

**Originally
Written by**

Jake Kurzer

**Originally
Edited by**

Michael Torres

William West

Chris Bennett

Chris Campbell

Rewritten by

Erik Ottosen

Re-edited by

Jake Kurzer

William West

Dharma 6

Dharma 6 is predicated on three rules of thumb:

- » **Never deal with dragons.**
- » **Character advancement is almost unheard of.**
- » **There is gaming after character death.**

The system allows for a gritty, highly lethal game, with character creation being easily performed in minutes. The generic scheme of Dharma is suited to magic-tinted cyberpunk – however, the system should easily port to other settings.

Dice Hits and Tests

All tests in Dharma are based on pools of 6-sided dice. The number of dice rolled for a test is equal to the value of the relevant attribute, plus any modifiers that increase the number of dice, minus any modifiers that reduce the number of dice. A die is counted as a Hit if it comes up as a 5 or a 6. The number of Hits is then compared against either a target Hit count for most tests or against an opposing pool's number of Hits. The latter is commonly called an Opposed Roll. Matching a target directly is a narrow success in a test, and a tie in an Opposed Roll. Otherwise, there is a degree of success or failure equal to the difference between the number of Hits and the target.

Dharma uses a fairly standardized difficulty scale for structuring tests. Tests that are easy require a single Hit where tests of medium difficulty require two Hits and hard tests require four Hits. It bears noting that in Dharma, pools of four or five will only rarely result in multiple Hits. As an example, this means a hard test to resist damage after you have been hit is unlikely to result in your character coming out unharmed. Worse, it puts you at risk of taking four points of damage, an amount which is lethal in most cases.

Attributes

Attributes define a character's abilities. They represent both the available dice and the 'hit points' for a character in that attribute. Players can increase any attribute for one point. However, these cannot increase above 6 during creation. The General attributes are:

- » **Physical:** Reflects all things related to Physical condition – both fitness and health. 3 is human average, while 6 is the peak of human performance.
- » **Mental:** Reflects all aspects related to knowledge and intellect as well as the use of ranged weapons such as guns and insults. 3 is human average, 6 is Marilyn Vos Savant.

While the Specialist attributes are defined by setting, the default setting uses the following attributes and bases most of the specialized abilities of a character on them, as we will see later.

- » **Tech:** Refers to the character's general knowledge in the use of technology, including electronic infiltration and information warfare.
- » **Magic:** Refers to the character's ability to use magical systems in general.

Damage

In Dharma, you almost never simply "take damage". Instead, you roll a test with the attribute at risk of being damaged, with the difficulty set equal to the potential damage you could suffer. If you pass, you take no damage – otherwise, you suffer damage to that attribute equal to the degree of failure. Each 'point' of damage you take to an attribute is one less die to roll for actions with that attribute, until the damage is healed by one means or another.

The vast majority of weapons do Physical damage. In fact, only special weapons can target the Mental stat. If your Physical stat is reduced to zero, then your character is either unconscious or dead. If your Mental stat is reduced to zero, then your character is unconscious. If a Specialist stat is reduced to zero, this usually just means you cannot use abilities related to those stats.

Damage can be recovered either using quick-use items (such as artificial clotting agents for a gunshot wound, or relevant drugs for Mental damages), long-term medical treatments (usually only in severe cases), or simply by the passage of time (such as 'shaking off' the effects of a flash-bang).

Character Creation

Item Examples

Beam Pistol

Rugged, doesn't require reloading, easy to use.

4 Dice: Limited to Ranged, Limited to Offense

– This weapon only adds its dice to ranged attacks.

Power: Shoots First – Add 2 to your Initiative pool in combat as long as no foe is in melee with you.

Ablative Armor

Thorough protection on a temporary basis.

3 Dice: Limited to Defense and 5 Uses – This armor only adds dice to opposed rolls using Physical-based dice pools, and only 5 times before expended.

Power: Full Absorb – You may expend all remaining uses of the vest to take no damage for a single round.

