

# Starting the Game

1. Divide the cards up into **stacks** (What is a stack? See below) and place them in the play area.
2. Each player takes turns drawing cards from the **Core Rule** stack and reading the front and back faces aloud, starting with the **X-Card**.

Once a card has been read, place it in the center of the play area if the group wants to use that rule.

3. If you don't know the sort of game you want to play, each player draws cards from the Frame stack. Use these cards to come to an agreement.
4. Each player will take one or more **Agenda** cards.

If your game has a "game master", give them the Facilitator, Storyteller, Lorekeeper, and Referee Agendas, and give everyone else a Principal Agenda.

If your game is free-form and everyone can make decisions equally, give everyone a Principal Agenda card, and place the remaining Agenda cards in the center area.

**Name:** cards can have one name on both faces, or unique names for each face.

**Stack:** every card belongs to a stack, which is a category or type of card.

**Text and Prompts:** each card talks about what it's about, with examples or questions.

Every card has two sides, or **faces**. Cards start on the front face. During the game, you will flip cards between back and front faces to accomplish things.

**Rule:** how to use this card during play, such as when it should be flipped or discarded.

**Courage**  
Character (Focus)

"It doesn't matter if I win. It matters if I don't try." - Emory

Courage is strength in the face of grief, pain, and fear.

Courage lets you fight when afraid, speak when being shouted down, stand up when you're injured, or rebuke someone you respect.

- Honor or pride must be upheld
- Someone or something near you has already suffered harm
- Nobody else can or will take the risk

**FRONT:** Flip to get a hit.

# Creating a Character

1. Each player with the Principal Agenda draws three Character cards: **Focus**, **Role**, and **Upbringing**. Players can draw cards at random, or pick specific cards.
2. Each player should look at the prompts on each card, and think about the cards together. What sort of character do you picture emerging from these cards?
3. Players can choose different cards, swap cards, or even create new character cards if they aren't satisfied with their choices. The Referee can approve any new cards.
4. Once everyone is satisfied with their choices, pick a name, pronouns, appearance, and so on for your character.
5. Finally, each player should take turns introducing their character to the group.

**Charm**  
Character (Focus)

*"I only came here to see you!" - Basler*

Charm is about creating a bond with someone at will. You can get through situations with style, panache, or force of personality.

- Perform with grace and elegance
- Get by on audacity
- Gain someone's confidence

FRONT: Flip to get a hit.

**Dreamer**  
Character (Role)

Tomorrow beckons, if you can fix today. You can't change the world alone. But you aren't, are you?

- Remind someone of their best self
- Light a candle to spite the darkness
- Defy what's possible with what's necessary

FRONT: Flip to get a hit.

**Cosmopolitan**  
Character (Upbringing)

*"The clear skies, the lure of the open road, it's perfect!" - Tana*

You've lived among people from all over. Maybe you lived in a bustling city, or traveled the world.

You've learned to approach situations by understanding many perspectives.

- Recall a story that inspires people to new ways of thinking
- Bring a fresh perspective to a situation
- Unite people by finding the common threads between them

FRONT: Flip to get a hit.

## What are Character Cards?

- **Character cards are your stake in the story.** If you have the Magic card, your character should be front and center when magic is involved.
- **Character cards aren't exclusive to your character.** Anyone can use magic, not just characters with the "Magic" card.
- **The front of Character cards let you pass story obstacles.** If someone poses a What If to your action, you can flip a character card to the back to prevail.
- **The back of Character cards are complications, drawbacks, and problems.** They're meant to keep your character's plot beats in play. Having a card flipped to the back doesn't mean you've lost some ability or can't do something. It just means you'd have to find another way to meet a What If challenge.

# Answering Questions With Cards

Individual cards aren't self-contained - it's the **combination of cards** that holds power.

When in doubt, **put two cards together** (that are in play or that you draw) and see what their combination suggests.

**Ask questions about the combination**, and keep asking new questions until you are satisfied.

The advantage of using players' character cards in combinations is that it gives you outcomes the players have already expressed interest in, via their selection of those cards. Everyone will have some stake in what happens next.

## Example Questions

**How does someone feel** (about the principal characters, about a subject...)?

Draw an Emotion Oracle card, which gives you a range of emotions

Can we **create a new ensemble character** quickly?

Draw a single Character card of any kind, or any Condition card

Draw an Emotion Oracle card

The emotion led to the Condition, or is how they feel about the Character trait

**Did an action succeed** based on luck or circumstances?

Draw a Success Oracle card, which will give you a Hit or Miss outcome

What kind of **conflict or struggle** would be interesting for these characters?

Have any two players put one of their character cards in a center area

Look at the two cards as forces in conflict with each other

## Example Outcomes

We draw Mercantile and Loathing to make a new ensemble character. They hate commerce and sales. Why? Somebody ripped them off in the past, or a merchant cheated them.

We want a scene or situation. One player adds their Courage card to a pile, another adds Tech. What could these things mean in conflict? Perhaps it's a warrior caste confronting a new type of weapon that threatens to make them obsolete. Maybe it's workers fearing they'll be replaced by some new machine, and rising up in resistance against its makers.

