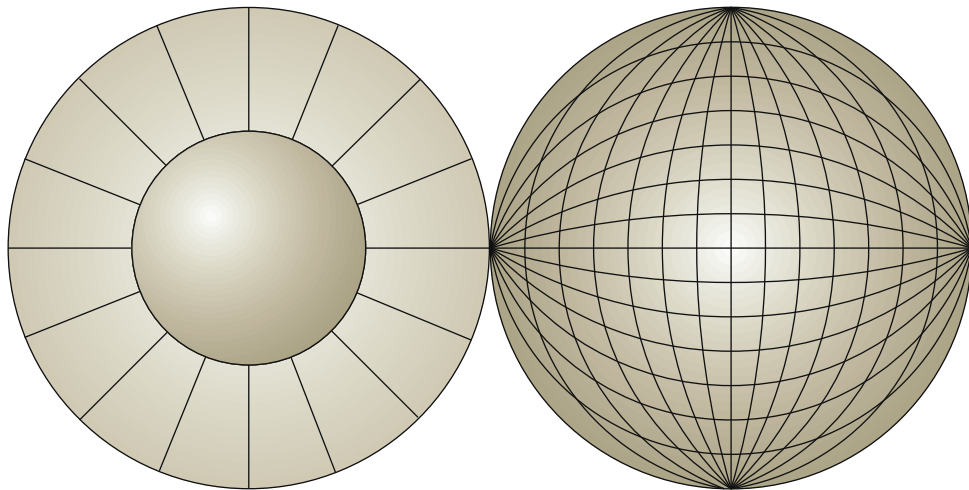


EPITOME

Continuous Role Playing System



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Version 1.0, July 14, 1998.

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Introduction

What it is all about

These pages represent an attempt to provide you with some instantly applicable hints about how to use the EPITOME role playing system for a couple of hand picked RPG settings. Since EPITOME, per se, does not include any setting in which to place your characters, this supplement is supposed to fill this gap.

There is a good reason to separate the basic rules set from this kind of background information: to cover and comprise even a small number of possible scenarios, the base system would have to be extended to lay them all out, applying the respective rules to each and every one of them. This would inevitably result in large amounts of redundant information, boring beyond belief those who are not interested in any but their favourite type of setting.

What does this mean?

Lets us assume that you have just come across the EPITOME role playing system, either via recommendation of a third party or by mere luck. You cursorily browsed the pages or even went right through them, thinking, “uh, neat, but how am I supposed to apply these suggestions of how to run my game to my favourite scenario?” This is where this supplement fits in.

Requirements

To be able to make use of this document you should be familiar with role playing games in general. If you haven't played RPGs before, the information you find herein might give you the impression of strange and weird terms and claims at best. However, it is beyond the scope of this document to explain what role playing is about and what it is supposed to be according to the idea of EPITOME.

The following lines also assume that you have at least skimmed over the basic rules set – a file that should be available to you on the same server on which you found this document. In particular, you should have got a rough idea about how EPITOME suggests to handle character creation.

Finally, you should take the following theorems to heart, propositions that can also be found in one of the first sections of the basic rules set:

1. The lines that separate and subdivide circle areas are just guides and are supposed to be treated as such. Fell free to move them around or completely ignore them, if you wish to. Subdivide the circles exactly the way you want.

2. Subdividing the Composition circle gives you an impression of any one's character's abilities. The larger the area an ability or trait covers, the more important this particular aspect. It represents a *relative* correlation of this attribute in regard to the other abilities, taking into account the overall potential. It does *not* stand for an *absolute* potential, neither for the character as such, nor compared to other characters, be they protagonists or antagonists.

All this boils down to the following concept: characters in EPITOME are schematized using abstract, continuous means. It is all about quality, not quantity.

Ways to lay out your character

For the sake of simplicity, you will find this document focusing mainly on the Composition and Coherence circles of the character sheet, leaving it up to the players to treat the smaller circles and to think about how to embed them into the uniform description of the characters.

