5	5

ABelle has average LCK, INT, BLD and AIM, but her STK of 7 shows she is a master of agility and fighting. Her GUT rating of 8 indicates that she is incredibly courageous – one of the bravest in the game world.

ABelle has 5 HP and 8 SP – derived from her BLD of 5 and GUT of 8. Her player decides that her Prime Characteristic will be GUT.

EXAMPLE

If she were to roll a 19 on a GUT check, which would normally fail, then she may 'switch' the roll to be 91, a *Complete* success.



✱ **WARNING** LCK should not normally be allowed as a character's Prime Characteristic, as this can unbalance play.

INITIAL SKILLS

Skills in **Frenzy** are of a binary nature. Having a skill allows you to do something that you otherwise could not. A starting PC has 6 skills. A list of examples is given opposite.

Some things are 'unskilled,' such as firing guns and fighting with weapons – these are covered by the AIM and STK characteristics. Other times the referee may deem that when a task is a test of a characteristic, having a related skill will allow you to 'step' the success level up by one. So, for example, a *Limited* success becomes a *Moderate* success, etc.

EXAMPLE

ABelle's player chooses the following skills: *Cut Promo*, *Martial Art: Karate*, *Intimidate*, *Look Cool*, *Streetwise* and *Wreck Stuff*.



SPECIAL ABILITIES

Your PC starts the game with one **SPECIAL ABILITY**, and you may gain more by accumulating and spending Experience Points. Some sample abilities are given on page 9.

EXAMPLE

ABelle's player decides that she has the ability of *Danger Sense*, which the referee has told her is allowed in the game. The ability warns ABelle of impending danger, but not the exact nature nor the proximity of the source.

TRAITS AND QUIRKS

Traits are aspects or properties of your character which describe how they view the world and interact with those around them. These are descriptive terms which serve as an aide-mémoire in helping the player roleplay the character.

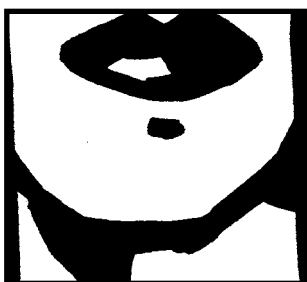
The following traits encapsulate a certain mental outlook or set of opinions. You are not obliged to take traits for your character, nor do they give any game-mechanical benefit (the *Gambler* trait does not make you more lucky or a better gambler!), but you are strongly advised to do so. Referees should encourage players to take traits, either picked from the list or created by themselves.

Traits are recommended as they give players a good handle on how their character should behave in difficult and challenging situations. Furthermore, traits enable a referee to determine more easily the different parts each PC will play in an adventure. Not every PC should have the *Leader* trait for example.

Finally, if the referee is giving out EXPERIENCE points (p. 23) then traits help determine if the player has been playing the character faithfully to the concept. How you interpret the following traits is up to you.

A NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST OF TRAITS

Anarchist, Autist, Autocrat, Boastful, Bully, Cautious, Collector, Competitor, Conventional, Critic, Cynic, Designer, Deviant, Even-tempered, Fanatic, Follower, Foolish, Gambler, Hedonist, Honest, Indecisive, Intellectual, Joker, Leader, Liar, Lover, Martyr, Masochist, Mentor, Missionary, Moderator, Planner, Protector, Rebel, Reckless, Swindler, Trendsetter, Trusting, Vain, Vicious, Voyeur, Wanderer.



A SAMPLE LIST OF SKILLS

<i>Accounts</i>	<i>Engineering</i>
<i>Animalism: Animal</i>	<i>Entertain: Style or Talent</i>
<i>Antiquities</i>	<i>Explosives</i>
<i>Boating</i>	<i>Finance</i>
<i>Computing</i>	<i>Forensics</i>
<i>Corporate Survival</i>	<i>Gambling</i>
<i>Cut Promo</i>	<i>Hypnotism</i>
<i>Disguise</i>	<i>Intimidate</i>
<i>Drink Alcohol</i>	<i>Journalism</i>
<i>Drive: Vehicle Type</i>	<i>Martial Art: Style</i>
<i>Economy of Truth</i>	<i>Knowledge: Type</i>
<i>Electronics</i>	<i>Language: Specific</i>
	<i>Lip Reading</i>
	<i>Lockpick</i>
	<i>Look Cool</i>
	<i>Mechanics</i>
	<i>Medicine</i>
	<i>Music: Instrument or Style</i>
	<i>Pharmacy</i>
	<i>Photography</i>
	<i>Pick/Palm</i>
	<i>Pilot: Vehicle Type</i>
	<i>Planetary Environment</i>
	<i>Ride</i>
	<i>Roll with Blow</i>
	<i>Safe Breaking</i>
	<i>Shadow/Track</i>
	<i>Space Environment</i>
	<i>Streetwise</i>
	<i>Take Drugs</i>
	<i>Trace/Find</i>
	<i>Wheel and Deal</i>
	<i>Wreck Stuff</i>



