

JUDGE DREDD

The Role-Playing Game



Character Creation Tutorial

The d20 System that Judge Dredd uses for its core rules is the most pervasive in the market place and a great many gamers are able to adapt to it intuitively and without second thought - hence our reason for using it.

For the d20 'newbie' though, things can seem a little daunting at first, even with the primer we placed in the introduction of the Judge Dredd Rulebook. Character creation, in particular, seems to be giving a lot of people headaches. So, without further ado, let us take a look at the process of character creation in Judge Dredd.

We will create a street judge character from scratch, going through the entire process step-by-step. This character will be Judge Straczynski, a fresh graduate from the Academy of Law, eager to take the Law to the streets!

The first step is to roll up the six ability scores, as described on page 4 of The Player's Handbook. We get 13, 12, 15, 11, 17 and 10. Knowing that a judge has to be agile enough to avoid incoming shots and blows, and yet commanding enough to bring perps to an instant halt during arrests, we arrange these scores like so;

Strength - 13
Dexterity - 17
Constitution - 12
Intelligence - 11
Wisdom - 10
Charisma - 15

As this is Judge Dredd we are playing, the character is automatically human and we have already decided that Judge Straczynski will be a street judge. So, he starts off with a Base Attack Bonus of +1 and Fort, Ref and Will saving throws of +2. His Fort save has a +1 bonus for his Constitution of 12 (see The Player's Handbook page 8) for a total of +3, and his Ref save a +3 bonus for Dexterity 17 for a total of +5. Will saves, depending on the Wisdom ability score, gains to bonus or penalty. The street judge has a hit die of d12, and so he will start with the maximum possible - 12, +1 for having a Constitution of 12 for a total of 13.

All character start with one feat at first level. However, Judge Straczynski gains a bonus feat for being human (all characters in Judge Dredd have this bonus) and a further bonus feat for being a 1st level street judge, for a total of three. Browsing the list of feats in Judge Dredd, we choose Toughness (to give a bonus 3 hit points, always useful for beginning characters), Lightning Reflexes (giving an all important bonus to his Defence Value later on) and Weapon Focus (lawgiver).

Now we come to the really fun part that a lot of you have been having problems with - skills!

Judge Straczynski, as a 1st level street judge has 4 skills points, plus his Intelligence modifier (having an Intelligence of 11, this is 0), multiplied by 4 - for a total of 16 skill points. However, being human, he also gains a bonus +4 skill points for a total of 20. We assign these skill points to the following class skills (note that the maximum points we can put into any skill is 4):

Climb - 4
Knowledge (law) - 4
Medical - 2
Ride - 4
Sense Motive - 2

We have 4 skill points left over at the moment, and we put all of them into the Move Silently. However, because this is a cross-class skill (not in the class skill list),

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each skill point only buys half a rank. Thus, though we put 4 skill points into Move Silently, it is only considered to have 2 ranks - clearly, it is always better to buy class skills for a character unless you plan to specialise with a prestige class later on. This done, we then make adjustments based on Judge Straczynski's ability scores. All Strength-based skills, for example, will have a +1 modifier, as he has a Strength of 13. Dexterity-based skills, for Judge Straczynski, will have a +3 modifier, Constitution skills +1 and Charisma skills +2. As his Intelligence and Wisdom scores are decidedly average, no bonus or penalty is made to these skills.

All skills in the class skill list also show which ability score they belong to. So, making these adjustments, Judge Straczynski's final skills are:

Climb 5
Knowledge (law) 4
Medical 2
Move Silently 5
Ride 7
Sense Motive 2

Now, if Judge Straczynski was a citizen, all we would do now is apply a prior life template, buy some equipment and we would then be ready to start exploring Mega-City One! However, as a street judge, he is instantly promoted to 3rd level before we start play. This is done as follows.

We need to add two character levels to him - for simplicity, we will do both of these together.

First off, hit points - rolling 2d12, we get 14. Judge Straczynski has a +1 Constitution modifier, which is applied to his hit points every time he goes up a level, so we add 16 hit points to his original amount for a total of 32. All his saving throws also go up by +1 (the base was +2, now it is +3 - bonuses for the appropriate ability scores and feats such as Lightning Reflex still apply).

He gains a bonus feat, as a street judge, when reaching 2nd level and every character gains another feat at 3rd - looking at the list, we select Improved Arrest and Menacing Presence, taking advantage of his high Charisma and suitably preparing him for life on the streets.

The last step is the addition of new skill points. As a street judge, Straczynski gains 4 skill points per level (he has no Intelligence modifier to affect this). However, being human, he also gains a bonus skill point every level for a total of 5 - as we are adding two levels to him straight away, we have 10 skill points to play with. No character can ever have more ranks in a skill than 3 + his character level, and so the maximum Straczynski can have is 6 ranks in any one skill. This does not, however, include the bonuses he has already gained for ability score modifiers.

We use these ten points as follows:

Climb 5 +1 = 6
Jump +2 = 2
Knowledge (law) 4 +2 = 6
Medical 2 +1 = 3
Move Silently 5 (no change)
Ride 7 +2 = 9
Sense Motive 2 (no change)
Technical +2 = 2

And that completes character creation for Judge Straczynski. All he need do now is run down to the armoury, pick up his standard issue equipment, meet his patrol team, and he will be ready to take the Law onto the streets!