The following are the rules for Nanopunk: Berlin, a real-time, real-space roleplaying game sponsored by the MIT Assassins’ Guild. You are responsible for knowing these rules. Many of them are nigh-impossible to enforce and rely upon the honor system. Do not cheat. Do not abuse loopholes. Play fair. Be your own harshest critic.

The gamemasters (GMs) run the game. If you have any problems or questions concerning the game, contact a GM. Rulings they make are final. They may violate the letter of the rules to preserve the spirit. The GMs promise to be as fair and reasonable as possible. Neither they nor these rules are perfect.

This game is intended to be fun. Getting into character, roleplaying, being dramatic, and playing competitively can all increase the fun of the game. Do not take the game too seriously. Even if you are losing, keep a good attitude. When the game is over, the real winners are the players with the best stories.

This is only a game. Everyone involved should act with courtesy, sportsmanship, patience, and taste. The GMs may expel anyone they believe to be violating the spirit of the rules or the game. Emotions may run high. If you think things are crossing the line from game to reality too much, or if you are just getting too stressed, calm down and maybe take a break. Stay in control. Use common sense. Always, play safely, then play to have fun.

This game is a work of fiction. Although it may refer to things in the real world, it does so only for the sake of the scenario. It does not represent the opinions of the GMs or the MIT Assassins’ Guild. These rules are modifications of those used in previous games. This game and all materials thereof are copyright 2008 by Jake Beal, Ken Clary, Dennis Perepelitsa, and the MIT Assassins’ Guild.
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1 Scenario

“Give me Christ, or give me Hiroshima.”
— Leonard Cohen

1.1 Before the war

The four decades after the turn of the millennium were a period of political and social turbulence, disastrous warfare and corporate ascension. A market crash of cyber stocks in 2007 threatened to turn into full-scale global war, but for the intervention of the United Nations. In the ensuing chaos, several nuclear weapons were detonated in the Middle East, turning much of the region into an uninhabitable wasteland. The decades that followed saw a nuclear winter and daily reports of atmospheric radioactivity became common. Widespread poverty and crime turned the United States of America, formerly a liberal democracy, into a fascist entity. Despite the instability, the corporations of Earth continued to grow into huge international entities, with power approaching that of small nations. Zero-gravity high orbit manufacturing, banking and asteroid mining paved the way for their expansion into space. By the time the nano-revolution rolled around, several megacorporations had attained a foothold in space. One of them, InSystem, even colonized Mars and a few large asteroids.

The advent of nanotechnology in 2042 rapidly and radically revolutionized every aspect of human existence. The first self-sustaining nano-assembler - capable of primitive and slow self-replication - was built by a United Nations science team based in sub-Saharan Africa. Under the auspices of the UN, uncountable trillions of nanobots found their way into daily life all over the world. Relief supplies and industrial infrastructure flooded all the impoverished nations of Earth. Permanent injury and even death became much less common. Gender, race, and appearance could be varied at will. Weapons of heretofore unimaginable power were stopped only by their counterpart in medical advances. The quality of life for the average citizen skyrocketed.

Scientific progress expanded by leaps and bounds, particularly in the abstract field of artificial intelligence. Gleaming, mile-high, nanobot-built cities seemed to challenge the glory of the sky itself.

Flushed with success and respect, the United Nations became the ascendant power on the planet, extending its reach into space, demolishing autocratic regimes in Europe and even partitioning InSystem into slightly smaller megacorporations. The UN’s ambitious social program of universal welfare, careful monitoring and correction of nanotechnology, and establishment of a pervasive underground police force all helped to curb violent crime and poverty. It was only the sudden invasion by a spacefaring alien power and a resurgence of armed National Socialist forces in Europe that broke the power of the mighty United Nations.

1.2 Alien invasion and the rise of the Fourth Reich

The aliens, commonly known as “lizardmen”, arrived in a fleet of hovering, silver saucers and attacked the Americas, Africa and Asia with overwhelming force and unknown technology. Despite savage and often heroic fighting in places like New York City, Los Angeles, Rio de Janeiro, Cape Town, Tokyo and Beijing, the aliens eventually crushed all major opposition and drove humanity underground and into the wastelands. Australia disappeared under an enormous opaque dome with the same properties of an alien shield, and has been hidden ever since. Most orbital bases were destroyed or lost in the years of guerrilla war that followed. New alien technology had a devastating and demoralizing effect on human resistance forces. Gravity-ignoring hovercraft, near-invincible shields and nuclear-reaction suppressing fields were some of the most dramatic surprises in store for Earth. The latter two effectively rendered conventional United Nations nuclear weaponry useless.

On the same day, a fanatic, well-armed and widespread group of neo-Nazis quickly captured every institution of government in Berlin, proclaimed the Fourth Reich under the clone of Adolf Hitler and immediately declared war on France and Poland. Within days, the Nazis quickly recaptured the continent, re-establishing the Festung Europa of old times. The remaining elements of the United Nations, caught off guard from two sides and acting from remote locations outside of Europe, activated a desperate contingency plan and released numerous military-grade survival cyberware and nanotech devices to the people. This capability, combined with widely distributed auto-doc systems made humans possible to revive after death in many circumstances. Unable to understand this technology and surprised at the refusal of the human resistance to stay dead, the alien advance stalled.
Within the year, all human territory came under the control of the Nazis or the aliens (at which point the mysterious and unspoken alliance between them became common knowledge) with several exceptions. Great Britain and Israel held out for a while against the encroaching Nazi forces, and later sued for peace under conditions favorable to the Reich. The United Nations forces guarding Moscow began to fail, but the Russians retreated farther eastward and underground and the invasion became untenable. Even now, more than two decades later, the Russian front is at a stalemate, and little information about what happens on the other side is available. There are reports of human settlements still existing in the asteroid belt, but these are unreliable and increasingly sporadic. While capturing North America, the aliens flipped the city of Chicago upside down as a show of force, effectively pacifying the region. A few days later, the same thing occurred to Tokyo, but overnight and with no warning. Whether or not this was an act of retaliation by the aliens is still unknown. In a surprise move, one of the three saucers garrisoned in New York City, then United Nations headquarters, was destroyed in what appeared to be a nuclear explosion. The consequences for the entire Eastern Seaboard were severe.