## Framing a Scene

- Every scene begins with a **Drive**.
  - A Drive is a **question** (“how do we sneak into this fortress?”) or a **goal** (“we need to rescue my character’s brother from this cell”) that can be answered or progressed here and now.
  - “Who murdered the Duke” isn’t a question you can resolve in a scene (usually)
  - “What clues can we find about the Duke’s murder in this room” is a good goal
- Play through the scene in order to:
  - Make progress **satisfying the Drive** - resolving it or turning into a new Drive
  - **Coming up with a Drive** for the next scene
  - **Resolving any moments** the players feel are important to the scene
- Once these goals are met, the group can **transition to the next scene**
- Going into a scene, every player should have an idea of what’s going on:
  - When and where are we? What’s the environment like? Who’s here?
  - What kind of tension or peril is present? What’s already going on?

## The First Scene

It’s easy to come up with Drives for scenes once a game gets going, but what about when you first start out? Here are some sample Drives, or ways to come up with them:

- A mutual friend or third party brings the characters together and asks for their help. The Drive: **Figure out whether they will help.**
- The characters are thrown together by hostile circumstance or a mystery. The Drive: **Survive and escape through cooperation.**
- One character has a task that the others are well suited to perform, and seeks them out to ask for their help. The Drive: **Convince those others to assist.**

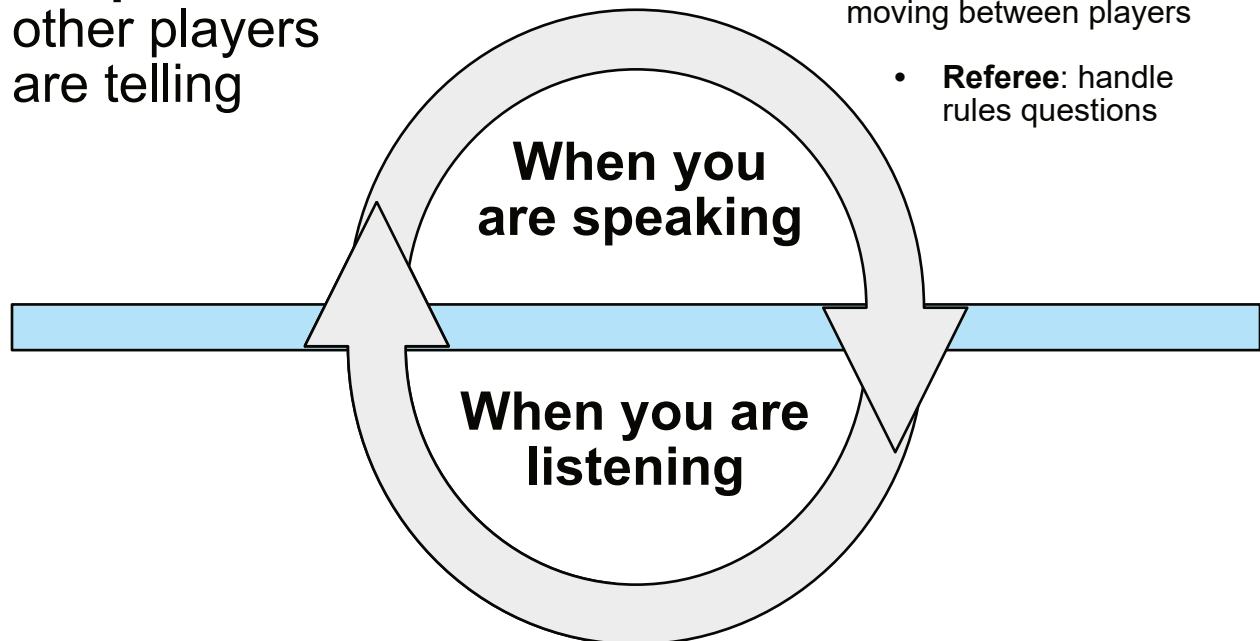
## Scenes and Agendas

- The **Facilitator** frames scenes and keeps track of Drives
- The **Lorekeeper** answers questions about the world
- The **Storyteller** speaks for any non-principal characters in the scene

**Narrate** according to what your Agendas demand

**Respond** to What Ifs other players give you by flipping Character cards or taking Conditions

**Respect** the stories other players are telling



## The Agendas

- **Principal:** you are a main character - tell your story!
- **Storyteller:** speak for every character the Principals meet, whether friend or enemy
- **Lorekeeper:** talk about the world's history, truths, environments, etc.
- **Facilitator:** keep the action moving between players
- **Referee:** handle rules questions

**Listen** for chances to flip your own character cards back to front

**Pose What Ifs** for the current narrator

**Look around** to see if other players seem like they want to speak up or seem uncomfortable

## What Ifs

- Does the narrating player have a **Condition card** that could impact what they're trying to do?
- Is there a way the narration could be adjusted that would **flip one or more players' character cards back**?
- Is there some **danger inherent in what they're trying to do** that should rightfully come up?
- Is there some **complication or plot twist** that should happen right now, because it feels right?