Skill Games

During the course of play, characters may run into a wide variety of situations beyond the scope of either the combat rules or the social encounter rules above. In these situations, GMs may want to grant the players additional control over the narrative or simply throw the players out of their comfort zones. Skill games are Legend's answer to these situations, a form of non-combat encounter that uses character skill and player ingenuity as a means of resolving an array of archetypal conflicts. In a skill game, the characters in a party act as a unit, making skill checks and acquiring tokens to spend on a variety of options.

Skill games are divided into Bidding games and Option games. In Bidding games, parties spend tokens to bid for one of a variety of actions, and the party that makes the highest bid wins the bid and takes its action, possibly gaining other benefits based on the margin of its win. In Option games, involved parties simply spend tokens to buy their actions for a set price, which play out exactly as described.

Skill Game Basics

At the beginning of any skill game, the GM sets the skill game's DC. We suggest this DC be equal to the party's level + 15 to 20, though GMs should always consider the party's individual abilities when setting this DC.

The skill game proceeds in [Action rounds]. At the beginning of each [Action round], each party collectively chooses a number of skills, listed as the Number of Skills Chosen per Action Round, from the skill game's Skill List entry. After doing so, each character in each party in the skill game makes a skill check for each skill his or her party chose. Each party then compares the highest result from among its members' checks for each chosen skill to the skill game's DC. For each of these results that exceeds the skill game's DC, the party is awarded a token for the skill game, which lasts until the end of the skill game or until the party uses it to pay tokens. Tokens can only be used in the Skill Game in which they are awarded. (Tokens can also sometimes be awarded in other ways specific to each skill-game encounter.)

Unless a skill game occurs over the duration of an [Encounter], [Scene], or [Quest], participants in the skill game may only take actions listed in that skill game's action set. The conditions under which a skill game ends are determined by the individual skill game. Most of the time, you cannot simply walk away from a skill game as you could a social encounter.

Using Tokens

Once tokens have been awarded, each party secretly chooses actions, and the [Action round] continues in one of two ways, as given below for the type of skill game. When secretly choosing actions, it is suggested that each party write down any of its actions and bid, if applicable. If the skill game includes parties controlled by both the GM and one or more players, it is suggested that the GM write down his or her actions and bid, if applicable, first, so that the players may consult openly with one another to determine their party's purchases and bids.

Bidding Game

Each party secretly chooses an action from the skill game's action set and secretly bids any number of tokens for the skill game it possesses on that action. (A party may bid zero tokens.) Once all parties have bid tokens, all parties simultaneously reveal the number of tokens they bid, but not the actions they chose, and pays that number of tokens for its action. The party with the highest bid takes the action it chose. The action has the effect listed for the number of tokens by the bid was won, as given in its entry in the skill game's action set.

If two or more bids tie for the highest bid, each party whose bid tied for the highest bid wins the bid and takes the action it chose if and only if that action has an effect if the bid was won by 0 tokens. Those parties each make a d20 roll. Parties take their actions in descending order of results. If there are any ties, the tied parties reroll until there is no tie between them. The order of the original rolls is followed except when determining the order between tied parties. After all actions are taken, the [Action round] ends.

Option Game

Each party secretly chooses a number of actions less than or equal to the skill game's maximum number of actions per action round from the skill game's action set. The combined token costs of the chosen actions must be

equal to or less than the number of tokens for the skill game the party possesses. (A party may choose zero actions.) Once all parties have chosen their actions, if any, all parties simultaneously reveal their chosen actions. Each party then pays a number of tokens equal to the combined token costs of the actions it chose and takes the actions it chose. All actions are taken simultaneously. After all actions are taken, the [Action round] ends.

Investigation

When trying to play games laced with social and political complexities, and especially games with actual detective work and investigations, the disconnect between a character's detailed in-game knowledge and its player's knowledge can make it difficult for the party to proceed. The Investigation skill game helps to solve this problem by presenting players with tools to learn about, involve themselves with, and define the setting in which their characters operate. Unlike most skill games, which resolve over the course of a single [Encounter] and are fought out between multiple interested parties, Investigation serves as the backdrop for an entire [Quest], and provides the players with opportunity for discovery rather than a particular contest to win.

