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Somewhere past the comfortable edge of the present, people are still people, but the line between a person and their tools has gone soft. A courier with a cortex jack and mirrored eyes. A soldier whose arm is a weapon and whose armor lives under the skin. A fixer who has never fired a gun but knows the name of everyone who has. This is a game about those people: hired, augmented, improvised, building themselves out of whatever the world will sell them, in the neon undercity, the corporate tower, and the cold dark between stations.

This document is a **Quickstarter**: a small but complete, playable toolkit for running science fiction on the Frontiers Engine. It is not a setting and not a full game. It is a curated slice, enough to make characters and play through the early band of a sci-fi campaign, built to show off one particular idea.

That idea is **construction**. Instead of choosing a class, you assemble a character out of **Nodes**, small interlocking pieces, and most of what you can do, your abilities and the gear you can wield, is unlocked by the specific set of Nodes you hold and how they combine. Characters grow in several directions at once, bolt on cybernetics at a real cost, and end up defined by the bundle they have built rather than a role chosen up front. Play feels like adapting and recombining, not climbing a single ladder.

What You Can Do With It

- **Play it as-is** for a one-shot or a short campaign.
- **Build on it** as the foundation of a larger sci-fi system of your own.
- **Playtest the engine**, to feel how multi-Node building and the augmentation economy behave at the table.
- **Strip it for parts**, taking whatever pieces fit your own design.

It deliberately leaves out what a full game would add: a setting, a map, factions, adventures, a bestiary, a real economy. What it gives you is the machine for making and running characters, and the room to wrap your own world around it.

Independent Documentation

This document stands on its own. Every system is explained where you meet it, starting with the core rules in Section 1, so a table that has never touched Frontiers can pick this up and play. That being said it is recommended to read the additional material for the sake of understanding.

The Frontiers Engine does have a full **Overview** and a set of **Design Documentation**, and they are worth reading if you want the deeper reasoning behind a rule or plan to build something larger.

A character is assembled in sequence, each choice narrowing the next. Work the steps in order, since later ones lean on earlier ones. The first build runs about 30 to 60 minutes; once a player knows the system, closer to 10 to 15. Every step points to the section that covers it in full, so this page is a map, not the rules themselves.

The Sequence

Step	What You Choose	Where to Look
1. Concept	Who is this character, and what do they want?	Your imagination
2. Attributes	Distribute 10 points across ♦Vigor, □Finesse, □Acuity, and ✱Resolve	Section 1
3. Origin	Install up to two Augmentations, trading ⚡Energy for passive features	Section 2
4. Background	Where the character came from: Skills, a Category bonus, a Narrative Leverage hook	Section 3
5. Nodes	Spend 3 starting Node levels across Protocols and Calibrations	Section 4
6. Skills	Finish your Skill list	Section 5
7. Equipment	Weapons, armor, and gear within your Calibrations and carry limit	Section 6
8. Finalize	Total your +HP, □□Defenses, ⚡Energy, ●Awareness, ∞Intuition, and ▶Initiative Value	Sections 1 and 7

Walking the Steps

Concept first. Before opening any section, answer two questions: who is this character, and what do they want? Even a loose answer anchors every choice that follows.

Attributes set capability. Distribute **10 points** across the four Attributes. Each starts at 1 and rises to a maximum of 5 at creation. Most builds land around 4/3/2/1 or 3/3/3/1; you may dump a stat to 1 to push another to 5, at a real cost. Each Modifier is the Score halved and rounded down (Section 1).

Your Origin is your body. Rather than a fixed package, your Origin is the line of Augmentations you choose to install. You begin fully organic with **3 ✂Energy** and may install up to **two Augmentations** at creation, each trading 1 point of Energy for a permanent passive feature, or stay clean and keep the full pool. See Section 2.

Background sets the history. Your Background is who the character was and who they know. It grants **3 Skills** (choose 2 from its list, invent 1 of your own), a **+1 Category bonus**, and a **Narrative Leverage** hook, your way into the world's people and gear. See Section 3.

Nodes are the heart of the build, and they carry your Abilities. You begin with **3 Node levels** to spend. Each level takes a new Node or raises one you already hold, up to a cap of 5 in any single Node. **Protocols** are your roles: each grants a scaling Passive at level 1 and, at every level after, an Ability of that tier or a **General Ability** from the shared utility pool in its place.

Calibrations are your gear mastery, sharpening the weapons and armor they govern. The sum of all your Node levels is your **Total Node Level**, a read on your overall depth rather than a gate. A few Abilities and pieces of gear ask for more than one Node, a count or a specific pairing; Section 4 covers how those prerequisites read.

Skills finalize specialization. Your Background's 3 Skills are joined by additional Skills equal to your **□Acuity Modifier**. A Skill grants Favor on rolls where it applies. See Section 5.

Equipment outfits the character. Choose weapons, armor, and gear. What you can scale is governed by your Calibrations; what you can carry is a flat **10 slots**. Untagged gear works for anyone at its base numbers. See Section 6.

Finalize the numbers last. With the build set, total your derived numbers:

- **+HP** = 10 + your **♦Vigor Modifier** + the HP your Nodes grant.
- **□Physical Defense** = 5 + the higher of your **♦Vigor** or **□Finesse Modifier** + armor.
- **□Mental Defense** = 5 + the higher of your **□Acuity** or ***Resolve Modifier** + armor.
- **✂Energy**, maximum 3 at creation, minus any spent on Augmentations.
- **●Awareness** = 1 + your **□Acuity Modifier**, dropping 2 per **⊖Fatigue**.
- **∞Intuition** = 1 + your ***Resolve Modifier**, dropping 2 per **⊖Fatigue**.
- **►Initiative Value**, your highest Protocol's base, adjusted by up to your **□Finesse Modifier** (Section 7).

The formulas live in Section 1, the Initiative Value in Section 7. With them totaled, the character is ready to play.

Everything in this game runs on one roll. Picking a lock, talking down a guard, slicing a server, firing a gun: they all resolve the same way. Learn this section and you can play. Combat adds a few

specifics in Section 7, and your character's own numbers come together as you build them in Sections 2 through 6, but all of it rests on what follows.

The Loop of Play

Play moves in a simple loop. The GM describes the situation, a player says what their character does, and the table finds out what happens. Most of the time the outcome is plain and you just narrate forward. **You reach for the dice only when the outcome is uncertain and that uncertainty meaningfully matters to the story.** Opening an unlocked door needs no roll; picking a locked one under fire does.

Frontiers runs in two modes, both using the same roll:

- **Free Play:** the open, unstructured flow of exploration, conversation, and investigation. Time is loose, and people act as the fiction calls for it.
- **Encounter Play:** the structured mode for moments where timing and order matter, above all combat. Play breaks into turns, and Initiative decides who goes when. Section 7 covers it in full.

Everything below applies in both modes.

Two Dice, Two Questions

A Frontiers roll uses two dice that answer two different questions.

The question	The die	What it tells you
Did it work?	d20 , the Resolution Die	Success or failure
How did it look?	d10 , the Gradient Die	The texture of that result

The d20 decides the outcome. The d10 colors it. They are rolled together, and the d10 never overturns what the d20 said.

The Resolution Roll

To resolve an action, roll your **Resolution Die** and add your modifiers:

d20 + the relevant Attribute Modifier + any Category bonus + any situational modifier

The total is your **Modified Result**. Compare it to a target: meet or beat the target and you succeed, fall short and you fail. There are no automatic successes or failures; the Modified Result decides.

A roll usually layers three things: the **Attribute Modifier** for the raw capability the task leans on, a **Category bonus** if you are trained in that broad area (a Category is one of the three skill groups, Body, Mind, or Voice, detailed in Section 5), and **Favor** from a specific Skill if one applies.

Types of Rolls: DR and CR

Every Resolution Roll is measured against one of two kinds of target.

Difficulty Rating (DR). For a task set against the world rather than another person, the GM sets a static target number. Meet or beat it to succeed. Most Frontiers games use DRs from 5 to 25:

DR	Represents
5	Trivial for a trained character
10	Moderately difficult
15	Challenging for most
20	Genuinely risky even for specialists
25+	Near-impossible without real leverage

What matters most is consistency: a DR 15 should feel the same on Tuesday as it does on Friday.

Contested Resolution (CR). When two characters oppose each other directly, a grapple, a chase, a debate, a battle of wills, both roll the Resolution Die and compare **Modified Results**. The higher result wins. If the Modified Results tie, the character who started the contest wins. In a fight this same idea takes a fixed form: your attack is measured against the target's Defense, a standing number rather than a live roll, which Section 7 covers.

The Gradient

The Gradient Die is the engine's signature, and it is what keeps the fiction moving even on a failure. After the d20 settles success or failure, the d10 tells the table how it happened.

A **high** Gradient is a clean result: the success looks effortless, or the failure still hands you something useful, a clue, a position, a lesson. A **low** Gradient comes with a cost: the success arrives with a complication or a price, or the failure goes worse than expected. Most rolls land in the middle and simply resolve as expected. The extremes are where moments turn dramatic; in combat they become grazes and critical hits, detailed in Section 7.

The Gradient **never reverses the d20**. A hit with a low Gradient still hits, it just hits messily. A miss with a high Gradient still misses, but you walk away with something. The engine's bias is to roll it whenever the texture of an outcome would enrich the scene, which is most of the time. Skip it only for flat, trivial checks.

Favor and Disfavor

Some things tilt a roll without changing its math.

