

# Risus Cheat Sheet

**Character creation:** Pick several (usually 4) cliches and distribute 10 dice (just d6s) among them, with no more than 4 dice in any one cliche.

- **Example1:** Grolfnar Vainsson the Viking: Viking (4), Womanizer (2), Gambler (3), Poet (1)
- **Example2:** Ripley "Blade" Braddock (futuristic / sci-fi genre)
  - Space Marine (4) surviving harsh climates, hoofin' it up hill, firing all rounds
  - Pardoned Ex-Con (3) breaking & entering, hotwiring, fast-talking, denying his past
  - Itinerant Barfly (2) drinking, carousing, chatting up girls
  - Compulsive Gambler (1) betting, bluffing, poker face, feeling lucky
- **Countdown method:** Pick 4 cliches, set one to (4), next to (3), then (2), last one (1)
- **Quality cliches:** The best cliche's have an adjective preceding the noun. Examples: Crimefighter -> Amateur Crimefighter; Quarterback -> Former Quarterback; Pop Star -> Aging Pop Star; Miner -> Dwarven Miner. Good choices for the adjective: profession, race / species, cultural background, personal history, degree of dedication, religious / philosophical bent, social class, gender, group affiliation, demeanor, appearance, pop-culture reference, goals, self-image, relationships, problems
- **Hook:** Pick a "hook" to gain 1 extra die in one of your cliches. Couple of flavors:
  - Weakness: operate at half dice under certain circumstance, e.g. "Computers hate me"
  - Compulsive behavior that pulls a character into a story: e.g. "Can't resist a wager"
- **Equipment:** Each character presumably has the tools they need for their cliches to function properly. If their equipment gets lost / stolen, they're at half dice (round down) or no dice (depending) until they get it back or find replacements. Examples: A Thief (4) is a Thief (2) if he loses his lockpicks, a Netrunner (3) is a Netrunner (0) if he loses his cyberdeck.

**Three Types of Success Rolls:** The core mechanic in all cases is to roll a number of d6s, equal to your cliche "potency", sum the result, and hope for high number.

1. **Target number:** For unopposed tasks, the GM sets a target # based difficulty & cliche fitness.
  - **Difficulty of endeavor:** Swimming in a pool=5, in a lake=10, in a river=15, stormy sea=20
  - **Cliche fitness:** Target # can vary based on cliche being used. For example, picking a lock might be a difficulty 20 for a normal shlub, but it could be a 5 for a Safecracker, a 10 for a Crimefighter, a 15 for a Handyman, and a 30 for a Unicorn (try picking it with your horn...)
  - **Haggling:** A player & GM can negotiate a target # can based on the scope / flashiness of the endeavor. For example, a Firemage(4) might try to set fire to the: whole castle = 30, front gates = 25, roof on one tower = 20, a single, sleeping guard = 15.
2. **Quick contest:** You & opponent make opposed rolls, high roll wins.
  - **Examples:** who can grab the knife first, who wins a footrace, who cooked the best chili, etc.
3. **Combat:** You're fighting with someone and trying to wear them down. Each side makes an opposed roll, low roll loses 1 die (temporarily) in that cliche. First one to 0 is the loser.
  - **The Losers' Fate:** Having a cliche hit 0 doesn't mean you're "dead", just "defeated". The winners decide the losers' fate, which could include public humiliation, psychological trauma, actual death, or a casual "Don't let me see your ugly face around here no more."
  - **Healing:** A wounded cliche could require: a first aid kit, therapy, magical healing, etc. Cliches heal at a rate decided by the GM. (Negotiation plays a role here.)
  - **Switching cliches:** A Pirate (4), Swashbuckler (3) could fight as a Pirate until his cliche is reduced to (2). He could switch to fighting as a Swashbuckler (3) and get a new lease on life.
  - **Inappropriate Cliches:** Risus uses a broad definition of "combat" which could include: dueling banjos, courtroom antics, seduction attempts, wizard's duels, and actual fistfights. You can use a cliche that's a complete mismatch for the type of combat, *but only if you describe it in a really, really entertaining manner*. The loser loses three dice instead of one.

