THE FORGE
A GENESYS RPG PODCAST

EPISODE 10 - DE-MYSTIFYING THE MYSTICAL (PART 2)

The Forge Podcast is all about bringing new creations to the table, and the Genesys RPG provides a powerful set of tools to do so. When it comes to designing a setting, the skills and talents provided to use during character creation and play, help players immerse themselves in the setting. The Die Casting segment is about closely examining individual skills and talents and how they relate to creations you craft.

We received an e-mail from one of our Patreon Supporters requesting we examine *Negotiation*, a social skill that stymies both GMs and players alike. Often confused with its counterparts, the *Negotiation* skill is a skill that has a specific methodology and one we explore with you now.

DIE CASTING (SKILLS: NEGOTIATION)

The *Negotiation* skill is one of five social skills in the game. It is most commonly mistaken for *Charm*, *Leadership*, and even *Deception. But Negotiation* is a *Presence* based skill (GENESYS Core Rulebook, pg. 56), and indicates the skill requires a personable approach.

When a character wants to make a deal, they're going to use *Negotiation*. Its not about giving orders, sweet talking, approaching situations with an aggressive stance, or telling lies. *Negotiation* is convincing someone to do what you want by giving them something they want in return. In essence, the *Negotiation* skill is used when one character has 'something' the other character wants. And then knowing how much they wish to part with for that 'something'. This concept is at the heart of the skill.

The thing being sold or purchased could be tangible like goods, vehicles, weapons, or anything that your character would traditionally purchase. But, it might also be something that you can't touch like a character's freedom, passage through a trade route, secret intelligence, or perhaps amnesty for a criminal who has evidence against your character's foe. Fundamentally, any use of the *Negotiation* skill involves an exchange of something tangible, such as money or goods, or intangible, such as information or favors for something else. Without that element, it is more appropriate for a character to use one of the other social skills.

Skill Differences

As mentioned before, the confusion with the *Negotiation* skill is that many players look towards character with a high *Presence* to deal with most social encounters. But, unless the situation involves an exchange, using any skill other that *Negotiation* is flawed. But why are they easily confused? Let's look at some examples:

- **Charm:** A suave character may saddle up to a bar to speak with the casino owner, offer them a drink, and the opportunity to use their services. Although a *Negotiation* check may result at some point, the intent of the character is to allure the target, and so *Charm* is more appropriate.

- **Coercion:** Forcing a person to part with their weapons or find themselves the victim in a terrible accident. Threatening a character by offering them their life in exchange for property is less of a *Negotiation* and more *Coercion*.

- **Deception:** Convincing a trader to give a load of freshly caught fish to a character for nothing. The PC may claim untruths to get what they need. Although this is a veiled attempt to negotiate, the method used is closer to the use of *Deception*.

- **Leadership:** A character gains a position of power in a small community. Their guards are reluctant to follow orders and so the character orders the guards to work or face imprisonment. This goes beyond coercion into authoritarianism where *Leadership* is more appropriate.

In each of the above interactions, the opposing side agreed to an exchange, including *Leadership*, where they gave up their freedom to do as they were ordered. Using *Negotiation* is possible for each example, but a player could still lobby for a different skill. When this occurs, the GM should adjust the difficulty, especially if the NPC is not as open to the PCs chosen approach.

For example, a PC who used *Coercion* to leverage a better deal for the purchase of an item may successfully intimidate the seller. Depending on the NPCs' disposition and backstory the difficulty may warrant an increase by one or more.

To Roll or Not to Roll

Forcing players to make a check when negotiating slows play. If a character seeks something simple, don't force them to play an encounter with the grocer or the merchant. Just tell the player that they find the item, however, they must purchase it at the asking price.

Unfortunately many players want the best deal and often negotiate on price for just about anything. Yet, not every NPC wants to undertake this task. For example, in most cases, if you were to go into the store of a major supermarket chain, negotiating for the best price is not always possible. However, some stores advertise that they "won't be beaten on price" or offer a price matching policy. This is the realm of the narrative use of the *Negotiation* skill.