With **Favor**, roll the d20 twice and take the higher result. With **Disfavor**, roll twice and take the lower. A relevant Skill grants Favor, and so can a strong position, good leverage, or the right tool; a bad position grants Disfavor.

Only **one** Skill grants Favor on any single roll, and Favor does not stack with itself: two sources of Favor are still just Favor. If a roll carries both Favor and Disfavor, they cancel, and you roll once as normal.

Attributes and Modifiers

Every character has four **Attributes**, each a **Score** from 1 to 10:

- **♦Vigor**: physical power, toughness, and stamina
- **□Finesse**: speed, precision, and dexterity
- **□Acuity**: perception, intellect, and technical skill
- ***Resolve**: willpower, presence, and composure

What you actually add to a roll is the **Modifier**, equal to the Score divided by two, rounded down. A Score of 1 gives +0, a Score of 6 gives +3, a Score of 10 gives +5. A Score never drops below 1, whatever happens in play.

Which Attribute governs a roll depends on the action: forcing a door is ♦Vigor, a precise shot is □Finesse, spotting a tripwire is □Acuity, holding your nerve is *Resolve. The GM calls which one fits.

Your Core Resources

Beyond your Attributes, every character tracks a handful of numbers at the table.

+HP (Health) is your buffer against harm; when it reaches 0 you go down. Your maximum is:

Maximum +HP = 10 + your ♦Vigor Modifier + the HP your Nodes grant.

The base and your Vigor are set at creation; the largest share comes from your Nodes, each of which adds Health for every level you put into it. Those Node values live in Section 4, so your final HP settles once you build them.

Defense is how hard you are to hit: the static target a roll must meet or beat to land on you, whether that roll is an attack or a forced save. You have two, one for each kind of assault:

▢ **Physical Defense** = 5 + the higher of your ♦ **Vigor** or ▢ **Finesse Modifier** + armor.

▢ **Mental Defense** = 5 + the higher of your ▢ **Acuity** or ✱ **Resolve Modifier** + armor.

A swung fist or a fired round is measured against Physical Defense; a psychic strike or a coercive will is measured against Mental Defense. Because each takes the higher of two Modifiers, a tough bruiser and a quick gunhand both defend well in a fight, just off different stats. Armor adds on top, and what each piece grants is in Section 6.

♣ **Energy** is your body's reserve of capacity for enhancement. You begin with a maximum of **3**, rising as you advance (see Advancement), and you always keep at least **1 free**. Two things draw on it: the Augmentations you install, each a fixed and permanent draw while in place (Section 2), and anything whose Level runs ahead of its **Reference Level**, the comparison explained just below.

● **Awareness** and ∞ **Intuition** are your senses made rollable. Awareness is **1 + your ▢ Acuity Modifier** and carries perception: spotting an ambush, a hidden door, a tail. Intuition is **1 + your ✱ Resolve Modifier** and carries the reading of people: a lie, a mood, a bluff. You roll each as **d20 + the value**, and both drop by **2 for every ☹ Fatigue you carry**, so a worn-down character misses what a sharp one would catch.

Reference Level

Most of what you carry and do is free. A few things reach past where you stand, and reaching costs ♣ **Energy**. **Reference Level** is the measure that decides which is which.

Every Ability and every piece of gear has a **Level**. To find what it costs you, hold that Level against its Reference Level: not one number for your whole character, but the level you hold in whatever the thing is sourced from.

- An **Ability** answers to your level in the **Node** it came from. A Trooper Ability measures against your Trooper level; one taken during a Calibration's growth measures against that Calibration.
- A **weapon or piece of gear** answers to your level in the **Calibration that governs it**. A Technomatics weapon measures against your Technomatics level, and a piece that draws on more than one Calibration measures against the **sum** of your levels in them, so a Technomatics frame with an Energetics edge is held against Technomatics and Energetics together.
- **Baseline gear and general picks** sit at **Level 0**. An untagged weapon, a field kit, a General Ability: none carries a Level worth measuring, so none ever touches your Energy. They begin to scale only if a Calibration is laid onto them.

The rule itself is a single line:

If a thing's Level is higher than its Reference Level, you pay the difference in ♣ Energy. At or below it, you pay nothing.

Deepen the path a thing answers to and the gap shrinks, until what once taxed you runs free.

How you pay depends on the thing. Something you **activate**, an Ability you fire or a device you trigger, charges the difference **each time you use it**. Something **worn or always on**, a passive

Ability or an equipped piece, instead **lowers your maximum $\searrow$ Energy** by the difference for as long as you keep it, the same standing weight an Augmentation carries.

You are allowed to reach, within a limit. You may take on an Ability or item up to **two Levels above** its Reference, carrying the Energy gap as the price of being early and watching it close as your level in that path climbs to meet it. Beyond that two-Level reach, the thing is simply past you for now.

Your **Total Node Level** still exists as the sum of all you have built, a quick read on overall depth, but it is no longer a gate. Cost lives at the level of the single path, so investment pays off exactly where you make it: the deeper you go in a discipline, the cheaper everything it grants becomes.

Augmentations are the one exception to all of this. They are not measured against a Reference Level at all; each simply occupies a fixed point of $\searrow$ Energy, permanently, for as long as it stays installed. See Section 2.

Advancement

Characters grow through **advancement**, granted by the GM at meaningful milestones: the close of a session, the end of an arc, surviving something that should have ended you. Each time you advance a **Level**, two things happen.

First, you gain a **Node level**. Raise any one Protocol or Calibration by 1, to its maximum of 5, and take that tier's benefit as that Node lays it out: a Protocol's signature passive or a new Ability, a Calibration's sharper gear. Your **Total Node Level** climbs by 1 with it.

Second, you take one **Vector Mark**, your free choice from:

- **Attribute Mark.** Raise two different Attributes by 1 each, up to the cap of 10.
- **Skill Mark.** Gain one new Skill, or raise one Skill Category by +1 toward its +5 cap.
- **Ability Mark.** Take one **General Ability** from the shared pool (Section 4).

Your $\searrow$ **Energy** keeps its own pace alongside the Marks, rising by 1 each time your **Total Node Level** reaches the next odd number past creation: 4 at Total Node Level 5, 5 at 7, and onward.

After advancing, recheck anything a permanent change touched: your maximum **+HP** if $\spadesuit$ Vigor rose, your Defenses, and the Reference Levels your gear and Abilities answer to, since deepening a Node may bring something that once taxed your Energy down to free.

Your Origin is what your character is. Rather than a fixed package that hands you a kit, it is a choose-your-own line of **Augmentations**: a track separate from your Nodes where you spend your $\searrow$ Energy, the core resource from Section 1, on permanent passive features of the body. Everyone starts the same, flesh and bone with three points of $\searrow$ Energy and nothing installed. What you become from there is written in chrome, and the body you end up with, clean or wired or synthetic, is flavor laid over the choices below.

An Augmentation is a passive, always-on feature of the body itself. Where a Node grants Abilities you use and gear you carry (Section 4), an Augmentation changes what you simply are: a sealed system, a hardwired port, a forged identity baked into your tissue. It runs quietly once installed and asks for only one thing, the Energy it occupies.

Augmentations and Your Energy

Your $\nearrow$ Energy is your enhancement budget. Each installed Augmentation occupies **1 $\nearrow$ Energy** while in place, and because you always keep at least 1 free (Section 1), your free Energy is the room you have left. Install nothing and you keep the whole pool and the flexibility it buys; build yourself up and you trade that flexibility, point by point, for a body that does more on its own.

Each time your maximum Energy rises, at every odd Level, you meet a quiet fork: leave the new point free to deepen your usable pool, or spend it on more chrome. Becoming more capable and becoming more built pull against each other, and that tension is the point of this track.

Augmentations are installed and uninstalled only in **downtime**, when the fiction provides the facilities: a clinic, a ripperdoc, a workshop. Uninstalling one frees its Energy again. Your loadout is a tool you rebuild for the job ahead, not a permanent sentence.

At Creation

With 3 Energy and a floor of 1, a new character installs **0 to 2 Augmentations**. Install none and you are fully organic and maximally flexible; install two and you have already started the long walk into the machine. Both are right, and the choice is meant to be tight.

Where you land has informal names, handy as table shorthand: **Pure** (no chrome), **Wired** or **Hybrid** (a piece or two), **Chromed** or **Synthetic** (heavily built). These carry no rules of their own. They are just a quick way to say how far someone has gone.

The Augmentation List

Each Augmentation costs **1 $\nearrow$ Energy** while installed and is installed only once: you broaden your body by adding different Augmentations, not by stacking the same one. None of them touch your combat numbers, since survivability lives in your armor and your Nodes (Sections 6 and 4). What they give you instead is reach: new things you can do, withstand, or simply be.

Augmentation: Sealed System

A closed, self-contained body. You do not need to breathe, and vacuum, ambient pressure, and airborne toxins and contaminants leave you untouched.

Augmentation: Hardened Biology

A reinforced immune and filtration system. You gain **Favor** on rolls to resist poison, disease, and other biological attacks, and you halve their duration and severity.

Augmentation: Reinforced Servos

Augmented musculature and load-bearing joints. You perform feats of strength well beyond a bare human frame: your jump distance is doubled and your carrying capacity rises by 2 slots.

Augmentation: Kinetic Legs

Rebuilt legs and tuned reflexes. Your $\Rightarrow$ Movement increases by 2 units, difficult terrain never slows you, and you can sustain a full sprint for hours without tiring.