Basically, there are two different ways of how to employ Composition for the purpose of assigning a character's potential.

First, you could think of it as a distribution of all the major and minor traits that come to your mind when you lay out your character, be it her occupations, skills and hobbies or any other abilities. If, for instance, you assign a large portion of the circle area to her occupation and professional life, you would point out that this aspect is very important to her, most likely causing her to be quite proficient in the respective field of expertise. Consequentially, this approach leads to your character being unique, for it can hardly be expected that any two characters share the same traits, let alone exactly the same qualitative distribution of the latter.

The second approach uses a common set of statistics to draw your character. This is the concept most traditional role playing games are based upon. The result of describing a character that way is that any two characters are somewhat comparable to each other, resulting from at least a limited set of identical abilities. The drawback is that characters composed that way might appear less unique and less straight forward compared to those created using the first method. Deciding to go for this option also urges players to fit their character concepts into previously enacted classes and categories and thus reducing their creativity to a mere evaluation of how much importance to assign to each trait.

You will find this document mostly propagating the second concept, using coarsely meshed statistics to yield as general options as possible. This way, the suggested abilities, when combined with arbitrary traits, may be tapped for inspiration to create a distinctively unique character.

Exemplary Settings

Sword & Sorcery

This setting represents the classical (high-)fantasy background with magic, various mysterious creatures and forces of Good and Evil clashing against each other. It emphasizes physical (and mental) conflict, travelling through dangerous, unknown territories as well as adventuring and quest solving.

Examples: (A)D&D, Rolemaster, RuneQuest, Stormbringer, Warhammer FRP

Suggested Composition:

- Adventuring
- Knowledge
- Melee
- Ranged combat
- Social competence
- Sorcery
- Wilderness

Adventuring describes all kinds of adventuring skills, like to move silently, climb, pick locks, use ropes and spot hidden objects.

Knowledge stands for all kind of theoretical knowledge and lore.

Melee describes a character's proficiency with weapons for hand to hand combat.

Ranged combat describes his proficiency with ranged weapons.

Social competence includes skills like subterfuge, intimidation, seduction and streetwise.

Sorcery circumscribes the ability to practise magic. Each branch of magic must be picked up separately. Examples for different branches are Animism, Conjuraton, Elementalism, Mentalism, Necromancy and Thaumaturgy.

Wilderness comprehends skills related to outdoor life, such as animal handling, swimming, survival, weather watching and tracking.

Due to frequent clash of metal, the weapons skills have been broken down into two categories, Melee and Ranged combat.

Contemporary

The characters operate in a world similar to the one known to us, at least, at the first glance. Depending on the actual setting, they may find out that things are quite different from what they appear to be. The characters may or may not have access to supernatural powers. Supernatural creatures may or may not be involved in the game scheme.

Examples: Call of Cthulhu (to a certain extend), Conspiracy-X, Over the Edge

Suggested Composition:

- Athletics
- Combat
- Common knowledge
- Gadget operation
- Investigation
- Knowledge
- Manipulation
- Special abilities (if applicable)

Athletics describes the amount of physical training a character has undergone, shaping and tuning her ability to move, run, jump or dive.

Combat describes a character's ability in hand to hand combat as well as with modern firearms.

Common knowledge circumscribes the knowledge about facts of daily life, including names of celebrities, politicians and most wanted prime time TV programs.

Gadget operation stands for the ability to operate gadgets and devices that are common in the game world, including to drive a car or to use a telephone and a computer.

Investigation includes skills being necessary to perform the process of retrieving lost information, objects and subjects.

Knowledge stands for all kind of theoretical knowledge. It may comprise different fields of knowledge such as science, archaology and parapsychology.

Manipulation displays a character's ability to deal with people, impress them and get information out of them.

Special abilities comprehend feats that are only available to a small number of individuals. Psionics and magic might be applicable examples.

The field of Investigation has been assigned its own item because of the respective actions' importance in contemporary settings.

