

Expanded Socialize Rules

Socialize

Introducing a Connection

One of the main functions of Socialize is to reflect the character's understanding of the social context in which he acts. In short, a character with a mastery of Socialize knows the landscape when it comes to people. Once per *chapter*, a character with Socialize 3+ and a relevant specialty or background (including Merits such as Allies, Contacts, or Influence) can describe a character she knows by reputation, position within an organization, or casual acquaintance (collectively called a "connection"). This connection doesn't owe the character anything, nor does she know him well enough to identify his Intimacies without other social influence actions. A newly created connection is usually not one present in the current scene but is typically one the character could approach during the next scene. This allows the character to introduce a connection in order to spice up the narrative, forward the plot, or simply flesh out the character by showing her to be well-connected.

The player describes the connection she would like to introduce. If the Storyteller deems this connection reasonable, roll the character's (Intelligence + Socialize) against a difficulty set by the Storyteller. The context of this roll is important. A character with Socialize 5 who is far from home and doesn't speak the local language will be lucky to find any useful connections to aid him, while one at the seat of his influence and network of contacts likely has his choice of local connections to call upon. In the same vein, it is easier to introduce a connection without any special skills or resources than one with the potential to solve a difficult narrative complication. Finally, a connection that is quite some distance away who will require the character to undertake a significant quest should carry a lower difficulty (up to -3 difficulty), while one that conveniently arrives during the current scene is much less likely (up to +3 difficulty).

If the roll succeeds, the connection exists and the character knows what must be done to make contact with her — whether it's as simple as walking into a nearby tavern and talking to the nervous man who just so happened to witness the event the character is investigating or as difficult as sneaking into the heavily guarded prison to interrogate the Dynast who has fallen out of imperial favor. If the roll fails, *the connection still exists*, but she isn't where the character expects her to be, or else circumstances make meaningful interaction impossible. The key witness might already be so deep in his cups that he passes out at the table moments after the character arrives, for example, or a local merchant might be away on business when the character calls on her at her home. The character can wait until the man sobers up or until the merchant returns, or the Storyteller can introduce the connection at a later part of the story

Specialties: A character with an appropriate Socialize Specialty, in addition to rolling an extra die as usual, may introduce a connection one additional connection per chapter, as long as the additional connection is relevant to that Specialty. Multiple Socialize Specialties grant additional uses, but no character may introduce more than one connection per scene regardless of the number of Specialties she possesses.

Merits: A relevant Merit such as Allies, Contacts, or Influence reduces the difficulty of introducing a connection by -1, regardless of its dot rating. In addition, a character who

introduces a connection based on a Merit may choose to define mutual Ties between herself and that connection (see below).

Negative Connections: Most connections a player introduces in this way are either strangers or, with an appropriate Merit, people with a positive Tie of some intensity toward the character. The player may always choose to introduce a connection who has a negative Tie toward her character and may describe and explain this Tie (subject to Storyteller approval).

Socialize, Ties, and Story Merits

Many story Merits define a character's access to connections, whether this is a fixed and relatively permanent connection like Allies or a Mentor or a much more flexible collection of connections such as those offered by Contacts and Influence. Most of these Merits allow the player to define a positive and mutual Tie between his character and a connection introduced by a (Intelligence + Socialize) roll, but each follows a slightly different set of rules:

Allies: The player must define the intensity of the Ties at the time he gains this Merit. The intensity of the character's positive Tie toward the connection cannot be weaker than the connection's positive Tie toward the character. Most allies have a positive Major Tie toward each other, but Minor and Defining Ties are allowed as long as the shared Tie is equal.

Backing: The character must define a positive Tie toward the organization in which he has backing at the time he gains this Merit. Connections introduced using this Merit usually have no Tie toward the character (and he need not have one toward the connection), but they have at least a Minor Tie toward the organization to which they both belong. The player may introduce a connection with a higher intensity of Tie, but this increases the difficulty of the (Intelligence + Socialize) roll by +1 for a Major Tie and by +2 for a Defining Tie. The player may also define Minor Ties between his character and the connection by increasing the difficulty of the roll by +1.

Command: The character must define a positive Tie toward the soldiers under his command. If this is a Major Tie he receives a +1 bonus on the (Intelligence + Socialize) roll to introduce connections related to his command, which becomes +3 for a Defining Tie. Newly introduced connections usually have a Minor Tie toward the character, but this is instead a Major Tie if the number of successes was two higher than the difficulty the Storyteller set for the (Intelligence + Socialize) roll or a Defining Tie if five successes higher than the difficulty. Connections introduced by this Merit must be consistent with the body of soldiers the character commands. Some might have surprising and useful skills unrelated to marching and fighting, but most will not have more than a dot or two in an Ability unrelated to their profession.

