

BESM EX

A Netbook For Big Eyes, Small Mouth Second Edition (Version 1)
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INTRODUCTION

*BESM EX** is a collection of essays, variant rules, and new character traits for Guardians of Order's *Big Eyes Small Mouth* anime RPG, intended to help you understand the system on a deeper level and even mutilate it to better fit your tastes and/or your particular campaign. At this point I'm not going to delve into advice for running anime-style campaigns, mainly because I could literally fill up an entire book on that subject alone.

This work is purely by and for fans, and is not endorsed by Guardians of Order in any way. Stuff is used without permission, rules interpretations are unofficial, new character traits are twice as unofficial, and new optional rules are even more unofficial than that. It's one big steaming pile... of unofficialness. If something's wrong with it blame us, not them. And buy lots of their stuff. I recommend *Uresia*.

BESM EX is also an ongoing project; it'll be revised as new material is created (and hopefully on the basis of feedback too hint hint), and also given a substantial revision to account for the changes in the upcoming *Big Eyes Small Mouth Third Edition*. If you have stuff you think ought to be in here, let me know, but be warned I'm going to be annoying and picky about it. Nyo.

Thanks To:

- The Guardians of Order message board community, whose arguments and insights have proven very enlightening. I think.
- The RPGnet message board community, for more or less the same reason.
- My friends, Suichi, Sanjiyan, KyngAzz, Red Eye, Wirebrain, and several others who not only have real names but for some reason are willing to put up with me and my writing habits.
- S. John Ross, whose wacky and elegant free game (Risus) I can't help but plug whenever I get the chance. <http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>

What's In This Book

- **Chapter 1: Using BESM:** This chapter discusses some of the finer points of running a game using BESM, both in terms of how the rules are meant to be used, and new ways to put them to use.
- **Chapter 2: New Rules:** Here we have a plethora of optional and variant rules that can be used to modify BESM as subtly or extensively as you wish.
- **Chapter 3: Characters:** Everything relating to making characters goes here. This includes a large selection of new Attributes, Defects, and Skills, plus guidelines for creating new "multipowers."

* Kind of like *Street Fighter EX* – made by someone else, and nifty in its own way, but not quite true to the original (GoO never used footnotes for one thing) and bound to annoy some die-hard fans. ^_^

CHAPTER 1: USING BESM

I picked up the original little gray book called Big Eyes Small Mouth pretty much on general principle because it claimed to be an anime game. What I found inside didn't make too much sense to me, and it promptly started to collect dust. I eventually gave it a chance and liked it overall, but quickly found that my players pretty much hated everything about it and found it to be far, far too simplistic. Character abilities that didn't seem to really do what the names suggested they should do (Cybernetic Body being a particularly bad offender), a Body Stat of 12 didn't have enough benefits to actually make a character seem like he was "best in the universe" at Bodily things other than not being able to fail a die roll without either a critical failure or penalties, and there were no skills to boot.

Between me getting some more experience with the game and the improvements and clarifications of the Second Edition, I've gotten a much better handle on how the game is actually meant to work. Without this understanding, Tri-Stat can be kludgy and vague to the point of being useless, but with a good knowledge of how it's supposed to work it suddenly becomes a powerful and elegant system. This chapter examines some of those things more closely, in order to help players get more out of what's already in BESM.

Effects and Causes

The single most important thing is that players must think in terms of effects instead of causes. It's pretty obvious that a wizard's fireball and a cyborg's built-in flamethrower are both similar Weapon/Special Attack attributes, but it's less obvious that this approach extends even to something as basic as Stats. Body, Mind, and Soul are an elegant and ancient triumvirate, but for anime it seems to be practically a requirement to have strength and agility in two separate character traits. With the exception of something like a shoujo manga that takes place in high school (where all that matters is an overall level of physical ability for P.E. class), in anime strength and agility tend to be inversely proportional, from the lightning-fast girl who defeats opponents by being too quick to even see, much less hit, to the slow rock-armored giant of a fighter whose blows shake the earth.

It's counter-intuitive at first, but Body doesn't really measure these things. It (along with Soul) may be a starting point for a character's Health points, but the main purpose of Body is to give the character a number to roll against when doing physical things. All of the things you normally associate with attributes/characteristics/stats like Strength/Muscle, Constitution/HT/Stamina, and Agility/Dexterity are only really reflected in Body where basic dice rolls are concerned. *Everything* else either can be altered beyond recognition by Attributes and Defects, or is wholly defined by Attributes and Defects in the first place, and even the rolls can be affected somewhat. A strong but slow character should take Not So Fast, Damn Healthy!, Super Strength, and maybe even Armor, while the speed demon would probably be wanting Not So Strong and Super-Speed.

Understanding this principle will allow you to write up pretty much anything in game terms, since it removes *any* need for Stats to directly correlate to reality. This is particularly true where scaling is concerned. In spite of being as tall as a skyscraper and having the strength to crush mountains, Godzilla doesn't need a Body of 28. He needs a Body high enough to let him succeed with appropriate frequency when it comes time to make a Body check on 2d6. But he also needs Super-Strength, Armor, and some other Attributes at pretty high levels to reflect his hugeness. A 6-inch-high pixie character doesn't have to have a Body of 1 either; Not So Strong and Diminutive will go a long ways towards making the game effects match her intended scale.

Twinkery and Munchkinism

A number of years ago there was an article going around the net about the four basic types of roleplayers – Real Men (who like kicking ass), Real Roleplayers (who like deep character interaction), Real Loonies (who like to make things silly), and Munchkins (who like to accumulate raw destructive power at all costs). Working the game mechanics to try to squeeze out the maximum amount of power is variously known as min-maxing, powergaming, and being a twink or a munchkin. Guardians of Order’s “Role-Playing Game Manifesto” states that these are a problem with the player and not the game. Although this isn’t 100% true of all RPGs*, BESM was definitely conceived with this philosophy in mind.

A player setting out to make an overpowered character within the same number of points as his fellow players wouldn’t have as much of a challenge in Tri-Stat as he might with some other systems. In part this is simply the price of its flexibility; a player who simply wants to build the character concept he has in his head is less likely to be held back by the game mechanics, and to a lesser extent even the assigned character point total won’t be too much of a burden.

Although players are expected to be responsible, it’s ultimately up to the GM to keep things under control. During character creation, the GM has a right to (politely) “veto” character traits that are felt to be inappropriate to the campaign. This can be for reasons of plausibility (“Why exactly does your allegedly normal high school student have Size Change?”) as well as game balance (“Why exactly does your allegedly normal high school student have enough Health Points to shrug off a tank shell?”), or whatever else is pertinent (“Why exactly do I see ‘Natural Weapons (Naughty Tentacles)’ on your character sheet?”). Even well meaning players will sometimes come up with something that could stand to be disallowed, whether because of inexperience with the game system or blind luck. If the GM can stop problems before they start, so much the better.

The other place where the GM can deal with powergaming is during the campaign. A GM is pretty much in charge of the whole game, and while it’s best to regard the relationship between the GM and the players as an equal partnership, a GM has an infinite array of possible ways for dealing with problems in-game. Although plausibility (or whatever passes for such in the game world) should be maintained, the GM can easily cause any abusive trait to be taken away, force it to be put to good use, or make it have dire consequences. Ideally the GM should be looking for a way to use it to make the game more interesting.

Dice Rolls

When all is said and done, particularly in a rules-light game like BESM dice rolls are simply one of the GM’s tools. Where a movie director wields things like cinematography, sound design, and lighting, a GM’s craft is aided by things like rules and narration – and dice rolls. Especially when dice-rolling is kept to a minimum, on those occasions when the GM does call for a player to roll the dice it calls attention to whatever the roll concerns, implying both importance and randomness (though neither is necessarily really there).

* The short version of this side-discussion goes along the lines that some RPGs put more emphasis on the “game” part, a style of play that is neither superior nor inferior, but a matter of personal taste.

• **Probability**

The entire point of dice is to put an element of randomness into the game. Understanding the probabilities involved can be useful, especially in the case of a roll-under mechanic like that used in Tri-Stat. The table below lists the chances of rolling a given number on 2d6, both in terms of a fraction of the 36 possible rolls afforded by two six-sided dice and as a percentage. The left side shows the chances of rolling each individual number, while the right side shows the chances of rolling that number or lower – in effect, the chances of success on a basic Stat Check of that level.