Augmentation: Grip Limbs

Adhesive pads or magnetized extremities. You climb any solid surface at full movement without a roll, and unstable footing and zero-g drift never trouble you.

Augmentation: Data Port

A hardwired interface jack. You connect directly to compatible systems to read, operate, or attempt to subvert them, as the GM adjudicates. A Netrunner needs none of this, their Jack In is innate (Section 4), but for anyone else it is the difference between fumbling at a port and speaking the machine's own language.

Augmentation: Strong Arm

An arm stabilized with inner brackets and supports. You can wield a single two-handed or Heavy weapon in that one arm.

Augmentation: Subdermal Storage

Sealed internal compartments. You conceal up to 2 slots of small gear, and searches to find it suffer **Disfavor**.

Augmentation: Translator Matrix

A language and dialect processor. You understand and can speak any language you have heard enough of, and you parse jargon, codes, and slang others would miss.

Augmentation: Biometric Spoofer

Forged credentials woven into your tissue. Identity scans, biometric locks, and routine background checks read whatever you tell them to, within reason, until someone verifies you by hand.

Augmentation: Subvocal Comms

A silent, encrypted link. You speak with anyone else on your channel without making a sound, across any distance the network reaches, and the traffic is hard to intercept.

Augmentation: Ghost Mesh

A signal-dampening weave under the skin. Cameras, sensors, and scanners read you as noise, and automated tracking struggles to hold you. A deliberate search by a person still finds you.

A GM may offer further Augmentations the fiction makes available.

Your Background is the external inheritance that shaped you before play began: where you grew up, what you did for a living, and who you came to know. Where your Origin is what you are (Section 2) and your Nodes are what you do (Section 4), your Background is where you came from. In this world, that means your way in. Augmentations and gear come from the fiction, from a clinic, a fixer, a salvage yard, and your Background is the natural answer to who you know and what you can get.

A Background grants:

- A short **narrative description** of who it represents
- **3 Skills** (choose 2 from a suggested list, invent 1 of your own)
- A **+1 Category Bonus** to the Body, Mind, or Voice Category that best fits it, the flat bonus that rides on every relevant roll (Section 1)
- A **Narrative Leverage** hook: a standing connection to the world you can lean on at the table

A Note on Skills

The suggested lists are examples, not limits. Choose from a Background's list or invent Skills that fit, following the normal rules in Section 5: a Skill grants Favor when it applies, only one Skill grants Favor per roll, and the GM decides when a Skill fits. Keep invented Skills meaningful but not too broad. "Slicing" works as a Skill; "Mind" is a Category, not a Skill.

Info

Corporate Exile

You worked inside a megacorporation: a cubicle analyst, a junior exec, a compliance officer, a wage-drone who saw too much. You know how the machine thinks, who signs what, and where the bodies are filed. Whether you walked away or were pushed, you left with contacts and grudges in equal measure.

Note

Skills (choose 2 from this list, invent 1 of your own): - Bureaucracy - Negotiation - Data Analysis - Corporate Protocol - Forgery

Category Bonus: +1 to **Voice**

Narrative Leverage: You still know people inside at least one corporation: a former colleague, a handler, someone who owes you or fears what you know. They can open a door, leak a file, or look the other way, usually at a price.

Info

Street-Born

You came up in the undercity, the sprawl, the parts of the map the corps don't bother to light. You learned to read a crowd, vanish into it, and find what you need where there's supposedly nothing. Nobody handed you anything; you took it or did without.

Note

Skills (choose 2 from this list, invent 1 of your own): - Streetwise - Stealth - Scrounging - Sleight of Hand - Urban Navigation

Category Bonus: +1 to **Body**

Narrative Leverage: You know the underground of at least one city: the fences, the safe squats, the people who move things quietly. You can find a black-market door, though what's behind it still has to be paid for.

Info

Veteran

You served in an armed force: a national military, a corporate security division, a private contractor outfit. You know discipline, hardware, and the difference between cover and concealment. You carry the habits of someone who has been shot at and lived.

Note

Skills (choose 2 from this list, invent 1 of your own): - Tactics - Firearms Drill - Field Medicine
- Intimidation - Demolitions

Category Bonus: +1 to **Body**

Narrative Leverage: You have a contact in an armed force somewhere: an old squadmate, a quartermaster, a former CO. They can pass intel, vouch for you, or quietly source hardware, within limits and never for free.

Info

Street Doc

You worked the clinics that don't ask questions: a ripperdoc's back room, a charity ward, a battlefield aid post. You can keep a body running and put chrome into one, and you have seen what augmentation does to people who push it too far.

Note

Skills (choose 2 from this list, invent 1 of your own): - Medicine - Surgery - Pharmacology - Cybernetics - Triage

Category Bonus: +1 to **Mind**

Narrative Leverage: You have clinic access. You know a place, or run one, where bodies get patched and Augmentations get installed off the record. It is an obvious door to new chrome, for you and the people you bring through it.

Info

Techie

You make machines behave: a mechanic, an electronics tech, a back-alley engineer who keeps the neighborhood's gear alive. Give you a workbench and a junk pile and you will give back something that works.

Note

Skills (choose 2 from this list, invent 1 of your own): - Engineering - Electronics - Jury-Rigging - Mechanics - Systems

Category Bonus: +1 to **Mind**

Narrative Leverage: You have a workshop, or know someone who does, plus a line on parts and salvage. You can build, repair, or modify gear given time and materials, and you know who to ask for the rest.

Info

Salvager

You make a living off what others left behind: wreck-diving, ruin-picking, stripping derelicts on the frontier. You know what is worth taking, what is worth avoiding, and how to get it out in one piece.

Note

Skills (choose 2 from this list, invent 1 of your own): - Salvage - Appraisal - Survival - Hazard Assessment - Piloting

Category Bonus: +1 to **Mind**

Narrative Leverage: You know the salvage networks: where wrecks turn up, who buys, who will trade gear for a cut. You can put your hands on hardware others cannot, if you are willing to go and get it.

Info

Fixer

You are the person who knows a person. You broker deals, move information, and connect the people who have with the people who want. You rarely do the job yourself; you make the job happen.

Note

Skills (choose 2 from this list, invent 1 of your own): - Negotiation - Networking - Deception - Streetwise - Appraisal

Category Bonus: +1 to **Voice**

Narrative Leverage: You have a web of contacts across the city's trades: who is hiring, who is selling, who can get the unobtainable. For most needs you know a name, and the name knows a price.

Info

Spacer

You were raised between worlds: on freighters, stations, and the long quiet of transit. Gravity is a setting to you, and a ship's hum is the sound of home. You know crews, ports, and the unwritten rules of the void.

Note

Skills (choose 2 from this list, invent 1 of your own): - Zero-G Operations - Piloting - Astrogation - Mechanics - Vac-Suit

Category Bonus: +1 to **Body**

Narrative Leverage: You know ship crews and station hands across the lanes: a berth when you need passage, a dock that will not log you, a captain who remembers you. Transit and the people who run it are open to you.

Where your Origin is what you are and your Background is where you came from, your **Nodes** are what you can do. Every character is built from Nodes, and there are two kinds.

Protocols are roles. They grant Abilities and define what you are capable of: holding a line, slicing a network, bending force with your mind. **Calibrations** are masteries of gear. They grant access to

and effectiveness with a category of equipment: the weapons you can wield, the armor you can wear, and the qualities you can exploit.

You invest in a Node by raising its **level**. The sum of all your Node levels is your **Total Node Level**, a single number that reads your overall depth at a glance, though cost and access live at the level of each individual Node (Section 1). A new character begins with **3 Node levels** to distribute, and any single Node can be raised to a maximum of **5**.

What a Node Level Gives You

Health. Every Node carries an **HP value** from 2 to 5, and each level you put into it adds that much to your maximum **+HP**. Frontline Nodes pay out more, specialist Nodes less, so your durability is a direct product of your build.

The per-Node HP values below are the variable part of your maximum **+HP**. The full formula, base plus your **❖Vigor Modifier** plus your Node HP, lives in Section 1.

Protocols also grant, at level 1, a signature **Passive** that scales with your level in that Protocol. From level 2 to 5, each level lets you take that Protocol's **Ability** for that tier, or a **General Ability** from the shared pool. You never have to take a Protocol's Abilities at all: a character can run entirely on passives and gear. Every Ability scales off the level of the Node that grants it, never off your Total Node Level.

Calibrations grant a ladder of gear benefits as they rise, ending in a signature ability at level 5. They have their own section below.

Reading an Ability

Each Ability lists a **prerequisite tag** in brackets. **[Trooper 3]** means you need that Node at level 3 or higher; you gain the Ability the moment you meet the tag, with no separate selection step. A few Abilities require two Nodes at once, written **[Trooper 2 + Operative 2]**.

Active Abilities cost your **action** for the turn, so using one trades against attacking or moving and you cannot chain several in a round. A small number of the strongest carry a **frequency cap** (once per encounter, or once per scene). Everything else, passives and gear scaling included, is always on. An Ability you hold at or below your level in its Node costs no **↘Energy**; reach above that level and you pay the gap, the way Reference Level lays out (Section 1).

