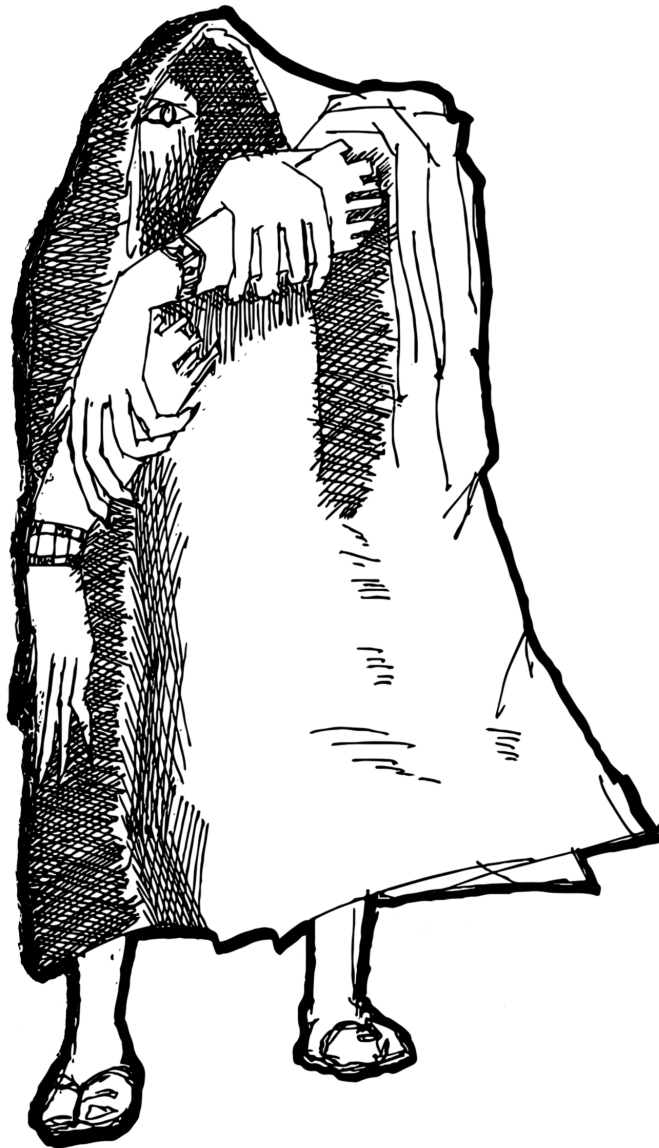


UnderControl

System Reference Document (SRD) — Beta

Kaveh Shahbazian



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March 25, 2026

1 Note for Playtesters

If you find a bug or a confusing rule, please reference build **afa656c** when sending feedback. This ensures I know exactly which version of the SRD you were using!

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3 About This Document

This document is the current active specification for the “UnderControl” System Reference Document (SRD) TTRPG system. It starts with high level, low detail explanations of stuff, and then gets more detailed as it goes on.

A web-based Character Sheet is available at <https://pbtpocket.com/undercontrol/character-sheet/>. Current features include:

- Saves the character data in the browser, for later sessions.
- Choosing the die size for **Mind**, **Body**, and **Control**.
- **Uplift**, **Degrade** or reset the current in-game value of the **Control Dice**.
- Rolling the **Control Dice** and the **Stat Die**. The **Outcome** will be shown immediately.
- The **Identity** sheet, for writing down the answers to the three questions.
- A tab for managing **Aspects**, which calculates the **Impact** automatically.

- A tab for managing **Binds**.

4 Vocabulary

High level definitions of terms used in “UnderControl”.

4.1 Control Dice

Control Dice are two dice of the same type. The goal is to roll the **Stat Die** under both of these dice.

4.2 Stat Die

The **Stat Die** is a single die of any type. It represents either **Mind** or **Body**. The goal is to roll this die under the **Control Dice**. In other words we want to keep our **Mind** or **Body Under Control!**

4.3 Outcome

A roll can end in three possible **Outcomes**: **Under Control**, **Endurable**, or **Out of Control**.

4.4 Scene

You make a **Scene** when you got yourself into something! The story goes on from **Scene** to **Scene** and between **Scenes**. We give a **Scene** a **Title** and possibly **Resolution Ticks** and a **Trouble** value.

4.5 Bind

You should not do that and you are in a **Bind** now! It can be an adversary in a **Scene**, a thread that spans between and through **Scenes** and such stuff. We can give a **Bind** a **Title**, **Resolution Ticks** and possibly a **Trouble** value. Also there could be some **Needed Aspects** that you might need in order to resolve the **Bind**.

