Zero Space : Skills

Skills allow a character to apply their attributes to solve a specific problem or accomplish a specific task. Skills cost one character point each. Expertise in a skill costs one additional character point, and it grants the character a bonus die to rolls pertaining to that skill. We suggest spending about 10 character points on skills, unless you have alien traits, gifts, or esoteric powers, in which case we suggest spending at least 5 points on skills.

Note that skills are quite broad. For example, Science covers everything from Acarology to Zymology. However, just because a character *could* do everything encompassed by a skill does not mean that they *should*. For example, a character with the Engineering skill could, in theory, do everything from repairing holocams to designing repulsorlift bridges. That doesn't mean it makes sense for them to do so. A character who is an electronics whiz does not necessarily know how to rebuild a speeder engine, even though both tasks use the same skill, Engineering. It's up to you as the player to know what makes sense for your character and what doesn't, and to communicate that information to the GM.

Action Value

A character's action value (AV) is usually equal to the attribute they are using to accomplish the task at hand, plus the rating of any equipment being used. For example, if a character is attempting to climb a sheer cliff (attempted with an Athletics roll), the character's action value is usually equal to their Brawn plus the rating of their climbing equipment.

Most skills are associated with a specific attribute (Brawn, Agility, etc.). However, the relevant attribute might change depending on the circumstances.

Better equipment makes success more likely. For example, a character attempting to hack into a ship's computer would make a Computing (Reason) roll. If they had a decryption tool with a rating of 2, their action value would be equal to their Reason + 2. Simple or multipurpose equipment, such a general-purpose handheld computer or a pocket multitool, generally has a rating of 1. Ordinary equipment, such as a reasonably complete box of tools or a handheld computer with programs for specified tasks, would have a rating of 2. Special-purpose or very high quality equipment, such as a device designed specifically to bypass a particular model of security lock, would have a rating of 3.

Being Unskilled

A character may attempt a task in which they have no skill, if the GM says it is possible. For example, anyone can tell a lie (attempted with a Deception roll), but not everyone can recite an epic poem and keep the audience's attention (attempted with a Performance roll). If a character attempts a task in which they have no skill, the character's attribute is not added to their action value: their action value is equal to the rating of the equipment they are using, if any.

Typical Skills

ZeroSpace divides skills into broad disciplines. This list of skills is not exhaustive, nor is it objective: skills are divided by their usefulness in a game, not by any objective taxonomy. This is why "Science" is a very broad skill, while "Computing" is relatively specific. A character may have a skill not listed here, subject to GM approval. However, any new skills should be approximately as useful as these skills in order to maintain a sense of fairness with other characters. For example, having a new skill called "Commando" which does everything that "Athletics", "Stealth", and "Survival" do would not be fair.

The attribute typically associated with a skill is listed here, but keep in mind that the relevant attribute might change depending on the circumstances. Also note that the same task might be accomplished in more than one way. Climbing a tree might be an exercise in Athletics (Brawn), but it might also be accomplished with the proper application of Survival (Brawn).

Table: Typical skills

Skill	Attribute	Examples
Athletics	Agility or Brawn	Climbing, gymnastics, riding, running, scuba, swimming, throwing objects
Close Combat	Brawn	Axes, clubs, psiblades, spears, swords, unarmed strikes, vibroknives; close combat powers
Computing	Reason	Artificial intelligence, forensics, forgery, hacking, programming, security systems, sensor operation
Culture	Reason	Art, fashion, history, music, philosophy, politics, popular media
Deception	Presence	Bluffing, disguise, lying, sales
Diplomacy	Presence	Carousing, conversation, etiquette, negotiation, streetwise
Engineering	Reason	Architecture, demolitions, electronics, mechanical engineering, starship engineering

Finesse	Agility	Explosive ordnance disposal, lockpicking, pickpocketing, sleight of hand
Investigation	Reason	Analyzing evidence, collecting evidence, identifying clues
Manipulation	Presence	Bribery, interrogation, leadership, seduction
Medicine	Reason	Cybernetics, diagnosis, nanotherapy, pharmacology, surgery
Perception	Reason	Eavesdropping, identifying an odor or taste, noticing a tail
Performance	Presence	Comedy, dancing, music, singing, theatre
Piloting	Agility or Reason	Aircraft, ground vehicles, heavy machinery, drones, spacecraft, submersibles, watercraft
Ranged Combat	Agility	Blaster pistols, blaster rifles, crossbows, thrown weapons, wrist rockets; ranged powers
Science	Reason	Astronomy, chemistry, genetics, geology, mathematics, nanotechnology, physics, psychology
Starship Combat	Reason	Disruptor, hellbore, proton torpedo, warp missile
Stealth	Agility	Hiding, shadowing, sneaking
Survival	Reason	Foraging, hunting, orienteering, tactics, tracking

Athletics

The Athletics skill covers the entire spectrum of non-combat sports, as well general feats of athleticism such as running, jumping, climbing, swimming, and throwing.