Nodes at a Glance

Protocols grant a scaling Passive at level 1 and an Ability at each level after. Each leans on one Attribute, which tells you where to put your points:

Protocol	Role	Favored Attribute	Base IV	HP
Trooper	Frontline anchor	♦Vigor	4	5
Mechanic	Field artificer	□Acuity	5	3
Operative	Stealth and precision	□Finesse	7	3
Netrunner	System intrusion	□Acuity	6	2
Psionic	Innate psychic force	*Resolve	6	3
Diplomat	Social control	*Resolve	5	2

Calibrations grant a ladder of gear benefits, ending in a signature at level 5:

Calibration	Covers	HP
Technomatics	Tech weapons and armor	3
Cybernetics	Cybernetic weapons and armor	4
Kinetics	Non-tech weapons and armor	4
Energetics	Elemental qualities	2
Ballistics	Munitions qualities	2
Optics	Precision qualities	2

The Favored Attribute is guidance, not a wall: it is the Attribute most of a Protocol's Abilities key on. Weapon attacks always follow the weapon instead (ranged and precise weapons use □Finesse, melee and heavy weapons use ♦Vigor, per Section 6), so any Protocol can lean on either martial Attribute through its choice of gear. **Base IV** is your starting Initiative Value when this is your highest-level Protocol; Section 7 covers how Initiative works.

Protocols

Each Protocol is one identity expressed through a kit of distinct abilities. Every ability lists its name, the level it unlocks and what it requires, then a stat line of cost, range, the Attribute it uses or the save it forces, and any limit on uses. A save resolves just like an attack: the acting character rolls d20 + the named Attribute against the target's Defense, landing the effect on a meet or beat. The two Attributes shown are simply which Defense applies, ♦Vigor / □Finesse meaning □Physical Defense and □Acuity / *Resolve meaning □Mental Defense (Section 1).

Info

Trooper (HP 5)

The frontline anchor: the one who decides where the enemy's damage goes, and makes sure it isn't into anyone who matters. Favored Attribute: ♦Vigor · Base Initiative 4.

Hold Fast: Level 1, Passive

Always on You are built to be planted. Your □Physical Defense rises by half your Trooper level, rounded up, and nothing your size or smaller can push, pull, or knock you prone. You are the fixed point the line forms around.

Guardian: Level 2, [Trooper 2]

Reaction | Close | first use each round is free, then a held ♦AP When an enemy hits an ally within Close range, you throw yourself into the path: the attack strikes you instead, and because you are set for it, you reduce its damage by your Trooper level before it lands. Decide to step in after the hit is confirmed, before damage is rolled.

Lock Down: Level 3, [Trooper 3]

Action | Short You make yourself impossible to ignore. Mark a number of enemies within Short range up to your Trooper level; until the start of your next turn, each marked enemy attacks anyone other than you at Disfavor. The fight bends toward you, which is exactly where you want it.

Kinetic Sink: Level 4, [Trooper 4]

Reaction | Self | once per round You ride a blow instead of breaking under it. As a Reaction to being hit, take the strike as a single ⊗Wound instead of letting its damage reach your +HP: the hit is negated, you carry the Wound and its penalties, and a Wound past your maximum is still fatal. Spend it on the blows that would truly hurt, since a Wound costs more than the +HP it spares.

Last Stand: Level 5, [Trooper 5]

Reaction | Self | once per encounter When the fight should be over for you, it isn't. For one full round you cannot be dropped below 1 +HP, and your □Physical Defense surges by your Trooper level as you plant yourself and refuse to fall.

Info

Mechanic (HP 3)

The field artificer. You do not fight so much as deploy the things that fight for you: a workbench with a body count. Favored Attribute: ▢Acuity · Base Initiative 5.

Fabricator: Level 1, Passive

Always on | rigs share your Initiative You build and command **Rigs**, small autonomous machines. You may keep active a number of rigs up to your Mechanic level, to a maximum of three at once. Each rig has **+HP** equal to twice your Mechanic level, and its attacks and checks use your ▢Acuity Modifier plus your Mechanic level. On your turn you may direct one rig for free; directing each further rig costs 1 **♦AP**, and an undirected rig holds its last order. Deploying a rig from carried parts costs 1 **♦AP** in a fight, or a few minutes outside one. You begin with the **Sentry Turret** (offense): a fixed gun-mount that attacks one enemy within Medium range for 1d6 + your Mechanic level. It cannot move once placed, but you can pick it up and redeploy it for 1 **♦AP**.

Skirmisher Drone: Level 2, [Mechanic 2]

Deploy: 1 **♦AP** | flies, moves fast A darting aerial harasser that ignores ground and Close threats. When directed it either makes a 1d4 + Mechanic level attack or **tags** one enemy it reaches: until your next turn, attacks against a tagged enemy have Favor. Fragile, but almost impossible to pin down.

Bulwark Rig: Level 3, [Mechanic 3]

Deploy: 1 **♦AP** | Close A squat machine that throws up a hard-light barrier. Enemies attacking an ally within Close of it do so at Disfavor, and you may direct it to interpose its own **+HP** and soak a hit aimed at such an ally. Slow, but built with double the usual rig **+HP**.

Sapper Rig: Level 4, [Mechanic 4]

Deploy: 1 **♦AP** | detonation: Close burst | Save: ♦Vigor / ▢Finesse A walking charge and trap-layer. On command it detonates: every creature within Close takes 2d6 + your Mechanic level, halved by a save against your ▢Acuity. Or it lays a trap on a space that triggers when crossed, leaving the one who sprung it slowed and prone.

Mastercraft: Level 5, [Mechanic 5]

Action to assemble | swarm command once per encounter Your finest work: a single **Prime Rig** with four times the usual rig **+HP**, its own signature weapon (1d10 + your Mechanic level at Medium range), and a free action each turn that does not count against your direction. Once per encounter you may also issue one command that directs every rig you control to act at once, for free.

Info

Operative (HP 3)

The one who ends a fight before it starts. You are not in the room until you decide to be, and by then it is too late for someone. Favored Attribute: □Finesse · Base Initiative 7.

Killer's Eye: Level 1, Passive

Always on You read a fight for the opening everyone else misses. Your attacks against a target that is unaware of you, compromised, or that you have Marked deal extra damage equal to your Operative level. The first cut is always the deepest.

Vanish: Level 2, [Operative 2]

Action | Self You break line of sight even in the open, a smoke-step, a cloak, a trick of timing, becoming Hidden until you attack or the start of your next turn. While Hidden you set up everything else in your kit.

Mark: Level 3, [Operative 3]

Action | Short You study one enemy you can see and find the seam in their guard. Until they leave your sight or the encounter ends, your attacks against them have Favor and trigger Killer's Eye. You may move your Mark to a new target as part of any attack.

Slip: Level 4, [Operative 4]

Reaction | Self | once per round You are never quite where the blow lands. Move up to your speed at any time; this movement provokes nothing and cannot be the target of a Reaction. Use it to vanish from a melee, cross a gap, or appear at someone's flank.

Execute: Level 5, [Operative 5]

Action | weapon range | once per encounter The killing stroke. Make one weapon attack with Favor; on a hit it deals triple your usual Killer's Eye bonus damage, and if the target is compromised or already below half its +HP, a hit that would drop it to 0 +HP kills it outright instead of downing it. Line it up and end it.

Info

Netrunner (HP 2)

The ghost in everyone else's machine. The battlefield is full of things with chips in them, and all of them will listen to you before they listen to their owners. Favored Attribute: □Acuity · Base Initiative 6.

Jack In: Level 1, Passive

Always on | no augment required The interface is part of you, no Data Port needed. You can connect to any system, device, or augment you touch or can reach across a network, and your intrusion rolls to breach, override, or read it add your Netrunner level. Once you are in, you can open, lock, read, or sabotage whatever it controls at the GM's call.

Spike: Level 2, [Netrunner 2]

Action | Close or interfaced You jolt a target's electronics: 1d6 + your Netrunner level tech damage that bypasses armor effects, and the target is Shocked (Disfavor on its next action; a drone or pure-tech target loses that action outright). Brutal against the wired, nearly useless against the purely organic.

Hijack: Level 3, [Netrunner 3]

Action | interfaced | Save: □Acuity / *Resolve You seize an enemy device, drone, turret, or augmented limb. On a failed save against your □Acuity, it obeys you until the end of your next turn, and you may spend ♦AP to keep it. Unattended machines simply submit.

Glitch: Level 4, [Netrunner 4]

Action | Short | Save: □Acuity / *Resolve You crash a target's gear mid-fight. On a failed save against your □Acuity, choose one until your next turn: its tech weapons jam, its armor effect shuts off, or it is Locked out of Reactions.

Blackout: Level 5, [Netrunner 5]

Action | Short burst | once per encounter You push a hard reset on a whole pocket of the battlefield. Every enemy device, drone, and augment within Short range goes dark for one round: drones fall inert, tech weapons and armor effects switch off, and augmented foes lose their augment benefits. No roll, no appeal.

Info

Psionic (HP 3)

The wild card the world cannot shield against. No lock, no plate, no firewall stands between your will and the thing you want moved. Psionic Abilities are innate and take no Calibration gear bonuses.

Favored Attribute: *Resolve · Base Initiative 6. Psionic attacks and contests use your *Resolve Modifier to hit and to resist.

Manifest: Level 1, Passive

At will, on your turn | Short | one manifestation per turn A minor psychic force, always at hand and costing nothing: shove or pull a creature or object one range step, lift and move objects up to roughly 5 kg per Psionic level, deflect a single small thrown object, read the surface mood of someone you see, or raise a flicker of ward giving +1 Defense against one attack you see coming. None of these deal damage; potency and finesse scale with your level.