4.6 Aspect

Anything factual can be an **Aspect**. It can be a trait, a relationship, a place, a time, a thought, an item and so on. It is made of **Words**. **Words** are our main currency! If you give your **Word**, you

can do wonders! An **Aspect** can optionally have a **Core Stat** (**Mind** or **Body**), **Bottom Die** and an **Impact** value.

4.7 Buff Aspect

A **Buff Aspect** is an **Aspect** that “buffs up” another **Aspect**, by increasing its **Impact**.

4.8 Character

And the **Characters** are the linchpin of the story, with their ambitions and **Binds**. A **Character** has a **Name**, some **Stats** (**Mind**, **Body** and **Control**), some **Aspects** and some history. They also could be in a **Bind** or two already.

5 Dice Resolution

In UnderControl, Polyhedral Dice (d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, and d20) are used. Player rolls three dice. Two of them are the same type, and they are called the **Control Dice**. The third die is the **Stat Die**. Player needs to literally roll “under control”!

Play Tip

When playing with physical dice, it helps to have three sets of Polyhedral Dice. It would be nice if two of those three sets are of the same color, so, we can use them as the **Control Dice**. The other set will be used as the **Stat Die**. This makes it easy to **Degrade**, **Uplift** and read them in a single glance.

5.1 Outcomes

A roll can end in three possible **Outcomes**: **Under Control**, **Endurable**, or **Out of Control**.

- If **Stat Die** is less than or equal to both **Control Dice** then the **Outcome** is **Under Control**.
- If **Stat Die** is less than or equal to one **Control Die** and greater than the other, then the **Outcome** is **Endurable**.
- If **Stat Die** is greater than both **Control Dice** then the **Outcome** is **Out of Control**.

A player can cross-off **Words** to **Bump** the **Outcome** to the next better one. By crossing-off one **Word**, it is possible to bump from **Out of Control** to **Endurable**. By crossing-off three **Words**, player can bump from **Endurable** to **Under Control**. But it is not possible to bump from **Out of Control** to **Under Control** directly by crossing-off four **Words**.

5.2 Pairs & Triples

The **Pairs** and **Triples** only affect the current roll.

- If both **Control Dice** show the same number, and the **Outcome** is **Under Control**, add +1 to the **Impact** of the **Aspect** you are using.
- If both **Control Dice** show the same number, and the **Outcome** is **Out of Control**, the player has to endure +1 additional **Trouble** on this roll’s consequences.
- If all three dice (two **Control Dice** and one **Stat Die**) show the same number, by definition it is an **Under Control Outcome**. In this case, add +2 to the **Impact** of the **Aspect** you are using.

5.3 Degrade & Uplift

Degrade and **Uplift** are the alterations that can happen to the dice, pushing the dice resolution towards a better or worse **Outcome**.

- **Degrade** reduces the die to the next smaller size (e.g., d10 → d8). Cannot degrade below d4.
- **Uplift** increases the die to the next larger size (e.g., d6 → d8). Each **Uplift** step costs one **Word**, crossed off from any of the player’s **Aspects**. Cannot uplift above d20.

6 Scene

A **Scene** is a situation that the **Characters** are in. It’s the stage. It is not happening in the background. It has a start and an end. Multiple **Scenes** can fit into a session. It can be a fight, a negotiation, a chase, or similar.

A **Scene** has a **Title** and may have **Resolution Ticks** and/or a **Trouble** value. For example, we

can have a **Scene** titled “Goblin Attack”. Let’s say there are 3 of them and the **Resolution Ticks** are 6. And the **Scene’s Trouble** is 3. The **Resolution Ticks** of this **Scene** represents how much **Impact** the **Characters** need to deliver through using their **Aspects** and rolls to resolve the **Scene**. Now, the first player will use their “Hammer of KnuckKnuck” **Aspect**, which has an **Impact** value of 3. And they roll a **Triple**, which means the actual delivered **Impact** is 3 (base) + 2 (triple) = 5! Wow! They managed to eliminate 2 goblins and severely wound the third one! The nice thing about this system, is that the mechanics gets out of the way and you can just narrate according to the flow of your imagination. Maybe you do not need to eliminate the last goblin. Maybe they give you what you want.

At each **Round**, if a player rolls **Endurable**, they deliver **Impact** but also have to cross-off a number of **Words**, equal to the applicable **Trouble**, from their **Aspects** — anyhow they want. If a player rolls **Out of Control**, they only have to cross-off **Words** equal to the applicable **Trouble**.

At the end of each **Round**, all players have to **Degrade** their **Control Dice**.