Faced with no real military options and the prospect of a grinding, cataclysmic conventional war, the free nations of the Solar System surrendered. Officials from the Fourth Reich and the aliens met with the scattered United Nations and Orbital leadership, and agreed to a peace accord. Unwilling or unable to manage Earth, the aliens kept conventional military and scientific forces in Earth System, mostly off of the planet, while the Nazis administered day to day affairs from Berlin. The aliens slowly pulled out of the Americas, Africa and Asia, leaving them in ruins, and took up a patrol orbit around Earth. The Reich fortified their position and began to transition from a wartime economy.

1.3 Post-war collapse

Unfortunately, the worst was yet to come. Throughout the vast battlezones where the UN had fought the aliens, freely available military technology and a breakdown of civil order proved to be a deadly combination. Even before the aliens had completed their pull-out, thousands of local wars had started up throughout the previously civilized world. Heavily armed and without a common enemy to unite them, corporate rivalries, old grudges, religious differences, and every other sort of human ugliness built into a firestorm of ever-shifting conflicts that spanned continents. It was nearly inevitable that weapons of mass destruction would be unleashed many times. Nuclear weapons, nerve toxins, bioweapons, and nanoplagues all scoured the land and brought environmental apocalypse to every corner of the Earth. Then the UN military cyberware rapidly began to fail, an event widely rumored to be the result of a cleansing nanoplague released by the Nazis as a final act of war.

Between civic collapse, war, plague, cyberware failure, and starvation, approximately 90% of the Earth’s pre-war population has died. World population is now estimated to be approximately one billion, and still dropping due to the ongoing ecological collapse. But life goes on, and even in the war-torn wastelands civilization is slowly beginning to re-emerge. Nobody has access to fresh food these days, but people have learned to accept the taste of synthetics. The mysteries of Russia and Australia persist, but survival is a more pressing problem. Battered but not broken, humanity has begun to heal.

1.4 State of the world

A full generation of mostly-benevolent neglect passed under this uneasy peace. The cyberware released decades ago by the United Nations has all but failed completely - the promise of resurrection after death is gone. Alien actions indicate that leaders on the alien homeworld have taken more of an interest in the social and technological progress of the race of man over the past generation. In particular, a large amount of Earth’s scientists are exported offworld by the aliens for what is dubbed “benevolent research needs” in alien laboratories across the galaxy. No scientist has yet come back. North America’s eastern seaboard has fielded a particularly high percentage of scientists in the past, though now Europe feels most of the brain-drain. As a result, renewed interest in nano- and cybertechnology has been slow to develop. On the other side of the Atlantic, things are much different...
1.4.1 The Wastelands

Much of North America, South America and Africa lies in ruins or severe neglect, with pockets of resistance deemed too insignificant to investigate by the Nazi regime. However, some inhabitants have started to rebuild the shattered civilization around them. New types of city-state have begun to emerge in the wastelands - ones in which, by nanotechnological standards, life is harsh and security scarce, but which have been making progress. Some technology has survived the devastation of war - many synthfarms and environmental terraformers still function, providing food and clean air to the residents. Unfortunately, much of the knowledge and gains of the past few decades have been lost. Still, the new nation states are beginning to be powerful enough to care about and affect the world around them.

Greater Michiana  Greater Michiana is a powerful nation state roughly taking up the area where the United State Michigan and the Canadian Province of Ontario had been. Even though Michiana’s technological capability is that of the early twenty-first century, but it has been able to secure a kind of stability in the region. Greater Michiana has managed to revive the old mentality of industrialization, building its cities and standing army to new heights. In the great libertarian and isolationist traditions of midwestern America, Michiana takes its sovereignty very seriously, and its elite border guard (known as the Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol, or LURP) is feared and respected by the North American continent. “Live free or die” is the unofficial motto. Recently, Greater Michiana has been surrounding itself with a bloc of other North American states, all loyal to Detroit. For the most part, the Fourth Reich doesn’t venture out into North America, but when they do, Michiana never hesitates to offer armed, if ultimately futile, resistance.

Vegas  This city state of Vegas, which consists primarily of campfire settlements in what used to be the state of Nevada, doesn’t have an official name. Most of its inhabitants refer to it, somewhat cryptically, as “Burning Man”. Viewed as some sort of anarchist Mecca, the settlement attracts all types of individuals. The residents are largely craftsmen, artists, online personas or unemployed. Second Life is an important part of the culture of Vegas, as are technology and art. Outsiders find Vegas difficult to understand, much less deal with diplomatically. It seems as if the state has almost no formal government structure at all. Although there is no official military, groups of “Desert Rangers” have organized themselves to defend their community with wildly varying levels of skill, equipment and sanity.

Rio  The nation state of Rio sits loosely where the former nation of Brazil used to be. Famed for their lucrative biotech and cyberware trade, Rio is one of the few places outside of the Fourth Reich where technological progress is up to late 21st century standards. It is said that in the great marketplace of Rio, anything can be bought for the right price. The nation seems to be run by a shady conglomeration of business and military interests with a rigid hierarchy of government agents and officials. By many military and political measures, however, the country is still in its infancy.

Compton Island  Off the coast of what was formerly Southern California rests Compton Island, the cultural capital of the Wastelands. Even before the war, the floating city-state was a peaceful area undergoing a strong artistic and intellectual renaissance. Compton’s politicians are prized for their orating power and way with words, and the music and art it produces are enjoyed around the world. Many in Berlin are excited about the arrival of Rufus Jackson-Sewell, a former Nobel laureate and poet, in the delegation from Compton Island.

