

INTRODUCTION

This system is derivative of work done by Robin D. Laws', *The Dying Earth Roleplaying Game*. *The Dying Earth Roleplaying Game* and *Dying Earth Quick Start Rules* are trademarks of Pelgrane Press. In order to use the finer points of this system; specifically "styles" and "trumping"; you will need to get a copy of the *Dying Earth Quick Start Rules*. You can find and download them by browsing Pelgrane Press' website at www.pelgranepress.com.

The Social Combat system is designed to arbitrate social interaction fairly while insulating it from the personal experiences and skillfulness (or lack thereof) of the GM and player. It is nothing more than a tool to give purely social encounters that same dynamic sense of tension and excitement that is the mainstay of highly detailed combat systems. While not everyone will feel the need to use or depend on an arbitrated system of social interaction, my own belief is that certain players avoid social settings because there is no arbitrator (rules) between their actions and the GM's interpreted results.

Luckily for all, this system does not require any additional charts other than the combat matrices found in HarnMaster 3rd Edition. In fact, the Social Combat routine is almost exactly like HarnMaster Combat.

Although there are no hard and fast rules for when this system is appropriate, the GM should be the final arbitrator in determining the results of successful Social Combat. Whether a clever player can reap a 100% discount or convince a lowly gateguard to escort the character into the citadel for a personal meeting with the emperor is a matter of personal taste and campaign style.

RELATED SKILLS

Oratory

This is your skill at persuasion. It is the offensive skill of social combat. In *Dying Earth*, this is your Persuade Skill.

Rhetoric

This is your skill at debate. It is the defensive skill of social combat. In *Dying Earth* this is your Rebuff Skill.

Intrigue

This is your ability to behave properly in certain social situations. It is also a measurement of overall social experience.

When observing a social combat, you may make an Intrigue test at the end of a combat round to determine the style of Oration or Rhetoric used by the participants in that round. A critical success also tells you what styles will be used by a participant in the next round of combat.

A participant engaged in the social combat may forego Oration and use their Intrigue skill against their opponent(s) at a -20% penalty, as they are trying to keep track of their arguments. If the result is a Critical Success, the character's opponent must inform him of the Oration and Rhetorical style chosen at the end of the opponent's turn.

I'm Arthur Reyes, I wrote these rules. Of course the real credit goes to Robin D. Laws for his inspiring system of styles and trumps. *Dying Earth* looks to be a great game. Check it out!

Jason Stahl deserves credit for editing the original posts on HarnForum. He is responsible for converting most of the attack matrix results to a social equivalent, and for the HarnMaster feel of the terminology and syntax used here.

Thanks to Camillus, for providing a social equivalent for Dodge that had escaped me for so long.

Although I came up with the idea, and executed the heist of Robin's concepts, my wife really helped make the system into a cog that fits perfectly in the HarnMaster machine.

Finally, thank you N Robin Crossby for making Harn and HarnMaster, and to everyone that contributes so freely to my favorite world, game, and hobby.

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Circumstantial Bonuses

It is beyond the scope of these rules to list every instance in which a character deserves a bonus to Social Combat, but consider giving some boon or bane for any of the following reasons:

- Bribery
- Previous insult or injury
- No common language
- Poor language skill
- Nepotism
- Being the local hero
- Expert knowledge of the subject

SOCIAL COMBAT 2

Charisma

This is a measurement of your overall social endurance, and how long you can stay in an argument. Your Charisma score is equal to the average of your Comeliness, Voice and Will attributes.

THE ROUTINE

When two or more characters meet for any type of social outcome in which the goal is to influence another, a Social Combat takes place. At the beginning of the routine, each character decides their initial Oratory and Rhetoric Styles. These styles influence the effectiveness of their particular point.

Each character makes an Intrigue test. The character with the highest degree of success goes first. In the case of a tie, the character with the highest Intrigue goes first.

On the character's turn, determine the target of the character's Oration. The target now chooses a defensive posture; they may Counterpoint, Interject, or Evade. Both characters reveal the style they are currently using and determine if either trumps the other. They then make the appropriate skill test. Results are compared on the attack matrix. Counterpoint is the equivalent of a Block. Interject is the equivalent of a Counterstrike. Evade is the equivalent of a Dodge.

RESULTS

DTA

Defender Social Advantage, the attacker has made a significant mistake and the defender can immediately go on the offensive.

Fumble

Character rolls 3d6 vs. Base Charisma or loses access to the fumbled style until he spends a round recovering (no Oratory tests in that round). The character's attempt was so foolishly executed, that he doubts its effectiveness and cannot execute it again without some consideration. If the character loses access to their only style, they must spend a round in recovery.