7 Bind

I bet you already know a thing or two about being in a **Bind**! Usually there is no easy escape from a **Bind**. You have to deal with it — well, up to **19** of those. It can be an adversary that you are hunting down, a thread, if you will. It can be a map of the galaxy, that no one can read it, except the nomadic traders that do not visit your space station any time soon. Maybe never.

A **Bind** can have a **Title**. It has **Resolution Ticks**. It may also have a **Trouble** value and some **Needed Aspects** that you might need in order to resolve the **Bind**

7.1 Resolution

The player can resolve a **Bind** by delivering **Impact** through using their **Aspects** and rolls, when-

ever it makes sense narratively.

- If a **Bind** has **Needed Aspects**, the player can roll on those **Aspects** to resolve the **Bind**.
- If a **Bind** has a **Trouble** value — like an opponent or a poison — the player can roll on the **Stat** die of their choice, to resolve the **Bind**. If they fail, they have to cross-off a number of **Words**, equal to the **Trouble** value.
- If a **Bind** has a **Trouble** value and some **Needed Aspects**, the player can roll on those **Aspects** to resolve the **Bind**. If they fail, they have to cross-off a number of **Words**, equal to the **Trouble** value.
- If a **Bind** has only the **Title** and the **Resolution Ticks**, it is handled completely narratively.

A **Bind** can be narratively, part of a **Scene**. But mechanically, it is separate. For example, consider the **Scene** we had before, the “Goblin Attack”. The **Resolution Ticks** of the **Scene** were 6, representing the three goblins. Now, we can have a **Bind** called “Goblin King”, which is the leader of the goblins. It has 4 **Resolution Ticks**, with a **Trouble** value of 2. Each **Round**, the players can choose to deal with the goblins — the **Scene** — or the goblin boss — the **Bind**. A player will reduce the **Resolution Ticks** of their target — either the **Scene** or the **Bind** — and they will endure the **Trouble** of their target.

8 Aspect

An **Aspect** is a factual statement about the world. It is made of **Words** — at least 3 and at most 12. *The Murky Skies* can be an **Aspect** of the land, ruled by the vampire covenant, which are loyal patrons of science. *The Chandelier of the Dark Sun* can be an **Aspect** of a powerful relic, which has a **Core Stat** of **Mind**, a **Bottom Die** of d12 and an **Impact** value of 2. It induces fear in vampires and leaves nothing but a husk. The **Impact** can only be 2 here — there is a formula for that!

It may have other properties.

- **Words** are the text that describes this **Aspect** and are the currency of the game. The player can cross-off **Words** to **Uplift** their **Stat** die (one **Word** per **Uplift** step).

- **Core Stat** (**Mind** or **Body**) is the stat that is needed to use the **Aspect**. The player can choose to roll on the other stat, but they have to roll with a **Degraded Control Dice** — or cross-off one **Word** to keep the die size.
- **Bottom Die** is the smallest die that is needed for this **Aspect**. As always, the player can cross-off **Words** to **Uplift** their **Stat** die size — if it's smaller than the **Bottom Die**.
- **Impact** reduces the **Resolution Ticks** of a **Scene** or **Bind**, when player succeeds in using this **Aspect**.

8.1 Buff Aspects

A **Buff Aspect** is an **Aspect** that “buffs up” another **Aspect**, by increasing its **Impact**. So, the delivered **Impact** will be the sum of both **Impacts** — the amount that will be reduced from the **Resolution Ticks**. The **Core Stat** of both, must be the same, and the **Bottom Die** of the **Buff Aspect** must be greater than, or equal to the **Bottom Die** of the **Aspect** it buffs. No need to roll for a **Buff Aspect**. To use a **Buff Aspect**, you have to cross-off one **Word** of it. It can be used only once per **Round** — as long as it has **Words** left for crossing-off.

8.2 Tethered Aspects

An **Aspect** can be **Tethered** to a **Scene**, a **Bind**, a **Character**, the group of players, etc. Take note of this on the **Aspect** flashcard.

A **Character** can have a maximum of 19 **Aspects**.

8.3 Calculating Impact

While defining an **Aspect** is freeform and completely narrative, the **Impact** value is calculated, at the time of creating the **Aspect**, using this formula:

$$\text{Impact} = \left\lceil \frac{\text{Bottom Die Size}}{\text{Number of Words}} \right\rceil$$

In our earlier example, *The Chandelier of the Dark Sun*, we count six words and the **Bottom**

Die is d12 (size 12), so the **Impact** is $\lceil \frac{12}{6} \rceil = 2$. We round up if the result is not an integer.