X	Chances of Rolling X Exactly		Chances of Rolling X or Lower	
2	1/36	2.8%	1/36	2.8%
3	2/36	5.6%	3/36	8.3%
4	3/36	8.3%	6/36	16.7%
5	4/36	11.1%	10/36	27.8%
6	5/36	13.9%	15/36	41.7%
7	6/36	16.7%	21/36	58.3%
8	5/36	13.9%	26/36	72.2%
9	4/36	11.1%	30/36	83.3%
10	3/36	8.3%	33/36	91.7%
11	2/36	5.6%	35/36	97.2%
12	1/36	2.8%	36/36	100%

• **Check Value**

A “Check Value” is the number the player must roll at or under to succeed on a given task. Under the standard rules this is simply the relevant Stat (skills and any other factors are treated as modifiers and are subtracted from the dice roll).

Optionally, the Check Value can be calculated as the sum of the Stat, Skill, and any other modifiers*, under which players must roll on an unmodified 2d6. This requires that modifiers be inverted; bonuses become positive numbers and penalties become negative ones.

• **Degree of Success vs. Binary Rolls**

The first and second editions of BESM diverge on one critical and often overlooked point. In the first edition all rolls were what might be called “binary,” in that success or failure was more or less the only thing that mattered; a roll of 3 and a roll of 9 technically have the same result if your Stat is 10. Second edition introduced a concept called “Degree of Success” (and the accompanying Degree of Failure), whereby the amount by which the dice roll is below the character’s Check Value determines the quality of the success or failure.

The advantage of binary rolls is mainly speed, since it cuts out a mathematical operation from the process. The GM can ask for a particular Stat Check and get a simple yes or no answer in seconds. Degrees of Success, however, let the GM evaluate the quality of an action’s success, and if used creatively they can add a lot of flavor to dice rolls. Probably the most important use of Degrees of Success is for contested actions. When two characters act against one another directly or indirectly, they both make rolls like normal, but the winner is the one with the greater Degree of Success (or least Degree of Failure if they both fail). Thus if two characters with Bodies of 8 and 11 are arm-wrestling and both roll a 7, the one with the

* This is how Tri-Stat dX handles things. Don’t be surprised to find it in BESM 3rd Edition.

Body of 11 wins (his Degree of Success is 4 to his opponent's 1), even though they both had the same die roll and both succeeded.

This book also features a variant rule for using a “roll-over” dice mechanic. See p. 15.

• Degrees of Success In Combat

In the standard Tri-Stat rules combat is the one type of “contested” action where Degree of Success is not a factor; combat rolls are always binary. A character defending from an attack always has the likelihood of defending indicated by his Defensive Combat Value (with applicable modifiers of course), regardless of how accurate the opponent's attack might be. The result of this is that attacks only actually hit when the attacker succeeds and the defender fails at the same time. With high-powered characters this can make combat very time-consuming, as the combatants continually throw out attacks that are unlikely to miss, hoping that their opponent will finally fail to defend. However this problem is handily solved by making use of the Trick Shots rule introduced in *BESM Revised Second Edition*, allowing those characters to take a penalty to OCV while imposing an equal penalty on the opponent's DCV.

Treating combat checks like standard contested actions makes it easier for attacks to hit and ensures that the accuracy of an attack directly determines how difficult it is to defend against, but it also makes each combat roll require another step. Powerful characters will be able to more easily overwhelm weaker ones, and combat will involve more damage being dealt overall. *Hong Kong Action Theater!* uses a similar rule, except that if the defender's Degree of Success is less than the attacker's but the check is still successful the damage is halved.

• Criticals

If the dice come up with a 2 or a 12, the result is a critical success or a critical failure (respectively). A critical success always succeeds and a critical failure always fails, regardless of the apparent Degree of Success/Failure. Thus there's always at least that 2.8% chance each of success and failure. In an opposed roll, a critical success does not guarantee victory since the opponent could still have a greater Degree of Success, but it does mean that the character's Degree of Success is always considered to be at least 1 (Marginal Success), even if the character's Check Value is less than 2.

• Fun Stuff

There aren't many ways to accurately represent a 2d6 roll with something other than 2d6. Using a d12 instead destroys the probability curve that 2d6 provides, making criticals about three times more likely. If you want to change the scale of dice and Stats, you should be reading Tri-Stat dX instead.

On the other hand, Mayfair Games makes a product called the “Deck of Dice,” a deck of 36 cards that simulates the probability spread of two six-sided dice. This opens up all kinds of possibilities for doing nifty things with letting players have a hand of cards and other weirdness.

Koplow Games also makes “double dice” – a clear plastic six-sider with a smaller one inside of it, allowing you to roll two six-sided dice at once*. It makes no particular difference to the game, but it's sort of a neat novelty, and it makes your dice bag sound weird when it

* They also make a triple-d6 die, consisting of a clear cube with three tiny six-siders inside; GURPS players take note. ^_^

rattles around. And since six-sided dice are the most common type, there are a seemingly limitless variety of colors, patterns, materials, and sizes out there, and no telling what weirdness could be done with them.

Doing Things (With Or Without Skills)

BESM is unusual among RPGs in that it began with no skills whatsoever, and when added they were an option. Like Shock Value, one of the major purposes of skills is to help Tri-Stat better handle low-level characters and grittier settings. Skills provide a good way to distinguish low-level characters; a given pair might have the same Body score of 7, but with skills their actual capabilities could be made totally different even without Attributes and Defects. Skills can be time-consuming however, especially during character creation, and for high-level characters they can create an annoying power creep (since characters can have a Stat at up to 12 and a Skill at up to 6, it's not too hard to have a character that gets to try to roll under 18 on 2d6), so while they can be a great addition to many campaigns, they're not appropriate for all. Whichever route you opt for there are some questions that arise; what exactly is it that a character with a given set of traits can do?

- **What Is A Skill?**

Mechanically speaking a skill's level is how much better the character is over his Stat level. A character with a Body 9 and an Unarmed Attack skill of 2 effectively has a Body of 11 when he's making rolls related to Unarmed Attack, and that's that. When you're paying attention to the mechanics, once again you have to consider what Stat and skill levels are appropriate to give the character the right success ratio. However, in story terms even one skill level represents a certain amount of training above and beyond a generic novice, to the point where a character without a skill often won't even be allowed to attempt the skill regardless of his Stat level (or he might be allowed to with a hefty penalty). These two factors may seem a little tricky to balance, but for the most part as long as a character has at least one skill level in every skill he should be competent in, things should work out.

- **BESM, Skill-less?**

Running a game without skills may seem like a foreign concept to many gamers, but it's entirely possible. That is, after all, how BESM began. In game terms it may seem as though any character with a high Mind can hack a computer, and any character with a high Body can do gymnastic feats worthy of a master ninja. So how do you present a character whose mental ability is focused on magic and ancient lore, or whose physical prowess is devoted almost exclusively to bodybuilding? As with the treatment of skill levels, this can be solved by the GM using his discretion. Think of a character's stats not as generic Mind, Body and Soul, but as the Mind, Body, and Soul of that particular character type. A wizard can use his keen Mind to draw upon his knowledge of ancient mysteries, while a computer hacker's Mind gives him a frighteningly deep knowledge of all things technical, but the wizard would be just as lost around a computer as the hacker would be around the wizard's trusty Necronomicon, no matter how high their Mind stats are.

- **Relevant Stats**

The majority of the Attributes in BESM list a "Relevant Stat" in their description, and this has been the case since First Edition – without any particular explanation of their

purpose. A few Attributes (such as Dynamic Sorcery) explicitly require a stat check, and many others have very specific bonuses to checks (such as Animal Friendship and Heightened Awareness), but for most the Relevant Stat is there primarily as a tool for the GM.

Unless the description specifically calls for a check to be made, Attributes don't require dice rolls for normal use. Instead, the Relevant Stat is used for checks where the character is doing something unusual or challenging with the Attribute, whether because of adverse conditions or trying to affect others. If a character wants to use Art of Distraction to keep a squad of hard-nosed imperial guards (who are much harder to distract than average people in the street) from noticing her friends sneaking past them, the GM might rule that a roll on the Relevant Stat (Body or Soul in this case) is going to be necessary to succeed. If two girls are competing to use their Appearance to charm the same prince, the GM might decide that they should make a contested roll on the Relevant Stat (Body) to decide who will be victorious.

• Attributes/Defects and Stat/Skill Checks

Attributes and Defects can both play a role in checks made by a character, even though relatively few of these give explicitly defined bonuses or penalties. This is mostly just a matter of applying some common sense. Attributes can have effects that fall far outside of the realm of what a character can accomplish using basic Stats and Skills, which means they can result in substantial bonuses or penalties to dice rolls, or even take things so far that a roll isn't really necessary.