Investigation works well for all sorts of plots but is designed particularly with mysteries in mind: the players want to find something or someone; and they are willing to put an entirely unreasonable amount of effort into doing so. They advance the plot of this effort via Investigation.

Investigation Action Rounds

Each [Action round] in an Investigation encompasses an entire [Scene], during which players accumulate tokens. Victory in an [Encounter] during the skill game, whether the [Encounter] is a combat, a social encounter, or even another skill game, is typically worth a single token. GMs may also choose to award a single token per [Scene] for good roleplaying. Additionally, each [Scene], the GM should offer the party a special skill check at a critical moment — a chance to win a single extra token. Each character should make this check, and the party uses the highest result, as in any other skill game.

Once the party has tokens to spend, they may purchase up to a single action per player at the end of each [Scene], following the rules for Option games. The party can also save tokens if it wishes. A party typically accumulates three to five tokens per [Scene].

Actions

Actions in Investigation allow players to advance the plot in desired directions, and are divided into Advantages, which represent tools or contacts, and Opportunities, which allow them to make discoveries and pursue clues and events.

The Advantages and Opportunities presented below are suggestions and guidelines. GMs are encouraged to create additional choices that are relevant to their campaign and to carefully moderate what Advantages and Opportunities are available at any given time. Adding choices or taking them away can help to control the pace and tone of a [Quest] while still affording the players agency in the narrative. Greater access to Opportunities allows players to directly assert control over the plot, while a broader set of Advantages gives access to extra tactical and logistical resources. In either case, you can gradually increase the players' access to Advantages and Opportunities over the course of the skill game, creating a sense of achievement and, ideally, reflecting the players' actual in-game accomplishments.

At the same time, the Investigation skill game should never be the only way to complete a [Quest] or solve a mystery. For many parties, the Investigation game offers a clean, straightforward method of problem solving. For others, it offers options like safe-houses and help from law enforcement, or even the occasional escape route instead of plot advancement. Either way, it offers a chance to explore a genre that might otherwise not fit with their normal playstyle.

Investigation Action Set: Opportunities

Small Lead (1 token): The party stumbles onto an obvious clue or avenue of inquiry that is interesting and directly relevant to the plot, a small but significant step forward in the pursuit of the truth/bomb/genie/deathray at the narrative's heart. The Small Lead action helps preserve a game's momentum, and should always be available.

A Snitching Prisoner! (2 tokens): The party or the organization it represents have obtained a prisoner worth interrogating. The party begins an Interrogation skill game, with the DC set to 15 + the player characters' level.

A Few Witnesses! (2 tokens): These poor people have seen... something, and the truth is out there. The party begins a Negotiation skill game, with the DC set to 15 + the player characters' level.

A Desperate Chase! (2 tokens): A villain is about to get away, and with him a delicious and critical clue! The party begins a Parkour skill game, with the DC set to 15 + the player characters' level.

A Great Escape! (3 tokens): Until the end of the [Quest], the party can opt to interrupt a single combat encounter with a Parkour skill game, with the party as the pursued party in the Parkour skill game. This allows the party members to retreat safely from the encounter and gain the effects of the Small Lead action if they win the Parkour skill game. This decision can be made during any of the party members' turns during an [Encounter], but the entire party must agree on the decision. If the party interrupts the combat encounter this way, the party is considered to have won the encounter, and is awarded a token as normal for the rules of the Investigation skill game.

A Big Shoot-out! (4 tokens): The players get to go on the offensive. The party may propose a combat encounter to the GM and work with the GM to determine the specifics of the encounter, including the enemies it faces. If the party wins the combat encounter, the party gains the effects of the Small Lead action and is awarded a token.

