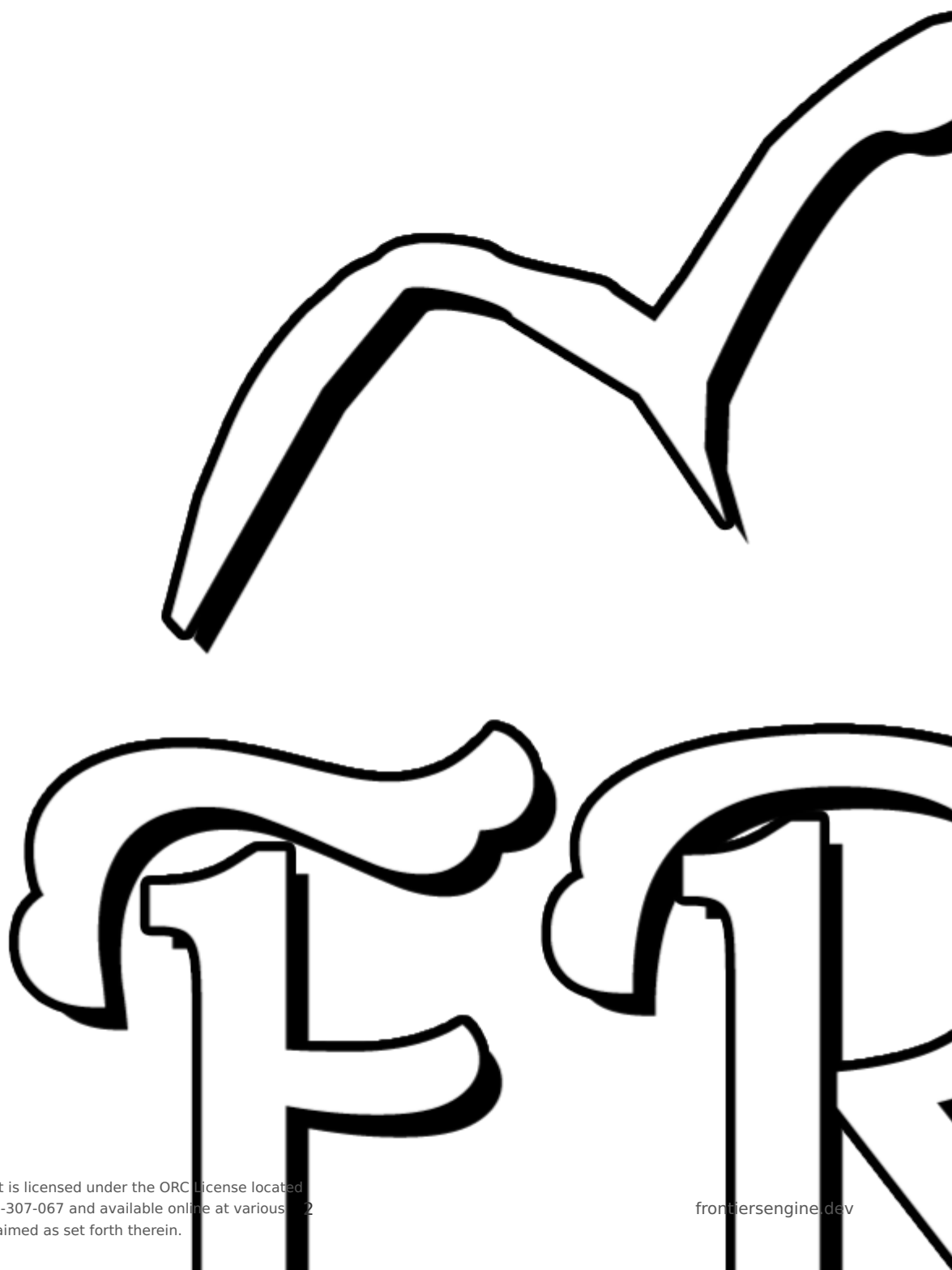




Frontiers Overview · Frontiers Tabletop Engine

Frontiers Tabletop Engine · frontiersengine.dev



Beta 2026-2

This document is the condensed working ruleset of the **Frontiers Tabletop Engine**. It is intended for ease of learning the default Frontiers rules: a structural reference that delivers the engine's mechanics cleanly, without teaching the design choices behind them.