SKILL DESCRIPTIONS

Here are descriptions for the sample list given above.

ACCOUNTS

Running a business, auditing and balancing accounts. Can be used to create or spot financial fraud.

ANIMALISM: ANIMAL

Used for training and handling animals.

ANTIQUITIES

Auction prices, antiques, obtaining items, spotting fakes.

BOATING

Piloting boats and steering through narrow and shallow waterways. Knowledge of nautical terms too.

COMPUTING

For programming and other tasks (data recovery, etc.). No skill is needed for simply operating a computer.

CORPORATE SURVIVAL

Keep your job, get promoted. Vital skill for businessboys.



CUT PROMO

Run your mouth about something or someone. Popular.

DISGUISE

Mimicking someone else or concealing your identity.

DRINK ALCOHOL

Drink excessively, comes with a withering addiction for free. Common in certain walks of life; bad for long-term health.

DRIVE: VEHICLE TYPE

Including *Car*, *Motorbike*, *Truck*, *Tank* and *Motorboat*.

ECONOMY OF TRUTH

The skill of lying, often without telling an outright fib.

ELECTRONICS

Get free cable TV and make sophisticated bomb timers.

ENGINEERING

Build houses, bridges, etc. Work out loads and pressures.

ENTERTAIN: STYLE OR TALENT

Provide enjoyment to others. Examples are *Acting*, *Dancing*, *Painting*, *Singing* and *Turning Tricks*.

EXPLOSIVES

Demolitions, bomb-making, rock blasting, mining, etc. How to properly create and control explosions.

FINANCE

Gambling on a massive scale, trading in stocks, shares and currency. An arrogant attitude is normally part of the deal.

FORENSICS

Fingerprinting, DNA analysis and examining clues at a crime scene. Usually need equipment for the analysis of evidence.

GAMBLING

This is not luck, gambling is rigged betting. Comes with a gambling addiction for free. Poker face optional.

HYPNOTISM

Popular with psychiatrists, government agents and cultists alike. Help people quit smoking or program them to kill.

INTIMIDATE

Frighten, scare and coerce others through physical presence, force of will and subtle implication.

JOURNALISM

Write, edit and distil information into readable form. Most probably an alcoholic with a list of contacts.

MARTIAL ART: STYLE

Judo, *Jujitsu*, *Karate*, etc. Allows flashy hand-to-hand fighting and ego massaging. Comes with an air of superiority.

KNOWLEDGE: TYPE

You are educated. Pick an area of expertise. Examples are *Astronomy*, *Economics*, *General*, *Literature*, *Occultism*, etc.

LANGUAGE: SPECIFIC

While you can natively speak and write a language or two in keeping with your character's background, learn additional dialects with this skill.

LIP READING

Reading what others are saying at a distance. Requires visual contact and a knowledge of the language being spoken.

LOCKPICK

Picking locks, quietly and quickly.

LOOK COOL

Keeping up appearances, drawing admiration, praise and attention. The ultimate skill for the narcissist in you.

MECHANICS

Repair engines, parts and machines. All sorts of usefulness.

MEDICINE

Diagnosing and treating illness. Performing operations and field surgery. Used by Doctors, Surgeons and Vets.

MUSIC: INSTRUMENT OR STYLE

Appreciate and create original music and song.

PHARMACY

Make simple pills, herbal cures and distil hallucinogenic drugs. Normally learned at university.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Take artistic, useful and well-composed photographs.

PICK/PALM

Dipping into pockets, stealing watches and wallets.