Contacts: The character need not define a Tie toward her contacts. Connections introduced through this Merit likewise do not have a Tie toward the character. However, the player may define a Minor Tie that a connection has to someone or something else. Often this is some interest in earning money that allows a character with Resources to exploit by offering a bribe, but it can be any number of useful levers the character can use to convince the connection to tell her what he knows. The character may accept a Minor Tie toward a connection to instead define a Major Tie — or a Major Tie to describe a Defining Tie. Connections introduced in this way generally know what's going on in their spheres of influence and they regard sharing rumors and tidbits of gossip as a trivial favor, but it might take some bargaining to pry dangerous, secret, or valuable information out of them.

Cult: A connection who is a member of the character's cult has a Minor Tie toward him. The character may spend a point of Willpower to instead introduce a connection with a Major Tie toward him or spend two points of Willpower to introduce a character with a Defining Tie toward him. The character need not have a Tie toward the cult or cultist, but if he abuses his worshipper or acts contrary to the tenets of the cult, his Cult rating is reduced by one dot for the remainder of the story (possibly until the end of the next story, if the current story is ending). If the character has already used up all the bonus Willpower the cult grants him, he also loses a point of Willpower. If the temporary reduction would reduce the character's Cult rating to zero dots, the character instead loses the Merit permanently.

Followers: The character must define a positive Tie toward her followers. If this is a Major Tie he receives a +1 bonus on the (Intelligence + Socialize) roll to introduce connections related to his followers, which becomes +3 for a Defining Tie. Newly introduced connections usually have a Minor Tie toward the character, but this is instead a Major Tie if the number of successes was two higher than the difficulty the Storyteller set for the (Intelligence + Socialize) roll or a Defining Tie if five successes higher than the difficulty. Connections introduced by this Merit must be consistent with the professions of the followers the character has attracted. Some might have surprising and useful skills unrelated to their profession, but most will not have more than a dot or two in any Ability unrelated to their field.

Influence: Connections introduced by Influence do not have a Tie toward the character and do not require one in return. However, the character's Influence dots can be used as leverage on a Bargain or Threaten action within her sphere of influence — not just on a connection introduced via Influence but on any connection or character. If the connection also wields influence in the area, subtract his Influence dots from the character's. If this has a result of 0 or less, the character cannot use her influence to bargain with or threaten the target. If the result is 1, the character can request inconvenient tasks on a successful Bargain/Threaten roll against the victim's Resolve. This is instead serious tasks if the result is 2 or 3, and life-changing tasks at 4 or more.

Mentor: The player must define the intensity of the Ties at the time he gains this Merit. The intensity of the character's positive Tie toward the connection cannot be weaker than the connection's positive Tie toward the character. Most mentors and protégés share a Major Tie, but Minor and Defining Ties are allowed as long as the mutual Ties are equal.

Resources: Connections introduced by Resources do not have a Tie toward the character and do not require one in return. However, the character's Resources dots can be used as leverage on a Bargain action — not just on a connection introduced via Resources but on any connection or character. If the connection also possesses Resources, subtract his Resources dots from the character's. If this has a result of 0 or less, the character cannot use her influence to bargain with the target; she simply can't offer the target something valuable enough to sway him. If the result is 1, the character can request inconvenient tasks on a successful Bargain roll against the victim's Resolve. This is instead serious tasks if the result is 2 or 3, and life-changing tasks at 4 or more.

Retainers: The player must define the intensity of the Ties at the time he gains this Merit. The intensity of the character's positive Tie toward the connection must be at least Minor. However, a retainer's Tie toward the character is always one step more intense than the character's Tie toward the connection — typically Major, but potentially Defining if the character has a Major Tie toward the retainer.

New Merit

Unequal Affections (• or •••) — Story

This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.

Prerequisites: Allies or Mentor Merit

Choose one of the character's Allies or Mentor Merits when you gain this Merit. At one dot, increase the intensity of that connection's positive Tie toward the character by one without increasing the character's positive Tie toward the connection — from Minor to Major if the character's Tie toward the connection is Minor, or from Major to Defining if his Tie toward the connection is Major.

At three dots, increase the intensity of that connection's positive Tie toward the character by two without increasing the character's positive Tie toward the connection — from Minor to Defining even though the character's Tie to the connection is only Minor.

New Charms

Socialize

Knowing Everyone Approach

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 3, Essence 1

Type: Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Mastery of Small Manners

The Solar understands the underlying currents of society and knows who to talk to in order to achieve his goals. The Lawgiver may use an introduce connection action that does not count against his maximum number of introduce connection actions for the chapter and gains double 9s on the associated (Intelligence + Socialize) roll. This does not allow the character to introduce more than one connection per scene.