This is not a teaching document. It is not designed to walk new designers through the philosophy of the engine, the tradeoffs considered, or the Variants and Alternatives available. For all of that, refer to the **Design Documentation** set, where each subsystem is broken down with full reasoning, alternative configurations, and design guidance.

If you want to use Frontiers, this is the document to read.

If you want to design with Frontiers, or modify, extend, or build new systems on top of it, read the Design Documentation alongside this Overview.

Design Documentation

Subsystem	Design Doc
The Resolution System	DD_Resolution_2026-2
Flow of Play	DD_FlowofPlay_2026-2
Attributes & Derivatives	DD_Attributes_2026-2
Skills	DD_Skills_2026-2
Abilities	DD_Abilities_2026-2
Equipment	DD_Equipment_2026-2
Characters	DD_Characters_2026-2
Designing With Frontiers	Designing_2026-2

Frontiers uses the **Gradient Resolution System**, which separates two questions:

1. **Does the Action or Activity succeed?** — answered by the **Resolution Die (1d20)**
2. **How strongly does the result manifest?** — answered by the **Gradient Die (1d10)**

The Resolution Die is always rolled first. The Gradient Die is rolled when the texture of the outcome would meaningfully affect the fiction.

For full design reasoning, Variants, and Alternatives, see the Resolution System design doc.

Resolution Roll Procedure

When uncertainty is present:

1. **Declare intent.** The player describes what they're trying to accomplish.
2. **Determine governing Attribute.** The GM identifies which Attribute Modifier applies.
3. **Determine if a Skill applies.** If the approach involves trained technique, the player may apply Favor from the Skill.
4. **Establish target.** Either a **Difficulty Rating (DR)** set by the GM, or a **Contested Resolution (CR)** against another character.
5. **Roll the Resolution Die.** Roll 1d20 + Attribute Modifier + any Category modifier + situational modifiers. The result is the **Modified Result**.
6. **Compare to target.** If the Modified Result $\geq$ target, the attempt succeeds. Otherwise it fails.
7. **Roll the Gradient Die if degree matters.** If the texture of the outcome would enrich the scene, roll 1d10.

The **Natural Result** (the d20 number before modifiers) has no inherent mechanical meaning unless a specific rule explicitly references it.

Gradient Die Results

d10 Result	Deviation
1	Major Negative
2–3	Minor Negative
4–7	Standard
8–9	Minor Positive
10	Major Positive

A Gradient result **never reverses** the success or failure of the Resolution Die. It shapes how that success or failure manifests.

- **Standard** outcomes resolve as expected, no additional texture.
- **Minor** deviations introduce small shifts: a cost, a delay, an opportunity, an advantage.
- **Major** deviations represent turning points: breakthroughs, breakdowns, scene-changing consequences.

Difficulty Ratings (DR)

Most Frontiers-based games use DRs between 5 and 25.

DR	Represents
5	Trivial for trained characters
10	Moderately difficult for mid-tier characters
15	Challenging for most characters
20	Genuinely risky even for specialists
25+	Near-impossible without system-specific leverage

Contested Resolution (CR)

When two characters oppose one another directly, both roll the Resolution Die and compare Modified Results. Higher result wins.

If degree matters, one or both participants may roll Gradient.

Favor and Disfavor

Favor and Disfavor can modify any die roll unless a rule explicitly states otherwise.

- **Favor:** Roll one additional die per stack of Favor. Use the highest single result.
- **Disfavor:** Roll one additional die per stack of Disfavor. Use the lowest single result.

Favor and Disfavor stack up to a maximum of 3 each. Each stack of Favor cancels one stack of Disfavor 1-for-1 before rolling.

Frontiers operates in two primary modes: **Free Play** and **Encounter Play**. Both modes use the same Resolution Roll grammar.

For full design reasoning, Variants, and Alternatives, see the Flow of Play design doc.

Free Play

Free Play is the default state of the game.

- Time is fluid.
- No strict turn order exists.
- Characters primarily engage in ***Activities**.
- Rolls occur only when uncertainty meaningfully impacts the narrative.