Suppose two characters are racing each other to reach a control panel in time to start or stop the Giant Death Ray. If one of them has Speed at 1, he's 1½ times faster than a typical adult; fast, but still within the range of human ability, so he could get a noticeable bonus to his Body check, but his opponent might still be able to get a lucky roll and catch up to him, especially if there are obstacles that need to be avoided along the way. On the other hand if it was say Speed 5 (*five* times the running speed of the average human), it wouldn't be too unreasonable to rule that our "slowpoke" friend is just plain out of luck, unless he can come up with some clever way to even the odds in time.

Methods and Madness

One way to up the "anime-ness" of the game is to take into account how a character goes about tackling a task when deciding what traits a check is going to be based on. Normally the Stat being used for an action is pretty obvious, and for realism there's rarely much leeway for changing what those are – but we're dealing with anime here.

Suppose there are three sisters who are going to cook dinner for when their father and older brother come home from a long trip to America. Ayase doesn't cook very much, but she's very smart, so she pulls out a recipe for curry rice and follows its instructions exactly. Chika is a fairly accomplished martial artist, so she decides to make a salad, using her martial prowess to chop, toss, and catch the vegetables with lightning speed and perfect precision. Harumi isn't too bright, but she's going to try hard and put her heart into baking a cake for her beloved older brother. The GM decides that Ayase makes a Mind roll because she's bringing her intellect to bear on the task at hand, Chika gets to make a Body roll for putting her agility to good use (for a change), and Harumi is relying on her heart and dedication to pull her through, so for her it's a Soul roll. When everything is done, it isn't hard to tell who cooked what; Ayase's curry rice is arrayed neatly on the table and tastes very much like the better convenience store brands, Chika's salad is a standard salad, but the cuts on the

vegetables are precise and they're all fresh, and the cake from Harumi seems a little lopsided, but it's decorated very cutely and actually tastes really good.

This approach isn't appropriate for everything; it's deliberately cinematic, and as such is better used sparingly, for the moments where it's either particularly poignant or just makes the game more fun. If a player wants to use the character's stronger Stat when it doesn't seem terribly appropriate to the action, an entertaining explanation is in order. If it's sufficiently amusing, and it doesn't bend the plausibility of the game too far, there's no reason to not let it proceed.

The "methods and madness" rule isn't really any different when used with skills; by and large it will simply be a matter of being flexible about which Stat is being used, something many skills already allow for. In the above example all three girls would be using their Cooking skill (if any), even though Chika is using a Stat that can't normally be used with Cooking.

More Features

There are a lot of things in BESM that aren't well understood or aren't used to their full potential.

- **Combat Value**

Combat Value is perhaps one of the most abstract – and for some players counter-intuitive – aspects of Tri-Stat. Calculated as the average of all three Stats, CV is the synergy of Mind, Body and Soul that allows a character to function in combat. And just like the Stats it's derived from, CV is meant to be redefined by other Traits. Combat Mastery and Inept Combat can increase or decrease CV as desired, and combat skills can boost it for specific purposes, allowing a character to be more accurate at some forms of combat than others (thus fixing what is perhaps the most difficult part of accepting CV as a valid game mechanic). However, there are other Traits that affect a character's combat skill in less direct ways. Focused Damage is an obvious example; it represents a character's skill with a given form of combat, but specifically skill at causing damage (which makes it especially good for characters who are meant to excel in hand-to-hand combat). Other Attributes like Gun Bunny and Kensei similarly give characters more subtle ways to affect combat, including bonuses for specific types of fighting.

- **Energy**

Energy Points are an exhaustible resource, separate from Health Points that every character has. Any character can put them to good use to temporarily raise a single Stat (10 Energy per +1) or his or her Health Points (5 Energy per +1), but they're also a limiting factor for Attributes like Dynamic Sorcery and Magic.

- **Magic**

Though "Energy" calls forth images of a wizard building power to throw a fireball or a martial artist charging up a chi blast, Energy is ultimately just a limiting factor on whether or not a character can use Attributes and such that have an Energy cost. The rest is just "flavor text." In turn, this means that the main purpose of the Magic attribute is to give a discount for Attributes that cost Energy to use. That makes the name a little bit misleading; while sorcery with a limited pool of magical energy are perfectly good way to use the Magic

attribute, it can be used for pretty much any set of abilities where “energy” of some kind is the major limitation on their use. The game text already suggests psychic powers – it’s listed as “Magic (Or Psionics)” – but that’s only the tip of the iceberg. Although it might be a bit out of place for your average superhero (even some of the ones who use magical powers), an anime martial artist can have “chi powers” that allow him to use his spiritual energy to perform spectacular energy-based moves, and a cyborg or robot might have a limited power supply that is drained when he uses his more powerful weapons and special gadgets. The same goes for Dynamic Sorcery; the only difference is that rather than a pool of points for specific powers, it gives the character an ability to make up effects on the fly. While a sorcerer is probably the most likely candidate for this kind of power, a psychic, or even a robot with some kind of liquid-metal system could just as easily put it to good use in representing their abilities.

Glossary of Game Terms

Even a simple RPG system like Tri-Stat involves a fair amount of game jargon; this glossary is intended to help you sort it all out. Terms marked with an asterisk (*) are either newly introduced here (to clearly define a concept that already exists unnamed), or were used in a Tri-Stat rulebook somewhere but not explicitly defined in BESM. This glossary omits basic RPG terms like GM, NPC, player, etc., concentrating on those terms for which Tri-Stat uses something different from typical RPGs.

Advancement Points: In long-term campaigns, BESM characters improve by being assigned a single Character Point every five sessions or so, and if skills are being used a Skill Point every session or so. For an alternative to Advancement Points, see “Experience Points” on p. 14.

Attribute: A type of character trait representing innate or acquired talents or abilities. These cover virtually every positive character trait not represented by Stats or Skills. Note that in most RPGs Tri-Stat’s “Attributes” would be called Advantages, Edges, Powers, Merits, etc., and Attributes are what Tri-Stat calls Stats.

Background Points: Extra character points (1 to 3) awarded to a player for the creation of an interesting background.

***Binary Roll:** A dice roll where Degree of Success/Failure is not taken into account and all that matters is whether the die roll is lower than the Check

Value. BESM uses binary rolls for combat.

Body: One of the three Stats, representing a character’s physical abilities. This includes strength, stamina, agility, and manual dexterity.

Bonus Points (BP): When a character takes a Defect, he or she gains extra character points, called Bonus Points.

Character Points (CP): Characters are created by spending Character Points on different character traits. Average characters get about 30 CP, but the GM can set the total as appropriate for the campaign’s intended power level.

Check: An instance where the player must roll the dice to see if his or her character succeeds.

***Check Value:** The number a character must roll under (on 2d6) to succeed at a given task.

Combat Value (CV): A character’s overall level of ability in combat, calculated as an average of the three Stats. Combat Value is divided into Offensive Combat Value (OCV) and Defensive

Combat Value (DCV); these are used for attacking and defending respectively, but DCV is two points lower than OCV. A character's base CV can be increased by either increasing Stats or taking the Combat Mastery attribute.

***Contested Action:** An action in which two characters are directly or indirectly opposing each other. The winner of a Contested Action is the character with the highest Degree of Success (or the lowest Degree of Failure if both characters fail).

***Critical:** A roll of 2 or 12 on 2d6 is a critical success or a critical failure (respectively). A critical success is always at least a Marginal Success and a critical failure is always at least Marginal Failure.

Defect: A trait reflecting something negative about the character. Most Defects provide 1 or 2 extra character points, depending on their severity. Note that these are equivalent to what many RPGs call "Disadvantages."

Derived Values: Special character traits that are calculated based on a character's Stats – Health Points, Energy Points, and Combat Value. All Derived Values can be modified with certain Attributes and Defects.

Degree of Failure: The amount by which a die roll exceeds an action's Check Value; how badly a character fails at an action.

Degree of Success: The amount by which a die roll is below an action's Check Value; the quality of an action's success.

Energy Points (EP): A character's inner reserves of energy, which can be used to fuel certain Attributes and also to temporarily boost Stats or Health, are represented by Energy. Energy is calculated as $(\text{Mind} + \text{Soul}) \times 5$.

Health Points (HP): Health is a character's capacity for damage; when a character is physically harmed, in combat or otherwise, the damage is subtracted from his or her Health, and when the Health reaches zero the character is incapacitated. Health is calculated as $(\text{Body} + \text{Soul}) \times 5$.