Kinetic Lash: Level 2, [Psionic 2]

Action | Medium | *Resolve vs □Physical Defense A whip of raw force. Attack with your *Resolve for 1d6 + your Psionic level damage and push the target one range step on a hit. No weapon, no ammunition, and nothing to disarm.

Dominate: Level 3, [Psionic 3]

Action | Short | Save: □Acuity / *Resolve You press your will into another mind. On a failed save against your *Resolve, you dictate its next action, move, strike an ally, drop what it holds, or stand frozen, and it spends its turn obeying. You cannot Dominate the same mind on consecutive rounds; once you release it, it is free of you for a beat before you can seize it again.

Ward: Level 4, [Psionic 4]

Reaction or action | Short You wrap yourself or an ally in a telekinetic shell. The target gains an overshield of twice your Psionic level in temp +HP that soaks damage before their own; as a Reaction you may instead snap it up to negate one incoming hit entirely. Reforms each time you cast it.

Overmind: Level 5, [Psionic 5]

Action | Medium | Save: ♦Vigor / □Finesse | once per scene Telekinetic upheaval centered anywhere within range: every creature and loose object in that space and all adjacent spaces takes 2d6 + your Psionic level damage and is knocked prone. A save against your *Resolve halves the damage and keeps the target standing.

Info

Diplomat (HP 2)

Wins the fights nobody has to throw a punch in, and tilts the ones they do. Your weapon is everyone else in the room. Favored Attribute: *Resolve · Base Initiative 5.

Read the Room: Level 1, Passive

Always on Presence is your edge. Add your Diplomat level to your social (Voice) rolls, and you can read the surface intent and mood of anyone you speak with. In a fight, you always know which enemy present is the real threat.

Rally: Level 2, [Diplomat 2]

Action | Short You steady the people around you. A number of allies within Short up to your Diplomat level each gain their choice of Favor on their next roll, temp +HP equal to your Diplomat level, or the immediate removal of one condition such as fear, Shock, or ⊖Fatigue.

Undermine: Level 3, [Diplomat 3]

Action | Short | Save: □Acuity / *Resolve A few precise words and an enemy comes apart at the seams. One enemy that can hear you; on a failed save against your *Resolve, until your next turn it acts at Disfavor and its Defense drops by your Diplomat level.

Command: Level 4, [Diplomat 4]

Action | hearing range | Save: □Acuity / *Resolve You speak a single word with the weight of inevitability. On a failed save against your *Resolve, on its next turn the target must obey, halt, flee, kneel, or drop what it holds, and do nothing else. A target you Command shakes off your voice afterward and cannot be Commanded by you again until it has taken one turn free of you.

Sway: Level 5, [Diplomat 5]

Action | Short | Save: □Acuity / *Resolve | once per scene You bend the whole room to your tempo. Choose one: every ally within Short gains a full round of Favor and clears one condition, or every enemy within Short that fails a save against your *Resolve is cowed, losing its next action.

Calibrations

Calibrations come in two kinds. **Primary** Calibrations cover the weapons and armor of a whole tech-tier and carry the full gear ladder. **Modifier** Calibrations unlock families of special gear qualities; a

piece of gear with such a quality still requires its own primary Calibration to wield, so qualities layer on top of the gear you can already use. Specific weapons, armor, and quality Behaviors live in Section 6.

Primary ladder: - **Level 1.** You can use this tier's weapons and armor without penalty. - **Level 2.** +1 to attack rolls with its weapons, and +1 Defense while wearing its armor. - **Level 3.** The bonus rises to +2, its weapons gain an additional damage die (a 1d6 becomes 2d6), and its armor's effect sharpens: a deeper overshield, higher feedback, a longer reactive window, and the like. - **Level 4.** The bonus rises to +3. - **Level 5.** The bonus reaches +4, and you gain a signature ability, below.

Modifier ladder: - **Level 1.** You can use this family's qualities on gear that has them. - **Level 2.** +1 to the damage or effect of those qualities. - **Level 3.** The bonus rises to +2, each quality's Behavior intensifies (a burn lingers, armor-piercing bites deeper, a called shot lands sharper), and damage qualities gain an additional die; the specifics are noted per quality in Section 6. - **Level 4.** The bonus rises to +3. - **Level 5.** The bonus reaches +4, and you gain a signature ability, below.

Primary Calibrations

Info

Technomatics (HP 3)

Tech-based weapons and armor.

L5 Signature, Overclock · once per encounter. Either maximize the damage dice of one tech weapon on a hit, or have your tech armor reduce one incoming hit to 0.

Info

Cybernetics (HP 4)

Cybernetic weapons and armor.

L5 Signature, Integrated Arsenal · passive, with a once-per-encounter effect. Your implanted weapons cannot be disarmed and deploy without an action. Once per encounter, make one extra cyber-weapon attack as part of your action.

Info

Kinetics (HP 4)

Non-tech physical weapons and armor: ballistic, blade, and brawn.

L5 Signature, Perfect Form · once per encounter. Either reroll one missed kinetic-weapon attack, or brace so your kinetic armor halves one incoming hit.

Modifier Calibrations

Info

Energetics (HP 2)

Elemental qualities: fire, shock, cryo.

L5 Signature · once per encounter. Your next elemental hit splashes to everything adjacent to the target at full condition strength.

Info

Ballistics (HP 2)

Munitions qualities: armor-piercing, explosive, and special ammunition.

L5 Signature · once per encounter. One special-ammunition attack ignores the target's armor effect and staggers it.

Info

Optics (HP 2)

Precision qualities: smartlink, tracking, called shots.

L5 Signature · once per encounter. Declare a perfect shot: a called shot at no penalty, made with Favor, that scores a critical hit on any successful roll.

General Abilities

General Abilities are a shared pool any character can draw from, taken in place of a Protocol's Ability when a Node level would grant one. Each is **Level 0**: free to anyone, tied to no Calibration, and never a draw on your $\neq$ Energy. They are deliberately the quiet kind of edge, talent and training that open the world up rather than win fights, much like an Augmentation you earned instead of installed. You take one to say something about who your character is away from the trigger, not to sharpen what happens at it.

- **Polyglot.** You read, write, and speak a wide range of languages, dialects, and machine codes, and you catch the gist of an unfamiliar one far quicker than you should. Foreign chatter and walls of cipher rarely stop you for long.
- **Connected.** You know people. Almost anywhere you land you have an old contact, a favor owed, or a name that opens a door: a fixer, a dealer, a former crewmate. Work with the GM to place one when it counts.
- **Field Medic.** You can read an injury, slow bleeding, set a bone, and nurse someone through sickness or withdrawal with whatever is on hand. Your care in Downtime helps the people around you mend.
- **Tinker.** Give you time and a pile of scrap and you can repair, modify, or jury-rig most technology, puzzle out what an unfamiliar device does, and coax a dead machine into one more cycle of life.
- **Survivor.** Wilderness, void, or ruin, you find water, shelter, and a safe route, read weather and terrain at a glance, and keep yourself and others alive where the untrained would not last the night.
- **Quick Fingers.** Locks, pockets, and sleight of hand are second nature. Given a quiet moment you can lift a keycard, palm a blade, or open something that was meant to stay shut.
- **Composed.** You hold your face and your nerve when it matters: a steady liar, a calm voice in a tense room, hard to read and harder to rattle.
- **Total Recall.** You keep what you have seen and heard with uncommon precision: faces, floor plans, conversations, the page you glanced at once. The details others lose, you hold onto.

Skills are specific areas of training a character has invested in. When the GM rules that a Skill applies to a Resolution Roll, you roll with **Favor**: roll the d20 Resolution Die twice and take the higher result. A Skill is the difference between someone who can attempt a task and someone who is genuinely practiced at it.

Skills do not stack. A character with two relevant Skills on the same roll still just rolls with Favor; one is enough to grant it, and only one Skill applies to any single roll.

Above the specific Skills sit three broad **Categories**: Body, Mind, and Voice. A Category provides a flat bonus to rolls of its kind, tracked separately and added on top. A roll therefore draws on three things: the relevant **Attribute Modifier**, the relevant **Category** bonus, and **Favor** if a Skill applies. The full Resolution Roll is laid out in Section 6.

Skills cover competence away from the weapon-and-Node combat layer; what you can wield and the things you can do in a fight come from your Calibrations and Abilities, not from this list.

Where Skills Come From

Your Background grants **3 Skills** to start, and you gain additional Skills equal to your **Acuity Modifier**. The lists below are a common starting set, not a closed one. Players and GMs are encouraged to add Skills that fit a character or a story: if a meaningful area of expertise is not represented here, invent one that is. Keep an invented Skill specific enough to mean something but not so broad it swallows a whole Category. "Slicing" is a good Skill; "Mind" is not.

Body Skills

Body Skills cover physical training: athletics, agility, stealth, endurance, and handling bodies and vehicles in motion.

- Athletics
- Acrobatics
- Stealth
- Endurance
- Piloting
- Zero-G Operations
- Driving
- Survival
- Sleight of Hand

Mind Skills

Mind Skills cover knowledge and technical work: engineering, medicine, the sciences, investigation, and the systems that run the world.

- Engineering
- Electronics
- Medicine
- Pharmacology
- Science
- Investigation
- Security Systems
- Cryptography
- Salvage
- Astrogation

- Demolitions

Voice Skills

Voice Skills cover dealing with people: persuasion, pressure, deception, and the social networks that move information and favors.