There is no ♦AP tracking during Free Play.

Encounter Play

Encounter Play introduces structured timing. Used when:

- Order of actions matters
- Positioning matters
- Immediate consequences matter
- Resource tracking matters

During Encounter Play: - Time is divided into **Rounds** (~10 seconds in-fiction). - Participants act in **Turns**, ordered by ►**Initiative**. - Actions consume ♦**AP**. - Movement consumes ⇒**MP**.

***Activities** are unavailable during Encounter Play unless explicitly allowed by a rule.

The GM determines when the game shifts modes.

► Initiative

Each character has an **Initiative Value (IV)** from 0 to 10. **Higher Initiative acts first.**

At the start of an Encounter: 1. Each participant uses their base IV (provided by Archetype). 2. They may adjust IV by ± their □Finesse Modifier. 3. The final IV is locked for the Encounter unless altered by effects.

Ties are resolved by higher □Finesse Score, then GM call.

♦ Action Points (AP)

During Encounter Play, each participant begins their Turn with **3 ♦AP**, unless modified.

♦AP may be spent: - During your Turn for ♦Actions. - During the Round (or until your next Turn) for **Reactions**.

At the start of your Turn, ♦AP refreshes to maximum (overwriting any leftover).

Unspent ♦AP **persists until your next Turn** for use on Reactions. ♦AP cannot accumulate across Turns. Refresh always overwrites.

♦ Actions

An ♦Action is a discrete, mechanically significant effort. Default cost: **1 ♦AP**.

Actions may include: - Attacking - Activating an Ability - Interacting with the environment - Utilizing equipment - Improvised efforts adjudicated by the GM

To perform an ♦Action: declare → spend ♦AP → resolve fully → apply effects.

A participant may not declare an ♦Action without sufficient ♦AP available.

◇ Free Actions

A ◇Free Action represents minor effort that does not meaningfully tax time or focus.

If an Ability costs a ◇Free Action: - It may be used **once per Round per ability**. - It does not cost ♦AP. - It may only be used during the participant's Turn unless explicitly stated.

Multiple **different** ◇Free Action abilities may be used in the same Round. The same ◇Free Action ability cannot be used twice unless explicitly allowed.

Reactions

Reactions are effects triggered outside a participant's Turn.

- Reactions cost ♦AP from the participant's **current pool**.
- ♦AP persists until the next Turn for this purpose.
- A participant with 0 ♦AP cannot use a Reaction.
- Reactions resolve immediately after their triggering condition unless the rule states they interrupt.

Because Reactions and Actions share the same ♦AP pool, every Turn involves a tactical choice about how much ♦AP to hold back for reactive use.

A participant cannot use Reactions while incapacitated.

⇒ Movement

Movement uses ⇒**Movement Points (MP)**.

Each participant begins their Turn with ⇒**MP equal to 3 + □Finesse Modifier**.

1 ⇒MP = 1 □Unit moved.

⇒MP refreshes at the start of the Turn. Unspent ⇒MP is lost at end of Turn. Movement does not normally cost ♦AP.

□ Units

- 1 □Unit = 5 feet (1.5 meters)
- 1 □Unit = 1 square or hex on a tactical map

□Units apply to movement, ranges, areas of effect, and positioning requirements.

If playing without a grid, □Units represent relative spatial positioning at GM discretion.

⚡ Energy

⚡Energy represents stamina, exertion, and the capacity to push beyond routine effort. It applies in both Free Play and Encounter Play.

Energy is most commonly spent to activate Abilities or use Equipment above the user's effective Level.

Spending ⚡Energy

When activating something that requires ⚡Energy: 1. Determine the cost. 2. Subtract from current ⚡Energy. 3. If insufficient, the user may **Overspend**.

Energy is spent immediately upon declaration.

Overspending

If a character lacks sufficient ⚡Energy: - The Ability or effect is declared normally. - The character immediately gains either **1 ☹Wound or 1 ☹Fatigue** (player chooses). - ⚡Energy may drop below 0, up to the negative limit.

Each instance of Overspend triggers its own Wound/Fatigue choice.

