

## Introduction

The Intrigue Engine is a lightweight, GM-less roleplaying game system that encourages scheming, favour trading and plotting. Each player portrays a central, powerful person in the setting who is driven by a series of three different goals. The only way to win the game, is by accomplishing your goals by brokering deals with the other players and supporting them in their ends.

This game usually takes about 4 hours to play, with a total of 4 people. In terms of materials, you also need some index cards, 5 coins to represent Wisdom, and a couple pens.

## Choose a Setting

Before you can start play, you need to pick a setting for the game. Each setting will have six different Drives which the characters can choose from. The settings also have some brief descriptions so that you can get some context for the world. This document presents two Settings, but they are easy to create.

### NeoNippon - Shogunate Science Fiction

*The Japanese colonization ship landed on the extra-solar planet of Shi Tateyama in 2236. The planet seemed a paradise from the remote surveys. It had abundant water, signs of native life, and a temperature in the habitable range. Once the colonists awoke from their cryo-freeze, they found it was far less pleasant than expected. It was a planet of extreme mountains, nearly boiling sea-level temperatures and harsh corrosive tempests. The rain corroded most metal and unusual electromagnetic characteristics at sea-level fried most electronics. The Colonial Board of Directors made the decision to settle on the cooler, dryer, and safer mountain peaks, with each corporation founding their own colony.*

Drives: Status, Servility, Honour, Ambition, Loyalty, Terror

### The Cold City – Canadian Police Procedural

*This is an old city. Tourists wander along the cobblestone roads, through the towering fortifications, ignorant to the dark side of the city. Corrupt politicians wield identity and economics as clubs to bludgeon their opponents into submission. Immigrants from the far flung corners of the world settle here, bringing diversity and ambition. Secrets, buried far too long, are uncovered and exposed to the chill air. It's an old city, a cold city. It's your city, to serve and protect as long as you can.*

Drives: Identity, Language, Money, Connections, Culture, Violence

## Create Characters

Everyone in the game needs to create a character with 3 Needs (Personal, Ideological and Imposed), and four Drives (ranked 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively).

## Choosing Drives

The person who brought a printed copy of this game goes first in picking Drives. The higher level you have in any Drive, the more effective you at conflicts that deal with that subject.

Going clockwise, each of you gets to pick one of the six Setting drives that represent your characters best, and rank it at level 4. Once a drive has been selected at any given level, it can't be selected by any other player at that same level. When you are done with this step, every player will have one of the six Drives uniquely assigned at this level, written this down on the right side of an index card.

Repeat this process for each to select a different level 3 Drive, level 2 Drive and level 1 Drive. At the end, each person will have a Drive ranked at level 4, one ranked at level 3, one ranked at level 2 and one ranked at level 1. Remember that you can't have two people with the same rank of the same drive, and that each character can only have a drive once.

## Example

- In a Neonippon setting,
- Julie chooses Status and Bob chooses Loyalty for their level 4 drives.
- Julie chooses Honour and Bob chooses Servility their level 3 drives
- Julie chooses Loyalty, while Bob chooses Terror as their level 2 drives.
- Julie chooses Ambition, while Bob chooses Honour as their level 1 drives.

## Choosing Drives

Now that you have your Drives, you need to choose your three needs. These are goals that your character is driven to achieve during play through guile, intrigue and diplomacy. Write down "Personal Need", "Ideological Need" and "Imposed Need". Everyone then passes their index card to the person on their left.

Everyone will write down a Personal Need for someone else's characters at this point. Personal needs are emotional in nature and deal with interpersonal relationships. *Avenge my father*, *Locate my childhood friend Suki*, or even *Understand my heritage* are great examples. When you are done, pass the card to the left.

Now you write down an Ideological Need of another character. These are concrete goals, that are defined by some kind of abstract and subjective ideology. Personal needs are passionate and aggressive

in nature and deal with society. Try to make it clash with the Personal Need you just established. Overthrow the corrupt general, Abolish the institution of slavery in the city, or even Become a respected merchant in the city are great examples. When you are done, pass the card to the left.

Lastly, everyone writes down an Imposed need. These are obligations that were forced on the character through some form of scheming, influence trading or outright intimidation. These are distasteful actions that your character is forced to perform, in order to escape their obligation. These beliefs should clash with the Ideological and Personal needs you just established. Good examples might *Get the password to the government database, burn down the orphanage, or Run for political office of the Rhino party.*

Pass the card left one more time, and everyone will have their own character card in front of them. Write down a name at the top of your index card and tell what they can call you. You should also examine what your three Needs tell you about your character.

### Examples of character cards

Personal Need Avenge my father	Julie - June  Drives 4- Status 3- Honour 2- Loyalty 1- Ambition	Personal Need Earn respect from the nobles	Bob - Bjorn  Drives 4- Loyalty 3- Servility 2- Terror 1- Honour
Ideological Need Seize control of the lowland villages		Ideological Need Establish a democratic order	
Imposed Need Surrender my son to Fukuoka		Imposed Need Protect the bandits	

### Scenes

In every scene, there are three different roles.

The Protagonist is the character, who's actively trying to achieve their goal directly.

The Antagonist is a supporting character or a foil, who interacts with the Protagonist and making deals.

The two observers cooperate to frame the scene, play minor characters and give the Protagonist or the Antagonist a coin from the Influence pool.

Every scene of play is focused on one specific character (the protagonist), who is interacting with another character (the antagonist). At the start of each scene, the Protagonist player chooses one other person to become the Antagonist of this scene. The antagonist of this scene will become the Protagonist of the next one.

## Conflicts

Roleplay freely.

When the Protagonist and the Antagonist disagree that one event should happen, you have a conflict on your hands. The Observers will state which of the 6 setting Drives is most applicable in this situation, and the character with the higher ranking in that Drive wins the conflict. If no one has the most applicable drive, the Observers will choose a second drive that would be appropriate for the conflict.

## Wisdom

### Gaining Wisdom

The observer can pull a Wisdom coin out of the pool and give it to the character who is winning a conflict. When that happens, describe some turn of fortune or circumstance that makes that character fail in the conflict. That character keeps the Wisdom until they choose to use it.

### Spending Wisdom

A person losing a conflict can spend one of their Wisdom and return it to the pool, which allows them to win a conflict they might otherwise lose.

When you make a bargain with someone else, you can give them a Wisdom to make it binding.

## End Game

Game ends when 7th goal is achieved in game.