

MULTI-STEP SKILL & ATTRIBUTE CHECKS FOR POCKET UNIVERSE

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These rules will help GMs balance the difficulty of tasks which require multiple successful checks to succeed. Examples of such tasks are things like defusing bombs, mixing alchemical ingredients, picking locks that have multiple tumblers, etc.

This rule expansion can be used with any Pocket Universe-based RPG; Bethorn: the Plane of Tékumel, Quicksilver, Teenage Demon Slayers, etc.

Multi-Step Difficulty

On tasks requiring multiple checks, the character gains a bonus of +1 for each extra step after the first. This bonus applies to every one of the checks, including the first. The character must succeed at all of the checks in order to succeed overall. Apply this adjustment in addition to any other relevant difficulty modifiers. If any of the checks fails, the entire task fails and the character must start over, if allowed by circumstances, if they wish to try again.

Example: Kazro Slimfinger (Lockpicking Skill: 15) is attempting to pick an extremely difficult lock which has 3 tumblers. The GM assigns a base difficulty modifier of -4 to reflect the lock's overall difficulty, and Kazro also receives a modifier of +2 because he must succeed at three checks in a row to pick the lock. Total modifier: -2. Kazro must roll $15-2=13$ or less three times in a row to open the lock. The rolls come up 13, 12, and 17 – darn! This attempt fails.

Multi-Step Time Requirement

Each step in a multi-step task requires a set amount of time. For example, lock-picking takes 1 action per tumbler. A character may attempt to complete a multi-step task more quickly by taking multiple actions, or they may take extra time on any of the steps in the task to gain an Extra Time a bonus on that step.

Example: Kazro spent a total of 3 Actions trying to open the lock from the previous example, only to fail on the 3rd step. Annoyed, he decides to try and zip through a second attempt by declaring a triple action at a further difficulty modifier of -4, leaving him a 9- chance of success. He still must succeed at all three rolls, but now if he fails it'll only have cost him one turn. He rolls a 5, then an 11 – and fails again!

Special-Case Rules

Different kinds of multi-step tasks may have unique requirements, penalties, and consequences in the case of failure. The GM may define these in advance according to the needs of their specific campaign. Here are some suggestions.

Alchemy

Brewing a potion, purifying a substance, transmuting one substance into another, etc. can all require multiple steps: mixing the correct ingredients, heating mixtures to specific temperatures, reciting incantations correctly, etc. The alchemist must have all of the necessary ingredients and at least a basic set of laboratory equipment; the GM may apply further difficulty modifiers as warranted or disallow characters from attempting steps which require materials or tools that they lack. Each step can take several minutes. Make the character's alchemy skill rolls secretly. On a failed check, the mixture is clearly spoiled (using up any ingredients added so far), and the alchemist must start over. On a fumbled check, the mixture has gone wrong, without the character's knowledge. The GM allows the checks to continue, and if the task is completed without any obvious spoilage, then the character unknowingly produced a potion or substance which will not behave as intended.

Defusing Bombs

Defusing a bomb requires steps such as cutting the right wires, bypassing certain wires, carefully removing components, etc. Proper tools are usually necessary. Generally, each of these steps only take one Action. A failed check simply has no effect; the bomb's timer continues counting down. A fumbled check, however, might do anything from preventing any further attempts, to accelerating the timer, or causing the bomb to immediately detonate. The specific risk associated with fumbling a check on a particular bomb can be determined by taking an Action to analyze the bomb, again using the Demolitions skill.

Picking Locks

The 'steps' represent the lock's several tumblers, which must all be picked to open the lock. Lockpicks or a makeshift substitute (probably at a penalty to success) are required, and each step takes an Action. A failed check re-sets all the tumblers, forcing the character to start over from the beginning. On a fumbled check, the tool breaks off in the lock – jamming it completely, even against proper attempts to open it with its key. Locks can also be broken by blunt impact; make a damage roll vs. a Structural Rating set by the GM.