Carib  Not much is known about the underwater nation of Carib, which sits somewhere in between the former nations of Cuba, Haiti and Jamaica. Although undersea settlements were common before the war, Carib is the only one known the have survived, and its size, strength, and technological level are all unknown.

Neo-Zulu  Residents of the nation state of Neo-Zulu, based along the Southern tip of Africa, have begun to weld the many warring city-states of that area into a peaceful league, somewhat like a miniature United Nations. They highly value the preservation of information and culture and are known throughout the world as peacemakers and diplomats.
1.4.2 Wild Network

Left unattended and unchecked for decades after the war, the network system built by humanity in the mid-21st century has undergone some significant changes involving the spread of wild telecomms. During the war, network self-repair systems were pushed beyond capacity. In the chaos that followed, they were left largely unsupervised, and have gone feral. Wild telecomms spread quickly to saturate an area with connectivity, incorporating any other telecomms in the area and filling their environment with noise. In civilized areas, IT professionals spend most of their time taming telecomms so that humans can use them again.

Second Life  The only human application known to run well on the wild telecomms is the virtual reality program Second Life (“SL”), which actually appears to run better on wild telecomms than on tame ones. Because of the wild telecomms, Second Life is the only way to communicate over long distances (except for a small capacity for Earth-to-orbit communication used by the Nazis, Japanese, and aliens), though it is a strange and unreliable way of doing so. Second Life tends to be addictive, though, and its users are widely looked down upon. Users often refer to the real world as “First Life”, and tend to be more common in the Wastelands, where wild telecomms are more numerous and where there is less stigma against use. An anonymous blogger named NeoAkane has become really popular recently.

1.4.3 The Developed World and the Fourth Reich

Megacorporations, military interests and politically correct science have flourished under the Reich. Though nominally ruled completely and autocratically by the Führer, Chancellor Hitler (known to be a clone of the original), in practice the Reich’s interests are served by a conglomeration of generals, corporate leaders, scientists and advisors.

Because it is composed of a mix of military, corporate, and political factions, the Reich government is both powerful and diffuse. Contrary to popular myth outside the Reich, it is not an iron-fisted police state. It emphasizes pride in the Fatherland, pride in the glory of humans (it’s considered rude to appear inhumanly modified), and strength in the individual. Citizens are said to have the “right to be powerful,” as long as it does not conflict with the Reich itself.

The Wehrmacht handles national defense all wartime efforts. The Gestapo is responsible for legal investigation, national security, and national intelligence. The Hitler Jugend, consisting of paramilitary troops of young adults, are responsible for basic policing and keeping the domestic peace.

Fourth Reich Corporations  Most Nazi corporations exist both as private entities and as government entities, as defined by the new National Socialist movement. While technically privatized, they are obligated to act for and as the State. They have a great deal of power, and they compete amongst themselves in a self-regulating fashion.

Praetoria is a large security corporation. They provide military might on demand and a variety of security services to customers large and small. They are known to be resented by the Wehrmacht and the Jugend, and they claim neutrality as a mercenary outfit, when not fulfilling Reich obligations. Notwendigkeiten (“Necessities”) is a general services corporation whose specialty is outsourcing and whose actions are largely invisible to the people they serve. They arrange for catering services, provide office supplies, provide secretaries, take a healthy cut, and don’t put their logo on anything. MediCon, the Medical Consortium, is an association of many different biological and medical research, development, and service corporations. Fliegender (“Flying Data”) is a corporation devoted to network wrangling. They keep the network tame within the Reich, and as far into the wastelands as is profitable, allowing for easy and regular communication. The Planck Institute is a set of privatized academic institutions unified under the Reich. They issue patents, and are very protective of their charges and the technology they invent. Board members are drawn from their faculty.

Other Countries  The Fourth Reich was not the only nation to strike a deal with the Great Race. At the end of the war, both Japan and England were able to maintain basic sovereignty. While England is mostly an isolationist set of islands that tries to not bother its neighbors, Japan has made gains in strength and stability.

Russia is an enigma. The world at large is unsure how Russia is able to survive, and the Fourth Reich has long been in a cold war its Eastern neighbor. Some say the Russians never stopped fighting. The borders between Russia and the Reich are a sparse no-mans-land, and setting to a number of military excursions.
The Great Race  The aliens, who call themselves the Great Race, rarely even appear on Earth. Most aliens who come to Earth and communicate at all with humans have taken human names, using a variety of sources for inspiration. They keep a small fleet of large saucers in orbit and stationed on Luna. Their soldiers almost never intervene on Earth. Most alien technology is not even allowed on the planet, and what little technology is allowed is kept under strict and careful control. They are known to have a distaste for cyberware and harbor a strong suspicion of nanotechnology.

They only rarely make public statements to the peoples of Earth. It is generally known that they have a long-term timeline for the integration of humanity into their greater society, but so far, they have kept Earth isolated. The other planets and moons in this system are entirely under Great Race control. Some bases are kept for manufacturing purposes, but the former Orbital States are gone completely.

1.5  Berlin, 2099

The League of Aryan Nations  A short time ago, the Fourth Reich announced the coming formation of the League of Aryan Nations, or LAN. This organization will act in many ways similar to the old UN, as an umbrella of protection and collaboration of the nations of Earth. This week is the first LAN convention, where the Security Council will be chosen and orders of business for the next year will be voted upon. It is generally known that the Great Race support the foundation of LAN, and that the Reich took these actions at their instigation.

The Hypership  The formation of LAN coincides with the coming launch of humanity’s first hypership. While much of the core systems were designed and built by the aliens, and the ship and its construction are very closely monitored by them, the Reich has been responsible for final assembly. This is especially notable because it is the first time ever that humans have been given any access whatsoever to a hyperdrive. However, the actual workings of the FTL and power systems are kept under a tight lid by the Great Race. The ship will launch after this week, with another system in Great Race space as its destination.