Initiative: At the beginning of each combat round characters make initiative rolls to determine the order in which they can act. Each player rolls one die and adds the character's Attack Combat Value; characters act from highest to lowest initiative value. Certain traits such as Speed, Maneuver Bonus, and Poor Maneuverability can add a bonus or penalty to this roll.

Mecha: In game terms, a mecha is a vehicle of some kind that one or more characters can ride in or on, whether a suit of power armor, a car, a tank, a giant robot, or a mile-long spaceship. Characters normally acquire mecha by taking the Own a Big Mecha (OBM) Attribute.

Mind: One of a character's three Stats. Mind represents intelligence and wits.

Modifier: A bonus or a penalty applied to a dice roll/check, usually due to conditions that make the action a character is attempting easier or harder.

***Multipower:** An Attribute that provides points with which several related "sub-attributes" can be purchased. BESM 2nd Edition includes the following Attributes that can be considered multipowers: Item of Power, Magic, Own A Big Mecha, and Servant (and arguably Metamorphosis). See p. 27 for a more in-depth look at multipowers.

***Contested Action:** An action in which two characters are competing, directly or indirectly, against each other. The winner of a contested action is the

character with the highest Degree of Success (or the lowest Degree of Failure if both fail).

Psyche: An optional Derived Value introduced in BESM 2nd Edition Revised, Psyche represents a character's ability to handle extremes of terror. Psyche is calculated as the average of Mind and Soul, and characters make Psyche checks whenever they encounter particularly terrifying creatures, taking a penalty between +0 and +5 depending on the creature in question. The degree of failure determines how badly the character is affected by fright.

***Related Defect:** A Defect that specifically pertains to one particular Attribute, usually one for a special power, and limit its use. Examples include Conditional Ownership, Magical Restrictions, and One-Way Transformation.

Relevant Stat: The Stat(s) most closely related to the use of a particular Attribute. Most Attributes don't require a check on the Relevant Stat normally, but the GM may decide it's necessary if a character is using an Attribute for an unusual or difficult task.

***RuneQuest Problem, The:** The fact that characters with very high Combat Values have an extremely difficult time actually hurting each other. This can be dealt with in a number of ways, including Trick Shots and using Contested Actions for combat.

Shock Value: Shock Value is an optional rule intended for grittier, deadlier campaigns; it's a Derived Value determined as the characters Health Points divided by 5. Damage in excess of a character's Shock Value can stun the character and cause more serious wounds that require treatment.

Skill: Skills are character traits representing training in specific areas of expertise; they're also an optional rule and not necessary for all campaigns. Skills are bought using Skill Points.

Skill Points: Skill Points are used to purchase skills; individual skills are assigned a Skill Point cost based on their importance to the game setting and genre, from 1 to 6. When Skills are being used, characters get 20 Skill Points, and can get 10 more for every 1 CP spent on the Highly Skilled Attribute.

Soul: One of a character's three Stats, representing willpower and spiritual ability.

Stat: Three basic traits that every character has to some degree – Body, Mind, and Soul. These are rated from 0 to 12, and each point of a Stat cost 1 character point. Note that these are equivalent to what most RPGs call "Attributes."

***Technique Attribute:** An Attribute which allows the player to select one "technique" or special ability from a list for each level of the Attribute taken. Examples include Gun Bunny, Kensei, and Special Movement.

***Trait:** Things that define a character in terms of game mechanics. A collective term for Stats, Attributes, Skills, Defects, and Derived Values.

Trick Shot: A new optional rule introduced in BESM 2nd Edition Revised, a trick shot in essence allows a character to find some unconventional way of attacking, and thereby take a penalty to his or her attack roll, but simultaneously impose the same penalty to the opponent's defense roll.

CHAPTER 2: NEW RULES

Drama Points

Drama Points (DP) are special points given to player characters, which can be spent to perform especially heroic tasks. Drama Points should be treated as what happens when a character summons up his or her inner reserves of willpower to accomplish something vitally important, and *never* a way for the players to hedge their bets when success seems uncertain.

Characters get 4 Drama Points at character creation, and are awarded 1-3 additional Drama Points at the end of every game session, based on how well the player role-played and in general made the game more fun.

There are numerous possible ways that Drama Points can be used. The default is for a single DP to allow the player to reduce a die roll by 2 points, to a minimum of 2 (but only a “natural” 2, rolled on the dice, is considered a critical). Only one Drama Point can be spent on a single die roll, and the player must declare its use before rolling the dice.

Experience Points

What follows is an optional system for character advancement, allowing for experience to be a little bit more granular than Advancement Points (where characters get 1 CP every five sessions or so).

At the end of each game session the GM assigns Experience Points (XP) to each character based on their performance. Because this is based on anime, the criteria for improving over time can vary vastly. As a rule of thumb, players should be rewarded for role-playing their character (especially when doing so makes the game more fun), actually learning things during the game, and of course accomplishing the goals of the adventure.

The genre and style of the campaign can influence what other criteria there are; if the game deals a lot with improving through combat, then experience should be granted for winning battles. If it's a more socially oriented shoujo-style game, then battles aren't too important, but role-playing well is vital.

Experience Point awards should range from 1-5 points, where 1 shows that the player at least showed up for the game session, 2 is average, 3 is good, and 4 or 5 means they did something really exceptional. Experience Points should be recorded on the character sheet and may be spent immediately or saved for later.

How XP may be spent is left up to the GM's discretion, and again should be determined partly by style and genre. In a more realistic campaign characters should have a reason for acquiring a new level of ability, whether through the School of Life (i.e., using the skill out in the real world) or taking lessons. More genre-fueled games can have characters learn things without much reason, possibly even on the fly – such as the martial artist who suddenly realizes what he needs to do and devises a new technique to defeat an opponent on the spot.

The GM sets an “exchange rate” for Experience Points to Character Points. To keep the rate of advancement within the same range as the standard character advancement rules (which say 1 CP per 5 or so sessions) this should be set at about 10 XP per CP, but the GM can slide this up or down depending on how quickly or slowly characters should be improving for the purposes of the intended genre and tone. If the game is using skills, characters can spend EP on that as well, usually at a rate of 1 Experience Point per Skill Point (thus maintaining the same 1:10 ratio as in character creation).

Roll-Over Action Resolution

BESM uses what could be called a “roll-under” method in that success at an action is determined by whether the dice roll is below a character’s Check Value. Many other game systems use a “roll-over” resolution mechanic; neither is inherently better than the other. There are certain trade-offs, and some players just have a preference for one or the other. Roll-over is a little quicker than rolls where Degrees of Success are used, but a little slower than rolls where they aren’t.

When a player makes a roll, he or she figures out the character’s **Check Value** (the sum of the Stat, Skill, and any other modifiers – where positive modifiers are good and negative ones are bad) and adds to it the total of a roll on two six-sided dice. The result is called the **Check Total**, and it can be used for an **Unopposed Action** (where the character is acting by himself) or an **Opposed Action** (where there’s someone acting directly against the character). Criticals are still used under the roll-over rules, but a 2 is a critical failure and a 12 is a critical success.

• Unopposed Actions

If the character is simply doing something on his own, such as fixing a computer or forcing open a door, the action is “unopposed.” For unopposed actions the GM sets a **Target Number** based on how difficult the action is; if the Check Total matches or exceeds the Target Number, the action is a success, and the greater the margin by which it exceeds the Target Number, the better the quality of the success attained. The “default” Target Number, which provides exactly the same chance of success as rolling under on 2d6, is 14.

Difficulty	Target Number
Trivial	10-11
Easy	12-13
Average	14
Difficult	15-16
Very Difficult	17-18
Nearly Impossible	19+

• Opposed Actions

When two characters are directly working against each other, as in combat, arm-wrestling, and whatever else seems appropriate, they both make a roll as usual and compare their Check Totals; the character with the higher result wins. A tie is just that, and in the case of combat it generally means that the defender succeeded, but just barely. Since there’s no Target Number involved in an opposed action, any factors affecting the difficulty of the action are represented as modifiers to the roll.

• Why Bother?

Roll-over is not the end-all be-all of game mechanics, but then neither are roll-under, dice pools, or anything else. It’s just another option that in the right place can fit better. First of all, it makes it easier for the GM to fudge rolls without the players knowing. In an unopposed action the player simply reports his Check Total; the GM can choose whether to keep the Target Number (or an opponent’s Check Total) a secret, change it to keep the result from derailing the game, or purposely tell the players to freak them out.

Binary rolls are made a little awkward, though they can be “simulated” by making a roll with a Target Number of 14. It’s easier to make combat use Opposed Actions for attack and defense; this makes it so that how powerful the opponent is and how well he rolled directly affect how difficult it is to succeed, and it’s rare for a roll to not result in a definite winner. For a fighting anime, this makes it much easier to have the archetypal villain character that can totally overwhelm the hero’s defenses.