- Persuasion
 - Deception
 - Intimidation
 - Negotiation
 - Streetwise
 - Networking
 - Insight
 - Performance
-

Gear in this setting is modular. Every weapon and piece of armor starts as a plain, capable baseline, and **tags** are what turn it into something specialized. There are two kinds, and they line up exactly with your Calibrations.

Trait tags are the three tiers: **Technomatics**, **Cybernetics**, and **Kinetics**. Tagging a generic weapon to a tier sets its **damage type** and lets the matching primary Calibration scale it. **Modifier tags** are the quality families: **Energetics**, **Ballistics**, and **Optics**. They layer a special quality onto a weapon and require the matching modifier Calibration to use.

A piece of gear with no tags is **universally usable** by anyone, at its base numbers, with no scaling. So a weapon's tag line is also its compatibility line: it tells you what the gear can become and who can push it further. Build a weapon by starting from a chassis and adding the tags your Calibrations support.

Carrying capacity is a flat **10 slots**; each weapon and armor lists its slot cost. Augments and gear can raise it.

Reading a Weapon

Each weapon is a dropdown. The heading gives its name, its attack Attribute, and how many hands it takes. The stat line beneath gives damage, range band, slots, and tags: the weapon's tier, or "any trait" if it can take any, followed by the quality families it accepts. The text below is its behavior and special effect. Range bands are Close (1), Short (2-5), Medium (6-10), and Far (11-15).

Attack Attribute. Ranged weapons are aimed with **□Finesse**; melee weapons are driven with **♦Vigor**. Two exceptions, both shown in the heading: a light or precise weapon uses **□Finesse** even in the hand, and a heavy weapon braced to fire uses **♦Vigor**. **Weapon Level and Energy.** A plain, untagged weapon is **Level 0**: baseline gear anyone wields for free (Section 1). A weapon earns Level only from the Calibration work laid onto it. Its **tier trait** and each **modifier tag** is one such enhancement, and each raises the weapon's Level by 1.

A weapon's Reference Level is your level in the Calibration that governs it, and a weapon shaped by more than one Calibration answers to the **sum** of your levels in them. If the weapon's Level runs higher than that Reference, the difference lowers your maximum $\nearrow$ Energy for as long as you wield it, the same standing weight an Augmentation carries; holster or stow it and the weight lifts. So a generic weapon costs no one anything, a single-tier weapon runs free once you hold one level in its Calibration and costs 1 until then, and a Ballistics rifle carrying two Energetics tags is a Level-3 weapon measured against your Ballistics and Energetics together: free while those two sum to 3 or more, and a gap below that.

Damage Types

All damage is either **tech** or **non-tech**. Technomatics and Cybernetics weapons deal tech damage; Kinetics weapons and untagged baseline gear deal non-tech damage. Some Abilities and gear key off the type: a Netrunner's Spike deals tech damage, and powered armor like the Aegis Field goes offline under Shock. In this Quickstarter the line is light, a hook for gear and GM rulings rather than a deep subsystem.

Generic Weapons

The common chassis. Untagged, each is non-tech and usable by anyone; a trait tag sets its tier and damage type.

Knife: **□Finesse, 1 handed**

1d4 | Close (thrown to Short) | 1 slot | any trait; Energetics Quiet, fast, and easy to hide. Drawing it costs no action, attacking with it never breaks Hidden by sound alone, and a thrown Knife can be picked back up with a move.

Blade: **♦Vigor, 1 handed**

1d6 | Close | 1 slot | any trait; Energetics, Optics Sword, machete, or monoedge, the close-quarters standby. Riposte: once per round, when a melee attack against you misses, you may strike back with it for free.

Pistol: □Finesse, 1 handed

1d6 | Short | 1 slot | any trait; Ballistics, Optics, Energetics The most common gun in the sprawl. Quick to bring up: drawing it is free, and it fires in melee without the usual Disfavor. Holds 12, reload as an action.

SMG: □Finesse, 2 handed

1d6 | Short to Medium | 2 slots | any trait; Ballistics, Optics Compact full-auto built to fill a room. Spend your attack to spray, striking up to two targets within Close of each other. Holds 20, reload as an action.

Rifle: □Finesse, 2 handed

1d8 | Medium to Far | 2 slots | any trait; Ballistics, Optics, Energetics The workhorse longarm. Steady aim: if you did not move this turn, it ignores cover and the first range-band Disfavor. Holds 8, reload as an action.

Shotgun: □Finesse, 2 handed

1d8 | Close to Short | 2 slots | any trait; Ballistics, Energetics Brutal up close, useless at distance: Favor to hit at Close, Disfavor beyond Short. A hit at Close also shoves the target back one step. Holds 6, reload as an action.

Heavy Weapon: ♦Vigor, 2 handed

1d10 | Far | 3 slots | any trait; Ballistics, Energetics Squad support, lugged and braced, so it draws on ♦Vigor. Brace as your move to fire cleanly, or fire on the move at Disfavor. Suppress: instead of damage, spend your attack to pin every enemy in a Close cluster, each taking Disfavor on its next action. Holds 30, reload as a turn.

Heavy Melee: ♦Vigor, 2 handed

1d8 | Close | 2 slots | any trait; Energetics Maul, great-axe, or breaching tool. A hit drives the target back one range step, and against a door, wall, or cover it simply goes through.

Tier-Specific Weapons

Signature arms born to a single tier. They come pre-tagged, so they need no trait tag and require that primary Calibration to wield well.

Technomatics (tech damage)

Laser Carbine: □Finesse, 2 handed

1d8 | Medium to Far | 2 slots | Technomatics; Energetics, Optics Recoilless coherent light. It ignores the first range-band Disfavor, and its beam burns through anything thinner than solid cover. Battery of 10, recharge as a turn.

Plasma Lance: □Finesse, 2 handed

1d10 | Short to Medium | 3 slots | Technomatics; Energetics, Optics A lance of contained starfire. On a hit, the target's armor effect shuts down until the end of its next turn. 4 charges, recharge as a turn.

Arc Projector: □Finesse, 1 handed

1d6 | Short | 1 slot | Technomatics; Energetics A handheld lightning tap. On a hit it arcs to one other target within Close of the first for half damage, and against a tech target the arc also Shocks it.

Smartgun: □Finesse, 1 handed

1d6 | Medium | 1 slot | Technomatics; Optics, Ballistics A pistol that aims itself. It ignores cover and concealment, and you may spend 1 ♦AP to let it acquire a lock, giving your next shot at that target Favor.

Cybernetics (tech damage, implanted)

Cyber-Spur: ♦Vigor, implanted

1d6 | Close | 0 slots | Cybernetics; Energetics Retractable forearm blades. They cannot be disarmed, stay hidden until deployed, and you can attack with them even with both hands full.

Monowhip: □Finesse, implanted

1d8 | Close to Short | 0 slots | Cybernetics; Optics A molecular wire, lethal and unforgiving. It slips through armor effects, ignoring overshields and reactive defenses. Wielding it without Cybernetics is at Disfavor.

Palm Burner: □Finesse, implanted

1d6 | Close | 0 slots | Cybernetics; Energetics A built-in incendiary jet. It counts as Incendiary with no tag spent, and a hit can set flammable cover or spilled fuel alight.

Subdermal Launcher: □Finesse, implanted

1d8 | Short | 0 slots | Cybernetics; Ballistics A concealed micro-missile rack. Its warheads guide, ignoring cover, and a hit staggers the target, costing it 1 ♦AP on its next turn. Holds 3, reload as a turn.

Kinetics (non-tech damage)

Revolver: □Finesse, 1 handed

1d10 | Short | 1 slot | Kinetics; Ballistics, Optics A hand cannon with real stopping power. Fan the hammer: spend 1 ♦AP to fire two shots at one target, both at Disfavor. Holds 6, reload as a turn.

Battle Rifle: □Finesse, 2 handed

1d8 | Medium to Far | 2 slots | Kinetics; Ballistics, Optics Heavy automatic fire. Burst: spend 1 ♦AP to add a die of damage to a shot, spending three rounds of ammunition. Holds 20, reload as an action.

Combat Shotgun: □Finesse, 2 handed

2d4 | Close to Short | 2 slots | Kinetics; Ballistics A drum-fed breacher. Favor at Close, and a hit may also clip a second target within Close of the first for half damage. Holds 8, reload as a turn.

Power Maul: ♦Vigor, 2 handed

1d10 | Close | 3 slots | Kinetics; Energetics A piston-driven crusher. On a hit, the target is knocked prone unless it saves, the higher of its ♦Vigor or □Finesse against your attack roll.

Modifier Tags

Each quality requires its modifier Calibration to use, and its effect scales with your level in that Calibration (see Section 4). Each modifier tag added to a weapon is a Calibration enhancement: it raises the weapon's Level by 1 and adds its Calibration to those the weapon answers to, which can put the weapon above its Reference Level and onto your <Energy (see Reading a Weapon and Reference Level). Some qualities force a **save** to resist their rider, resolved like any other (Section 4): roll d20 + your weapon's attack Attribute against the target's □Physical Defense, since these saves all use ♦Vigor / □Finesse. The hit's damage lands regardless; the save only decides the extra effect.

Energetics (fire, shock, cryo)

Incendiary. On a hit, the target gains Burn: 1 damage at the start of each of its turns. At the start of each turn it may save (♦Vigor / □Finesse) to beat out the flames; left burning, it lasts 2 rounds. Burn damage and duration scale with your Energetics level.