Negative $\searrow$ Energy Limit

A character may Overspend down to **negative one-half of their positive maximum** (rounded down).

Example: a character with 9 maximum $\searrow$ Energy may go as low as -4.

If spending would push beyond this limit, the activation fails.

Recovery

$\searrow$ Energy is regained during $\square$ Downtime at **1 $\searrow$ Energy per hour**.

Negative $\searrow$ Energy recovers at the same rate as positive Energy.

⊗ Wounds

⊗Wounds represent significant physical injury beyond momentary loss of **+HP**.

A character gains a ⊗Wound when: - Reduced to 0 **+HP**. - A rule explicitly inflicts a Wound. - They Overspend $\searrow$ Energy and choose Wound.

When reduced to 0 **+HP**: - Gain 1 ⊗Wound. - Fall **Unconscious** and prone. - Cannot take $\blacklozenge$ Actions, $\ast$ Activities, spend $\Rightarrow$ MP, or use Reactions. - Remain Unconscious until they regain at least 1 **+HP**.

If the Encounter concludes and an ally can reach them, they automatically reawaken with 1 **+HP**.

Maximum ⊗Wounds

Maximum ⊗Wounds = **1 + $\blacklozenge$ Vigor Modifier**.

If a character would gain a ⊗Wound that exceeds their maximum: **the character dies**.

There are no death saves. Exceeding maximum Wounds is the death condition.

Effects of ⊗Wounds

Each ⊗Wound imposes a cumulative penalty: - -2 to $\square$ Physical Defense - -2 to $\square$ Mental Defense

Penalties stack.

⊖ Fatigue

⊖Fatigue represents mental strain and overextension.

A character may gain ⊖Fatigue from: - Overspending $\nearrow$ Energy and choosing Fatigue. - Prolonged stress, deprivation, or psychological pressure. - Specific Abilities or effects. - Narrative strain at GM discretion.

Maximum ⊖Fatigue

Maximum ⊖Fatigue = **1** + ***Resolve Modifier**.

If a character would exceed their maximum ⊖Fatigue: - They immediately fall **Unconscious** and prone. - They cannot take ♦Actions, *Activities, spend ⇒MP, or use Reactions. - They remain Unconscious until ⊖Fatigue drops below maximum.

Effects of ⊖Fatigue

Each ⊖Fatigue imposes a cumulative penalty: - -2 to ●Awareness - -2 to ∞Intuition

Penalties stack.

Stabilizing an Unconscious Character

An ally adjacent to an Unconscious character at 0 ♦HP may spend **2 ♦AP** to stabilize them. This restores them to 1 ♦HP.

The ally must be in melee range (1 □Unit or able to physically touch the target).

The ⊗Wound that was gained when the character fell to 0 ♦HP **remains**. Stabilization restores the character to acting condition; it does not remove the injury.

□ Downtime

□Downtime represents structured rest and recovery outside active pressure.

For each uninterrupted hour of □Downtime: - Regain 1 $\nearrow$ Energy. - Remove either 1 ⊗Wound **or** 1 ⊖Fatigue.

A character cannot remove both a Wound and a Fatigue in the same hour.

For each 3 uninterrupted hours of □Downtime: - Regain 1/2 of maximum ♦HP.

This stacks at rolling intervals. 3 hours = 50% HP, 6 hours = 100% HP. **+**HP cannot exceed maximum.

If Downtime is interrupted by combat, immediate danger, or significant exertion, recovery for that hour is lost.

Every character is defined by four core Attributes, each on a **1-10 scale**.

For full design reasoning, Variants, and Alternatives, see the Attributes & Derivatives design doc.

Attributes

Attribute	Domain
♦ Vigor	Physical strength, endurance, bodily resilience
□ Finesse	Coordination, agility, reflexes, tempo
□ Acuity	Perception, reasoning, mental sharpness
* Resolve	Mental fortitude, composure, emotional endurance

Each Attribute produces two values:

- **Attribute Score** — the full 1-10 value
- **Attribute Modifier** — $\text{Score} \div 2$, rounded down

Score	Modifier
1	0
2-3	+1
4-5	+2
6-7	+3
8-9	+4
10	+5

The **Score** is used for thresholds and defensive values. The **Modifier** is used for resolution rolls and rollable derivatives.