Long Hammer

Low-tech, highly satisfying weapon.

3 Dice: Limited to Melee, Limited to Offense – This weapon only adds its dice to melee attacks.

Power: Extended Reach – You can make melee attacks 3 meters farther than normal.

Alice Band

Magic in a bottle, minus the bottle.

3 Dice: Limited to Fire Magic and 5 Uses

Power: Fire Magic – Using this item, you can toss fireballs, lift yourself on a jet of flame, or weld a door shut.

Character creation in Dharma is point-based, using a limited number of points to define attributes, gear, and/or powers for a character. Seven points is the recommended value, while higher-power can go to eight or nine. Creation runs in three steps: Attributes, Powers, and Gear.

Attributes

General attributes always start at 2, while Specialist attributes always start at 1. Players can then raise these attributes, spending one point per attribute increased.

Powers

A Power is a characteristic that goes outside of what attributes reflect, such as tele-operation or fire magic proficiency. They operate by providing bonuses to a character in specific contexts. A character in Dharma may only have one Power.

Gear

Gear can be many different things – magical tattoos, magician's wands, and weapons of all stripes. They are all similar, however, in that they enhance the wielder's prowess in a key area. A single piece of Gear consists of three things: The Power the Gear may have, the dice it grants to an attribute, and the limitations that define the contexts where it enhances your dice pool and its Power can be applied. A single piece of gear must have one Power and two Limitations. Players get three pieces of gear, one that offers four dice, one that offers three dice, and one that offers two dice.

Fluff Gear

Mundane, common items often represent the vital difference between life and death. They are lost or broken more easily than statted gear, and do not grant powers or dice, but they can allow the user to make checks that they otherwise could not even try. Players may have a number of pieces of Fluff Gear equal to their character points.

Combat

Combat in Dharma is fast, loose, and potentially very lethal. The rules for Combat, however, are also used for many other gameplay purposes in Dharma.

Initiative

Initiative is used to set action orders both in and out of combat. All characters involved in a combat roll their Physical and Mental stats in dice, with order proceeding from whoever rolled the highest number of successes to whoever rolled the lowest. Ties are settled by single die rolls.

Turn Actions

Outside of combat or other high-action moments, actions are usually free-flowing, with you moving around, interacting with objects and characters, etc. freely. In combat, however, you may do only two things per turn:

- » **Move up to ten meters** (which can be before, after, or around your turn action – that is, you can move 5, take a turn action, then move another 5, for example)
- » **Take a single turn action**, such as a Physical attack or magic spell.
 - » Your turn action may be an additional move.

Actions are performed in four steps:

- » **Announce:** You decide what you are going to do.
- » **Confirm:** The GM confirms that what you are going to do is legal within game context. Otherwise, go back to step 1 and pick a new action.
- » **Roll:** Dice rolls, if any, occur.
- » **Verify:** The results, in both mechanical and fluff sense, are described.

Distance

Actions may have their difficulty modified by the distance between the actor and the target of an action. In general, ranges can be put into four classifications, each matching with a test grade: Short distances to easy tests, medium distances to medium tests, hard distances to hard tests, and extreme (sniping) distances to extreme tests. Classifications are meant to be loose and contextual. For a typical gunshot in a cyberpunk setting, ten meters would be short, fifty meters would be medium, and three

hundred meters would be long. Within 3 meters would be considered melee range, but ten meters would be at least a medium test if you were throwing a sword or something similar.

Relative Position

The location of objects and characters in a situation must be considered and adjudicated during play. A character who is behind cover, for example, can't be shot at using a normal gun – a specialized spell or clever bit of technology would be your only recourse. Or a grenade, probably.

Holding an Action

You can hold an action to perform it on someone else's turn – for example, Aiming when someone else exits cover, or initiating a Full Defense right when they attack. In some cases, a held action may even be able to interrupt an in-progress action. Actions may only be held until the end of a round.