CHAPTER 3: CHARACTERS

This chapter deals with character creation; it includes some more rules options and clarifications specifically aimed at making characters, and a large selection of new character traits. Some of these (especially Defects like Code of Honor and Personality Flaw) fall a bit outside of Tri-Stat's canon design philosophy, so they should be considered even more optional than the rest of this book.

Roleplaying and Social/Personality Character Traits

From the point of view of a game designer it can be tricky to find the right balance between leaving things to roleplaying and defining them in game terms, especially given the fact that the location of the "right" dividing line is purely a matter of opinion. Tri-Stat specifically tries to minimize the number of traits that have to do with social interaction, while other RPGs like Steve Jackson Games' GURPS specifically maps out several different personality traits (with accompanying game mechanics, often involving Will rolls) and social skills.

The argument against representing personality traits and social skills in game terms is pretty clear; it puts something that ought to be left up to the players in the hands of the game mechanics, and often gives players extra points for something that they can easily ignore. If you're of this school of thought, BESM is pretty much your ideal game system. You might wish to pull out skills like Intimidation and Seduction, and maybe some of the Attributes like Art of Distraction and Aura of Command, but for the most part it'll be smooth sailing.

On the other hand, social Traits can add a lot to the game, provided they're handled with a dose of common sense. Or to put it a different way, they need to be treated much the same as everything else in BESM – as an aid to the game that can be totally ignored whenever the GM feels doing so will be more conducive to the story. Just like the player who decides to take a couple levels of Cooking skill just because he has a few skill points left over after buying all those levels of Unarmed Attack, a player who picks up a "Personality Flaw" Defect because he needs that one extra BP is adding something to his or her character that wouldn't have been there otherwise and in all likelihood making the game a little bit more interesting.

• Attributes and Skills

For Attributes and Skills (including quite a few existing ones like Aura of Command and Seduction), the problem is keeping them from taking the place of roleplaying. These kinds of Traits are partly useful simply as a yardstick for what the character can do, both for the player and the GM. It's much the same as the Appearance attribute; everyone knows that a character has a certain kind of looks from it, but apart from the free levels of Art of Distraction (which in itself is pretty abstract in terms of game mechanics) it has no particular effect on the game beyond what comes about from roleplaying. Thus the GM can listen to how a player role-plays a given scene, and then take note of the character's Aura of Command attribute, Intimidation skill, Appearance attribute, or his or her utter lack of any of the above in deciding how NPCs react. Conversely, if a scene is too trivial and unimportant to waste time on roleplaying, a simple dice roll can handily decide the matter and move on to something more interesting.

- **Defects**

For Defects the difficulty is in making it matter to the point where those Bonus Points are justified, without being so heavy-handed that the GM is dictating a player character's actions. This isn't just a problem with representing personality traits as new Defects; existing ones like Easily Distracted can be just as bad. Some players will take a given Defect and play it to the hilt without any prompting. Others can be persuaded to put a bit more into roleplaying their Defects with some simple bribes in the form of small in-game rewards. A few are just greedy for more points, and if you know you have this kind of player you should probably be scrutinizing the rest of their character sheet just in case. The section on "Defects And Bonus Points" (see p. 24) includes some options that can be especially helpful for handling Defects relating to personality traits.

The Tri-Stat rules include no guidelines for if or how a character can overcome the effects of personality Defects like Easily Distracted and Phobia. The best solution is for the player to be sufficiently responsible and handle those character traits without any prompting from the GM. In some circumstances the GM decide to ask the player to make a Stat check (usually Soul, though nearly anything is possible) in order to overcome the effects of a Defect, often with a modifier depending on the severity of the Defect and the circumstances under which it comes into play. (A character with 2 BP worth of Gluttony would have a harder time resisting than one with 1 BP worth, but both would have a harder time resisting stuffing themselves when a mountainous feast is set before them). Needless to say, how the player roleplays the scene should at least be taken into account.

Attributes

Costume

Cost: 1 point/Level
 Relevant Stat: None
 Type: Normal (Shtick)

This rather cinematic Attribute gives the character's clothes some unusual properties.

Level 1	Clothes will only take minor, superficial damage from normal damage sources (the character still takes full damage, but he'll look cool doing so).
Level 2	The costume will also always fit the character should they change size and/or forms. If they take on a form where the costume is inappropriate or unnecessary (such as an animal form), it can change to appropriately themed accessories and such instead.
Level 3	If caught out of costume, the character can spend 5 Energy to change into it. This happens by spinning through the air, ripping off one's current clothing, or even getting really mad and having one's present clothing just sort of melt away.

Increased Energy Restoration

Cost: 1 point/Level
 Relevant Stat: None
 Type: Normal

Characters normally regain Energy Points equal to the average of their Mind and Soul stats every hour. A character with this Attribute has that amount increased.

Level 1	+1 Energy restored per hour.
Level 2	+2 Energy restored per hour.
Level 3	+3 Energy restored per hour.
Level 4	+4 Energy restored per hour.
Level 5	+5 Energy restored per hour.
Level 6	+6 Energy restored per hour.

Regeneration

Cost: 4 points/Level
 Relevant Stat: Body
 Type: Racial or Supernatural

Regeneration is a natural ability to heal wounds and other forms of damage very quickly while inactive. The form this takes depends on the character and the tone of the campaign; it might be grisly and painful, with blood flowing back into wounds and limbs agonizingly re-forming bones, muscles and tendons, or it might be all sparkly and nice, or it might just happen off-camera.

Level 1	Character heals 2 Health Points per turn
Level 2	Character heals 6 Health Points per turn
Level 3	Character heals 10 Health Points per turn
Level 4	Character heals 14 Health Points per turn
Level 5	Character heals 18 Health Points per turn

Level 6	Character heals 20 Health Points per turn
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Resourceful Pockets

Cost: 2 points/Level

Relevant Stat: Soul

Type: Normal (Shtick)

The character keeps various random items in their pockets, purse, or whatever, which can be pulled out as needed. This Attribute is vaguely reasonable at the first level, but becomes increasingly cartoony as it goes up in levels. The GM may require Soul rolls to find items.

Level 1	The character has a collection of random trinkets, which <i>may</i> prove useful in a given situation.
Level 2	The character has a nearly unlimited supply of one particular type of item, or a fair chance of pulling out an item useful in a given situation.
Level 3	The character has an unlimited supply of a given type of items (e.g., foods, traps, etc.), or a good chance of pulling a useful item.
Level 4	The character has all kinds of things in their pockets, of nearly infinite supply.
Level 5	The character seems to have the contents of an entire planet in their pockets.

Skills

Generic Skill Costs

While the genre-variable skill costs are one of the more unique and innovative aspects of BESM, it's useful to have a standard set of point values, whether for a multi-genre campaign or simply to reduce bookkeeping.

General Skill	Cost	General Skill	Cost	Combat Skill	Cost
Acrobatics	5	Mechanics	3	Archery	2
Animal Training	1	Medical	3	Gun Combat	6
Architecture	1	Military Sciences	3	Heavy Weapons	4
Artisan	1	Navigation	3	Melee Attack	5
Biological Sciences	3	Performing Arts	1	Melee Defense	5
Boating	3	Physical Sciences	3	Ranged Defense	6
Burglary	3	Piloting	2	Thrown Weapons	4
Business Management	2	Poisons	2	Unarmed Attack	6
Computers	4	Police Sciences	3	Unarmed Defense	6
Controlled Breathing	1	Riding	2		
Cooking	2	Seduction	2	New Skills	
Cultural Arts	2	Sleight of Hand	3	Communications	2
Demolitions	3	Social Sciences	3	Lore	2
Disguise	3	Sports	1	Meditation	3
Driving	3	Stealth	3	Music	1
Electronics	3	Swimming	1	Paranormal Sciences	3
Forgery	2	Urban Tracking	4	Persuasion	3
Gaming	1	Visual Arts	2	Use [Attribute]	6
Interrogation	1	Wilderness Survival	3		
Intimidation	3	Wilderness Tracking	3		
Law	2	Writing	1		
Linguistics	2				

Skill Ranks (Optional Rule)

While the variable skill costs of BESM have a lot of advantages, they can easily more than double the time it takes to make a character. Skill Ranks are an optional rule intended to make skills simpler and faster to use*. Rather than Skill Points, skills are bought using Skill Ranks; a Skill Rank is the equivalent of half of a Character Point or 5 Skill Points, and each Skill Rank is worth 1 level of any one skill. Characters have 4 free Skill Ranks; every level of Highly Skilled buys 2 more Skill Ranks, and every BP of Unskilled takes away 2 Skill Ranks.