Just recently, the Führer, Chancellor Adolf Hitler, announced that he would personally be the co-pilot of the ship when it launches, and that he would announce a successor at the time of launch. The trip will last at least a year, possibly longer.

Game Times and Game Area:  Game runs from 8pm on Friday to 11am on the second Sunday. Game may end early. Cleanup will immediately follow the end of game. Wrapup will be at 2pm on Sunday. Game break will start at 6am Tuesday and end at 6pm Wednesday; during game break, you may communicate freely but take not game action nor perform mechanics. For all mechanics that are “per day” or similar, the day rolls over at 6am.

Most publicly-accessible areas on campus are considered in-game (your character can move about freely in them). As usual, avoid places it is illegal for you to go, areas under construction, etc. Don’t take game actions in bathrooms, private offices, activity offices, and other places not all players would be allowed to enter.

When in living areas, such as dorms, remember the Player Rooms section. Many living areas on campus are not technically accessible to all players. Whether or not to take game action in your living area is left to player judgment.

The GM Control Room is room 26-204. The Box Room is room 26-210. You may leave personal items with the GMs. Do not hang out or hide in the Box Room; people need to use it for private mechanics. The Common Room is room 24–402. Do not leave food, trash, or personal items in the Common Room overnight. Do not enter or leave game in the Box Room or Common Room; go somewhere open and public (like the infinite corridor, or Vassar Street) instead.

The LAN room is in 38-166. A few other notable in-game locations are: ReichHaus (3–4), Wehrmacht HQ (37-6), Praetoria HQ (36-1), Planck Institute HQ (4-3), Fliegendaten HQ (38-3), Notwendigkeiten HQ (10-2), MediCon HQ (66–68 bridge), Braun Mansion (3-3), and the Alien Hypership (36-8). (ReichHaus is so named because we didn’t want a sign that says “Hitler’s Mansion” in game area.)

Electronic Information:  You may use email, zephyr, IM, phones, and other forms of electronic communication freely for game purposes. You may not violate any rules of use of these devices (no packet sniffing, wiretapping, etc.). When searching a character or their stuff, you do not get access to their electronics, except in specified instances. Game action is allowed in Athena clusters, as long as you obey the NP rules and don’t make a mess.
2 Getting Started

2.1 Character Packs

Your character packet is a big manila envelope. It contains your role: who you are, what you’re up to; everything about your part as a player-character (PC) in the game. Read all the contents and generally keep them with you during the game. If you are missing something or find something which doesn’t seem to belong to you, tell one of the GMs. Character packets are confidential. Game materials which cannot be given to other players are marked “Not Transferable,” whereas things which can be given to others are marked “Freely Transferable” or “Game Item.”

Name-Badge: A name-badge with your player name, character description, and badge number on it shows that you are in the game; wear it visibly while you are playing. It represents your character’s body in-game. Badge numbers are not in-game information. See the Character Bodies and Badge Numbers sections for more details.

Character Sheet: Your character sheet describes who you are and what you are up to. It contains a list of everything else that should be in your character packet. Do not show or read your character sheet to other players.

Bluesheets: A bluesheet describes information common to members of a group. When in conflict, character sheet information overrides bluesheet information. Do not show or read a bluesheet to other players.

Greensheets: A greensheet describes and expands abilities, mechanics, or in-game knowledge. Do not show or read a greensheet to other players.

Stat Card: Your stat card lists your statistics. You might not know what all of your stats mean. Do not show your stats to others. The reverse side is a death report: fill it out and give it to the GMs when your character dies.

Ability Cards: An ability card explains a special ability your character has. The front side describes the effects; show it to players when you use the ability. The reverse is the rules of use and must not be shown to other players.

Memory/Event Packets: A memory packet is an envelope or stapled piece of paper with a trigger which describes when to open and read it. If the trigger is a number, open the packet when you see something with that number. If it’s a quoted phrase, open when you hear or read it in-game. If it’s a symbol, open when instructed. Do not take game action based on an unopened trigger. Do not show or read a memory packet to other players.

Items: In-game items may be transferred from character to character, and should be marked as such. See the Items Etc. section for more details.
2.2 Reality and Game Reality

There is a big difference between reality and game reality. Players must treat each other with courtesy and explain to each other what their characters perceive in confusing situations; e.g., “My character’s hands are covered in blood,” an out-of-game statement. Characters are under no such restrictions, and may do what it takes to further their goals; e.g., “Uh, hi Bob. Just got back from the butcher shop,” an in-game statement.

Metagaming is inferring in-game knowledge that is inappropriate for your character from out-of-game information. Do your best to not metagame and especially to prevent the risk of metagaming. Be your own harshest critic.

Halts: A halt pauses game action. To call one, say “game halt” in a clear and audible voice; other players around a corner should hear you, but you shouldn’t scare some poor grad student. End a halt by saying “three, two, one, resume.” Call a halt for one of only three reasons: because a rule instructs you to, for safety and similar out-of-game issues, or to pause game and fetch a GM (which you should avoid).

Not-Here: You may go not-here by turning your name-badge around so the “I’m Not Here” side is showing (or by removing your badge entirely, if you are leaving game). Putting a hand on your head, visible from a distance, helps if you’re near other players. Go not-here for one of only three reasons: because a rule instructs you to, to leave game, or to fetch a GM while in a halt (which you should avoid).

When you are not-here, your character is not there. Your character cannot see, hear, or remember any game actions or information you (the player) happen to encounter. Avoid other characters, common game areas, game signs, or any sort of game interaction. To leave or enter game for the night/day/whatever, walk to somewhere public. Don’t go not-here in front of other characters; give them a fair chance to interact with (ambush) you.

Non-Players: Use tact and common sense when dealing with non-players (NPs). You are encouraged to spread the gospel of real-time, real-space roleplaying; however, many NPs prefer to sleep, study, or work undisturbed.

NPs may not knowingly affect the game. They and their rooms may not be used to hold items or information. They may not help you kill. Do not use the presence of NPs to hide from rampaging mobs that want your blood.