Space Opera

The characters find themselves in a world where the use of spacecrafts and interplanetary or interstellar travel is common. The level and impact of technology on daily life is high. There are most likely alien races beyond the setting's primary race, usually humans, involved. The characters may or may not have access to supernatural powers.

Examples: Star Trek, Star Wars, Traveller

Suggested Composition:

- Athletics
- Combat
- Gadget operation
- Knowledge
- Piloting
- Social competence
- Special abilities (if applicable)
- Technical

Athletics describes the amount of physical training a character has taken, shaping and tuning his ability to move, that is, to run, jump or dive. It also covers his battle prowess in hand to hand combat, such as brawling.

Combat describes a character's ability to use modern weaponry, like phasers and blasters.

Gadget operation stands for the ability to operate gadgets and devices that are common in the game world, including to fly a small shuttle and use a computer to browse its database.

Knowledge stands for all kind of theoretical knowledge. It may comprise different fields of knowledge like science, xenobiology and foreign cultures.

Piloting comprehends the ability to operate all sorts of vehicles and spacecrafts.

Social competence displays a character's ability to deal with people, impress and lead them as well as to get information out of them.

Special abilities comprehend abilities that are either innate to the character's alien race or only available to a small number of individuals. Psionics might be a candidate for such a trait.

Technical skill includes the ability to operate, maintain and repair electrical and electronical devices.

Gadget Operation and Technical have been split up to reflect the different capabilities necessary to handle a device on a daily basis or to be able to actually understand how it works.

Cyberpunk

This genre stands for the type of environment commonly known as sprawls, that is, jungles of steel and concrete that give birth to both, technology and abnormalities of social life. Life itself tends to be cheap, technology and information being valued higher than flesh and soul. Accepting and embracing this kind of life results in a daily struggle for survival.

Examples: Cyberpunk, Cyberspace, Shadowrun

Suggested Composition:

- Driving
- Firearms
- Knowledge
- Manipulation
- Melee
- Netrunning
- Special abilities (if applicable)
- Technical

Driving comprises the ability to control cars, cycles, combat machines and small aircrafts.

Firearms describes a character's ability to use modern guns, pistols and rifles.

Knowledge stands for all kind of theoretical knowledge. It may comprise different fields of knowledge like science, languages, law and history.

Manipulation displays a character's ability to deal with people, impress them and get information out of them.

Melee includes the execution of hand to hand combat, with or without the use of weapons. Examples are kung fu, teak won do, sword play, baseball bat.

Netrunning is a synonym for the capability to use and hack computer systems. Unlike other settings where computers are just useful gadgetry, cyberspace networks host virtual life of their own.

Special abilities comprehend abilities that tend to be available to a small number of individuals only. Psionics may be an example for such a trait.

Technical skill includes the ability to operate, maintain and repair electrical and electronical devices.

Like Sword & Sorcery, cyberpunk settings have a tendency for violence, thence the explicit split of Firearms and Melee.

Eastern Asia

The kind of eastern Asian setting being referred here depicts a world somehow related to medieval Japan, featuring a feudal, strongly hierarchical structure of a society that rates honor and grace as its highest virtues. The principal idea, that is, next to solving this world's daily problems, is to be confronted with a foreign culture through which the characters have to be guided.

Examples: Legends of the Five Rings, Sengoku

Suggested Composition:

- Adventuring
- Art
- Bushido
- Etiquette
- Knowledge
- Social competence
- Special abilities (if applicable)
- Spiritual

Adventuring describes all kinds of adventuring skills, like to move silently, climb, pick locks, use ropes and spot hidden objects. Note that samurai are rather unlikely to be able to pick locks.

Art comprises all sorts of personal expression through different means. Examples are calligraphy, heiku, singing and dancing.

Bushido circumscribes the art of war, that being the use of weapons, bare hands or the entire body.

Etiquette allows a person to behave inconspicuously or complaisantly in respective environments like circles of high society.