You can imagine all sort of creative **Aspects**! It depends on your world, your setting and other extra mechanics that you create (“can be used once per **Scene**”, “activates during full Moon”, etc). For example, “Banjo of the Ghost Riders” can be an **Aspect** that uplifts other players’ **Control Dice** for one **Round**. It might depend on a **Core Stat** of **Mind** and a **Bottom Die** of d8, which means it has an **Impact** of $\lceil \frac{8}{5} \rceil = 2$ — 2 uplifts that other players can share and use.

9 Rounds

Usually a **Scene** happens in **Rounds** — whether playing solo or with a group. A **Round** goes like this:

- **Uplift Control Dice** — *Optional*: Players can cross-off **Words** to **Uplift** their **Control Dice** before the roll (one **Word** per **Uplift** step).
- **Control Check**: All players roll their **Control Dice** — but not their **Stat Die**; yet.
- **Choose Aspect**: Players can choose an **Aspect** or go barehanded (rolling without an **Aspect** — the **Impact** is 1). They can use a **Buff Aspect** to buff-up the **Impact** of that **Aspect**. To use a **Buff Aspect**, player has to cross-off one **Word** of it. Other players can also use their **Buff Aspects** to buff-up the **Impact** of the same **Aspect** for that player.
- **Action**: They roll their **Stat Die** and see the **Outcome**.
- **Outcome Bump** — *Optional*: Players can cross-off **Words** to **Bump** the **Outcome** to the next better one.
- **Narrate**: Players narrate what happens, considering the **Outcome**.
- **Consequences**:
 - **Under Control**: Players reduce the **Resolution Ticks** of the current **Scene** or **Bind** by the **Impact** of the **Aspect** they used.

- **Endurable:** Players reduce the **Resolution Ticks** by the **Impact** of the **Aspect** they used, but also have to cross-off a number of **Words**, equal to the applicable **Trouble** (from the targeted **Scene** or **Bind**), from their **Aspects** — anyhow they want.
 - **Out of Control:** Players have to cross-off a number of **Words**, equal to the applicable **Trouble** (from the targeted **Scene** or **Bind**), from their **Aspects** — anyhow they want. No **Impact** is delivered.
- **Degrade Control Dice:** All players have to **Degrade** their **Control Dice**.

10 Character Creation

Creating a **Character** is simple in structure but interesting and can go deep. Keep in mind to leave some room for things to add during play — especially during the first session. Creating **7 Aspects** would be a nice starting point: create **4** during **Character** creation, and discover/remember the other **3** during the first hour of play.

1. **Name:** Choose a name for your **Character**.
2. **Stats:** Choose a “Die Size” for each of the three stats: **Mind**, **Body** and **Control** — two “D6” and one “D8” is a good start for solo or easy(er) play.
3. **Bump Stat:** Roll all three stats and **Uplift** the middle one.
4. **Identity:** Answer these questions. Answering these questions could give you some starting **Binds**.
 - *What is that smell? or What is that sound? or Are you hungry?*
 - *How did you end up here?*
 - *What are you going to do about it?*
5. **Aspects:** Create some starting **Aspects**. This list is optional, but fun to do.
 - *An item that you inherited:* Remember how you got it.
 - *Equipment:* Weapon, armor, a gadget, medicine, etc.

- *Supply:* Food, water, fuel, etc.

Use **Aspect** flashcards to write down **Characters’ Aspects**.

11 Advancement

Advancement can happen in different ways. You have to narrate the condition that justifies the advancement.

- **Uplifting Character’s Stats**
- Creating new **Aspects**
- Having more **Aspects**

There can be legendary **Aspects** that can only be obtained through advancement. They can come from looting, crafting, training, etc.

12 Game Loop

The *Game Loop* described here, is more of a guideline. Try to enjoy it!

- Assess the situation.
- Setup the **Scene** and/ or the **Binds**.
- Play and resolve the **Scene** and/ or the **Binds**.
- Narrate the consequences and the aftermath.
- At the end of the **Scene**, reset the **Control Dice**.
- Remove the destroyed **Aspects** — the ones with zero number of **Words**.
- If there are any crossed-off **Words**, choose an **Aspect**, remove it, and create a new one based of it. This action recovers all the remaining crossed-off **Words**.
- Finalize the resolution of the **Scene** and/ or the **Binds**. Take the loot, gather information, etc.
- Don’t just stand there! Go after the one escaped. That **Bind** is still not resolved!