Avoid conspicuous or threatening game actions in front of NPs. Shooting your friend outside of a classroom one minute before class lets out is a bad idea, as is screaming bloody murder down a hallway. If, despite your most valiant efforts, some NPs do get upset, call the GMs who will help calm them down.

Player Rooms: Players may retreat to their rooms to study, sleep, or whatever in safety. Your character may not enter a player’s room unless invited in-game. This has traditionally been called the “jhereg rule.” Do not use your room as an impenetrable meeting place or stash site. If your character is in-game in your room, other characters may interact with (kill, torture) you. Roommates and similar are considered to have separate rooms for this rule.

Observers: An observer is someone not playing the game who has agreed to watch. They generally wear an observer headband or an observer name-badge. Observers have traditionally been called “ghosts.” They should stay out of the way; you can always ask an observer to leave. If a friend who is not playing wants to observe game, send them to the GMs.

Non-Player-Characters: Non-player-characters (NPCs) are characters in the game’s universe not played by a full-time player. They are minor characters, bit parts, or random people. Some may have name-badges; sometimes called “GM plants,” these are often not readily distinguishable from PCs.
Mechanics: Many actions your character can take, such as walking, talking, and general interaction with other characters, are represented by you doing them. Others, like combat, are performed via abstract mechanics, which are described in ability cards, greensheets, and rules. The abstract information for mechanics (like badge numbers) may not be discussed in-game. If you want to do something special for which there is no mechanic, ask a GM.

Become familiar with your mechanics before game starts, especially those which occur under time-pressure (like combat). Game action will not stop for memory packets, greensheets, or such.

A kludge (and derivative forms like “kludge-ite”) is something impervious to logic and cleverness, usually for game-balance. You can’t affect a kludge without a specified mechanic.

Zone of Control (ZoC) is a rough distance measurement. You are within ZoC of someone if your outstretched fingers can touch their outstretched fingers. Double-ZoC is twice this distance, triple-ZoC is three times, etc.

Headbands represent obvious visual effects; wear them visibly on your head. If you see a headband and don’t know what it represents, ask. If you are wearing a headband, tell people what their characters see.

Safety: This is a game. Real violence is unacceptable. Game action should cause no real-world damage, either to people or property. If something dangerous is happening, call a halt. Stay in control, use common sense, and do not endanger yourself or others. You should not run or otherwise force your way into or through someone else’s ZoC, and you should not make physical contact with another player without permission.

2.3 Basic Strategy

Make sure you understand the rules. If you are completely confused, get a GM who will try to help you out. Make sure you know enough about your character to role-play him or her when you start talking to other people. Read through your entire packet a couple of times, and skim through it again right before game starts. If you don’t know something about your character, ask a GM.

As a character, your first priority should be to open lines of communication. Contact people, show up at meetings, and chat. Try to be easy to get in touch with. Ask people questions on relevant subjects. They’ll probably lie, but you may find something out.

There are no guarantees that you can trust anyone, but since cooperation is the key to accomplishing things, you will be forced to trust people anyway. The most trustworthy people are probably those who need you.
3 Items Etc.

Many in-game items are represented by little white cards with a number and description. Item cards may be shown to others, passed around, stolen, etc. The item number on the card is not in-game information and may not be discussed. Not all in-game items have cards or numbers; whatever they are represented by should be clearly marked “in-game item” or “freely transferable.”

Use common sense. You can’t carry a hundred rocks in your pocket, fold a sword in half, or hide a life-sized statue in a fire hose. You can’t stop a bullet with a set of blueprints or rip apart a metal safe with your bare hands. Even if your bag can carry a shovel in it, the shovel noticeably sticks out (“you see a shovel sticking out of my bag”).

Written Information: If you write in-game information down on a piece of paper, that paper is now an in-game item and must be clearly marked as such. Don’t write in-game information on out-of-game documents (character sheet, etc.). Don’t write out-of-game information (like memory packet triggers) on in-game documents.

Envelopes: Some items and locations may have an attached envelope (or just be a labeled packet or folded paper). The envelope may include directions for when to open these (“open packet if you press the big red button” or “open packet if you eat this”); otherwise you may only open them if instructed. Close them when you are done. Open and close packets gently.

Signs: Some locations and other game materials are represented by signs or packets posted throughout game area. You may read any signs and must follow any rules printed on them. If a sign or packet doesn’t have some sort of in-game description (it only has out-of-game mechanics information, like a number or just a colored dot), then your character doesn’t even see it or know that anything unusual is there.

Bulkiness: A bulky item is too big or heavy to be carried or concealed freely. Bulkiness is measured in hands or dots (how many hands it takes to carry it). If you are carrying a bulky item, make it clear to onlookers (hold the card). A hand carrying a bulky object may do nothing else. With one hand less than required, you may drag a bulky item at a slow pace.

Props: Some items may have props (physical representations or physreps) associated with them. The card and physrep should be kept together. If they are separated, the card is the real item. Prop items are as bulky as the physrep. They can be carried in bags that can hold them, on straps that are attached to them, etc.

Containers: Some items, like crates or personal bags, have a capacity. Capacity is measured in dots or hands; this is how many dots of items can be stored within. You can put as many non-bulky items inside as is within reason. A container may have a capacity bigger than its bulkiness; use common sense when nesting containers. Put contained item cards inside the envelope attached to the container card.

Character Bodies: A body is three hands bulky and usually represented by a name-badge. It must be willing or unable to resist for you to carry it. Carry the badge conspicuously. Onlookers can’t tell if it’s dead without close examination, unless it would be obvious (like headless).
3.1 Searching, Stashing, and Stealing

Places: To search a place, search it. Normal items can be stashed in any reasonable, legal place. Don’t put items behind locked doors, inside ceilings, in construction sites, or in hacking locations; consequently, don’t go rummaging through such places for game items. Don’t stash or search in places that are not in-game; see the Game Areas section for more information.

