MEGAPOMPS

Introducing **MEGAPOMPS**: The game system with **just one table**. No classes, no attributes, no hit points; just doing stuff. If you want to do a thing, figure out the skill & difficulty, roll a d20, and check the one table. The GM will figure it out. This one system covers shooting a dude, jumping over a hole, buying a car, fixing a robot, sneaking into a bakery, spotting a rat, stabbing a rat, cooking a rat, and treating diarrhea—MEGAPOMPS does it all. MEGAPOMPS is based loosely on (and also plagiarizes) J.E. Sawyer's "Simple" system, which was just not simple enough.

There isn't a specific game world tied to the MEGAPOMPS system, though it was designed with an eye toward "Fallout", a post-apocalyptic nuclear survival series.

Overview

MEGAPOMPS stands for the nine fundamental skills you can learn. The system is based on the Game Master (GM) resolving much of the ambiguity instead of relying on paper rules. As such, the only rules present are to put a bit of structure, scarcity, and character differentiation into the mix. A character in MEGAPOMPS just has a name, a background, maybe some special traits, and a rank (zero to twenty) in each of the nine MEGAPOMPS skills:

- **Melee**: Stabbing, slicing, punching, throwing crap.
- **Engineering**: Science, mechanics, math, physics, computers, chemistry, and a bit of biology.
- **Guns**: Pistols, rifles, shotguns, crossbows, and even rocket launchers.
- **Athletics**: Run, jump, swim, climb, dance!
- **Perception**: Notice stuff passively, investigate stuff actively, and react fast.
- **Outdoorsman**: Navigation, weather, tracking, foraging, finding water, building makeshift tools.
- **Medic**: Anatomy, dressing wounds, treating disease, making medicine, performing surgery.
- **Persuasion**: Sympathy, debate, intimidation, seduction, deception, acting.
- **Sneak**: Stealth, theft, lock picking, sleight of hand, surprise attacks.

Doing stuff

Whenever you want to do a thing, just figure out what skill that thing best falls under and the difficulty (as described later on and guided by the GM). Also, make sure you have the stuff to do it (you can't build leather armor out of dirt). If it's trivial and your skill is non-zero, then you just do it. Otherwise, roll a d20 to see if you succeed. Based on your skill level and task difficulty, you will succeed if the roll is at least the value in the table below.

Table 1: Minimum roll to do a thing

Skill level	Difficulty		
	Easy	Medium	Hard
0	20*	20*	20*
1	3	11	19
2	3	9	17
3	2	8	16
4	2	8	15
5	2	7	14
6	2	7	13
7	2	6	12
8	2	6	11
9	2	5	10
10	1	5	9
11	1	5	9
12	1	4	8
13	1	4	8
14	1	4	7
15	1	3	7
16	1	3	6
17	1	3	6
18	1	2	5
19	1	2	5
20	Auto-crit	2	4

* Beginner's luck: 1-5 is a critical failure, but 20 is an absolutely MASSIVE success

For details of the skills and the difficulties of different tasks, see "Skills and difficulties". There are only three additional facts to consider: **modifiers**, taking **extra time**, and **criticals**; each is discussed below.

Modifiers

A modifier is a number you add to (or subtract from) your roll based on special circumstances. The possibilities are:

- **Major advantage (+4)**: You have specific knowledge for the task, the enemy has fallen, etc.
- **Minor advantage (+1)**: A bit of cleverness on your part (GM's discretion)
- **Minor disadvantage (-1)**: Fate conspires against you (GM's discretion)
- **Major disadvantage (-4)**: You are playing into a trap, the enemy is behind cover, etc.

The major advantage/disadvantage is a concrete fact of the situation—examples are given in the individual skill sections later on.

The minor advantage/disadvantage is a bit of storytelling flourish done after the roll to tweak the situation. It can be done by players and accepted by the GM, or even done by the GM directly. Here's an example of a minor advantage _not_ being awarded:

> "I'm attacking the boss with my knife. I need to roll a 7. Shucks, a 6. Can I get a boost here?"
> *"Nope."*
> "Dag."