A Meeting at the Crossroads! (5 tokens): The party has something that an antagonist wants. The party makes contact with the antagonist, who offers a major concession as part of a trade. It may be that the players find the trade undesirable, but if that's the case, the offer itself should be sufficiently telling, providing the party with the effects of two Small Lead actions.

An Abandoned Lair! (6 tokens): It's too late to catch the mysterious big boss this time, but by forcing the heretofore nameless foe to abandon this facility, the players have revealed their enemy's identity, dealt them a major setback, and recovered enough evidence to reveal at least some portion of the grim plan behind all these events. This should provide a clear course of action moving into the next scene, with plenty of information and new leads to follow.

A Wicked Something! (8 tokens): The players have learned enough to make life dangerous — for themselves. Their adversary sends an assassin or group of assassins to eliminate the pesky heroes.

The party faces a combat encounter with an EL party members' level. If the party members survive this encounter, the party is awarded one token and gains the effects of two Small Lead actions. If the party wins the encounter, it is awarded an additional token per the rules of the Investigation skill game. If the party takes one of the assassins alive, the party gains the effects of the A Snitching Prison! action.

A Deadly Boss! (10 tokens): The players catch up with their target, or at least the highest-ranked target that they know about. This kicks off what the players should certainly think of as the final battle of their adventure, but feel free to reveal a new and more terrible enemy as the old one falls.

A Roaring Finale! (15 tokens): This is it — curtains are pulled back, myths unveiled, and the true enemy is ready for the Big Fight At the End. This will go down in the history books, as long as there's someone left to write them.

Investigation Action Set: Advantages

Much Needed Rest (1 token): Party members have a chance to return to base, heal up, regroup, and pursue other matters without threatening any of their deadlines or disrupting their ongoing missions. During this respite, each character in the party has the chance to exchange one consumable in their possession for another consumable of the same tier.

Advance Man (2 tokens): Explosives get set, tool caches sequestered, doors jimmied open, and getaway vehicles placed. Party members get everything they need to perform miracles that would be perfectly at home in a heist movie.

Goon Squad (2 tokens): The party gains the support of a mook of its members' level with the myriad archetype for a single [Encounter]. This myriad obeys their orders unquestioningly and leaves after the [Encounter] is over.

Can't Touch This (2 tokens): The characters hire an expert to remove evidence of a single [Encounter] after the fact. The party cannot be linked to the events of that [Encounter], nor can it credibly claim responsibility for what transpired.

License To Kill (3 tokens): A relevant governing authority grants the players full sanction. For the next [Scene], the party faces no legal repercussions for property damage, mayhem, killing, or whatever other destruction the characters can dream up in pursuit of their goals. Of course, this does not protect them from any injured parties seeking revenge or from the governing authority's own enemies.

Potion Cache (3 tokens): Each character in the party gains an allowance of consumables as if it were the beginning of a [Quest], plus one additional consumable of any tier they are normally granted at the beginning of a [Quest].

Friendly Guild Mage (5 tokens): Until the end of the [Quest], as a swift action, any member of the party may cast each of the following spells once, at which point it becomes unavailable to the party: Dimension Lock, Legend Lore, Major Image, and Teleport. (As always, you don't have to offer this advantage if it's going to bust your plot or setting down the middle.)

Wealthy Friend (5 tokens): Each party member gains a Greater Item and the ability to attune and use it in addition to his or her normal allotment of items until the end of the [Quest]. In general, only three Wealthy Friend Advantages should be available per [Quest].

Invisibility Cloak (7 tokens): The characters get the chance to be sure no one sees them coming. Until the end of the [Quest], the party may choose to gain a surprise round in any one combat encounter. This choice must be made before initiative is rolled.

What Feats They Did That Day (9 tokens): This story shall the good man teach his son, from this day to the ending of the world. A powerful moment steels the party for the fight ahead. Until the end of the [Quest], the party may choose to have all damage its members deal be doubled in any one combat encounter. This choice must be made before initiative is rolled.