People: All searches of characters or their belongings are conducted via player dialogue. Someone must be willing or unable to resist for you to search them. You need at least one free hand to search someone. Anyone within ZoC of either you or your victim can prevent the search by saying “I stop you” or an equivalent phrase.

You can perform a **pat-down search**, which will only reveal the presence of weapons. This takes as much time as it takes your victim to tell you what you find. If you’re the victim, do this at a reasonable pace.

A **total search** is an invasive, complete search of a character’s clothing. This reveals all in-game items, and takes as long as your victim spends handing over possessions. If you’re the victim, hand over items at a reasonable pace.

Bags: To search a bag in someone’s possession, say “I search your bag.” This proceeds just as a total search.

To search a bag that is obviously in-game (has an attached, displayed item card), search the physrep. Item cards in the bag must be in reasonable places. If the item card has a capacity and an envelope, the bag is just a prop and all in-game items should be in the packet.

To search a bag that is not obviously in-game (no visible item card attached), spend thirty seconds by the bag, put a “searched (see a GM)” note on the bag, and come tell a GM. Tell any onlookers that they see you searching through the bag. Search an attended bag via player dialog with the owner; they must be willing or unable to resist. If someone searches a bag you are holding, hand over all game items inside at a reasonable pace.

If you find a “searched” note on your bag, come see a GM. To declare a bag out-of-game, label it “no game items.”
4 Skills and Trails

Some tasks require points of certain skills. Points in a given skill may come from different people. Skills are listed on your statcard. **Hard** skills have a value listed as a number of points per day. **Soft** skills have a value listed as a number of points per inspiration. You may convert a point of inspiration to the listed number of points of the soft skill. You may distribute inspiration amongst any of your soft skills; you can’t split a single point between different skills. You may find small signs which grant inspiration, after which you remove the sign. When you complete a step from a key trail (see below), anyone who spent one or more points from any skill for that step may flip a coin twice: if it is heads both times, that person gains one point of inspiration.

Most PCs have only one hard skill and/or no more than 3 points total in hard skills. PCs might have any number of soft skills. Hard skills are generally required for mechanics, while soft skills are usually optional ways to gain extra information or reduce requirements. There are five basic hard skills: **Hacking**, which is general engineering and technical problem solving; **Research**, which is the general skill of generating and analysing data; **Investigation**, the skill of getting information from people; **Administration**, organizing people and sociological problem solving; and **Security**, including information, tactical, and personal security analysis. There are some special hard skills: **Spy**, which has its own greensheet, and **Budget**, which accumulates (you keep unspent points from previous days, until you spend them).

Skills points may be spent remotely, via phone, zephyr, IM, or other realtime communication. Some skill uses will specify restrictions and guidelines for remote usage. Remote usage must be clear to players; do not lie about spending points.

**Key Trails:** Many plots and goals require the completion of key trails. A key trail is a series of different steps, each of which requires a “key” item card, likely some number of skill points, and various other tasks. Each key trail has a notebook detailing the steps, some pages of which you can’t open until you’ve completed preceeding steps. Notebooks are out-of-game and cannot be shown to or stolen by people who do not start with access to them. If a group shares a notebook, only one member will start with a copy of the notebook, but any member can get a copy.

A **keycard** is a freely copyable item which contains agglomerated data necessary for a given step. Successfully completing a step will usually give you a new keycard. A collection of keycards from your trail is the in-game representation of the necessary information. If you lose your notebook, you may get a new copy and automatically progress as far as you have the the requisite keycards. You may keep keycards as a virtual, out-of-game list on paper, a computer, or other electronic device; the list must include the name and number of the keycards, and anyone who searches you can get copies of all keycards in the list.

Steps on a trail will usually require points in hard skills, and might have ways to spend points in soft skills. Each step will have an in-game description of the resulting data that must be read to anyone helping with the step. Each keycard lists one or more soft skills; by spending one point in each of the listed soft skills and emailing the GMs, you will find out, within 24 hours, the description for the step that created the keycard. If someone spends points, hard or soft, on a step, they must be given access to the keycard resulting from the step (information from this card will be redundant with the step description). Additionally, if someone spends hard skill points on a step, they must be given access to any keycard(s) required for the step.

**Pictionary** steps represent some form of brainstorming. One person, the **brainstorming lead**, has a list of words and draws pictures, attempting to get the other participants to say the words. Only one person with the notebook may be the lead; no-one else may read the page. The step is complete once the participants have said all of the words. As lead, you may not give any clues through verbal or physical communication. You may indicate “yes,” “no,” and “close” in response to guesses. You may not draw words or other attempts at language.

**Zendo** steps represent some form of training. One person, the **student**, needs to correctly deduce a **koan**. Koans are rules (like “all vowels”) that describe a string of 4 letters (“ABCD” or “AABB”). Any number of people may act as **teacher** to help the student: a teacher may only write down strings that follow the koan in one column or incorrect strings in another column.

**Hacking** steps generally require you to write sentences or whole stories to certain specifications. The results should be coherent, with correct spelling and grammar (we are forgiving for players with English as a second language). Whenever you complete a hacking task, send the result to the GMs (electronic or hard copy acceptable). We will reward you if it is very good or penalize you if it is lame (like obviously a repetative mad lib from the internet).

**Location** steps involve getting into specific sites, usually going through a security packet. If you have access to a site (specified in your character sheet), you can freely enter a site, view the security packet, and let other people past the security packet. Other step requirements (like skill costs) are not affected by access. Access does not let you open other packets at the site. Some steps may direct you to open special packets and/or take unique items in sites. **Dots** are tiny, innocuously hidden white signs.
5 Violence, Damage, and Death

Characters have four basic health states. When fine, you may act freely. When restrained, you are helpless and may do nothing but talk. When knocked out, you will wake up in five minutes. When dead, you are dead. Your Hit Points (HP) represent how much physical damage you can take. Your HP may not go above its starting max value or below the negative of its max value. When at 0 HP or lower, you are seriously injured and knocked out; after 5 minutes, regenerate 1 HP per 30 seconds until at 1 HP. If you reach the negative max HP, you die. If conscious you can spend Budget 1 to go out of game for 30 minutes to heal to full HP. You heal to full HP for free when leave game and go home and sleep. Remember to leave game to go sleep.