Now here's an example of a minor advantage being awarded:

> "I'm going to stab that dude. Rolling…damn it. I'm going to bite his goddamn face then."
> *"Okay, but you now have hepatitis C."*
> "Sweet."

So be interesting.

Extra time

Extra time is when you spend take much longer to prepare for your action; **you get up to <u>three</u> rolls to hit the number you need**. There's not an absolute time figure here. If you're shooting a gun, extra time is having a few seconds of silence undetected to line up your shot. If you're fixing a robot, it's taking a full day to read the manual and experiment safely instead of just an hour hacking at it. In general, it refers to time without distraction, but it's up to the GM.

Criticals

If you roll a natural 20, you achieve a **critical success**. Whatever you were trying goes awesomely, as dictated by the GM. Also, someone with skill 20 trying to do something of low difficulty always has a critical success.

If you roll a natural 1, your attempt is a **critical failure** (unless your target number is 1). Whatever you were trying goes awry, often comically so, and sometimes with terrible consequences, as dictated by the GM. Also, someone with skill 0 trying to do something will suffer critical failure for any roll ≤ 5.

Finally, if someone with skill 0 hits a 20, it's more than a critical success: it's a **massive success**—that's beginner's luck. The result will be insane: an attempt to punch someone will make them explode into a cloud of money. An attempt to hunt for small game can yield a pack of lemmings that baste themselves in garlic and balsamic vinaigrette for three days before skinning themselves and leaping into a George Foreman grill. After this happens, the character gets 1 point for that skill: they are no longer a beginner.

Skills and difficulties

This section will cover the nine MEGAPOMPS skills in depth and give examples of tasks for each that are of trivial, low, medium, or high difficulty. If you have a skill level above zero, you can do trivial tasks without rolling. Everything else requires a d20 roll as described in "Doing stuff" previously.

Melee

The use of all hand-to-hand and thrown weapons as well as unarmed combat.

Example tasks:

- **Trivial**: Hit a big fat slow dumb guy who's not expecting it. Throw a small object and hit a man-sized target 5 ft. away.
- **Easy**: Hit an average enemy who's not expecting it. Throw a small object and hit a man-sized target 10 ft. away.
- **Medium**: Hit an average enemy who's actively dodging or fighting you. Hit a well-trained opponent who's not expecting it. Throw a small object and hit a man-sized target 20 ft. away.
- **Hard**: Hit a well-trained opponent who's actively dodging or fighting you. Throw a small object and hit a melon-sized target 25 ft. away.

Example modifiers:

- **Major advantage**: Opponent is asleep, on the ground, drunk, etc.; you have the high ground.
- **Major disadvantage**: Opponent is armored appropriately, opponent has the high ground, your vision is impaired.

Engineering

This covers knowledge of the practical (mechanics, electronics, computers) and theoretical (mathematics, physics, computers, chemistry, and a bit of biology). Since this is a wide category, the tasks below are broken down into six main things you can do: operate machines, drive vehicles, repair stuff, build stuff, run computers, and reference general science/math expertise.

Example tasks:

	Trivial	Easy	Medium	Hard
Operate	Simple machines (can opener, elevator).	Common machines (drill press, music player).	Complex machines (crane, subway train).	Massively complex systems (factory control systems, ballistic missiles).
Drive	Drive a car on decent roads.	Drive a car in adverse conditions (rain, potholes).	Drive a car in dangerous conditions (rough off-roading, heavy snow & ice). Drive a complex vehicle (semi-truck, tank, motorboat) in decent conditions.	Drive a car in insane conditions (high-speed chase, leaping a gorge). Drive a complex vehicle (semi-truck, boat) in rough conditions.
Repair	Easy repairs to simple machines (rusty door hinge, stuck doorknob).	Common repairs (change a flat tire, solder a wire, clean a firearm).	Standard repairs (replace spark plugs, do an oil change, maintain basic firearms).	Sophisticated repairs (replace an engine gasket, calibrate a large water filtration system, maintain advanced firearms).
Build	Spitball launcher.	Simple melee weapons (spear, mace).	Common weapons (slingshot, bow, pipe rifle), basic home-made armor, and crude explosives. Reload ammo cartridges.	Advanced homemade weapons (firearm, crossbow, flamethrower), high-quality custom armor, complicated ammunition, powerful explosives with timed or remote triggers.
Computer	Very simple menu surfing.	Use a decent computer GUI to get information.	Use a console interface to get information.	Get information from well-protected computers.
Expertise	Count to 100.	Four-function math.	Rudimentary chemistry and physics knowledge.	Advanced calculus, chemistry and physics.

