

New Skill System—by Mike Nigh, “Mac”

This system is designed for people who think that skill selection in Iron Heroes should be more flexible. There are two basic options: the “simple” fix merely incorporate Section II of this page and ignores the rest. The “complex” fix introduces a bevy of “Background” skill groups that tie skill to character background. Either fix is fine, depending on the degree of complexity and flexibility you want. By the way, Chris Camfield had the idea of making some skill groups, such as Green Lore, a narrow selection of skills from a broader list, so thanks to him.

I. Miscellaneous changes to skill groups

- There is no Academia skill group.
- There is no Wilderness Lore skill group.
- The Mysticism skill group gets the Knowledge (arcana) skill.

II. Skill groups by class

- Archer: Perception, plus any two skill groups.
- Armiger: Any one skill group.
- Berserker: Any one skill group.
- Executioner: Perception, Stealth, plus any one skill group.
- Harrier: Agility, plus any one skill group.
- Hunter: Perception, Stealth, plus any two skill groups.
- Man-at-Arms: Any three skill groups.
- Thief: Social, Stealth, Theatrics, plus any three skill groups.
- Weapon Master: Any one skill group.
- Arcanist: Mysticism, Social, plus any two skill groups

III. Background skill groups.

Background skill groups are special skill groups tied to the character’s background. If you take a Background trait, you also may select any of the background skill groups associated with it. If you do not take a Background trait, you may select any one background trait. A character with a Background trait is restricted to the background skill groups he may select, but he may select more than one.

Note that access to background skill groups merely gives the player options in addition to the eight basic skill groups. Access to background skill groups never actually grants bonus skill groups or skill points. For example, a Man-at-Arms with the Artisan trait may choose from Acrobatics, Athletics, Mysticism, Robbery, Social, Stealth, Theatrics, Craftwork, and Engineering when selecting skill groups, but he may still only select three of those skill groups

Some Background traits, such as Shadow Born, do not provide any additional skill groups. For the purposes of assigning skill groups, treat characters with such traits as though they did not have a Background trait.

Here are the Background traits and their associated skill groups.

Arctic Born

Arctic Lore: The icy climates of the North teach the people that live there certain skills to survive.

-Choose from either Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (nature). Choose three of the following: Balance, Handle Animal, Ride, Survival.

Healing: In less civilized parts of the world, injury and illness is common, and people count on those with the knowledge of healing even more than in the cities and towns.

-Concentration, Heal, Search, Sense Motive.

Artisan

Craftwork: Artisans must learn certain skills to make beautiful objects.

-Appraise, Concentration, Craft*, Forgery.

Engineering: Some artisans learn more about machines and devices than arts and crafts.

-Craft*, Disable Device, Knowledge (architecture and engineering), Open Lock.

*The character should pick a skill group appropriate to his Craft specialty. For example, Craft (jewelry) would go with the Craftwork skill group, while Craft (trap) would go well with the Engineering skill group. Something like Craft (weapon) could work with either.

Child of Faith

Healing: Some religious characters gain respect for their skills in the healing arts.

-Concentration, Heal, Search, Sense Motive.

Cleric: The religious life brings with it certain skills and knowledge.

-Diplomacy, Knowledge (religion), Perform (oratory), Profession (religious)*.

*that is, ceremonial functions

City Rat

Buffoonery: A clownish demeanor can get some characters out of trouble.

-Bluff, Escape Artist, Perform (comedy), Tumble.

Investigation: Watchmen, collectors, and bounty hunters all need certain skills for their profession.

-Gather Information, Knowledge (local), Search, Survival*.

*For the specific purpose of tracking specific people and items. See the City Rat trait description.

Desert Born

Desert Lore: Sandy, dry, and hot, surviving in the desert requires certain skills.

-Choose from Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (nature). Choose from three of the following: Balance, Handle Animal, Ride, Spot, Survival.

Healing: In less civilized parts of the world, injury and illness is common, and people count on those with the knowledge of healing even more than in the cities and towns.

-Concentration, Heal, Search, Sense Motive.

Forest Born

Green Lore: Life among the trees teaches people how to use them to their advantage.

-Climb, Handle Animal, Survival. Choose from Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (nature).

