# Basic Training: Task Resolution

What follows is a very basic look at how to determine whether characters succeed or fail at tasks in the game. There's more to it than what we present here, but that's beyond the scope of this PDF. Still, it's enough to give you a taste of the exciting new card-based game mechanic that powers Downtrodden.

## Abilities and Suits

Every character is defined, in part, by 21 Abilities, divided into three categories of seven Abilities each. These categories are *Physical, Mental* and *Social* and are each linked to a suit from a traditional playing card deck *(see right)*.

Each Ability has a rating that ranges from -4 to +9, with 0 being average.

Abilities can have Specializations that narrow down what the character is exceptional at. For example, they might have "Singing" as a Specialization of Performance or "Swimming" as a Specialization of Athletics.

| Social Abilities | Physical Abilities | Mental Abilities | None |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |

## The Decks

One of Downtrodden's unique qualities is the use of an ever-changing deck of standard playing cards. Each character has their own deck and this deck begins the campaign with only certain cards in it. Various factors, such as experience and the character's mental health, can cause a deck to gain new cards or lose existing ones.

The GM has their own deck as well.

## Difficulty and Goal Number

To give you a better idea of how it all works, we're going to demonstrate the entire process using an example. Let's set the scene: Brooke is playing Alice Stewart, a woman attempting to escape from a re-training facility. Unfortunately, she was spotted and is now being pursued by a security guard and a taser-armed drone.

When a character wants to attempt a dramatic or important task (or sometimes even multiple tasks), the GM can call for a check to be made. Before any randomization is carried out, though, the GM and player work together to determine one of the character's Abilities that would be useful in accomplishing the action.

Once this is established, the GM has to determine the *Difficulty* (ranging from Very Easy to Almost Impossible). Each Difficulty has a bonus number. For example, Hard has +12. The GM flips over the top card of their deck and adds the value of the card to the bonus of the Difficulty. This total is the Goal Number that the player's character has to get equal to or higher than. More on that in a sec.

You may be wondering about face cards (Queens, Kings, etc.). Each face card has a different effect, but we're not going to worry much about that in this PDF. Just know that they add variety and create interesting storytelling possibilities.

Jen (the GM) and Brooke decide that the pursuit will revolve around a check that uses Alice's Athletics, which has a rating of +4. Jen decrees that the task is Hard (which carries a +12 modifier) and draws a card. It's a 6 of Spades. She adds 6 and 12 together to arrive at the Goal Number of 18.

Difficulty +12 = Goal Number 18

# The Chain

The player making the check flips over six cards in order, from left to right, forming a line of face-up cards in front of them. This is called the *chain*. The cards on either end of the chain are referred to as *exposed cards*. When it's all said and done, the exposed cards will be added together and modified by the character's pertinent Ability rating. The intention is to equal or exceed the Goal Number.

Brooke draws her six cards. As it stands now, the total would be 16 (2+10 with the +4 from Athletics), which isn't enough to succeed, since the Goal Number is 18.

Exposed Card →   2♠   8♣   A♥   K♦   5♦   10♥   ← Exposed Card

But, wait! There's more!

Various effects can manipulate the chain, such as face cards appearing in the chain, certain situations affecting the outcome (having proper tools, good lighting, etc.) and something characters possess called Ace Qualities (we'll get to that shortly). So when the cards first hit the table, there could very well be changes made. Let's go back to the example and see what alterations need to occur.

For players, a King counts as having a value of 1. Furthermore, as soon as they are placed in a chain, they shift positions one space toward the nearest exposed card. The King would move one "spot" to the right, effectively trading places with the 5 of Diamonds.

2♠   8♣   A♥   5♦   K♦   10♥
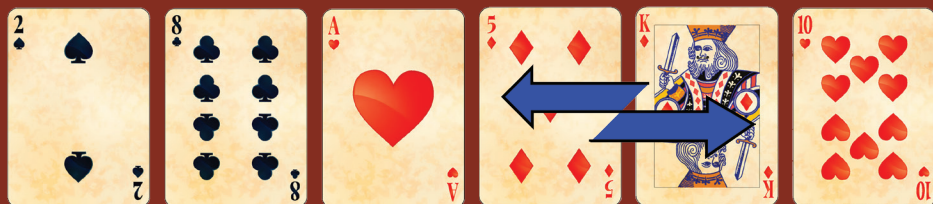
When an Ace shows up in the chain, the player places the Ace near their character sheet. It can be spent during the game to power one of the character's Ace Qualities. The Ace is replaced in the chain by the top card from the deck. Here, it's replaced by an 8 of Spades.

Specializations also manipulate the chain. If a Specialization makes sense, it allows the player to remove an exposed card. Fortunately, Alice has an Athletics Specialization called "Fast Runner", which would obviously be useful here.

In this case, removing the 10 of Hearts would leave the King of Diamonds as an exposed card. Not good! Instead, Brooke decides to use the Specialization to get rid of the 2 of Spades, leaving the 8 of Clubs as the exposed card on the left.

As mentioned earlier, once the chain has been manipulated, the two exposed cards are totalled and added to the relevent Ability rating. If the total of that is equal to or higher than the Goal Number, the task is successful.

The final chain for the check looks like this. Two two exposed cards are the 8 of Clubs and the 10 of Hearts (total of 18). Adding that to Alice's Athletics rating of +4 gets her a total of 22. There's one more wrinkle: for each of the exposed cards with a suit that matches the Ability, +1 is added to the total. Since Clubs is linked to Physical Abilities, the 8 of Clubs will grant a +1 bonus, making the grand total 23, which easily exceeds the Goal Number of 18. Alice manages to outrun the security guard and the drone as well.

| 8 of Clubs | 10 of Hearts | Athletics | Clubs Bonus |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| +8 | +10 | +4 | +1 |

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Grand Total
23

So there you have it: the basic task resolution system for Downtrodden. The full rules have much more depth than what is shown here, but this PDF at least gives you a glimpse of how the system works at its most basic level. A few of the aspects of the full system:

• Adding a secondary Ability to the check when situations warrant it.
• Using opposing characters' Abilities as Goal Numbers.
• Players spending Aces to manipulate the chain via their characters' Ace Qualities.
• The GM spending Aces (yes, they keep their Aces as well) in order to manipulate the chain via a set of Ace Options. Particularly important Game Master Characters unlock even more Ace Options.
• Checks being hindered by characters' Flaws, which are similar to Abilities, but in reverse.
• Details of how all the face cards affect the chain and also how they affect the card drawn by the GM.
• Rules for "crucial checks", which are so dangerous that failure can remove the character from the scene... or even the entire game.

For more information about Downtrodden, visit
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