When knocked out, fall down and drop anything you are holding. Just lie there. You won’t be doing much of anything until you wake up. Do not listen to conversations going on. When not under stress of combat, roleplay your injuries; e.g. if you have lost half your HP, you may be weakened or unable run long distances, and you may be fading in and out of awareness at 1–2 HP.

Dead men tell no tales. If dead, do not give out any information about your character or death to any players. You may remain on the scene to play the part of your corpse; describe obvious information to onlookers (“I have a gunshot wound in my back”). When you leave, place the front of your name-badge with a description of the body’s obvious state. Take the “I’m Not Here” side to wear. Stack your items with your body. Fill out your Death Report. Make sure the GMs know about your death. If your death becomes generally known to the other characters, you may be able to become an observer. Until the game is over, you may not convey game information to any player.

5.1 Combat

Combat, both ranged and martial, is based on incants. In the heat of combat, people may have trouble hearing incants or noticing hits. If you cannot understand an incant, make it clear by calling “miscast.” Miscast attacks are not used up. The attacker is responsible for making incants clear and understood; speak clearly, don’t shout over others, and wait for openings.

Weapons: Any weapon will have an obvious physrep. Weapon effects are on the item card or in your abilities. To use a weapon, you must have it in your hand and unobstructed. Display it in an obvious manner. You cannot hold more than one weapon in a hand. You may only use one melee weapon at a time. Ranged weapons are represented by a variety of toy guns, usually nerf microdart guns and disc guns. Disc guns and any rapid-fire weapons (magstrikes, powerclips) are burst weapons (see below).

Everyone has a dart gun that may not be stolen or confiscated. It is used to mechanic innate skill, melee damage, cyberware, and other equipment. A dart gun may have headbands tied to its barrel, representing noticeable flavors of cyberware and equipment: a red band represents some form of laser, blaster, or plasma weapon, blue is a force or energy field, black is claws or other offensive physical cyberware, and white is a physical shield. Abilities and items will specify when and how to use your dart gun.

Killing Blow: A killing blow will kill a helpless victim. Your victim must be within ZoC and either unconscious or restrained. You must use a weapon (melee or ranged). Clearly incant “killing blow one, killing blow two, killing blow three” at a reasonable pace. If you want to use a specific attack, state the incant at the end, e.g. “. . . killing blow three, 10 damage.” During the incant, if you are attacked or if someone within ZoC says “I stop you” or an equivalent phrase, you are stopped. To stop a killing blow, either attack the person doing it or say “I stop you” within ZoC.

Ranged Combat: Ranged combat is real-time and mostly based upon player skill at firing and dodging physreps. Keep it safe. Hits to anywhere on the body count the same; don’t aim for the head. If a projectile hits clothing or long hair such that it would not hit the body when passing through, it doesn’t count. Hits to an item you hold count as a hits on you, not the item. If there is a conflict over whether or not a projectile hit, the shooter calls the shot. All ammo is unlimited; do not hoard ammo physreps.

Ranged incants specify damage (“5 Damage”). Your Damage Resistance (DR) represents how hard you are to hurt. Subtract your DR from the any damage you receive. Subtract any remaining positive damage from your HP. Say “no effect” if you took no damage. A shot with no incant has no direct effect; it represents some form of maneuvering, so you may still want to dodge.

A burst weapon is fired in bursts with at least one shot per second. A burst has a single damage incant: if one or more shots hit, the incant takes effect once. You may repeat the incant during a burst for clarity. Once a second passes without a shot, the burst ends, and you must wait at least 3 seconds before starting another (even if the next burst is from a different burst weapon).
Martial Combat: All characters have a **Combat Rating** (CR) stat. This represents your basic skill in martial combat; you use the same number for attacking and defending. When using this stat, you may pull your punches by using a lower number.

To martial-attack someone, clearly state your attack and CR (“Knock Out 2”, “Disarm 2”, etc.) from within ZoC. Your attack must resolve before you make another; otherwise, you may act freely. If an ally directs Assist at you after you attack, you may, within 2 seconds, restate your attack with the Assist’s CR added (“Restrain 3”, “Assist 2”, “Restrain 5”). Assist does not change your CR for defense. You may ignore an Assist.

When martial-attacked, resolve by comparing the attack against your CR. If your CR is lower, take the effects; else, say “**resist**” and the attack has no effect. If you neither say “resist” nor state your own attack within two seconds of the incant’s end, you are surprised and the attack just works. The attack begins when the incant begins; until you resolve, all of your actions other than martial attacks are interrupted; serial attacks don’t prevent simple actions (talking, weapon-drawing, ranged attacks) in-between. Resolve all attacks alone, in the order they occur; choose the order if it is unclear. If you are attacked with “**waylay**” instead of a CR (“Knock Out waylay”), the attack just works.

Everyone may Assist with their CR; both the target and ally must be within ZoC. Other attacks must be specified by an ability or item. Knock Out knocks the target out. Restrain restrains the target until you incant “release” or your health state changes; you can freely drag, attack, or killing blow them (if you fulfill any weapon/ability requirements). Disarm makes the target drop one item that you point to. Throw makes the target take three steps in the direction you point and sit down with their hands on the floor; until they’ve sat down, they may not attack or use any abilities.

Hit Chains: Hit chains represent different kinds of both offensive and defensive combat maneuvering. They are by default performed with dart guns; some ranged weapons may have their own hit chain abilities. A hit chain is a series of successive hits on the same target with the same weapon. A chain ends when **10 seconds** pass without another hit. Any hit from the same weapon keeps a chain from expiring, but only hits without incants will increase the current length of the chain. Chain abilities require you to achieve hit chains of certain lengths to be used, and are only effective against the target of the chain.