Attribute Floor: No Attribute Score can be reduced below 1 by any means.

Attribute Ceiling: Attribute Scores are capped at 10 by default.

Derivatives

Frontiers tracks ten Derivatives:

Derivative	Function	Formula
➕ Health Pool (HP)	Physical damage capacity	Per Level: ♦Vigor Mod + Archetype HP Mod
⊗ Maximum Wounds	Lasting physical injury cap	1 + ♦Vigor Modifier
⊖ Maximum Fatigue	Lasting mental strain cap	1 + *Resolve Modifier
➤ Initiative	Turn order in Encounter Play	Archetype-provided base, ± □Finesse Mod
⚡ Energy	Effort and exertion currency	Starts at 3, grows via advancement
□ Physical Defense	Defense against physical attacks	5 + higher of (♦Vigor Mod or □Finesse Mod) + Equipment
□ Mental Defense	Defense against mental attacks	5 + higher of (□Acuity Mod or *Resolve Mod) + Equipment
● Awareness	Perception rolls	1 + □Acuity Modifier
∞ Intuition	Social/emotional reading rolls	1 + *Resolve Modifier
⇒ Movement Points (MP)	Movement per Turn	3 + □Finesse Modifier

When making an Awareness or Intuition check, roll d20 + the Derivative value. The current value is reduced by 2 for each ⊖Fatigue the character has.

➕ Health Pool

When a character advances a Level (including Level 1), Maximum ➕HP increases by:

♦Vigor Modifier + Archetype HP Modifier

The **Archetype HP Modifier** (typically +4 to +8) is defined by the character's Archetype.

If ♦Vigor changes permanently, recalculate Maximum HP retroactively as if the new Vigor had been in effect since Level 1. Temporary Vigor changes do not change Maximum HP.

There are no other contributors to Maximum HP in the default engine.

Live vs Anchored Derivatives

When an Attribute changes mid-Encounter, some Derivatives update immediately and some don't.

Live Derivatives update immediately: - □ Physical Defense - □ Mental Defense - ⇒ Movement Points - ● Awareness - ∞ Intuition - Additional Skills granted by Acuity Modifier

Anchored Derivatives do not update mid-Encounter: - + Maximum HP - ⊗ Maximum Wounds - ⊖ Maximum Fatigue - ► Initiative (once locked at Encounter start)

If an Attribute changes **permanently**, Anchored Derivatives recalculate at the next reasonable pause or at the end of the current Encounter.

Frontiers' Skill system has two layers: **Skill Categories** (broad domain modifiers) and **specific Skills** (binary, grant Favor when applicable).

For full design reasoning, Variants, and Alternatives, see the Skills design doc.

Skill Categories

Every Skill belongs to one of three Categories:

- **Body** — physical Skills
- **Mind** — mental Skills
- **Voice** — social Skills

A character may have a **Category modifier** (from +1 to +5) that applies to all rolls within that Category. This is additive to the Attribute Modifier on the roll.

Category modifiers are gained from: - Archetype features - Vector Marks - Abilities - Equipment (in some systems)

A character does not start with any Category modifier. Category investment is a build reward, not a baseline.

Category modifiers cap at +5 per Category. All sources count toward the cap.

Specific Skills

Specific Skills are binary: a character either has a Skill or they do not.

When a Skill applies to a roll, the character gains **Favor on the roll**. That is the entire mechanical effect.

If a Category modifier also applies, both apply: the character gains the Category modifier AND Favor.

Only one Skill applies per roll. If multiple could fit, the player picks one.

When Skills Apply

A Skill applies when the character's approach clearly relies on trained technique, specialized knowledge, or deliberate practice.

The standard guideline: - The **task** determines the Attribute. - The **approach** determines whether a Skill applies.

A character without a relevant Skill may still attempt the action. They use the governing Attribute Modifier (and any Category modifier) but do not gain Favor.

Gaining Skills

Skills are granted through:

1. **Origin / Background / Archetype** — character creation choices.
2. **Acuity Modifier** — additional Skills equal to Acuity Modifier.
3. **Vector Marks** — Skill Marks during advancement.