Shock. On a hit, the target saves (♦Vigor / □Finesse) or is Shocked: Disfavor on its next action, or, for a drone or pure-tech target, the loss of that action. Scales with Energetics.

Cryo. On a hit, the target saves (♦Vigor / □Finesse) or is slowed (movement halved) until the end of its next turn. At higher Energetics the slow lasts longer, then roots.

Ballistics (munitions)

Armor-Piercing. Your hits ignore the target's armor effect: overshields do not soak them and reactive defenses do not reduce them. At Ballistics 3 or higher, also reduce the target's armor Defense bonus by 1.

Explosive. On a hit, every creature adjacent to the target takes 1 + your Ballistics level damage, each halving it with a save (♦Vigor / □Finesse).

Special Ammo. Chosen when loaded: tracer (+1 range band) or flechette (+1 damage against unarmored targets). Scales with Ballistics.

Optics (precision)

Smartlink. +1 to attack rolls with this weapon, rising with your Optics level.

Tracking. The weapon ignores cover and concealment.

Called Shot. On a hit, you may trade your damage bonus to impose a precise effect (disarm, blind, cripple a limb); the target saves (♦Vigor / □Finesse) to avoid it. Sharper at higher Optics.

Armor

Armor never just subtracts damage. Each piece gives a small **Defense** bump, to your □Physical or your □Mental Defense, and a signature **effect** that is the real reason to wear it. There is no flat damage reduction in this Quickstarter; you stay alive through +HP, shields, and what your armor does.

Every armor belongs to a tier and can be worn by anyone, but its matching primary Calibration sharpens it as the Node climbs, raising its Defense (+2, then +4) and strengthening its effect (see Section 4). No single piece is best: a plate that turns you immovable does nothing against a Psionic, and a mind-shield stops nothing a rifle does.

Technomatics (tech, powered)

Aegis Field: Medium

+2 □Physical Defense | 2 slots | Technomatics A projected energy barrier worn over a light rig. You gain an overshield of 3 temp +HP plus your Technomatics level; incoming damage drains it before your own +HP, and it refills after a full round without being hit. Shock or EMP collapses it for a round.

Ghost Sheath: Light

+1 □Physical Defense | 1 slot | Technomatics A light-bending weave for people who would rather not be shot at all. Ranged attacks against you from beyond Close take Disfavor, and you have Favor on Stealth. It shorts offline for a round if you take tech or Shock damage.

Null Veil: Light

+1 □Mental Defense | 1 slot | Technomatics A worn projector that floods the space around your skull with cognitive static. You roll mental saves with Favor, and the first mind-affecting effect that would land on you each encounter fizzles out entirely. Like all Technomatics gear, Shock or EMP drops it for a round.

Cybernetics (subdermal, always on)

Feedback Weave: Subdermal

+1 □Physical Defense | 0 slots | Cybernetics A subdermal mesh that bites back, always on and impossible to remove or disarm. Any creature that hits you from Close takes feedback damage equal to 1 plus your Cybernetics level.

Neural Lattice: Subdermal

+2 □Mental Defense | 0 slots | Cybernetics Hardened wiring laced through the brain stem. You roll mental saves with Favor, and once per encounter you may simply refuse a mind-control or domination effect that would seize your action, shrugging it off as it tries to take hold.

Reflex Mesh: Subdermal

+1 □Physical Defense | 0 slots | Cybernetics Wired reflexes that move you before you decide to. Once per round, when you are hit, you may shift 1 unit as a free Reaction; if that carries you out of a melee weapon's reach, the attack misses.

Kinetics (unpowered, reliable)

Reactive Plating: Medium

+1 □Physical Defense | 2 slots | Kinetics Layered plates that fire outward to blunt a blow. The first hit against you each round is halved, then the plates are spent until your next turn. Needs no power and cannot be hacked.

Servo Exo: Heavy

+2 □Physical Defense | 3 slots | Kinetics A brute hydraulic frame that turns you into a fixed point. You cannot be moved against your will, knocked prone, or slowed, and you ignore the heavy-weapon move penalty. Disfavor on Stealth. Needs no power, so it cannot be shut down.

Faraday Plate: Medium

+1 □Physical Defense | 2 slots | Kinetics A grounded cage of dense, dumb plating. You are immune to Shock and cannot be hacked or interfaced, and you roll with Favor on saves against any tech-based effect. The Netrunner's worst day.

Field Gear

Beyond weapons and armor, every character carries the ordinary tools of the trade. None of these have fixed rules. The GM decides what they accomplish in the moment, and a clever use is worth more than a stat line would be. Treat the list below as a starting kit, not a limit.

- **Medkit.** Field surgery in a satchel: stabilize the downed, close wounds, and dull pain enough to keep someone moving.
- **Stimpack.** A single-use injector that wrings a burst of focus or endurance out of the body, with a crash waiting on the far side.
- **Rebreather.** A sealed mask that buys you clean breath through smoke, gas, or hard vacuum for a short while.
- **Lumen Rod.** A hand-light that dials from a soft work-glow up to a beam that throws hard shadows down a corridor.
- **Multitool.** The everything-wrench: opens panels, splices cable, strips wire, and jury-rigs the broken back into working.
- **Grapnel Line.** A smart-cable launcher for scaling a wall, dropping down a shaft, or hauling something heavy toward you.
- **Comm Bead.** An encrypted earpiece for squad chatter up close and relayed signal across a city.
- **Datapad.** A slate for files, maps, schematics, and the kind of basic system access that does not need a Netrunner.
- **Breaching Kit.** Picks, shims, and a stubby thermal cutter for the doors and locks that would rather stay shut.

- **Optics.** A handheld scope with magnification, low-light, and thermal modes for reading a room you have not entered yet.
 - **Marker Beacons.** Adhesive lights and transponders to tag a route, a rendezvous, or a target for someone else's eyes.
 - **Field Rations and Purifier.** Dense, joyless food and a filter that makes questionable water drinkable. Days in the wild, handled.
 - **Restraints.** Zip-cuffs and a compliance collar for the prisoners you would rather take alive.
 - **Smoke Canister.** Bursts into a rolling cloud that blinds the eye, though not always the sensor.
 - **Flash Charge.** A crack of light and sound meant to empty a room of its composure for a few seconds.
 - **EMP Charge.** A one-use pulse that drops unshielded electronics in its reach, friend and foe alike.
 - **Intrusion Spike.** A plug-in dongle that lets a non-specialist fumble at a system a Netrunner would simply walk through.
 - **Thermal Cloak.** A poncho that smothers your heat signature and breaks up your outline against a scanner.
 - **Holo-Projector.** Throws a convincing image or a wall of false noise: a distraction, a decoy, or a quick disguise.
 - **Power Cell.** A spare charge to bring a dead weapon, tool, or drone back to life when it matters most.
-

When a scene turns to violence, play tightens into **Encounter** mode: initiative order, turns, and the action economy below. The roll itself does not change, it is still the d20 Resolution Roll from Section 1, so this section covers only what combat adds on top: who goes when, what a turn buys, how an attack lands, and what the conditions our gear and Abilities throw around actually do.

Initiative

Combat order is your ►**Initiative Value (IV)**, a fixed number from 0 to 10; higher acts first, and you never roll for it. At the start of an encounter:

1. Take your base IV from your highest-level Protocol. A build with no Protocol starts at 5.
2. Adjust it up or down by up to your ◻Finesse Modifier, your choice. Finesse is a band of control, not a flat bonus: a quick character can choose to strike first or hang back and react, while a slow one stays near their base.
3. The result locks for the encounter unless an effect moves it.

Ties go to the higher ◻Finesse Score, then to the GM. A character caught unaware is **surprised** and sits out the first round, acting only from the second, unless an effect says it acts regardless.

The Turn

On your turn you have two pools:

- **3 ♦AP (Action Points)** to spend on actions.
- **⇒Movement of 5 units**, its own pool separate from AP, so moving never costs you an action. Distance uses the same units as the range bands below: 5 units carries you from Close to the edge of Short.

One **action** costs **1 ♦AP**: an attack, an active Ability, a reload, aiming, taking cover, working a device, or anything else that takes real effort. When gear or an Ability says it costs "an action," it means **1 ♦AP**; when it says it takes "a turn," it consumes your whole turn, all three AP and your other actions with it.

Attacks per turn. You may make **two attacks in a turn without strain**. Spending a third AP to attack again is possible, but it inflicts ⊖Fatigue (below). Most turns therefore trade an attack for an Ability rather than doing everything at once.

Reactions. Many Abilities and armor effects are **Reactions**, used out of turn when their trigger fires; each lists its own cost and frequency (a Trooper's Guardian is free on its first use each round, a Neural Lattice's refusal is once per encounter). Beyond those, any ♦AP you do not spend on your turn is held for Reactions until your next turn, when your AP refreshes to full. Dump all three on your own turn and you cannot react until then; hold one back and you stay dangerous between turns.