Yes, this technically another table, and I promised there was just one, but this doesn't have to be a table – it's just easier to read this way. And it's not numbers either.

Example modifiers:

- **Major advantage:** You grew up working on this machine, your vehicle has traction control and ABS, you have access to an ideal workshop, you just worked with this recently.
- **Major disadvantage:** You're working with faulty or improvised materials, you are new to this kind of thing, the computer screen has a big crack in it.

Guns

Primarily, this is the difficulty of hitting a target at range with a given weapon. Below is a baseline, which may be influenced by many additional factors, including target size, target movement, combat environment, weapon quality, and attachments (e.g. scopes and sights).

Example tasks:

- **Trivial**: Fire the weapon into a direction other than oneself.
- **Easy**: Hit a man-sized target with a pistol or shotgun, range 5 m. Rifle/crossbow, range 10 m.
- **Medium**: Hit a man-sized target with a pistol or shotgun, range 5-20 m. Rifle/crossbow, unscoped, range 10-40 m. Rifle, scoped, range 20-80 m.
- **Hard**: Anything farther.

In addition, you can **target a specific body part** by making the task *one notch harder* (so if hitting someone at 7m is easy, hitting him in the head is medium). It is not possible to target body parts at the "hard" range.

Example modifiers:

- **Major advantage**: Target is motionless.
- **Major disadvantage**: You're firing from an unstable position, such as a moving vehicle or while running. Target is behind cover. Target is clad in armor this weapon cannot penetrate.

Athletics

Running, jumping, swimming, climbing, dancing, it's all here!

Example tasks:

- **Trivial**: Climb a sturdy ladder without losing your grip. Jump down from a height of 2m onto level ground without falling prone. Tread calm water while unencumbered.
- **Easy**: Climb a rickety ladder without losing your grip. Take a running jump across a 1m chasm. Swim a short distance in calm water while lightly encumbered.
- **Medium**: Climb using improvised but sturdy, well-placed handholds without losing your grip. Take a running jump across a 2m chasm. Swim a short distance in choppy water while lightly encumbered.
- **Hard**: Climb using improvised, awkward, widely-spaced handholds without losing your grip. Take a running jump across a 4m chasm. Swim a long distance in choppy water while heavily encumbered.

Example modifiers:

- **Major advantage**: You grew up doing this kind of thing.
- **Major disadvantage**: You are dizzy or nauseous.

Perception

Perception covers three main things: Noticing stuff around you, searching/investigating an area, and reacting fast. It's also used to determine sequence in combat.

Example tasks:

- **Trivial**: Hear a growling animal right behind you. Find a basketball among baseballs. Take your hand off a hot stove.
- **Easy**: Notice clear footsteps approaching in a quiet environment. Find the smoking gun next to the body. Catch a tossed ball.
- **Medium**: Notice a subtle shadow pass in a hallway. Find a gun among scrap metal. Dodge a thrown object.
- **Hard**: Spot a well-laid tripwire trap. Find the shell casing that rolled into the air vent. Draw your weapon during an ambush before the first shot.

Example modifiers:

- **Major advantage**: You had reason to expect an ambush. You're investigating a familiar room.
- **Major disadvantage**: You are sleepy, sick, drunk, etc. Your eyesight or hearing is impaired.

Outdoorsman

Scouting and survival in the wilderness.