Because all skills cost the equivalent of 5 Skill Points per rank, it's recommended that when Skill Ranks are being used characters be allowed to make basic Stat Checks for skills they don't have provided it's reasonably appropriate to the character's concept to be able to do so. Thus an average Japanese high school girl could probably cook something palatable without having the skill, but an average Japanese high school tomboy couldn't.

* For another way to simplify skills, see "Skill Groups" (*Tri-Stat dX* p. 46).

New Skills

This section provides a total of seven new skills; the table below gives the point costs for each of the genres listed in BESM. The individual skill descriptions also include a “Default Cost,” should the Generic Skill Costs rule (see above) be in use.

	Cyber-Punk	Hotrods and Guns	Martial Arts	Medieval Fantasy	Modern Military	Occult Horror	Space Opera	Teenage Romance
Communications	3	2	2	3	4	2	3	1
Lore	1	1	4	3	1	6	4	1
Meditation	1	1	4	2	1	3	1	1
Music	2	1	2	3	1	1	1	4
Paranormal Sciences	1	1	4	3	1	6	4	1
Persuasion	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	5
Use [Attribute]	4	3	5	6	3	6	4	2

Communications

Relevant Stat: Mind

Specializations: Carrier Pigeon, Laser, Microwave, Radio, Satellite, Secret Codes, Semaphore

Default Cost: 2

Communications is the ability to use specialized equipment for communicating over long distances. What this entails exactly depends on the character’s particular background, and could range anywhere from sending carrier pigeons with coded messages to operating a hyperspace communications array whose signals can cross galaxies in seconds.

Lore

Relevant Stat: Mind

Specializations: Ancient Tomes, Cryptozoology, Hermetic Magic, Religion, UFOs, Vampires

Default Cost: 2

This skill gives a character knowledge of ancient lore – myths, ancient tales, and tabloid stories about things that the rest of the world claims doesn’t exist and secretly fears that they do. While the knowledge provided by Lore is probably not 100% accurate, it’s sure to be useful for the kernels of truth it contains.

Meditation

Relevant Stat: Soul

Specializations: None

Default Cost: 3

Meditation is the ability to center oneself and be at peace with the universe. If a character meditates for one hour, he or she regains extra Energy equal to the Degree of Success of the Meditation check.

Music

Relevant Stat: Mind or Soul

Specializations: Bass, Composition, Drums, Guitar, Keyboard, Piano, Singing, Violin, etc.

Default Cost: 1

The ability to create and perform music. This can include composition, singing, and the playing of virtually any instrument imaginable.

Paranormal Sciences

Relevant Stat: Mind

Specializations: Paraphysics, Parapsychology, Tachyon Theory, Thaumaturgical Science, etc.

Default Cost: 3

In some settings it may be appropriate for there to be a scientific study of paranormal phenomena. This can include parapsychology (the study of psychic powers), paraphysics, (the study of the physics behind psychic powers), thaumaturgical science (the study of the principles of magic), etc.

Persuasion

Relevant Stat: Mind or Soul

Specializations: Beg, Bribe, Carouse, Fast-Talk, Flattery, Wheedle, Whine

Default Cost: 3

Persuasion is, put simply, a character's ability to manipulate others. Different characters have different ways of doing this, whether a corrupt bureaucrat's clandestine bribery, a used car salesman's practiced fast-talk routine, or a cute little girl's knack for whining until she gets what she wants.

Use [Attribute]

Relevant Stat: As per the Relevant Stat of the Attribute.

Specializations: None

Default Cost: 6 (see below)

This is a special skill intended for characters that make extensive use of an Attribute whose Relevant Stat they're deficient in. Use [Attribute] must be purchased separately for each Attribute for which the character wants to receive a bonus to Stat checks.

Optionally, the cost of Use [Attribute] can be set to the cost per Level of whatever Attribute it applies to, plus 2.

Defects

Defects And Bonus Points

Defects (known elsewhere by such diverse names as Disadvantages, Hindrances, Flaws, Faults, etc.) are sometimes criticized as a game mechanic because some players like to try to abuse them as a source of free character points. Some systems get this claim more frequently than others, but since BESM's defects generally provide only 1 or 2 points (out of 40+ for a typical character) and Defects are meant to always be things that the character can't control, it's not heard as often in reference to Tri-Stat.

- **Advancement Penalty**

If a player really seems to be ignoring a Defect, the GM might rule that the character is effectively having the Defect removed, and withhold enough Advancement Points to make up the BP value of the Defect.

- **BP Limit**

One easy way to keep Bonus Points under control is to simply set a limit on the number of BP that a character can gain. Players can still select as many Defects as they want, but over a certain threshold they no longer count towards more BP. Unless Defects are being used extensively to modify the effects of Attributes, a BP Limit of 5 or 6 is appropriate for most campaigns.

- **Drama/Experience Point Rewards**

When the optional rules for Drama Points or Experience Points are being used, a handy mechanism is created for rewarding just about anything. If a character has a Defect that's going to come into play, the GM can give the player the option of either resisting it and continuing on as normal, or succumbing to it but getting an extra point in the process. Similarly, if the player voluntarily has his character do something significantly disadvantageous on the basis of the effects of a Defect, a reward is in order. This approach gives the players an incentive for playing out their Defects as much as possible. Especially in a long-term campaign, the benefits of pushing a Defect to the limit can outweigh the extra point or two gained from it, and players who don't make their Defects matter simply don't get the points. Alternatively, these rewards could be the *only* benefit for taking Defects, especially ones related to personality traits, with no BP gained during character creation.

- **Drama Point Expenditure**

If Drama Points are being used, characters might be able to overcome some Defects by spending one.

- **In-Game Significance**

Like any character trait, Defects should come into play often enough to justify the points involved. Just as a good GM gives the player characters challenges that reflect their Attributes and Skills, making actual obstacles of Defects during the course of the game (within reason) is important.

Bad Skill

Select one of the character's skills (or if you're not using the skill system, a given activity); this defect causes them to be mind-numbingly bad at the skill, while still insisting on trying. Regularly. Bad Skill at Cooking would produce inedible if not poisonous dishes, Bad Skill at Computers would have the things exploding, Bad Skill at Gun Combat would have them firing off wildly inaccurate shots (lots of them) and generally endangering everyone around, and so forth.

- | | |
|------|------------------------------------|
| 1 BP | Skill becomes useless. |
| 2 BP | Skill becomes downright dangerous. |

Code of Honor

The character follows a strict code of honor, and breaking it would have serious repercussions, whether because of consequences from outside, or consequences that the honorable character will inflict on himself.

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1 BP | The code significantly limits the character and may lead him to harm. (Code of Chivalry, Pirate's Code, etc.) |
| 2 BP | The code severely limits the character, or could easily lead him to harm. (Bushido, Three Laws of Robotics, Shinobi/Ninja code, etc.) |

Combat Paralysis

Some characters just have a hard time reacting when combat starts, whether because of fear, panic, or simply slow reflexes.

- | | |
|------|---------------------------|
| 1 BP | +2 penalty to Initiative. |
| 2 BP | +4 penalty to Initiative. |

Limited Actions

A character with this attribute moves very slowly for some reason, and in combat doesn't get to act every turn. Some characters are this slow, but generally this defect is intended for large, lumbering mecha.

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1 BP | The character only acts two turns out of every three. |
| 2 BP | The character only acts every other turn. |
| 3 BP | The character only acts one turn out of every three! |

Limited Energy Restoration

Characters normally regain Energy Points equal to the average of their Mind and Soul stats. A character with this Defect regains Energy more slowly, if at all. This defect should not be allowed to characters who do not use Energy Points for something.

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1 BP | -2 Energy Points restored per hour. |
| 2 BP | Half the usual number of Energy Points per hour. |
| 3 BP | No Energy Points restored naturally! The character must gain energy from some outside source. |

Obligation

A character with an Obligation has some task or responsibility that he or she must take care of, to the detriment of his or her ability to handle the main activities of the campaign. This could take the form of a part-time job, going to school, a sick relative who needs to be cared for, a younger sibling or child who needs to be watched over, a high-maintenance pet, a huge debt that has to be repaid over a long period of time, or anything else of that nature. Obligation never applies to something that is the main point of the campaign; if all of the player characters are in high school or work as police officers, those don't count as Obligations.