Skills are **permanent** once gained.

Resolution with Skills

When making a Resolution Roll where a Skill applies:

1. Determine the governing Attribute.
2. Add the Attribute Modifier to the roll.
3. Add the Category modifier (if any).
4. Apply Favor from the Skill.
5. Apply any other Favor or Disfavor.
6. Resolve normally.

Example: A character with Acuity 6 (Mod +3), +2 Mind Category, and the Investigation Skill is searching for clues. The roll is d20+3 (Acuity) +2 (Mind) with Favor (Investigation Skill).

Competencies

Competencies are a separate system from Skills. They handle access and proficiency, not roll bonuses.

A Competency is the formal training, familiarity, or licensure required to use a specific tool, weapon, armor type, language, or system without penalty.

Competencies are binary: a character has a Competency or they don't.

Common Competencies: - **Weapon Competencies** (Light Weapons, Heavy Weapons, Ranged Weapons, etc.) - **Armor Competencies** (Light Armor, Heavy Armor, Shields, etc.) - **Tool Competencies** (Healer's Kit, Alchemy Kit, Thieves' Tools, etc.) - **Languages** - **Vehicle Operation** - **Magical Systems** (in systems where magic requires structured access)

The specific Competency list is system-defined.

Lacking a Competency

If a character attempts to use something they lack the Competency for, the GM may rule that: - The item cannot be used effectively - The action functions at Disfavor - The Difficulty Rating increases - The benefit is reduced - Narrative limitations apply

The specific penalty is system-defined.

An **Ability** is a discrete mechanical feature that lets a character do something beyond baseline action.

For full design reasoning, Variants, and Alternatives, see the Abilities design doc.

Ability Anatomy

Every Ability defines nine fields:

1. **Name** — identifier
2. **Level** — Static or Dynamic
3. **Action Cost** — ♦AP, ♦Free Action, Reaction, or Passive
4. **Range** — Self, Melee, Short, Medium, Long, or specific □Units
5. **Target** — what the Ability affects
6. **Resolution** — whether a roll is needed, and what kind
7. **Effect** — what happens
8. **Duration** — if applicable

9. **Frequency** — usage limits, if applicable

Fields not relevant to a specific Ability may be omitted.

Ability Level

Every Ability has a Level. Levels come in two types:

Static Level Abilities. The Level is fixed at design. A Level 3 Parry stays Level 3 forever, no matter who uses it.

Dynamic Level Abilities. The Level scales with the user's Reference Level via a formula. A Dragon-Origin breath weapon written as "Ability Level = Reference Level + 1" always costs 1 Energy regardless of when it's used.

Dynamic Abilities should generally include scaling Effects (damage, range, duration) that grow with the Ability's current Level.

The maximum recommended Ability Level is **15** (Character Level soft cap of 10 plus 5 Levels of stretch).

Reference Level

The **Reference Level** is the comparison value used to determine an Ability's Energy cost.

Actor	Reference Level
Player Character	Total Character Level (sum of all Archetype Levels)
Non-Player Character	Defined Level set by GM or system designer
Item activating an Ability	The Item's Level

⚡ Energy Cost Rule

If an Ability's Level exceeds the user's Reference Level, the user pays ⚡Energy equal to the difference. Otherwise, no Energy cost.

If the user lacks sufficient ⚡Energy, they may **Overspend** (see Flow of Play).

Action Cost Types

Standard ♦AP Cost. Most Abilities cost 1 ♦AP. Some powerful Abilities cost 2 or 3.

♦**Free Action.** No ♦AP cost; once per Round per Ability.

Reaction. Triggers off external events; costs ♦AP from the user's current pool.

Passive. No Action Cost, always active. If the user's Reference Level is below a Passive Ability's Level, they continuously pay the difference in Energy.

Frequency

If no Frequency is listed, an Ability may be used as often as ♦AP and ↯Energy allow.

Frequency limits ("once per Encounter," "once per Scene," etc.) exist for Abilities that should be gated beyond what Energy alone provides.

Equipment represents physical items that a character carries, wears, wields, activates, or consumes.

