



KEEPING YOUR CHARACTER ALIVE

It's hard to withstand the lure of making a narrowly focused character with an array of powerful Charms. This extreme focus can lead to very short-lived characters, however. If a character possesses only impressive Archery Charms, she'll die a terrible death when she runs out of ammunition. Similarly, unless you want your Eclipse Caste diplomat always hiding behind the Dawn Caste warrior in your circle, your character should be able to handle himself in combat. The following are some tips for first-time players on designing characters.

Make Sure Your Character Can Survive: Don't get lost in all the cool Abilities and forget the meat-and-potatoes Charms that get a character through combat alive.

Unless you have a very good reason to do otherwise, be sure to take the Resistance Charm Ox-Body Technique at least once. It's very inexpensive for what it does, and it can extend your character's life span a great deal.

Taking one or more Charms that allow your character to soak or avoid damage is also recommended: at the very least, a reflexive defense such as Dipping Swallow Defense or Shadow Over Water. If you expect your character to fight without armor, be sure to take Durability of Oak Meditation and Iron Skin Concentration, and strongly consider taking Adamant Skin Technique.

If your character's primary combat Ability doesn't have defensive Charms, consider buying Resistance Charms that allow the character to soak more damage from an attack. Alternatively, you can choose Dodge Charms, particularly Shadow Over Water and Reflex Sidestep Technique, that improve your character's evasion. Taking a persistent defense such as Fivefold Bulwark Stance or Flow Like Blood allows for avoiding harm without continually spending Essence. Without a persistent defense, all an opponent needs to do is wait for you character to run out of Essence. Finally, when your character suffers harm, waiting several weeks on recovery can be boring—and deadly, especially if the Wyld Hunt is after her. Unless you have an excellent reason not to, you should take the Resistance Charm *Body-Mending Meditation*, which allows characters to heal from even the most serious injuries in a day or two.

The way the Charm cascades work, plowing later experience into Charms for a given Ability also brings greater and greater payoffs. If you build a solid foundation with your "free" Charms during character creation and stack higher during play, the character will seem to grow and advance more than if you focus narrowly and have to pump experience points into the least rewarding Charms at the base of the cascades. However, don't waste Charms attempting to make your character good at everything. You probably don't need to take both Parry and Dodge Charms, nor should you normally take Charms connected to more than two of the four combat Abilities (Archery, Martial Arts, Melee and Thrown). Your character is not expert at everything. That's why she needs the rest of her circle to accomplish her goals.

Combat Isn't Everything: Although combat is a focus, characters should have something to do when they *aren't* fighting. No game of **Exalted** is entirely combat. There is also intrigue, romance, adventure and exploration. If your character is only useful slaying opponents by the dozen, you'll spend a lot of time bored, waiting for something to attack. Also, you'll miss a lot of the game. More than two-thirds of the Charms in **Exalted** aren't combat-related, and they compare well with the combat Charms. Excellencies in Presence or Performance can transform a simple warrior into a commanding general, and powerful Socialize and Performance Charms allow your character to sway others by words as well as strength of arms.

above 8. Remember that even her fellow Exalted will consider such a character unreasonably intense.

INTIMACIES

"Intimacies" is a term for things your character cares about enough that it changes how the character acts—though not enough to be a Motivation. Characters start with a number of Intimacies equal to their Compassion.

Intimacies can be anything your character cares about on a meaningful level—a cause, an ideal, a place, a person, a nation. Don't worry if you don't have a good idea for all the Intimacies. Your character can start with less Intimacies than her Compassion if you're not sure what the character cares about. You could just pick some things and try to roleplay them. Intimacies are easy to gain and lose in play, so you'll be able to switch them around easily if you don't like the ones you pick.

Sometimes, Intimacies can be very important, such as when they are the targets of magical effects. If this is the case, characters will generally gain an appropriate Intimacy on the spot if they don't already have one.

Intimacies are governed by Conviction. The higher your character's Conviction, the longer it takes her to gain and lose new Intimacies and the more secure they are against being undermined by social manipulation.

ESSENCE

Essence measures your character's connection to the mystical energies that permeate the world of **Exalted**. Most mortals have an Essence rating of only 1. Solar Exalted begin with an Essence rating of 2. This value may be increased with bonus points, but characters may not start the game with an Essence above 5. Only characters who are more than a century old can have Essence scores of 6 or higher.