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1 BP | A significant obligation that takes away a fair amount of the character's time, such as a part time job, school, or a younger sibling that has to be looked after. |
| 2 BP | A major obligation that is always taking up a major portion of the character's time, such as a baby sibling, a full-time job, school with lots of club activities and cram school after, etc. |

Personality Flaw

The character has a flaw in their personality, something irritating if not outright amazingly annoying to others. This Defect is not to be taken lightly; any flaw chosen is beyond normal human proportions, especially in the 2 BP version. For Arrogance, a character really will consider themselves to be the center of the universe. For Greed a character will hoard every last penny possible, and then some. For Lechery a character will be... er... You get the idea.

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1 BP | The personality flaw is severe but livable. |
| 2 BP | The personality flaw is the character's primary defining personality trait, and few (if any) people can stand them because of it. |

Weirdness Magnet

Odd stuff just tends to happen to the character. Though they might long for a normal life, the strangeness just keeps on happening. The form that this takes depends on the campaign, but can range from invading aliens stopping by, to demons coming for tea, to strange martial artists challenging them to duels, to simply having strange bouts of luck.

- | | |
|------|---------------------------------|
| 1 BP | Mild weirdness. |
| 2 BP | Extreme, inescapable weirdness. |

Multipowers

A “multipower” is an attribute that provides characters with a pool of points that can be spent on “sub-attributes.” BESM already includes several Attributes that can be considered multipowers, notably Item of Power, Magic, Own A Big Mecha, and Servant (and to a lesser extent Metamorphosis). Several of GoO’s licensed RPGs have also included setting-specific multipowers, such as the “Jurai Power” and “Mass Power” attributes in the *Tenchi Muyo! RPG And Resource Book*. BESM 2nd Edition already includes virtually every multipower that could be useful on a universal basis, but it’s entirely possible to create new ones that are specific to a particular style or game world.

Multipower Design Guidelines

- **Balanced vs. Elemental**

Broadly speaking there are two types of multipowers: balanced and elemental. The ones that exist in BESM already are **balanced multipowers**; the extra points they provide are balanced by some kind of limiting factor. Sub-attributes of the Magic attribute have an energy cost, and OBM creates a vehicle that is subject to loss and requires repairs. **Elemental multipowers** don’t bother with any significant balancing factors; they exist to codify a particular type of special power in game terms. Elemental multipowers usually have a specific set of Attributes that can be purchased as sub-attributes, not unlike how only certain Attributes are appropriate for mecha; the aforementioned Jurai Power and Mass Power each have a list of a dozen specific sub-attributes available. Generally speaking, a multipower should never include another multipower as a sub-attribute.

Balanced multipowers can conceivably be used in any campaign, though new ones are likely to be fairly specific in setting or style (such as the Cyborg multipower below). Elemental multipowers should always be something that every player character in the campaign can have access to, even if there are a few different ones available. Without something to balance the discount, it becomes just plain unfair. A typical multipower provides points for sub-attributes at a 2:5 ratio (10 points per 4 character points put into the Attribute), allowing a character to more than double the points put into the multipower.

- **Concept**

Like everything else, a multipower starts with a concept of what it is and what it can do. What kind of character uses this power, and how do they obtain it?

- **Base Cost/Sub-Attribute Points**

Multipowers usually cost 4 Points/Level, but the GM may set it lower for a multipower that works on a smaller scale (Item of Power and Servant being good examples). Most multipowers provide 5 points worth of sub-attributes for every 1 or 2 CP spent on the multipower. Generally speaking a 1:5 ratio (such as how OBM provides 20 points per 4 CP) is for things detached from the character that can be lost, stolen, or destroyed, and a 2:5 ratio (such as how Magic provides 10 points per 4 CP) is for things that are a part of the character but carry some kind of limitation. Characters can reduce the number of sub-attribute points granted by taking off a number of character points from the cost. If the cost is 4 CP per 10 points, a character could take off 2 CP and 5 sub-attribute points.

- **Drawbacks/Limitations**

Magic has an Energy Point cost and OBM gives you a machine that requires maintenance and can be blown up, so what does your new multipower have that justified the reduced cost of the sub-attributes it provides? For elemental multipowers this isn't necessary, but it pays to think about what limitations logically should fit into the theme of the powers anyway.

- **Perks**

Multipowers sometimes provide some kind of special advantages, though usually minor ones. Especially for elemental multipowers, perks are often simply something that it makes sense for every character with that type of power to have.

- **Available Attributes**

The GM probably should restrict the attributes that can be bought as sub-attributes for a multipower, and for an elemental multipower this is a must. This is partly a matter of avoiding annoying rules complications and excessive bookkeeping (such as how a Servant can't have its own Servant or OBM), and partly to keep in line with what's appropriate for the multipower in story terms. If "Magical Girl Power" is going to be available, Super-Strength is out of character, OBM is unnecessary (a Summonable mecha should be purchased on its own), and Magic would be getting downright abusive. Particularly ambitious GMs can even go so far as to modify the point costs of Attributes when they're used as Sub-Attributes. Characters with Magical Girl Power could Dynamic Sorcery costing 8 CP per Level (still discounted, but not nearly as much). Points from a multipower should rarely if ever be used to buy another multipower.

Sub-attributes from a multipower can potentially stack with normal character attributes too, though it's recommended that these cost more and/or have limited availability due to the nature of the mutlipower. In the "Magical Girl Power" example, Appearance could be available as a sub-attribute; if a magical girl already has Appearance 2 as a normal character trait and takes Appearance 3 as a sub-attribute, she'll have Appearance 5 when she transforms, but Appearance 2 otherwise. For some multipowers it might even be appropriate to include traits such as extra levels of Stats or Attributes like Damn Health! or Combat Mastery as sub-attributes.

- **Special Sub-Attributes**

A multipower could even have very specialized sub-attributes available, reflecting either abilities that are unique to that type of power or things that tweak its basic nature in certain ways.

- **Related Defects**

Certain Defects such as Conditional Ownership, Magical Restrictions, and One-Way Transformation are specifically meant to be paired with a given Attribute, adversely affecting how it functions in some way. New multipowers can easily be taken with existing related defects, or have new ones invented to allow them to be customized in new ways.

Example Multipowers

The following are some examples of different types of multipowers. None of these are tied to one particular setting, but there also aren't any that are as universal as a typical BESM attribute is.

Cyborg

Cost: 4 points/Level

Relevant Stat: None

Type: Technological (Balanced Multipower)

The Cybernetic Body attribute was rendered obsolete as of BESM 2nd Edition; any abilities a cyborg might have can easily be represented with various Attributes. However, suppose we wanted to create a balanced multipower for cyborg characters, or at least cyborg characters as they appear in a particular campaign world. This new Attribute is only appropriate for characters whose bodies are mostly artificial, and the point break is justified by the limitations of the nature of the cyborg's artificial body, which has to be maintained and repaired at a considerable expense.

- **Cyborg Appearance**

Cyborg characters are obviously partly artificial. Although they can be given realistic artificial skin, and can appear quite beautiful in some cases, it's very difficult for them to fully conceal what they are. Their bodies are up to five times heavier than those of normal humans, and even when made as human-looking as possible the artificial nature of their bodies shows through in subtle ways.

- **Longevity**

One advantage of an artificial body is that since there aren't any parts that can't be replaced it can be maintained almost indefinitely. With proper maintenance, a cyborg's lifespan is limited only by that of the human brain, which means living to the age of 120 or more isn't at all unusual.

- **Maintenance**

Cyborgs require regular maintenance, ranging from regularly cleaning and lubricating joints to periodically replacing parts. This adds up to a considerable expense; cyborgs generally have a job, are more or less owned by someone, or are very wealthy in order to keep their bodies in good running condition.

- **No Natural Energy Restoration**

A cyborg character's Energy Points don't represent any kind of mystical energy, but rather a reserve power supply used to run certain systems. As such it doesn't get restored with time; cyborgs must plug themselves into a power supply of some kind, allowing them to regain 20 EP per hour.

- **No Natural Healing**

A cyborg's artificial body can't heal on its own, and must be repaired. This requires the proper tools and in some cases replacement parts. Cyborgs with proper training may be able

to repair themselves, assuming the damage doesn't interfere with their ability to properly manipulate the tools and such. They cannot take attributes like Regeneration that restore Health Points.

• **Available Attributes**

The special features of a cyborg body are mostly technological in nature, so most Attributes that are appropriate for a mecha are also appropriate for a cyborg. Notable exceptions are Artificial Intelligence, Extra Capacity, Mecha Regeneration, Mecha Transformation, Summonable, Super-Transformation, and any Special Attribute that exceeds the bounds of the campaign world's technology level. This description assumes a near-future/cyberpunk type of cyborg, but in other settings Attributes like Insubstantial or Teleport might be appropriate.