Example tasks:

- **Trivial**: Finding north when you know the time of day and can see the sun in a clear sky. Associating heavy clouds and thunder with rain and lightning. Knowing not to eat rotten or maggot-infested flesh.
- **Easy**: Finding north in a clear sky at night. Associating creature movements with weather patterns and the locations of food and water. Able to prepare poisonous game to make it palatable for consumption.
- **Medium**: Tracking a small group of people or animals over clear ground during daylight. Finding enough water to keep a single human adult healthy for a day. Able to forage safe plants for human consumption. Turn a large animal into a leather outfit and six shivs.
- **Hard**: Tracking a small group of people or animals over broken ground during night. Finding enough water to keep three or four human adults healthy for a day. Able to forage safe plants for three or four adults to consume. Able to spot dangerous natural locations for what they are one hundred feet ahead of time.

Example modifiers:

- **Major advantage**: You grew up in this area.
- **Major disadvantage**: This is a completely new biome to you (e.g. first time in a desert).

Medic

This covers everything from the knowledge of creature anatomy to hands-on proficiency at treating wounds, healing broken limbs, and dealing with toxins/disease.

Example tasks:

- **Trivial**: Operate a bandaid. Recognizes that a healthy person ought not bleed or vomit. Give someone an injection.
- **Easy**: Basic first aid. Dress minor wounds. Remove thorns, splinters, and bullets from the wound. Give oneself an injection. Prescribe basic treatments for illness or poisoning (rest, fluids, etc.)
- **Average**: Dress major wounds. Apply splints and tourniquets. Perform basic surgeries, such as removing shrapnel and suturing the incision. Prescribe existing medication responsibly to treat illness or poisoning. Differentiate ailments with clearly differing symptoms (e.g. heart attack vs. stroke).
- **Hard**: Perform complex surgeries. Develop new medicine using available items (especially in concert with Outdoorsman skills). Differentiate ailments with similar symptoms (e.g. food poisoning vs. dysentery).

Example modifiers:

- **Major advantage**: You've treated this problem many times before.
- **Major disadvantage**: The patient is violently spasming or out of control with pain or dementia. The disease or poison is highly esoteric. Treating yourself while sick or injured.

Persuasion

Persuasion is used to convince people of what you want them to believe through various means, including debate, intimidation, seduction, and deception.

Example tasks:

- **Trivial**: Convince a weak-willed person to do something he or she doesn't mind doing. When shopping, pay the asking price.
- **Easy**: Convince a weak-willed person to do something he or she "kinda" doesn't want to do. When shopping, get them to throw in a freebie with your purchase.
- **Medium**: Convince an average person to do something he or she "kinda" doesn't want to do. When shopping, get a decent discount.
- **Hard**: Convince hardened skeptics to do something very dangerous or otherwise seriously repulsive. When shopping, the merchant is your buddy: you buy at cost and cheap stuff is on the house.

Example modifiers:

- **Major advantage**: Extensive knowledge of the subject's history and personality.
- **Major disadvantage**: A partial language barrier or translator makes direct communication difficult.

Sneak

Moving in silence, pickpocketing, lock picking (of mechanical locks), sneak attacks.

Example tasks:

- **Trivial**: Sneak by a deep sleeper.
- **Easy**: Sneak 3m from a light sleeper. Pickpocket a deep sleeper undetected. Pick a cheap briefcase lock. Your sneak attack on an unsuspecting target will land the first hit, but devolve into a struggle.
- **Medium**: Sneak up to a light sleeper; sneak 3m from someone who isn't looking. Pickpocket a light sleeper undetected. Pick a standard house lock. Your sneak attack on an unsuspecting target will be lethal on a normal enemy, but involve a noisy scuffle.
- **Hard**: Sneak up to someone who's not looking. Pickpocket someone who's not looking undetected. Pick a complex safe lock. Your sneak attack on an unsuspecting target will be lethal, brief, and silent.

Example modifiers:

- **Major advantage**: You are perfectly camouflaged for the environment.
- **Major disadvantage**: Though your target has not detected you, they do know you're coming.

Combat

Combat is just a special form of "Doing stuff", described earlier. Combat formally starts when two or more opposing characters believe that violence is imminent. Up to that point, characters can prepare without restriction. For example, if a sniper is watching a meeting, he or she could take "extra time" to line up a shot, and characters at the meeting could move into advantageous positions.