**When someone can't participate:** If one or more players haven't got a cliche that fits a particular contest (e.g. a pie-eating contest), they get 2 free dice to use temporarily. Characters with a fitting cliche *also* get 2 extra dice. Applies only to quick contests & combat.

**Character Advancement:** At the end of each gaming session, make a separate roll for each cliche you used. If all the dice show even numbers, that cliche goes up by 1. (Thus, high-potency cliches will advance slowly, while low-potency cliches will advance more quickly.)

## The Dozen Endeavors

Here are some possible things you might do with a given cliche. One cliche might be able to do 2, 3, or even 4 of these things. It's very unlikely have 1 cliche that can do all of these things (well).

- Athletics: running, jumping, climbing, swimming, shoving, lifting
- Persuasion: lying, seducing, inspiring, entralling, calming, leading
- Communication: language, jargon, courtly manners, cultural quirks, protocols, performances
- Detection: noticing, recognizing, and understanding clues
- Driving, Riding & Piloting: chasing, eluding, handling tricky conditions
- Gadgeteering: crafting, repairing, improving, disabling, and exploiting technology
- The Medical Arts: first aid, magical healing, therapy, drugs, etc.
- Wilderness Mastry: survival, tracking, using plants, taming beasts
- Scholarship: knowledge, history, following tricky conversations
- Intrusion: spying, stealing, hacking, hiding, slipping by unnoticed
- Combat: beating people up, breaking things, blowing things up
- Magic: wielding supernatural powers for fun and profit

**Example:** a Two-Bit Thief(3) would excel at Intrusion & Detection, be reasonably good at Combat & Athletics, might have some specialized talent with Gadgeteering, Persuasion & Communication, but probably can't do the other things very well.

## Risus: Optional Rules

### **Character Creation:**

- **Tale:** If you write a paragraph backstory about your character, you get a bonus die (like a hook).
- **Lucky Shots:** Devote char gen dice to a "pool" that you can draw from later. 1 dice = 3 lucky shots. Spend these during a session to boost one cliche for a single roll. Lucky shots refresh every session.

**Pumping cliches:** You can boost one of your cliches for a single roll. Max boost is equal to your cliche potency. Afterwards, you take damage in that cliche equal to the amount you pumped. (You can pump yourself right out of commission.) Can't be used in Quick Contests.

**Teaming Up:** Sometimes the whole party must unite to defeat a single, boss enemy!

- **Pick a team leader:** Usually this is the character with the highest-ranking cliche.
- **Harmonize cliches:** Everyone needs to use cliches that are fitting for the type of battle.
- **Everybody rolls:** All the team leader's dice count, everyone else contributes only sixes.
- **If the team loses that round:** Everyone rolls the cliche they used, low roller takes 1 die of damage.
- **"Jumping on the grenade":** If a team member *voluntarily* steps forward to take the damage, he takes *double* the normal damage, but the team leader can roll double his normal dice for his cliche next round.
- **Disbanding:** If the team disbands, each member loses one die in their cliche, just like taking damage.
- **Dropping out:** Individuals can drop out of a team, but the cliche they used gets reduced to zero.
- **Lost Leader:** If the team lead drops out / gets reduced to zero, treat it as "disbanding".

**Boxcars & Breakthroughs:** If you ever roll all sixes on one roll, reroll all the dice and add it to your prev roll!

**Montage:** Once per session, you can narrate a montage that gives one of the following benefits:

- **Healing:** A single character gets all cliches healed up to full.
- **Repairs/Shopping:** Existing equipment is fully repaired or new equipment is purchased.
- **Training/Prepping:** Grants the *entire* group a one-die bonus in *every* roll they make in one, upcoming scene (e.g. The Big Fight).
- **Recruiting/Campaigning:** Can sway public opinion in party's favor or recruit a Generic Grunt Squad (5) for a single, upcoming scene.

**Character Advancement:** Other ways to boost cliches:

- **Insta-leveling:** If, during the session, you say something that makes the whole table burst with laughter, the GM may allow you to roll at that instant to level-up the cliche you just used.
- **Loot:** Characters might gain equipment that either gives them either a one-shot boost to one cliche for a single endeavor, or a permanent boost for a specific endeavor. Example: a Model (3) gets magic lipstick that makes her a Model (4) when she does photo shoots, but not when she negotiates for movie deals.