Attacking

A basic attack begins with the attacker making a check. The attribute the dice pool is based on depends on the nature of the attack. For example, a punch is a Physical attack, and firing a gun is a Mental attack. In most circumstances, the attempt to hit is an Easy check, except for dealing with ranges – use the Distance rules above for that. If the attack succeeds, then it threatens to deal damage equal to the number of successes – the target makes an opposed roll to resist damage (see 'Damage' above).

Aiming

Aiming is performed in the place of an attack. After performing Aim, you 'hold your action' until the end of the round, and then roll a test identical to what you would have rolled for a normal attack against a target. Success means you are "locked on" to that target until either you move, or your opponent explicitly uses an action to break your lock-on, for example, by moving behind cover.

Locking on is a prerequisite to the use of some powers and adds a die to the actual attack roll. You can tighten your aim further by spending another turn aiming, for a maximum of two dice gained. A lock is broken once you use it to attack.

Full Defense and Flat-Footed

Full Defense is an action that allows you to take defensive actions more effectively, gaining one die to checks to resist damage for that round. On the other hand, Flat-Footed is a condition that applies when the character is attacked unexpectedly, and means the character has one fewer dice on checks to resist damage for the round they are attacked.

Delayed Annihilation

Delayed Annihilation is an option only available to player characters, allowing them to, once per plot arc (a length to be defined by the GM), avoid the ill effects of a failed test, representing a lucky break of one sort or another. However, declaring this comes at a significant cost – namely, that their luck will be paid back, with significant interest, at the GM's interest and disposal. Powers are generally considered to be dominated by a given attribute when it comes to their applications and nature. If a power requires rolls of any flavor, it uses this linked attribute. By default, Dharma 6 uses only circular templates. Any time the size of a template is specified, that's the radius to use.

Powers

Powers are generally considered to be dominated by a given attribute when it comes to their applications and nature. If a power requires rolls of any flavor, it uses this linked attribute. By default, Dharma 6 uses only circular templates. Any time the size of a template is specified, that's the radius to use.

Physical Powers

Extended Reach: You can make melee attacks from an additional three meters away.

Dash: You can move twice your speed twice per session.

Monofilament Blade: Once per combat, you can ignore any defense dice from gear for one attack.

Freaking Ninja: You use your Physical attribute for attempts to sneak around. You add one die to any melee attacks made while successfully sneaking this way.

Swift: You move five additional meters per turn.

Crushing Blows: Your Physical melee attacks push opponents back by up to two meters. You may advance two meters as well.

Full Absorb: This power is only useful on armor with limited uses as one of its restrictions. Activating this power completely exhausts your uses, but lets you soak up all the damage you would otherwise take this round. This power's a pretty standard tool for insuring that squishy hackers get their job done.

Tankgod Armor: Your armor automatically reduces incoming damage by one. This effect triggers three times before being exhausted and you must have a Physical attribute of five to use this power.

Tempered: You're immune to damage from acid, radiation, cold, vacuum exposure, and most environmental toxins such as tear gas or neurotoxins.

Unstoppable: You may act for one round after having your Mental or Physical attributes reduced to zero.

Mental Powers

Shoots First: Add 2 to your Initiative pool in combat as long as no foe is in melee with you.

Underslung Grenade Launcher: You get three shots where your ranged attack manifests as a 3 meter burst. Use them wisely.

ActiveScan: Once per session, you can detect all enemies within 50 meters.

Blueprints: Once per session, you can pull the blueprints for your surrounding area. They might not be perfectly accurate, but it's going to help.

Crime Scene Infiltrators: With a little effort, you can blend in with the police for an hour or two, giving you access to secured areas briefly or letting you get close to an otherwise protected witness.

Augmented Vision: You can see in the dark, and possess IR vision. Further, you can transmit a live stream of your vision to your allies.

Take The Shot: You can use your action to let an ally attack. You must have a Mental attribute of four to use this.