When combat begins, each character will **roll for initiative**: roll a d20 and add their Perception. Characters will take turns from the highest to lowest value, looping until combat ends. Combat ends when combatants have escaped the combat area, brokered a peace, or killed/disabled their enemies.

Combat is not the focus of MEGAPOMPS. The GM dictates most of the action, and there are no grids, vision cones, movement counts, etc. There are also no hit points: being stabbed in the chest doesn't make you 15% less healthy, it puts a great big hole in you and your stuff comes out. In other words, wounds are serious, and combat is short, brutal, and decisive.

There will be a general map or description of the environment. Each turn, the character may:

- Move a reasonable amount, including getting into cover, prone, etc. This depends on the situation: you can move more behind cover in a long-distance shootout than you can in a bar fight.
- Take an action (as described in "Doing stuff").

These two steps may be done in any order.

If the action taken is a form of attack, and you succeed, you're going to do damage. No hit points are needed: if you shoot an unarmored human being in the chest with a decent weapon, that person will then suffer from a status condition known as "major gunshot wound", which generally leads another status condition called "being dead". The GM will determine how this plays out. The way combat damage works may change if you're facing more esoteric enemies (e.g., zombies care a lot less about such things).

Two or more characters may opt to **work together**. To do this, characters with earlier sequence will forego their turn until the character with the latest sequence is about to proceed. Then all characters involved will collaborate on what they do, mixing movement and actions as desired.

Death

If you are declared dead by the GM, it will be sad. But take heart, your journey isn't over, merely worse! This is because, a MEGAPOMPS game operates on the **defective understudy system**. This means that, should you wish to continue, you will happen upon a new character for you to take over. However, you don't get to create this character yourself (though you may be given partial or full control over its skill points). It will come with a background and roleplaying requirements which you will be stuck with. For example, you may encounter a happy simpleton giant whose vocabulary consists of "ugg" and "fugg". In fact, in this system, it is possible for a party to consist of an entirely different set of characters than it started with.

Character creation

Character creation in MEGAPOMPS is pretty simple. You start by picking a theme appropriate **name, gender, age,** and **race**. The GM will define what "theme appropriate" means and provide a selection races to choose from.

Next, give your character some **background**. It doesn't have to be super serious or detailed, but it will play a hand in what your character starts out "knowing" in the game, and may modify the difficulty and modifiers for tasks as the GM sees fit.

Now you may choose to select some **traits**. Traits are short tidbits of info that have a game effect, generally it's a trade-off. A list will be provided by the GM, and you'll probably be asked to pick between zero and two of them. For example, a trait called "One Hander" may apply a +2 to rolls for single-handed weapons, but a -2 for rolls on dual-handed weapons. You may also ask the GM let you add **custom traits**.

Finally, you set up the all-important MEGAPOMPS **skills**. All skills start at 1 unless the character's has literally <u>no</u> experience with the skill, in which case it starts at 0. For example, someone raised in an underground fallout shelter would start with zero Outdoorsman skill. To assign points, first **tag** two skills, adding 5 points to each. Next, spend 4 additional skill points as you see fit.

Lastly, please indicate if you like dogs.

Congratulations, you are now ready to play a MEGAPOMPS game!

Name: _____

Sex: __   **Age:** ___   **Race:** _____

What's your deal?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Special traits:

Trait	Effect
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Skills:

Skill	Rank	Actions
Melee	____	*Stabbing, slicing, punching, throwing crap.*
Engineering	____	*Science, mechanics, math, physics, computers, chemistry, some biology.*
Guns	____	*Pistols, rifles, shotguns, crossbows, and even rocket launchers.*
Athletics	____	*Run, jump, swim, climb, dance!*
Perception	____	*Notice stuff passively, investigate stuff actively, and react fast.*
Outdoorsman	____	*Navigation, weather, tracking, foraging, finding water, building tools.*
Medic	____	*Anatomy, dressing wounds, treating disease, making medicine, surgery.*
Persuasion	____	*Sympathy, debate, intimidation, seduction, deception, acting.*
Sneak	____	*Stealth, theft, lock picking, sleight of hand, surprise attacks.*

Do you like dogs? ❑ Yes ❑ No