• **Related Defects**

Hangar Queen and Volatile could be appropriate for cyborgs with more bleeding-edge/experimental bodies. Given the cost of cybernetic enhancement, Owned By A Megacorp is a common choice. A cyborg of cheap construction might have Bane, representing (for example) vulnerability to water because of poor insulation.

- **Remote Detonator** is a Unique Defect where someone has the ability to send a signal that will trigger an internal explosive placed close to the cyborg's brain; for 1 BP they are friendly, for 2 they're hostile but find the character useful.

Level 1	Character receives 10 points for cyborg features.
Level 2	Character receives 20 points for cyborg features.
Level 3	Character receives 30 points for cyborg features.
Level 4	Character receives 40 points for cyborg features.
Level 5	Character receives 50 points for cyborg features.
Level 6	Character receives 60 points for cyborg features.

Elemental Power

Cost: 4 points/Level

Relevant Stat: None

Type: Paranormal (Elemental Multipower)

Some characters are born with the power to control one of the elements. The power has to be either an inborn talent or the result of genetic tampering; it cannot be obtained otherwise. Different individuals manifest it differently, and develop their own techniques for using the particular elemental power they've developed.

This is an elemental multipower (put not intended), without any special drawbacks or perks – just a list of specific sub-attributes available for each element. It's intended for campaigns where every character of note has this power. Look at anime series like *Elementalors* and *Tokyo Underground* for examples of elemental powers.

A character with Elemental Powers must choose one element that he or she is able to influence. Fire, Wind, Water, and Electricity are covered here, but the GM is encouraged to work with players to devise lists of sub-attributes for other elements such as Earth, Gravity, Ice, Light, Magnetism, and Sound that might appear in the campaign.

The table below lists the Attributes that can be taken as Elemental Powers. Every Elemental Power sub-attribute must represent something accomplished through manipulation of the character’s particular element. Special Attacks are always used to represent the character using the element as a weapon, Flight involves in some way using that element as a form of propulsion, etc. The only exception is Sixth Sense, which can be taken for the purpose of sensing the use of elemental powers. An elemental character with Sixth Sense (elemental powers) can detect the use of any element and its approximate location, but not what type of element or power is being used.

All Elements	
Force Field (made of element)	Meld (element)
Metamorphosis (self, elemental form)	Sixth Sense (elemental powers)
Special Defense (against own element)	Telekinesis (element)
Transmutation (element)	Weapon/Special Attack
Electricity	
Flight	Keyed Energy Restoration (electricity)
Fire	
Flight	Illusion (visual only; made from fire)
Water	
Insubstantial (Liquid Form)	Water Speed
Wind	
Flight	Insubstantial (Gaseous Form)

Level 1	Character receives 10 points for Elemental Powers.
Level 2	Character receives 20 points for Elemental Powers.
Level 3	Character receives 30 points for Elemental Powers.
Level 4	Character receives 40 points for Elemental Powers.
Level 5	Character receives 50 points for Elemental Powers.
Level 6	Character receives 60 points for Elemental Powers.

Magical Girl Power

Cost: 4 points/Level
 Relevant Stat: None
 Type: Paranormal (Elemental Multipower)

This is a way to represent the abilities of a magical girl (mahou shoujo) in game terms, specifically intended for campaigns where all of the player characters will be magical girls of some kind. The quintessential example of this type of power in action is *Sailor Moon*, but *Pretty Sammy*, *Tokyo Mew Mew*, and *Wedding Peach* are among the many magical girl series whose heroines have similar powers*.

- **Transformation**

Magical girls created with this multipower must transform with the aid of an item in order to access any of their powers. Until transformed they have no access to any of the sub-attributes taken through Magical Girl Power, which means any magical abilities that are

* On the other hand this is definitely not the only kind of “magical girl” seen in anime.

accessible without transforming should be taken as normal Attributes. Transforming takes only one turn (though it seems longer to the audience), and it lasts until the character decides to end it or runs out of Energy Points. The transformation puts the character into a cute, girly costume; if the character isn't a girl aged 10-14, they become one during the transformation, and turn back when it's over with. This gives them one additional level of Appearance (more can be taken as a Sub-Attribute if desired).

When transformed, the character is always in her special costume. This outfit displays a curious immunity to damage, and will always be more or less intact. Any damage done to the costume will be superficial at most, and will be gone the next time the character transforms.

• **Protected Identity**

One of the unusual properties of the magical girl transformation is that it magically protects the girl's identity. Even though the transformation usually appears to amount to little more than a change of clothes, some property of the magic prevents people from realizing that the magical girl and her normal self are one and the same, no matter how similar they might look. Fellow magical girls and other beings with magical powers can always see through this protection, however.

• **Gestures and Attack Phrases**

Magical girls can't help but be obvious about their powers. Their more powerful abilities always require extensive gestures and incantations or attack phrases that must be shouted out.

• **Motivation Required**

A magical girl who loses her faith in herself and the cause for which she fights will find her powers diminished or even unavailable.

• **Sub-Attributes**

Magical Girl Power has a very specific list of what Attributes are available as sub-attributes, some of which cost more than usual. Below is a list of the available sub-attributes; those that cost more than usual are listed in italics.

Normal Attributes	
Appearance (1/level)	<i>Divine Relationship (2/level)</i>
Aura of Command (1/level)	<i>Energy Bonus (3/level)</i>
<i>Combat Mastery (4/level)</i>	<i>Extra Attacks (6/level)</i>
<i>Damn Healthy! (3/level)</i>	<i>Heightened Awareness (2/level)</i>
Special Attributes	
<i>Dynamic Sorcery (8/level)</i>	Servant (1-2 points/level)
<i>Environmental Control (2 or 4 points/level)</i>	Shape Change (2-3 points/level)
<i>Exorcism (2 points/level)</i>	Shield (1 point/level)
Flight (3 or 4/level)	Sixth Sense (1 point/level)
Healing (4 points/level)	Special Defense (1 point/level)
<i>Heavy Armor (5 points/level)</i>	<i>Speed (2 points/level)</i>
Illusion (2-6 points/level)	Spirit Ward (1 point/level)
Item of Power (2 points/level)	<i>Telekinesis (2 or 4 points/level)</i>

Jumping (1 point/level)	Teleport (5 or 10 points/level)
Precognition (1-2 points/level)	Weapon/Special Attack (1 or 4 points/level)
Reincarnation (3 points/level)	

• **Related Defects**

Magical Girl Power often has Magical Restrictions attached to it, indicating additional conditions that must be met in order to transform such as the presence of the magical girl’s cute mascot character. The following are some additional Unique Defects.

- **Dark Change:** Some magical girls have been known to experience a phenomenon known as the “dark change.” Their powers are based on a desire to help others and spread the power of love (even if they themselves don’t realize it), and if their motivations fall too far into darkness they’ll suddenly be overcome by a desire to destroy. Magical girls who’ve gone dark in the past have been extremely dangerous, so having the change will quickly attract people intent on stopping them. A magical girl who has the dark change is filled with cruelty and a desire for wanton destruction, and also gains Massive Damage at level 3 (+15 to damage). The GM may take control of the character when the change happens, or the player could roleplay it. For 1 BP it happens occasionally, while for 2 BP it can happen fairly easily.
- **Random Transformation:** Some transformations are unstable, and tend to turn on and off at random times. For 1 BP the character can feel it coming a few minutes beforehand and can make a Soul check to hold it off for up to an hour. For 2 BP the character can feel it coming only a few seconds beforehand, and a successful Soul check (with a +2 penalty) can hold it back only for up to a minute. When the random transformation kicks in is up to the GM; it’s suggested that the GM roll a die every now and then, and on a 1 to 3 have the character switch forms.
- **Transformed Personality:** Some magical girls literally become different people when they transform into their heroic identities. This could be a personality shift caused by the transformation, or an entirely separate personality that takes over, causing the magical girl to become a totally different person. For 1 BP the alternate personality is *somewhat* similar to the original character and they can get along, while for 2 BP they’re very different to the point where they’re likely to have a strong dislike of each other.

Level 1	Character receives 10 points for magical girl powers.
Level 2	Character receives 20 points for magical girl powers.
Level 3	Character receives 30 points for magical girl powers.
Level 4	Character receives 40 points for magical girl powers.
Level 5	Character receives 50 points for magical girl powers.
Level 6	Character receives 60 points for magical girl powers.