A Note on Motive-Discerning Technique

No Storyteller can reasonably expect to know all the Intimacies of every character in the world. This Charm can actually make your job easier by allowing players to take some of the work of fleshing out Storyteller characters off of your shoulders. If a player speculates on an Intimacy the target of this Charm is reasonably likely to possess, let the Solar's speculation be correct in the majority of cases. Even if the Intimacy is *unlikely*, consider using it anyway as long as it doesn't throw you out of the story or completely contradict your understanding of the character. Weird tastes, strange predilections, and embarrassing secrets make Storyteller characters more memorable, after all. If you are concerned that the suggested Intimacy will grant the players too much power over the character, consider setting its intensity to Minor instead of vetoing it outright.

Chance Meeting

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Socialize 4, Essence 1

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Knowing Everyone Approach

Fate or good luck shines down on the Solar and brings the people he needs to him at just the right moment. Activate this charm after declaring the intention to introduce a connection but before making the (Intelligence + Socialize) roll to do so. If it is reasonably likely that the connection is nearby and the introduce connection roll succeeds, then the connection is either already present or soon arrives in the current scene. If the Storyteller judges the connection beyond the reach of this Charm, the Solar does not spend motes and does not make an introduce connection roll.

Pre-Arranged Rendezvous

Cost: —; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 1

Type: Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Chance Meeting

When using Chance Meeting to introduce a connection using an appropriate story Merit (Allies, Mentor, Retainer, etc.) but who is not within reach of that Charm, the Solar may always use a stunt to attempt the introduce connection roll at a higher difficulty. This is +1 difficulty if merely unlikely (a man who lives and works on the opposite side of the city) and up to +3 difficulty if it is extremely unlikely (a prince walking down a dark alley in a rough neighborhood). Most such stunts involve a brief flashback during which the player reveals how she arranged this coincidental meeting in advance. This Charm cannot introduce a connection to the scene who is prevented from doing so (imprisoned, a thousand miles away, dead, etc.) or who does not wish to be there, although the Solar may take a reflexive Persuade, Bargain, Threaten, or Inspire action in an attempt to convince him to show up at the appointed time.

Call the Guards

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 1

Type: Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Chance Meeting

When using Chance Meeting to introduce a connection using the Command Merit, the Solar may instead bring a Size 2 unit of her soldiers into the scene.

This Charm can only be used once per scene but is reset when an enemy battle group fails a rout check or is reduced to Size 0. This Charm cannot be reset more than (Command) times per scene.

Circle-Gathering Method

Cost: —; **Mins:** Socialize 3, Essence 2

Type: Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Knowing Everyone Approach

Even a Lawgiver can only do so much without the aid of followers and allies with specialized skills. The Solar may use the introduce connection action one additional time per scene, although each counts against her maximum number of introduce connection actions per chapter (unless offset by Knowing Everyone Approach).

The Lawgiver may purchase Circle-Gathering Method (Intelligence) times, with each repurchase increasing the maximum by one.

Counsel of Kings

Cost: — (+1 wp); **Mins:** Socialize 4, Essence 3

Type: Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Circle-Gathering Method

To rule Creation, a Lawgiver must forge alliances between strangers and bring them into harmony within her manse. When introducing multiple connections using Circle-Gathering Method, the Solar may spend a point of Willpower to ensure that all the connections are in the same place at the same time. If the resultant (Intelligence + Socialize) rolls fail to introduce at least two connections, the Willpower cost of this Charm is refunded.

Heroic Solar Convocation

Cost: 5m per connection; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3

Type: Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Special

Prerequisite Charms: Pre-Arranged Rendezvous, Counsel of Kings

The Solar calls his allies from all the corners of Creation, and they answer him. This Charm supplements any number of introduce connection actions the Lawgiver makes during the current scene as long as they use the Allies, Mentor, or Retainer Merit. These connections arrive at a time and place appointed by the Solar at the time he uses this Charm unless this would contradict a greater Tie than the connection's Tie toward the Lawgiver. Distance and most forms of

imprisonment do not prevent these connections from arriving or increase the difficulty of the (Intelligence + Socialize) roll. However, the meeting date cannot be earlier than the longest it takes a connection to arrive by the most expeditious means available to her. The motes used to activate this Charm remain committed until the convocation takes place or until the Solar ends the commitment (which prevents the meeting from taking place).

For example, a Solar pirate lord wishes to gather his allies from throughout the West. He makes several (Intelligence + Socialize) rolls to call four different Allies for a meeting a month hence. Three allies are within a month's journey from the meeting place, but the fourth is currently rotting in a Dynast's prison. The Lawgiver can still choose to include his imprisoned ally, but the Storyteller judges that it will take a season for her to find an opportunity to escape and find transportation to the Solar's convocation. The Solar may choose to delay the gathering until a season has passed, to exclude that ally from this Charm's effects, or to launch a daring rescue on the prison in order to free his friend and bring her to the gathering of allies.

(Fan rules created by Eric Zawadzki. Visit my blog for other news about my writing and game design: www.fourmoonspress.com/news)