Making an Attack

1. Roll **d20 + the weapon's governing Attribute Modifier + your weapon and Calibration bonuses + any situational modifier**. A weapon's Attribute is on its card in Section 6 (□Finesse for ranged and precise arms, ♦Vigor for melee and heavy ones); psychic attacks use the Psionic's ✱Resolve.
2. Compare the total to the target's □**Physical Defense**, or □**Mental Defense** for psychic and mental attacks. Meet or beat it and you hit. There are no automatic hits or misses.
3. Roll the weapon's damage and add any bonuses. If the target has an **overshield** (such as an Aegis Field), the damage drains that first; the rest comes off its **♦HP**.
4. Roll the Gradient if the texture matters. On a hit, a Gradient of **1** is a **graze** for half damage, and a Gradient of **10** is a **critical** that deals maximum weapon damage, every die counting as its highest face, before bonuses. Anything in between deals normal damage.

There is no flat damage reduction in this Quickstarter. Toughness is **♦HP**, Defense, shields, and what a target's armor does, so every point of damage you roll past a shield reaches the target.

Range and Cover

Distance is measured in **bands**, not squares or feet:

- **Self (0):** you alone
- **Close (1):** within reach, melee distance
- **Short (2-5):** a room away
- **Medium (6-10):** across a street
- **Far (11-15):** a long shot
- **Very Far (16+):** the edge of sight

Each weapon lists the bands it works in; firing outside them is at Disfavor or simply impossible, at the GM's call. Moving between bands spends Movement. A target behind meaningful **cover** imposes Disfavor on attacks against it, though some gear (a Smartgun, the Tracking quality) ignores it.

Taking Damage

Damage comes off your overshield first, then your **+HP**. While you still have **+HP** you fight unhindered.

Drop to **0 +HP** and you fall **Unconscious** and prone: you take a **⊗Wound**, you cannot act, spend $\Rightarrow$ Movement, or react, and you stay down until you are back to at least **1 +HP**. An adjacent ally can spend **2 +AP** to stabilize you to **1 +HP**, and if the encounter ends with an ally able to reach you, you come round on your own at **1 +HP**. The Wound itself remains: stabilizing puts you back on your feet, it does not undo the injury.

Your maximum $\otimes$ Wounds is **1 + your ♦Vigor Modifier**, and each Wound you carry stacks a **-2 to both □Physical and □Mental Defense**. Take a Wound past your maximum and you die. There are no death saves; outlasting your Wounds is the only line.

⊖Fatigue is mental strain and overextension, the cost of pushing past a safe limit: a third attack in a turn, an Overspent effort, prolonged stress, or anything that says so. Each point you carry cuts **2 from both ⊗Awareness and ∞Intuition**, so the more frayed you are the more the world slips past you. Your maximum is **1 + your *Resolve Modifier**, and taking Fatigue beyond it drops you **Unconscious** and prone until your Fatigue falls back below the cap. An effect that removes a condition, such as Rally, sheds 1 point of it.

Overspend. When a cost would take more $\angle$ Energy than you have, you may pay it anyway: the Ability or item still works, your $\angle$ Energy drops as far as **minus half your maximum**, and you take your choice of **1 ⊗Wound or 1 ⊖Fatigue** for forcing it.

Recovery. Recovery comes in **Downtime**, structured rest away from pressure. Each uninterrupted hour returns **1 $\angle$ Energy** and lets you shed **either 1 ⊗Wound or 1 ⊖Fatigue**, never both in the

same hour. Every three uninterrupted hours restore **half your maximum +HP**. Nothing here mends mid-fight; a scene's toll follows you to the next quiet stretch.

Conditions

The recurring states our gear and Abilities apply. Anything not listed is a judgment call; the engine trusts the GM to rule on the fiction and keep the scene moving.

- **Favor / Disfavor:** roll the d20 twice and keep the higher or the lower (Section 1). They cancel one for one and do not stack with themselves.
 - **Burn:** at the start of each of its turns, the target takes the listed damage for the listed duration.
 - **Slowed:** the target's Movement is halved until the effect ends.
 - **Locked:** the target cannot take Reactions until the effect ends.
 - **Prone:** knocked down. Standing costs Movement; melee attacks against it are at Favor, ranged attacks against it at Disfavor. Counts as compromised.
 - **Pushed:** moved the listed number of range steps directly away.
 - **Hidden:** cannot be clearly seen. Attacks against it are at Disfavor, and it can act unseen until it reveals itself.
 - **Blinded:** cannot see. Its attacks are at Disfavor and attacks against it are at Favor. Counts as compromised.
 - **Shock:** Disfavor on its next action; a drone or other tech target loses that action entirely.
 - **Stunned:** loses its ♦AP on its next turn. It may still move and defend.
 - **Staggered:** loses one ♦AP on its next turn.
 - **Compromised:** the umbrella for prone, slowed, locked, blinded, or any hard-control state. The Operative's Killer's Eye and Execute key on it.
-

This Quickstarter hands you a working slice of the Frontiers engine. You do not need to master it, only run it. What follows is enough to start a session tonight and build the rest at the table.

The Core Loop

Play moves in a simple cycle. You describe the situation, a player tells you what they want, and you decide whether it is worth a roll. Most things are not: if a task is trivial or a failure would be dull, just let it happen. Call for a roll only when both success and failure would be interesting.

When you do, name the **Attribute** the attempt leans on and any **Skill Category** that applies, set a **Difficulty Rating** from the ladder (5 trivial, 10 ordinary, 15 testing, 20 hard, 25 at the edge of possible), and have the player roll d20 plus their Modifiers against it. The **Gradient** die rides along to color the result: a low one makes a success scrape through or a failure cost extra, a high one

makes a success gleam (Section 1). When two characters push directly against each other, both roll and the higher wins, ties going to whoever started it.

A few habits keep it smooth. Reach for **Favor and Disfavor** before fiddly numbers: a good plan, the right tool, or the high ground grants Favor, while darkness, a bad angle, or a wound grants Disfavor. Let a **Skill** be the difference between trying and trying well. And remember that a character's **Defense is also their save number**, so when you throw an effect at a player you roll against their Physical or Mental Defense exactly as an attack would (Section 7).

Two Kinds of Pressure

The engine gives you two separate dials to turn. ☹️**Wounds** are what a fight threatens: bodies break, +HP runs out, the injury lingers. ☹️**Fatigue** is what everything else threatens: fear, exhaustion, a long interrogation, the slow grind of a hostile place. A firefight presses Wounds. A haunted derelict, a tense negotiation, or a march through the cold presses Fatigue. Build a scene knowing which lever you are pulling, and vary it, since a session that only ever threatens +HP goes flat fast.

Pacing Advancement

Hand out a **Level** at milestones, not on a timer: the end of a session, the close of an arc, the moment a goal is met or a hard line is crossed. Roughly one per session keeps a Quickstarter moving. Each Level is a Node level and a Vector Mark, and the players handle the rest (Section 1).

Building Adversaries On the Fly

You do not stat an enemy the way you build a character. An adversary needs only what the scene will actually use, and you can scribble it in a moment:

- ☹️**Defense** (and ☹️**Mental Defense** if minds will be attacked), the number players roll against to hit it or to break its will.
- +HP, how long it lasts.
- **Attack**, a single bonus to hit and a damage die.
- ➤**IV**, when it acts.
- **One or two tricks** lifted straight from the player rules: a condition it inflicts, a save it forces, a Reaction, a borrowed Protocol move.

Scale those few numbers to the party rather than to any chart. As a rule of thumb, set a **standard** foe's Defense and attack near where the party's own sit, give it +HP worth two or three solid hits,

and let its damage die match the threat: 1d6 for rabble, 1d10 for a real soldier, 2d6 and up for something fearsome. Then bend that baseline by role.

- **Mooks** drop in a hit. Thin **+**HP, a low Defense, one die of damage. Run them in numbers and let them fall.
- **Standards** are a fair one-on-one for a single player. The baseline above.
- **Elites** are worth several players' attention. Higher Defense and **+**HP, two tricks, and damage that makes a wound land hard.
- **Bosses** stand against the whole party. Deep **+**HP, a strong Defense on both tracks so Dominate and Command cannot simply switch them off, a high **►**IV, and three tricks that change how the fight is fought. Give a boss a reason the party cannot just burst it down: terrain, reinforcements, a second phase, or a goal beyond killing it.

Adversaries do not track **↗**Energy, Marks, or Reference Levels. Give them their tricks at will, or cap the scariest at once per scene, and move on. If you need a number and have no time to think, borrow a player's: a foe meant to rival the Operative can simply use the Operative's Defense, **+**HP, and a pared-down piece of that kit.

A Few Scenes to Start

Drop the party into one of these and let it unfold. Each names the pressure it leans on; turn the other dial when the table needs a change of pace.

- **The Quiet Derelict.** A salvage ship answers no hails, drifting and dark, its reactor still warm. Something aboard emptied it of crew, and it is patient. Fatigue first, then Wounds when it finally moves.
- **Company Town.** The arcology has cut water to the lower decks, and the people there have stopped asking nicely. The party is hired by one side and trusted by the other. A negotiation that can tip into a riot: Fatigue, then Wounds.
- **Down in the Wild.** A shuttle goes down a long way from help, in weather that wants everyone dead and terrain that hides worse. Walk out, or wait for a rescue that may not come. Fatigue and attrition, with the occasional sharp Wound.
- **The Handoff.** A simple exchange, a case for a name, in a crowded market where three other parties want the same case and one of them brought a crew. Wounds, fast and loud, unless someone is clever.

Run one as a single evening or string several into a short campaign. Whatever you build, lean on the two dials, hand out Levels when the story turns, and let the dice add their texture.

For the engine's broader design philosophy, see **Designing With Frontiers**. For the engine's core ruleset, see the **Frontiers Overview**.