PILOT: VEHICLE TYPE

Dogfighting and flying *planes*, *shuttles* and *helicopters*.

PLANETARY ENVIRONMENT

Adapted to living on a planet and knowing your surroundings. Useful for survival in the wilderness, etc.

RIDE

The skill of riding a horse or other animal.

ROLL WITH BLOW

Taking short (<10 m) falls. Lessen a wound by one step.

SAFE BREAKING

Used for opening safes or for cracking combinations.

SHADOW/TRACK

Tailing an unwitting target in heavy crowds or traffic. Also covers tracking in the wild. Weather can obscure tracks.

SPACE ENVIRONMENT

Adapted to living in space and knowing your surroundings.

STREETWISE

Get stolen concert tickets, drugs and avoid heat with gangs.

TAKE DRUGS

From chain-smoking up to a \$500-a-day habit. Addiction.

TRACE/FIND

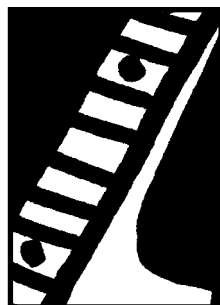
Tracking people down and finding facts using libraries, data bases and other sources of information.

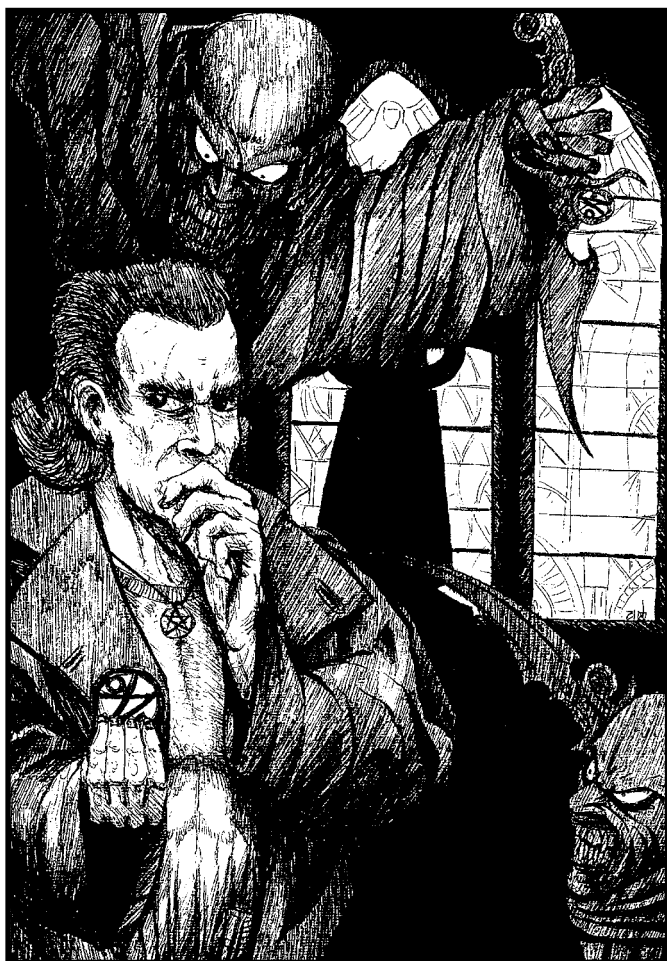
WHEEL AND DEAL

Negotiating and getting gear cheap and quick. Obtaining rare, stolen or restricted items.

WRECK STUFF

The proven ability to break things. A prized talent for rock stars and mob heavies. May limit invitations to parties.





THE INTUITION CHECK

Checks of INT are tests of the senses and of your instincts. These checks can also be used by the referee to make players more wary of proceeding, or more tense. For example, the referee could ask for an INT test as the PCs head towards a room. Merely asking for the test will put the players on edge. If they fail the test then the referee can declare that no sound is heard in the room ahead. Maybe because it is empty – their failure was immaterial – or maybe they have missed a chance to foil an ambush by something very sinister indeed...