For full design reasoning, Variants, and Alternatives, see the Equipment design doc.

Equipment Level

Every item has a Level. Items default to **Level 0** unless their design specifies otherwise.

- **Level 0 items** are baseline gear (**non-enhanced**). No ↯Energy interaction.
- **Items above Level 0** are **Enhanced**. They interact with the user's Reference Level.

Maximum recommended Equipment Level is **15**, matching the Ability Level cap.

The term "Enhanced" is genre-neutral. What fantasy systems call a "magic sword" is, in Frontiers vocabulary, an "Enhanced sword" of some Level. Sci-fi, horror, and modern systems use the same framing.

Equipment States

Items fall into one of three states that determine how Energy interaction behaves:

Equipped Items (Persistent ↘Energy Reduction)

Items providing continuous benefit while worn or wielded.

If an Equipped item's Level exceeds the user's Reference Level, the user's **maximum ↘Energy is reduced** by the difference for as long as the item remains Equipped.

If equipping multiple Enhanced items, reductions stack. If total reduction would push maximum ↘Energy below 0, the most recently Equipped item cannot be Equipped.

Activated Items (Per-Use ↘Energy Cost)

Items producing effects when used.

If an Activated item's Level exceeds the user's Reference Level, the user pays ↘Energy equal to the difference at the moment of activation.

If the item defines its own Energy cost in addition to the Level difference, both are paid.

Consumables (Single-Use ↘Energy Cost)

Items used up after a single activation. Energy interaction is identical to Activated items. After use, the Consumable is removed.

Equipped vs. Carried vs. Stored

State	Definition	Effect
Equipped	Actively worn or wielded	Passive bonuses apply, usable without draw cost
Carried	Accessible but not readied	Drawing or readying costs 1 ↗AP
Stored	Not immediately accessible	Cannot be used without retrieval

Swapping Equipped items typically costs 1 ↗AP unless overridden.

Items Granting Abilities

When an item grants an Ability:

- **The Ability's Level equals the item's Level.**
- **The user must be able to Equip the item to use its granted Abilities.**
- **Energy cost follows normal Ability rules** (Reference Level vs. Ability Level).

Inventory

The default engine **does not** prescribe carrying capacity, slot limits, or inventory tracking. A character carries what makes narrative sense.

Systems may add inventory rules (slot-based, weight-based, encumbrance tiers, narrative-only) as fits their genre.

Equipment Damage and Durability

The default engine **does not** include item damage, breakage, or durability rules. Equipment is assumed to remain functional unless specifically destroyed.

Systems may add durability rules where appropriate.

Every character is built from three layers, each tied to a different identity question:

Layer	Question	Root
Origin	What are you?	Biological inheritance
Background	What did you do?	External inheritance
Archetype	What do you do?	Trained inheritance

The mechanical contributions of each layer are system-defined. The defaults below are templates, not requirements.

For full design reasoning, Variants, and Alternatives, see the Characters design doc.

Origin

Origin represents what the character is biologically and metaphysically.

Default template: - One small innate Ability or trait - Optional minor Attribute influence (if the system uses it, often +1 to 2 attributes) - Narrative grounding for biology, lineage, or creation method

Origins do not scale by default. Scaling Origins use Dynamic Level Abilities.

Background

Background represents the character's external inheritance, lived experience, profession, social position.

Default template: - 2-3 starting Skills - 1-2 Competencies - Narrative leverage (contacts, reputation, situational expertise)

Background does not scale by default. Long-term relevance comes from narrative leverage rather than scaling bonuses.

Archetype

Archetype represents the character's trained inheritance, active vocation, role, progression vector.

Default template: - HP scaling per Level (Archetype HP Modifier, typically +4 to +8) - $\nearrow$ Energy growth per Level - Abilities at each Level - Competencies that fit the role - Eligibility for Vector Marks

Each Archetype contains **10 Levels**. At each Level, the character should gain a meaningful benefit.

Vector Mark Advancement

Frontiers uses **Vector Mark advancement**. Three Vector Marks earned = one Level gained.

Vector Marks are GM-granted at narrative milestones. The default pacing is roughly **one Mark per session**, with extra Marks awarded for major story moments, producing a Level every ~3 sessions on average.