A passive chain ability is used by spending the given length of chain, and remains on until your chain expires. You may choose to end a passive ability early. You may not stack a passive ability with itself. A per-use chain ability is used by spending the given length of chain per use of the ability.

5.2 Stealth

Stealth abilities represent sneaking up on a victim with obvious intent to invade their personal space, probably to attack them by surprise or to pick their pocket. To use a stealth ability, you must be within ZoC of your victim. Form the sign of the devil (index and pinky fingers extended, thumb holding other two fingers down) and extend it along the direct, unobstructed line from your shoulder to the victim’s head. Hold this position for the time specified by your ability. Before this time is up, the ability is thwarted if anyone attacks you or if the victim notices the symbol. If they react in any way to the symbol, they have noticed; you (the attacker) make the call.

If you notice someone using a stealth ability on you, make it obvious. “I notice you” is unambiguous; use it if you can. Once a stealth ability is finished, you may not retroactively have noticed.

Anyone can waylay as a stealth ability. You must hold the symbol for **5 seconds**. If you succeed, you may replace your CR with “waylay” for a single immediate attack on your victim. If you successfully waylay with a damage-based weapon, you may fire a single, immediate shot at triple damage at your victim.
6 Miscellaneous

Headband Colors and Badge Numbers: A **white** or **yellow** headband represents an observer. A **red** headband is full-scale assault armor, which is quite rare outside of military operations, and frowned upon in public. A **green** headband represents a lizardman alien (or “member of the Great Race” if you prefer). A **blue** headband is a Hitler Jugend in a turf battle; they can only directly interact with each other. The **first** digit of your badge number is your character’s apparent age in decades. The **second** digit is an approximation of your HP, where the digit equals \((\text{HP} - 6) / 2\), which gives a clue to your apparent burliness.

Combat Stats: The useful theoretical range for HP is 6 to 24: a pubescent child may have 6, an average-unmodified man has 10, a normal athletic person has 12, and bulky bio-geneered soldiers start at 15 or so. Most people have DR 0, though some combinations of cyberware can grant DR 1–3. Unconcealable armor vests can up DR by 4, but are trashed after they’ve been used a few times. Higher DR is possible with assault armor (red headband). Most normal, non-combative people have CR 1 or 2. The default PC is CR 2, where strength or martial training could give CR 3 or 4, and both in abundance could mean CR 5.

The most commonly available ranged weapon is the basic disc gun (Autoburst Blaster Pistol), which does 6 Damage per burst. More discerning warriors may have the basic single-shot nerf gun (Mil-Grade Xaser Pistol), which does 7 Damage and can “hotshot” for 15 Damage with a hit-chain. Better (and sometimes bigger) models of gun exist. Melee weapons are generally limited to knives, clubs, tasers, and katanas (which can be very deadly in the right hands). Combat cyberwear includes concealed, deployable melee weapons (like claws, taser systems, and tracking-assisted shields) and full-body modifications which grant strength, dexterity, or durability. One notable type: Cyber Hardening, generally rare (most likely in the military), makes someone effectively immune to Knock-Out effects, and makes it necessary for a Killing Blow to penetrate their DR.

Gray Market: Many valuable items are distributed via gray market auctions, which are signs around on campus. Prices and bids are in points of Budget. The sign specifies the item being auctioned, the deadline, and the minimum bid. If it specifies a “buy now” price, you may end the auction immediately by spending that price. Once the deadline passes, the highest bid wins. If there is active bidding at or near the deadline, it may continue until all are either satisfied or unable to bid further. Two hours past the deadline, the first person willing to pay the highest bid wins. If you win, take the sign and trade it to the GMs for the item.

To bid, cross out the previous bid (it should still be readable) and write your bid with some identifying mark. The mark may be initials, a anonymous symbol, or anything in- or out-of-game that lets you recognize it. Write small and neatly. Multiple people may bid together as one. Points you bid may not be used for anything else; this hold is released if you are out-bid.

Rocks and similar trivial blunt weapons are freely available. You need some small, easily-distinguished physrep; it allows you to do Knock-Out attacks at your CR. Rope or binding tape is also freely available. Make an item card for it and have an appropriate physrep (for appearances only). To tie someone up, they must be either willing or helpless. If you get tied up with rope, you become restrained. If you are conscious and left alone, you can wriggle free in five minutes.

Legal System: There are two kinds of criminal charges: **misdemeanors**, including illegal entry, theft/destruction of property, or endangerment of public health; and **felonies**, including murder, treason, and accumulating 5 or more misdemeanors. **Duels**, when notarized by a member of the Hitler Jugend or the Gestapo, legally excuse violence; lethal duels excuse death. To make an accusation, present your case to the GMs; more evidence is better. The GMs may reject accusations: “people think she’s sketchy” or “he’s on the playerlist and has no alibi” are not sufficient evidence. Do not spam the GMs with attempts to bring fake charges.

If someone is successfully charged, it will be publicly announced. If it is a felony, anyone can arrest them and bring them to the GMs. They will be out-of-game for up to approximately 24 hours (the GMs will be nice to the player). They are interrogated by Gestapo NPCs; usually, the results will be announced as 3 pieces of information deemed appropriate for the public good. If found guilty, they are permanently out-of-game and subjected to a second interrogation.

Closing Notes: These rules are imperfect. The GMs may violate the letter of the rules to preserve the spirit. We hope these rules are reasonably clear, but if you have any doubts about your interpretation, talk it over with us in advance. We should also add, as much as we hate to admit it, we GMs are human: when all of our carefully laid plans are going haywire, we may lose our cool. The best way to deal with people is remaining calm and friendly, especially when everyone is tired and hungry.

We hope you have lots of fun. Good luck.