EXAMPLES

- ✱ **Sound:** hearing a noise. Club-footed henchmen may be heard sneaking with a *Limited* success, the 'click' of a pressure plate underfoot may need a *Significant* success.
- ✱ **Smell:** noticing odours such as detergents, gunpowder, perfume or cigarette smoke. Strong smells need at least a *Limited* success. Identifying a particular perfume may also require a skill (*Look Cool* or a *Knowledge*) or a *Complete* success. Subtle odours can also be masked by stronger smells.
- ✱ **Taste:** noticing something odd in food and drink is normally harder unless the character is suspicious. Being alert to a spiked drink might require a *Moderate* success.
- ✱ **Sixth Sense:** sensing when something is 'not right.'
- ✱ **Judgement:** reading someone's psychology.

THE STRIKE CHECK

Checks of STK are tests of armed and unarmed combat, general agility, dexterity, quickness and balance. The referee is encouraged to 'bump' the level of success up by one for a particularly good description of a character's action. Dull, repetitive descriptions can be judged to automatically fail, no matter how good the dice roll (see *BEING BORING*, p. 25).

EXAMPLES

- ✱ **Punching:** quick jabs, swinging hooks, flashy blows and knife-edge chops are covered by tests of STK. The damage caused is listed under the 'Effect' on the Frenzy Chart.
- ✱ **Kicking:** powerful stomps, stinging leg whips, flailing boots and lightning kicks use STK. Useful when your hands are tied or you are in need of a longer reach.
- ✱ **Fighting:** stabbing with broken bottles, swinging swords, axes, flails, chainsaws, nailguns, sharp sticks and other weapons use STK as the target number. Multiple blows in one combat round requires a *SPECIAL ABILITY* (see p.9).
- ✱ **Dodging:** avoid a blow by achieving a success equal to or better than the level of damage inflicted. A successful dodge negates all damage from that blow. You may dodge all STK attacks against you. You cannot dodge bullets or explosions.
- ✱ **Catching:** grab falling objects or thrown items.
- ✱ **Nimble fingers:** reload firearms or pick things up.



THE LUCK CHECK

LCK is a characteristic that can be tested when you need to see who is lucky, and who is not.

EXAMPLES

- ✱ **Blind luck:** the character doesn't know whether to go left or right, up or down, or keep going straight ahead. A test of LCK can push the character in the right, or wrong, direction.
- ✱ **A spot of bother:** faced with a bit of trouble a lucky break can often come the character's way – with a successful LCK test. Of course, should the test be a *Catastrophe* then the spot of bother can become far more serious than before.
- ✱ **The end is nigh:** ...so the character has just fallen off the roof of a skyscraper to certain death, or met some other grisly fate. In these cases the referee should ask for a test of LCK. Maybe the character will only fall a short distance before crashing through the roof of a lift? Of course, this does not mean they get off scot-free, but at least they're not dead.
- ✱ **Bad luck:** *something bad* is going to happen to *someone*. All possible targets test their LCK. The lowest failure gets the bad news that is coming. All *Catastrophes* get the bad mojo.
- ✱ **I've changed my mind:** sometimes players will say the stupidest things: "drink from the bottle". They may then realise their error and say: "I stop. It's poison!" Test their LCK...
- ✱ **Red wire or blue wire:** do you feel lucky? Well, do ya?

THE BUILD CHECK

Checks of BLD are tests of strength, endurance, fortitude, stamina, general physical size and general health.

EXAMPLES

- ✱ **Barging:** knocking people over and breaking down doors are covered by tests of BLD. The referee determines the difficulty on the Frenzy Chart. A locked interior door might need a *Moderate* success, a steel one needs a *Fantastic* success.
- ✱ **Poisoning:** resist poison with a test of BLD. The success required to avoid the harmful effects is determined by the strength of the poison. Mild poisoning may need a *Limited* success, while deadly snake venom requires a *Complete*.
- ✱ **Lifting:** characters can lift their BLD×10 kg untested. They may lift more by testing BLD. *Limited* success allows ×12 kg, *Moderate* ×14 kg, etc. up to *Fantastic* ×20 kg.
- ✱ **Surviving:** exposure to harsh conditions or lack of food means that a character must make successful BLD tests to function properly. Repeated failures can lead to penalties on actions and a loss of health and consciousness.
- ✱ **Breaking:** items and objects can be smashed, bent and broken with a successful test of BLD. The referee will determine the level of success required to break objects.
- ✱ **Standing firm:** BLD can be used to avoid being knocked out of the way, e.g by a large wave or an opponent's barge.