Strike

Roll #d damage and consult the chart below to determine the impact.

1+	5+	9+	13+	17+
M1	S2	S3	G4	K4

Whenever a character takes new social damage, roll a number of d6 equal to the total number of damage levels taken. If the result exceeds Charisma the character is stunned into silence (the character must take the ignore defense against all further attacks) until they pass that test or are defeated. When the number of damage levels exceeds Charisma, the character is beaten and can't argue anymore.

Improveable Charisma

☐ Like Endurance, Charisma may increase through experience.

Charisma is equal to the average of Oratory + Rhetoric, divided by (5).

The Social Combat Round

There is no predefined length for a round of Social Combat. If the player is trying to bluff his way out of being mugged in an alley, rounds may last (6) seconds. Debating in the Senate of Tharda may be regulated to clearly timed (5) minutes turns at the podium. Finally, a socialite moving through influential circles while trying to outmaneuver his adversary at a party, may be called upon to make Social Combat rolls every hour.

Outnumbered

☐ It is more difficult to advance your own position when faced by more than one adversary. When engaged by more than one opponent in a round, you incur a 10% penalty to all Social Combat rolls for each additional adversary beyond the first.

Additional Combat Results

An S3 result also causes the recipient to make a Stumble check.

A G4 result also causes the recipient to make a Fumble check.

If the recipient survives a K4 result, they must immediately make a Fumble check.

A participant may forfeit Social Combat at anytime. Whether this results in a more favorable outcome for the winner is determined by the GM.

Stumble

Character rolls 3d6 vs. Base Charisma or loses the thread of their own position. The character has suffered a momentary lapse in concentration or has otherwise been distracted from their objective. The character suffers a 10% penalty to all tests related to the stumbled skill until they spend a round recovering (no Oratory tests in that round).

STYLES

A character whose style trumps his opponent's style gains a +10% bonus to the appropriate skill during that round.

A character may change their style of Oration or Rhetoric, but they may only do so at the end of their turn.

Learning Styles

Every character knows (1) style for each 20% in Oratory and Rhetoric. A character with 40% Orate and 65% Rhetoric, knows (2) Oratory Styles and (3) Rhetorical Styles.

☐ SINGLE COMBAT SKILL AND SOCIAL ARMOR

It may be desirable to make Social Combat follow the combat routine even more closely. Due to the number changes this option presents, they must be described here.

Like combat skills, your ability to attack and defend is governed by one skill, Oratory. Oratory is your skill at presenting ideas. It is your public face, demeanor, or bearing.

Rhetoric is your skill for crafting and dissecting ideas. It is both your talent at formulating your own ideas and evaluating the ideas of others. Your SI in Rhetoric is treated as an impact bonus and also as armor against attacks.

Since Oratory is now purely for delivering ideas, and Rhetoric for crafting and dissecting ideas, the Skill Bases of both skills should be changed to reflect this:

Oratory VOI, CML, AUR

Rhetoric INT, WIL, HRG

When you strike in combat, add your SI in Rhetoric to your damage roll. Your opponent gets to subtract his SI in Rhetoric from your roll before the damage level is determined.

Since Oratory is the only combat skill, every new character start with the knowledge of (1) Persuasion style and (1) Rebuff style. For every 10% increase in Oratory beyond 20%, the character may chose (1) addition Persuasion or Rebuff style.

Was it a bargain?

Here is a conservative way to evaluate a successful combat between two merchants trying to sell each other goods. Subtract the winner's ILs from his Charisma, and determine the percentage of his remaining Charisma.

100% Discount of 30% on purchases and a 30% mark-up on sales.

75% Discount and mark-up of 25%

50% Discount and mark-up of 20%

25% Discount and mark-up of 15%

10% Discount and mark-up of 10%

Decisive Trumping

☐ All results made by the trumping character are either a Critical Success or Critical Failure.

Limiting Styles

You may find that the use of styles slows down the Social Combat routine, or you may feel that people are generally not as versatile of a speaker as these rules assume.

Single Style

☐ Each character knows only one style for each skill.

Style Specialities

☐ Alternatively, Styles are learned only as specialties of Orate or Rhetoric. If you use this rule, some characters may have no specific style. You cannot trump a character that does not use a style.

No Styles

☐ While styles and trumping give Social Combat panache, they are unnecessary. The Social Combat rules are in use, but all references to style and trumping are ignored.