13 Miscellaneous

Game Design Considerations: The rules described in this SRD are the default rules. You can change them when you design your game. But the core mechanics are pretty solid: rolling under control, **Aspects**, **Impact**, and the **Words** economy, **Scenes** and **Binds**. You can add more mechanics, or remove some of the existing ones, but try to keep the core mechanics intact.

Buff Stacking: By default, one **Aspect** can receive one buff by the player (from their own **Buff Aspects**), and one buff from each other player (so, two other players can give two Buffs).

Aspect Flashcards

Aspect Words:

Core Stat: ____ Bottom Die: ____
Impact: ____ Buff:

Aspect Words:

Core Stat: ____ Bottom Die: ____
Impact: ____ Buff:

Aspect Words:

Core Stat: ____ Bottom Die: ____
Impact: ____ Buff:

Aspect Words:

Core Stat: ____ Bottom Die: ____
Impact: ____ Buff:

Aspect Words:

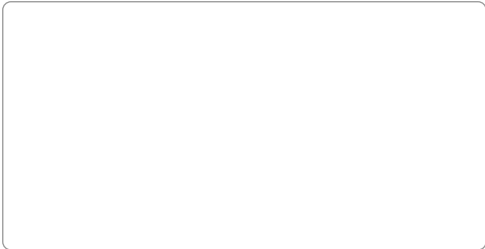
Core Stat: ____ Bottom Die: ____
Impact: ____ Buff:

Aspect Words:

Core Stat: ____ Bottom Die: ____
Impact: ____ Buff:

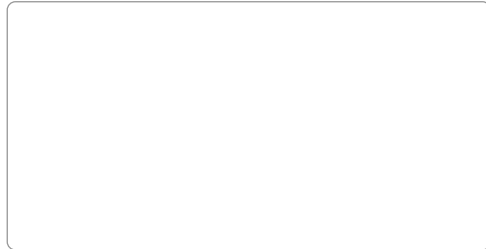
Scene Flashcards

Scene Title:



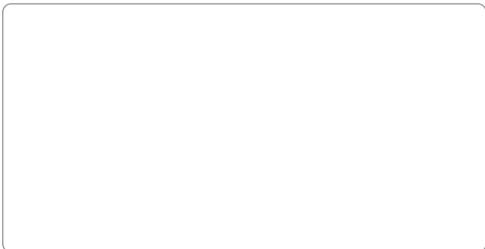
Resolution Ticks: ____ Trouble: ____

Scene Title:



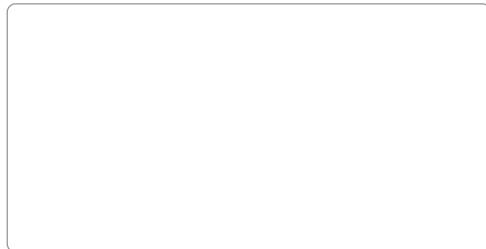
Resolution Ticks: ____ Trouble: ____

Scene Title:



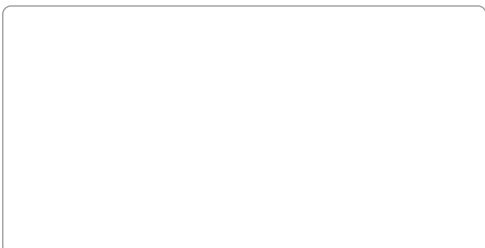
Resolution Ticks: ____ Trouble: ____

Scene Title:



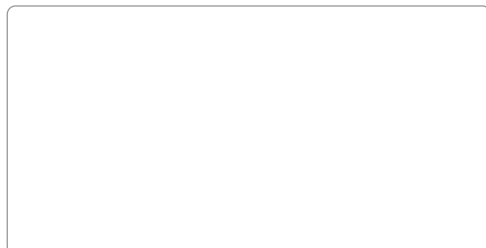
Resolution Ticks: ____ Trouble: ____

Scene Title:



Resolution Ticks: ____ Trouble: ____

Scene Title:



Resolution Ticks: ____ Trouble: ____

Bind Flashcards

Bind Title:

Resolution Ticks: ____ Trouble: ____

Bind Title:

Resolution Ticks: ____ Trouble: ____

Bind Title:

Resolution Ticks: ____ Trouble: ____

Bind Title:

Resolution Ticks: ____ Trouble: ____

Bind Title:

Resolution Ticks: ____ Trouble: ____

Bind Title:

Resolution Ticks: ____ Trouble: ____

Character Sheet

Name: _____

Stats:

Mind: _____ Body: _____ Control: _____

Identity:

What is that smell? / What is that sound? / Are you hungry?

How did you end up here?

What are you going to do about it?