Common Mark triggers: - End of a major scene or arc - Surviving a significant Encounter - Achieving a defined goal - Personal milestones (mastering a skill, forging a critical bond, coming to terms with the past) - End of a session (as a baseline pacing tool)

Mark Types

Mark	Effect
Attribute Mark	Increase two different Attributes by 1 each (respecting the 1-10 cap)
Skill Mark	Gain one new specific Skill, OR increase one Skill Category modifier by +1 (toward the +5 cap)
Ability Mark	Gain one new Ability with Level $\leq$ (Reference Level + 2). Some Abilities may have additional requirements set by their design

Mark	Effect
Energy Mark	Increase maximum $\nearrow$ Energy by 1
Additional Mark	A system-specific Mark type defined by the system designer

Each Mark type can only be selected **once per Level**. Diversity is enforced.

Level Up Procedure

When a player accumulates 3 Marks:

1. Increase total Character Level by 1.
2. Choose which Archetype receives the new Level (for multi-Archetype characters).
3. Gain that Archetype's Level features (HP Mod, Abilities granted at that Level, Competencies if any).
4. Recalculate any Derivatives affected by permanent changes.
5. Recalculate Equipment Level interaction if total Character Level changed.
6. Recalculate Maximum HP retroactively if $\diamond$ Vigor changed.

Leveling does not automatically restore $\nearrow$ Energy unless the system explicitly defines this.

Multi-Archetype Progression

A character may take Levels in multiple Archetypes. When advancing, the player chooses which Archetype gets the new Level.

Single Archetype maximum: 10 Levels.

Total Character Level soft cap: 20.

When a character takes their first Level in a new Archetype: - They gain the Archetype's per-Level features for that Level (HP Mod, Abilities granted at Level 1 of the new Archetype, Competencies if any). - They do **not** gain a new "Level 1 starter package" (no new starting Attribute Points, no new starting Skills, no new starting Energy pool).

Systems may modify this rule as fits their tone.

Starting Values (Default)

At Level 1, characters typically begin with:

Resource	Default
Attribute Points to distribute	10
Maximum $\nearrow$ Energy	3
Skills	3 (typically from Background)
Abilities	2 of Level 3 or lower

These values produce a competent starting character without overshadowing later progression.

Character Creation Procedure

This procedure is recommended but not required.

1. **Establish concept** — core identity, intended playstyle, narrative tone.
2. **Choose Origin** — apply any innate Ability or trait, any Attribute influence (+1 to 2 attributes).
3. **Choose Background** — apply Skills, Competencies, narrative leverage hooks.
4. **Assign Attributes** — distribute 10 points across $\blacklozenge$ Vigor, $\square$ Finesse, $\square$ Acuity, $\ast$ Resolve (up to 5 maximum in one stat). Calculate Modifiers and Derivatives.
5. **Choose Archetype** — gain Level 1 benefits (HP Mod, Abilities, Competencies).
6. **Finalize Resources** — calculate $\blacklozenge$ HP, $\nearrow$ Energy, $\square\square$ Defenses, $\otimes\ominus$ Maximums, $\bullet$ Awareness, ∞ Intuition, $\Rightarrow$ MP, $\blacktriangleright$ Initiative.
7. **Choose starting Equipment** — apply Energy interaction with any Enhanced items above Reference Level 1.

Icon	Meaning
$\blacklozenge$	Vigor
$\square$	Finesse
$\square$	Acuity
$\ast$	Resolve
$\ast$	Activity
$\blacklozenge$	Action / Action Point (AP)
$\diamond$	Free Action
$\blacktriangleright$	Initiative
$\Rightarrow$	Movement / Movement Point (MP)

Icon	Meaning
□	Unit
+	Health (HP)
⊗	Wound
⊖	Fatigue
⚡	Energy
□	Physical Defense
□	Mental Defense
●	Awareness
∞	Intuition
□	Downtime

This Overview is the condensed working ruleset. For design reasoning, Variants, and Alternatives, refer to the Design Documentation set linked at the top of this document. For the engine's broader design philosophy and how to build modules on top of it, see **Designing With Frontiers**.