Knowledge stands for all kind of theoretical knowledge. It may comprise different fields of knowledge like law, geography and history.

Social competence displays a character's ability to deal with people, impress and lead them as well as to get information out of them.

Special abilities comprehend feats that either tend to be available to a small number of individuals or a restricted class or caste only.

Spiritual deals with knowing the ways of nature, your ancestors and certain spirits and entities sharing the world of the living.

In case of frequent encounters that call the characters to arms, you might think about splitting up Bushido into kenjitsu (sword play), kyudo (archery) and the use of mundane weapons like pole arms.

World of Darkness

This section has been written as an example to demonstrate two different approaches to tackle the concept of a single setting. It features White Wolf Publishing's World of Darkness setting with Vampire—The Masquerade being picked as the characters' playground.

In Vampire, the characters, being vampires, undead creatures who feed on the blood of the living, are damned to walk the earth eternally, all the while fighting and plotting against each other. Though also dealing with actual physical conflict, the game play mostly emphasizes character interaction.

Suggested Composition (first version):

- Physical
- Social
- Mental
- Will
- Disciplines

Physical circumscribes a character's physique, notably her Strength, Dexterity and Stamina.

Social circumscribes the degree of a character's ability to interact with others, notably her Charisma, Manipulation skills and Appearance.

Mental circumscribes a character's mental abilities, notably her Perception, Intelligence and Wits.

Will comprises all abilities based on will, that being the Willpower trait itself, but also secondary traits such as Conscience and Courage.

This approach focuses on the selection of a set of four, rather abstract attributes combined with hand picked Disciplines. To customize the character and to give her her finishing touches, her personal traits and skills derived from her occupation or profession would go directly into the respective circles on the upper half of the character sheet.

Suggested Composition (second version):

- Athletics
- Awareness
- Combat
- Expression
- Gadget operation
- Knowledge
- Social competence

Athletics describes the amount of physical training a character has undergone, developing her ability to move, run, jump or dive. It may be regarded as a tuned, that is, trained, equivalent of the raw Physical trait above.

Awareness combines all perceptual abilities including the five senses, wits, reflexes as well as one's spiritual empathy.

Combat deals with a character's proficiency with arms and hand to hand combat.

Expression includes all expressional skills, such as acting, painting, singing and the ability to play instruments.

Gadget operation stands for the ability to use and wield all kind of gadgetry that is common in the game world's respective period of time. It rates how much the character is atuned to the world around her.

Knowledge stands for all kind of theoretical knowledge. It may comprise different fields of knowledge like science, occult and linguistics.

Social competence stands for a character's ability to deal with people, manipulate and lead them as well as to get information out of them.

Unlike the first version, this variant emphasizes the character's actual fields of competence instead of displaying her general potential. It intensionally lacks the vampires' special powers usually referred to as Disciplines, for these traits would be written down as particular skills on the upper half of the character sheet.

Thus, this method of describing your character represents the exact opposite approach of the first version, but eventually serves the same purpose.

Both versions use the Coherence circle in the following way: the vertical alignment notes the position on the vampire's chosen Path (or Road), with the upper point representing the most competent status and the lower point marking the status of greatest weakness. The horizontal alignment monitors the character's being in sync with her true Nature. To do so, the player picks two opposing aspects of her psyche between which external and internal conflict rocks her back and forth, that is, left and right.

Afterword

The idea of how to choose abilities for the respective setting when following the approach of assigning (partially) the same set of feats to all characters is relatively simple: try to find a way of narrowing each trait to an extends that allows its potential and impact in play to be comparable to other traits. If a single trait tends to threaten the game balance, think about breaking it down into smaller sub traits.

These restrictions do not apply to players who prefer to create unique freeform characters with no limits in regards of how to compose each trait. You might want to check with all players in unison when deciding to go for this option because players, being humans only, tend to have different points of view of how to influence the game. Game balance is a sensitive factor and should be watched carefully. In the end, everybody is supposed to have fun.