Generally, an athletic competition is simply a matter of who has the highest relevant attribute. In the case where two competitors in a sport have the same attributes, the winner would be decided with a roll, or perhaps a series of rolls. In some sports, the difference between the winner and second place may be as little as one one-hundredth of a second.

Athletics typically requires an Agility or Brawn roll.

Examples: Climbing, gymnastics, riding, running, scuba, swimming, throwing objects

Close Combat

The Close Combat skill covers the myriad ways that humans have found to hurt, maim, and kill one another in hand-to-hand combat. Any form of hand-to-hand combat is covered by the Close Combat skill.

Close Combat typically requires a Brawn roll.

Examples: Axes, clubs, psiblades, spears, swords, unarmed strikes, vibroknives; close combat powers

Computing

Computing allows the character to write new programs, take apart old ones, and follow data trails across networks. It also allows a character to create or circumvent computer security programs and protocols. If a character is extremely familiar with the program in question, the GM might decide that the attempt is automatically successful. If the character is attempting to break into a computer system, the GM may assign a difficulty of 6, or perhaps even 9, since these programs are designed to prevent interference.

Failing a Computing roll might mean that an attempt to circumvent a computer security system is simply unsuccessful, or it may mean that the character has set off an alarm or left a "trail" which may be followed back to their location.

Computing typically requires a Reason roll.

Examples: Artificial intelligence, forensics, forgery, hacking, programming, security systems, sensor operation

Culture

The Culture skill covers the wide range of information that provides the backdrop of our lives. It includes literary, artistic, and political tidbits of information, such as the middle name of the fifth Imperator or the origin of that green stripe on starship disposal vents (they all have one).

Culture typically requires a Reason roll.

Examples: Art, fashion, history, music, philosophy, politics, popular media

Deception

The Deception skill is used to convince someone of the truth of a given statement or situation, usually with the aim of getting them to act on it. Deception could be used to convert someone to a religion, sell someone a car, or simply win an argument. It is not necessary for the deceiver to actually believe their own statements, but if they do they gain a bonus die -- nothing is as convincing as genuine sincerity. If the person being deceived is predisposed to believe the deceiver, the GM may allow the task to succeed without rolling. If the character is trying to persuade someone to believe a patent absurdity (from the target's point of view), the GM might impose a penalty die, or even declare the attempt an automatic failure for truly outrageous lies.

A failed Deception roll usually means that the subject simply does not believe the lie, but it could mean that the attempt has backfired, firmly convincing the subject of the opposite of what the character was trying to convince them of.

Deception typically requires a Presence roll.

Examples: Bluffing, disguise, lying, sales

Diplomacy

The Diplomacy skill is used to adapt to one's social environment. It enables a character navigate through red tape, know the proper manners for a given environment, or survive an excursion to the dark side of civilization. A Diplomacy roll might be required to circumvent a bureaucratic obstacle, to socialize with a group without offending them, or to get the word to the Black Sun that the shipment of blasters at midnight is a set-up.

A failed Diplomacy roll could result in the character being snubbed by polite society, or possibly in being maimed by a coarser crowd.

Diplomacy typically requires a Presence roll, and is sometimes opposed.

Examples: Carousing, conversation, etiquette, negotiation, streetwise

Engineering

Engineering is the relevant skill whenever a character attempts to design and build structures, machines, devices, systems, or materials. An Engineering roll might be required to repair a damaged suspension bridge, modify a hadron collider to be a singularity cannon, or construct a containment suit for a being made of electromagnetic radiation.

Failing the Engineering roll might indicate that the device simply does not work, or that it will fail catastrophically during use.

Engineering typically requires a Reason roll.

Examples: Architecture, demolitions, electronics, mechanical engineering, starship engineering

Finesse

Finesse covers the skills which require a delicate touch and fine control of the hands and fingers. A Finesse roll might be required to slip a note to an ally, to pick someone's pocket, or to pick the lock on a pair of handcuffs.

Failing a Finesse roll indicates that the deception is easily spotted by the casual observer, or that the lock resists the attempt to pick it.

Finesse typically requires an Agility roll.

Examples: Explosive ordnance disposal, lockpicking, pickpocketing, sleight of hand

Investigation

The Investigation skill covers most of the tasks involved in solving mysteries and researching obscure topics. This includes searching for clues, collecting and analyzing evidence, sifting through Hypernet records and police databases, and so on.

A failed Investigation roll might mean that the character hits a dead end in the investigation, or it might mean that they seize on a red herring and draw the wrong conclusion from the evidence.

Investigation typically requires a Reason roll, or perhaps a series of rolls.