Healing: In less civilized parts of the world, injury and illness is common, and people count on those with the knowledge of healing even more than in the cities and towns.

-Concentration, Heal, Search, Sense Motive.

High Born

Courtier: Emissaries and rulers alike must learn how to negotiate the treacherous world of diplomacy.

-Diplomacy, Knowledge (nobility), Sense Motive.

Jungle Born

Green Lore: Life among the trees teaches people how to use them to their advantage.

-Climb, Handle Animal, Survival. Choose from Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (nature).

Healing: In less civilized parts of the world, injury and illness is common, and people count on those with the knowledge of healing even more than in the cities and towns.

-Concentration, Heal, Search, Sense Motive.

Mountain Folk

Mountain Lore: Living in the rocky, unstable, almost vertical mountaintops presents its own challenges to survival.

-Choose from Knowledge (dungeoneering), Knowledge (geography), or Knowledge (nature).

Choose three of the following: Balance, Climb, Handle Animal, Listen, Use Rope.

Healing: In less civilized parts of the world, injury and illness is common, and people count on those with the knowledge of healing even more than in the cities and towns.

-Concentration, Heal, Search, Sense Motive.

Nomad

Plains Lore: Survival in the open country requires not only knowledge of the world around you, but a sharp eye to find danger before it finds you.

-Choose from Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (nature). Choose from three of the following: Handle Animal, Ride, Spot, Survival.

Healing: In less civilized parts of the world, injury and illness is common, and people count on those with the knowledge of healing even more than in the cities and towns.

-Concentration, Heal, Search, Sense Motive.

Sea Child

Nautica: Whether they are sailors or fishermen, those whose livelihood depends on the sea learn skills that no one else does.

-Profession (sailor), Use Rope. Choose two of the following: Balance, Climb, Spot, Swim.

Just for fun, I'll include skill groups for some trait ideas I am kicking around.

Scholar

Antiquities: Knowledge of ancient artifacts brings with it its own skills.

-Appraise, Knowledge (history), Search.

Physician: Those who study medicine must learn precise techniques in the healing arts.

-Concentration, Craft (poison), Heal, Search.

Scribe: A scribe must learn of every aspect of the written arts.

-Decipher Script, Forgery, Knowledge (history), Speak Language.

Soldier

Combat Training: Soldiers are trained in many athletic skills, in addition to combat.

-Balance, Jump, Ride.

Leadership: A proper general must learn how to rally the troops and how to see the advancing enemy and plan accordingly.

-Diplomacy, Perform (oratory), Spot.

IV. Other rules.

Skill groups apply only to the class you take them in; that is, when you multi-class, you cannot spend skill points in a skill group that is not of the class that is leveling up. This is in part to rule against the RAW, which I don't like anyway; but also because the RAW would be particularly abusive in a system where all the classes get skill groups of their choosing.

The Knowledge and Perform skills work the same as the RAW, but they require special treatment, since most skill groups have immediate access to only one Perform or Knowledge sub-skill. If you want to buy other sub-skills, you have to spend one skill point outside the skill group in question to gain the other sub-skill. You can then continue to spend skill points in the skill group and progress in both sub-skills. Note that the rule works the same whether the other sub-skill is part of another skill group or not.

For example, Edgar has access to the Buffoonery skill group. He wants to learn how to play some instrument, in addition to Perform (comedy). At first level, if he maxes out the Buffoonery skill group, he has four ranks in all of those skill, including Perform (comedy). If he spends another skill point in Perform, he will have access to both Perform (comedy) and Perform (stringed instrument). In the future, when he spends skill points in Chicanery, he gains ranks in both Perform skills.

For another example, Ingrid has access to both the Mysticism and Antiquities skill groups. She has four ranks in Mysticism, giving her four ranks in Knowledge (arcana) (according to the new rule above). If she spends one skill point in Antiquities, she will have four ranks in both Knowledge (arcana) and Knowledge (history), because buying a skill point in Antiquities has the same effect as buying a skill point in Knowledge (history). Now if she spends skill points in either the Mysticism or Antiquities skill groups, she gains ranks in both Knowledge skills, though of course she cannot ever exceed her maximum ranks per level.