

Information and Investigation

A ttRPG Sourcebook About Gathering and Making Sense of Information

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Sometimes, you need to hit the books, or spend some time mulling over things. The sort of intellectual work that a turbo-dork or a rumor-monger would do when locked up in a room by themselves.

These are some sub-systems to give guidance on what you can do to get information, and synthesize it into a meaningful form.

These systems treat information, data, observations, and the like, as if they were items; the GM doesn't need to actually tell you what, specifically, you learned. Just that your character has something that represents knowing things.

Ergo...

Information and Investigation

Anybody whomst has played any of the Failbetter Games like *Fallen London* or *Sunless Skies*, probably already gets the picture here with things like “Whispered Hints” or “Salon Stewed Gossip.” The board game *Arkham Horror* did something similar to this with Clues, as did the RPG *Meikyuu Kingdom* with the Information resource.

Information Items can also be given out as rewards for quests, or as the results of other encounters. The Information Gathering process exists as a way to generate them outside of major plot lines, such as during downtime.

Important!!

This system is designed to be system agnostic – meaning you'll need to know the rules of the game you're running.

No specific numbers are listed, so you'll need to know what's considered Easy, Medium, or Hard difficulty checks for your game. You'll also need to make some judgment calls about what skills or stats should be used for your checks.

This system also makes use of Progress Clocks, as they appear in games like *Blades in the Dark* and *Fabula Ultima*. The short explanation is that they count up until a certain thing happens.

The longer? Check out <https://bladesinthedark.com/progress-clocks>

Basic Processes

There's two basic processes at play here, Gathering Information, and Synthesizing Information.

Gathering Information

Observable Phenomenon → Rolls to advance clocks → Acquire Basic Information Item

Observable Phenomemon – You need to be in an environment where you can get information. Such as in a library with the right kinds of books; a well stocked lab with equipment and samples to experiment with; or at a party where enough wine is flowing to get the attendees' lips loose.

Roll To Advance Clocks – Research takes time, and parties eventually wind down. Depending on the situation, clocks could represent either how much progress is needed to make some kind of novel discovery, or how much time is left before people decide it's time to head home. In either case, each roll should represent at least 1 hour of observation – time spent studying and taking notes, schmooving around and listening in on conversations, etc etc.

Acquire Basic Information Item – Gathering Information gives your character raw data or other factoids. Basic Information Items are meant to be small factoids. They also represent information your character knows, but you as a player don't need to know the specifics of. (Either because it's not the right time, or because the specifics of how the world works isn't necessarily important.)

Benefits from using these things are fleeting, such as getting a bonus on a roll. They represent how a given fact on your mind suddenly becomes relevant in a very specific situation. For more potent or longer lasting effects, you would use them for Synthesizing Information.

Synthesizing Information

Basic Information Item → Rolls to Refine Information → Functional Item (Specified) or Special Effect

Basic Information Item – Acquired either through Gather Information, or from other methods. As a general rule, you should need multiple Information Items to even start this.

Roll to Refine Information – This is where the most variation in the system will come about. It can call for a progress clock rolled on for every hour (or more) of pouring over the details. It could also be a simple instantaneous roll that consumes all the needed information items on success, or just one on failure. (Failure representing the realization that something you thought you knew made no sense or was wrong.)

Functional Item or Special Effect – The benefits of Synthesizing Information are greater than those of using a Basic Information Item; either by giving a stronger bonus or effect, or a longer lasting one. It's not just the information that goes into this process that matters, but the mental labor of drawing conclusions, and verifying that they hold up to scrutiny.

Examples of Gathering Information:

Observing Magical Phenomenon – Stones glow during a full moon	
Requirements	During a Full Moon. Must be at the location of the glowing stones. Must be able to cast spells or otherwise able to manipulate and observe magic.
Clocks	Hours Left (4), Progress (4)
Roll	Medium Arcana/Magic Knowledge Check, once every hour spent observing and experimenting.
Results	Every successful roll advances Progress by 1. When progress is maxed out, reset to 0, and gain “Arcane Research Notes”
Possible Uses for Arcane Research Notes Bonuses to rolls for identifying magic Three can be Synthesized into “Manual of Spellcraft [Spell Type]”	

Dissecting an Unusual Creature – Some kind of fish from the clouds	
Requirements	Specimens of the fish, the more in tact, the better. A lab with dissection equipment (Pins, knives, etc). Knowledge of biology.
Clocks	Integrity Loss (2), having addition specimens can raise the threshold for Integrity, Progress (4)
Roll	Easy Nature/Biology Check, once every hour as long as Integrity Loss is not maxed out, advances Integrity Loss by 1
Results	Every successful roll advances Progress by 1. When progress is maxed out, reset to 0 and gain “Zoology Notes, Cloud Fish” Failure advances Integrity Loss by 2.
Possible Uses for Zoology Notes, Cloud Fish: Bonuses to rolls for dealing with Cloud Fish or other related creatures 5+ sets of related notes can be Synthesized into a “Field Guide of [Biology]”	

Gathering Gossip At A Party – The Baron’s Salon	
Requirements	An invitation to the party, or some other way to gain access.
Clocks	Hours Left (4)
Roll	Medium Check, skill depends on Player Character’s approach. Can be rolled once every hour of the party.
Results	Every Successful roll gains 1 High Society Gossip
Possible Uses for High Society Gossip Can be used for bonuses for any social rolls involving High Society (or their fans) 3 Can be Synthesized to remember/identify an important figure 5 can be Synthesized to create Blackmail Material	

Examples of Synthesizing Information

Creating a Spell Scroll for an altered version of a spell	
Requirements	Relevant Manual of Spellcraft, Arcane Notes
Clocks	Adjusting (12)
Roll	Medium Difficulty, once every day, consumes 1 Arcane Notes
Results	Success Advance Adjusting by 1; GM should award more progress for Adjusting if a higher difficulty is met.
Spell Scroll functions like any other spell scroll would, but casts a version of the spell with some detail changed.	

Compiling a Field Guide to Creatures from the Clouds	
Requirements	5 sets of relevant Zoology Notes
Clocks	Compiling (12)
Roll	Medium Biology or Nature, once every day
Results	Success: Advance Compiling by 1; GM should award more progress for Compiling if a higher difficulty is met.
Possible Uses for Field Guide to Creatures from the Clouds: Having it handy gives bonuses to any rolls to identifying or otherwise discerning information about relevant creatures.	

Determining what an NPC cares about	
Requirements	3 Gossips from social circles the character in question belongs to
Clocks	None
Roll	Medium Socializing or Psychology
Results	Success – GM reveals a secret about the NPC Failure – Lose 1 Gossip
The secret is its own reward – you can use that as an angle for persuading them, threatening them, etc etc.	

Other potential uses

Surveying Unfamiliar Lands	
Gathering	Finding spots with a good vantage point, spending time drawing maps; gives Expedition Notes
Synthesizing	Player character gets to describe a landmark in an area

Searching for a Pirate's Hidden Treasure	
Gathering	Reading stories of the pirates exploits, gathering myths from the areas they operated out of, reading their old travel logs; gives Pirate's Treasure Clues
Synthesizing	X marks the spot, and you know where the X is.

Blank charts

Requirements	
Clocks	
Roll	
Results	

Requirements	
Clocks	
Roll	
Results	

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