Go Go Go: You can forgo your movement to let an ally move. You must have a Mental attribute of four to use this.

Gunslinger: You can fire a single shot before combat starts once per session.

Charming: Add an additional die to any attempt to talk your way into trouble.

Dapper: Your attire helps you fit in. It takes one round for most people to realize you're somewhere you shouldn't actually be. This might be long enough for a single question, or a quick dash through the kitchen to a safe exit.

Tech Powers

Sneaksuit: You use your Tech for stealthy actions and rolls, and add an additional die.

Snipersuit: Your integrated components allow you to use Tech for long range attacks and target acquisition. You add an additional die for these endeavors.

Breakersuit: You can break down security measures of an electronic flavor. This includes things like magnetic locks, laser grids, and other delightful high-tech security systems. Add one additional die to attempts to do so.

Bafflesuit: You're invisible to infra-red and sonar. You must have a tech of 4 to use this.

Hacksuit: Your new specialty is mechanical security systems, such as sophisticated safes, clever gates, and surprising pit traps. Despite the joys of learning the hard way, you can now use tech to disable or subvert these systems. Add an additional die when dealing with such mechanisms.

Snapsuit: With some time and effort, you can break into most secured computer systems. In cases of truly secure systems, you may need Physical access to the actual computers. Add one additional die to attempts to do this.

Mortarsuit: You *are* fire support. You can use any allied attack roll to place warheads on foreheads. As your action, you can slave your weapons to a friend's, and if they hit, you place a 3 meter blast on top of their target. Roll Tech, and any hits you make are treated as damage for anyone within that radius.

Climbsuit: You've got the ability to move along any surface with a little preparation. You must have a Tech attribute of at least three to use this power.

Medicsuit: You can heal damage your allies take out of combat. For each injury, make a medium test. If you pass, you manage to patch it up within 15 minutes. You can make a hard test instead to try and patch it up within 1 minute, but this can deal a point of damage if you fail.

Demosuit: Your gear includes explosives and the precision equipment required to use them safely. You get one claymore mine, two structural charges, and three grenades for each adventure. Grenades blow up in a 4 meter template and structural charges are used for blowing open doors or dropping load-bearing points. Claymores take about a minute to rig, but place a five meter template on one side of where they are set when triggered by hapless foes. Grenades and Claymores deal damage equal to the number of hits you score on a tech roll.

Magic Powers

Fire Magic: Fire magic is probably the simplest approach to casting. It lets you use a ranged attack based on magic, allows you to get limited flight using jets of flame, ignite flammable objects, and with some time and effort, it can be used for welding doors shut or similar odd-ball utility tasks.

Teleport: You can teleport up to 7 meters as your action. You must have line of sight to your destination, and must pass a hard test to teleport. Failure means nothing happens.

Shield Mage: For one round each combat, damage your allies take is reduced by one die. You must have magic of three or higher to take this.

Barrier: You can block doors, create small amounts of opaque hard cover, and throw up soft smokescreens. You must have magic of four to use this, and your barriers can only take two damage before disintegrating.

Pull: You can lift unattended objects and move them around at a moderate but harmless speed. Large objects like cars aren't possible without another person to Pull with, and you can only move them about 6 meters per round. You must have a magic of three to use this.

Ice Magic: Opponents within 10 meters of you move at half their normal speed, and you can toss deadly bolts of ice as a ranged attack based on Magic. You must have Magic of five to use this.

Heal: You can heal up to three points of damage as an action once per combat. You must have Magic of five to use this. You can use this for one point between combats.

The Spice Must Flow: Once per session, you may ask your gamemaster a yes-or-no question based on information your character possesses. You must have Magic of 6 to take this. Examples of permitted scope for this question are "Is this the password?"; "Does this idiot know the password?"; and "Is this the right drop point to wait at with that password?"

Fade: Twice per session, you can render yourself completely undetectable for one round. You can only move 5 meters per round while undetectable. You must have Magic of four to use this.