Examples: Analyzing evidence, collecting evidence, identifying clues

Manipulation

The Manipulation skill pertains to eliciting cooperation or information from others by using flirtation, threats of violence, or just verbal trcikery. Interrogation usually hinges on convincing the subject that hope is futile and that resistance will only make things worse, while seduction can sometimes be successful even if the target is aware that they are being seduced.

Failure of a Manipulation roll could result in the subject of interrogation convincingly giving false information, or in the target of a seduction finding the would-be seducer pathetic.

Manipulation typically requires a Presence roll, or perhaps a series of rolls.

Examples: Bribery, interrogation, leadership, seduction

Medicine

A knowledge of Medicine can be very useful in the violent world of *ZeroSpace*. Any medical procedure, from taking a person's temperature and splinting broken limbs, to performing open-heart telesurgery and administering nanotherapy, is covered by the Medicine skill. Knowledge of Medicine also gives the character familiarity with common drugs and toxins, and a competent knowledge of their effects on human physiology. Simple procedures, such as diagnosing and treating mild infections, are usually within the ability of a character with the Medicine skill. Extensive and difficult medical procedures, such as re-attaching a severed limb or performing brain surgery, are generally better left to characters with experience in those areas.

Medicine typically requires a Reason roll.

Examples: Cybernetics, diagnosis, nanotherapy, pharmacology, surgery

Perception

The Perception skill pertains to noticing subtle things, identifying sensory input, and generally being aware of one's surroundings. Perception can reflect the keenness of one's senses, one's powers of observation, or both.

Perception typically requires a Reason roll.

Examples: Eavesdropping, identifying an odor or taste, noticing a tail

Performance

The Performance skill is used to entertain an audience, making them forget their worries for a brief while.

Performance typically requires a Presence roll.

Examples: Comedy, dancing, music, singing, theatre

Piloting

The Piloting skill covers the navigation and control of a mechanical contrivance, be it a sports car, a star fighter, a walking forklift, or a skyscraper-sized kaiju-fighting robot. Piloting also covers controlling tiny mechanisms, like radio-controlled helicopters and missile-launching drones. The Piloting skill as it pertains to starships is covered in more detail in the Starships chapter.

A failed Piloting roll could result in being unable to attack because the vehicle is in the wrong position, a temporary loss of control, or even a collision.

Piloting typically requires a Reason roll to chart a course for a craft, and an Agility roll to control it.

Examples: Aircraft, ground vehicles, heavy machinery, drones, spacecraft, submersibles, watercraft

Ranged Combat

The Ranged Combat skill covers the myriad ways that humans have found to hurt, maim, and kill one another from a distance. Any form of ranged combat is covered by the Ranged Combat skill.

Ranged Combat typically requires an Agility roll.

Examples: Blaster pistols, blaster rifles, crossbows, thrown weapons, wrist rockets; ranged powers

Science

The Science skill can cover a variety of fields, depending on the character's interests. A character with the Science skill may be conversant with any discipline that's reasonable for their background.

Science typically requires a Reason roll.

Examples: Astronomy, chemistry, genetics, geology, mathematics, nanotechnology, physics, psychology

Starship Combat

The Starship Combat skill is used to target heavy weaponry on distant targets. As the name implies, this will usually be during a battle in outer space, but any combat where the weapon is controlled from a stationary console is covered by the Starship Combat skill.

Starship Combat typically requires a Reason roll.

Examples: Disruptor, hellbore, proton torpedo, warp missile

Stealth

Stealth is the art of sneaking around. A Stealth roll might be required to hide from a monster in an alien spaceship, to sneak up on a sentry, or to shadow a suspect back to the criminal's hideout. Terrain, available cover, camouflage, and background noise will all affect the difficulty of the Stealth roll.

Failing the Stealth roll indicates that the furtive prowler is easily spotted by a casual observer.

Stealth typically requires an Agility roll, and is usually opposed by a Perception (Reason) roll by the person the character is hiding from.

Examples: Hiding, shadowing, sneaking

Survival

The Survival skill pertains to living off the land, coping with adverse environments, and finding one's way based on landmarks, the stars, and dead reckoning. The difficulty is dependent upon the terrain, temperature, and availability of food and shelter, and how well equipped the character is for the particular area. Survival in a temperate environment with available sources of food and water would require a moderately difficult (DV 3) Survival (Reason) roll. Harsh, hostile environments, such as the Gobi Desert or the Antarctic, would have a higher difficulty, depending on how prepared the character is. Surviving in very mild environments, such as Central Park or the woods just outside of town, would not require a roll at all.

Failing a Survival roll once might mean that the character has caught a cold, lost the trail of their prey, or eaten a plant that has made them sick. Failing numerous Survival rolls could be lethal.

Survival typically requires a Reason roll, or perhaps a series of rolls.

Examples: Foraging, hunting, orienteering, tactics, tracking