If players still wish to negotiate, the GM may consider incorporating the check to find the item into the check to purchase that item. In that case, a GM should allow the player to spend ⚔ and ❂ to reduce the price, or the GM can increase the price using ♙ and ⊗.

Who Gets Negotiation?

- **Core Rules:** Leader, Socialite, Tradesperson, Priest
- **Realms of Terrinoth:** Envoy
- **Shadow of the Beanstalk:** Academic, Con Artist, Ristie.

Mechanical Effects

There are two main ways to use the *Negotiation* skill:

- Finding something
- Trading for something

Finding Something

When attempting to locate and purchase an item, you use the item's Rarity value to set the availability. The difficulty is half the item's Rarity (rounding down). For example if the item sought has a Rarity of 7, the character would make a **Hard (◆◆◆) Negotiation check**. (page 82 of the Genesys Core Rules). However, when searching for illegal, restricted, or unusual items, a character uses their *Streetwise* skill or, in some circumstances, an appropriate *Knowledge* skill.

Varying factors affect the Rarity of an item including location, local laws, and other story factors. The availability of medical supplies, for example, is greater in a major city than in a small country town. The table on page 83 of the Genesys Core Rules provides numerous examples.

Once a character locates an item, they may purchase that for the listed price or negotiate for the best price. This is where the second use of the *Negotiation* skill comes into effect.

Trading is when a character has something to offer a buyer. In these circumstances, both parties want to get the best deal they can. This type of check is opposed. When that happens the difficulty dice mirror that of the NPC's skill. For example, an NPC with *Presence* 4, and *Negotiation* 2 would normally have a beginning dice pool of ◆◆⬡⬡. When a PC opposes this character, the difficulty is ⬥⬥⬣⬣.

The exception to this rule is the Black Market. When buying or selling on the Black Market you use your character's *Streetwise* skill instead of *Negotiation*.

SPENDING ✦, ✕, ⋀, ⊛, ⬡, & ⊗

Spending dice results in a *Negotiation* check is something not covered in the GENESYS CORE RULES. The STAR WARS ROLE PLAYING GAME, does provide some guidance, particularly with success. We provide those in **Table 10-1: Negotiation Results**.

ALTERNATE WAYS TO USE NEGOTIATION

There is only one additional method of using the *Negotiation* skill in the rules:

- **Intrigue Tone (Major Revelation):** Found in the GENESYS CORE RULES on page 246.

SPECIES

The following species gain a rank or the choice to gain a rank in the *Negotiation* skill as part of their starting package

- **Realms of Terrinoth:** Highborn Elves, Forge Dwarves.

TABLE 10—1: NEGOTIATION RESULTS

RESULT	DESCRIPTION
SELLING	
✦	¼ of the base price
✦ ✦	½ of the base price
✦ ✦ ✦ or more	¾ of the base price
BUYING	
✦	5% per uncancelled ✦ up to a maximum of 50% of the base price.

TALENTS

The following talents use the *Negotiation* skill:

- **Core Rules:** Counter-Offer.
- **Realms of Terrinoth:** Well-Travelled.
- **Shadow of the Beanstalk:** Corporate Drone (1), Good Cop (2).

GEAR

Few items of equipment provide an enhancement to the *Negotiation* skill except the following:

- **Realms of Terrinoth:** Gilded Armour Attachment (page 107)

RULES OF THUMB

I. The *Negotiation* skill should be the "default" skill for all social encounters.

II. Until it isn't. If a character tries smoothtalking their adversary - it's *Charm*. If they attempt to trick their opponent - it's *Deception*. If their intention is to intimidate their opponent - it's *Coercion*. If they speak from a position of authority - it's *Leadership*. But you should assume the default skill is *Negotiation*, especially if both parties are exchanging something, and let the circumstances modify the skill, if warranted.
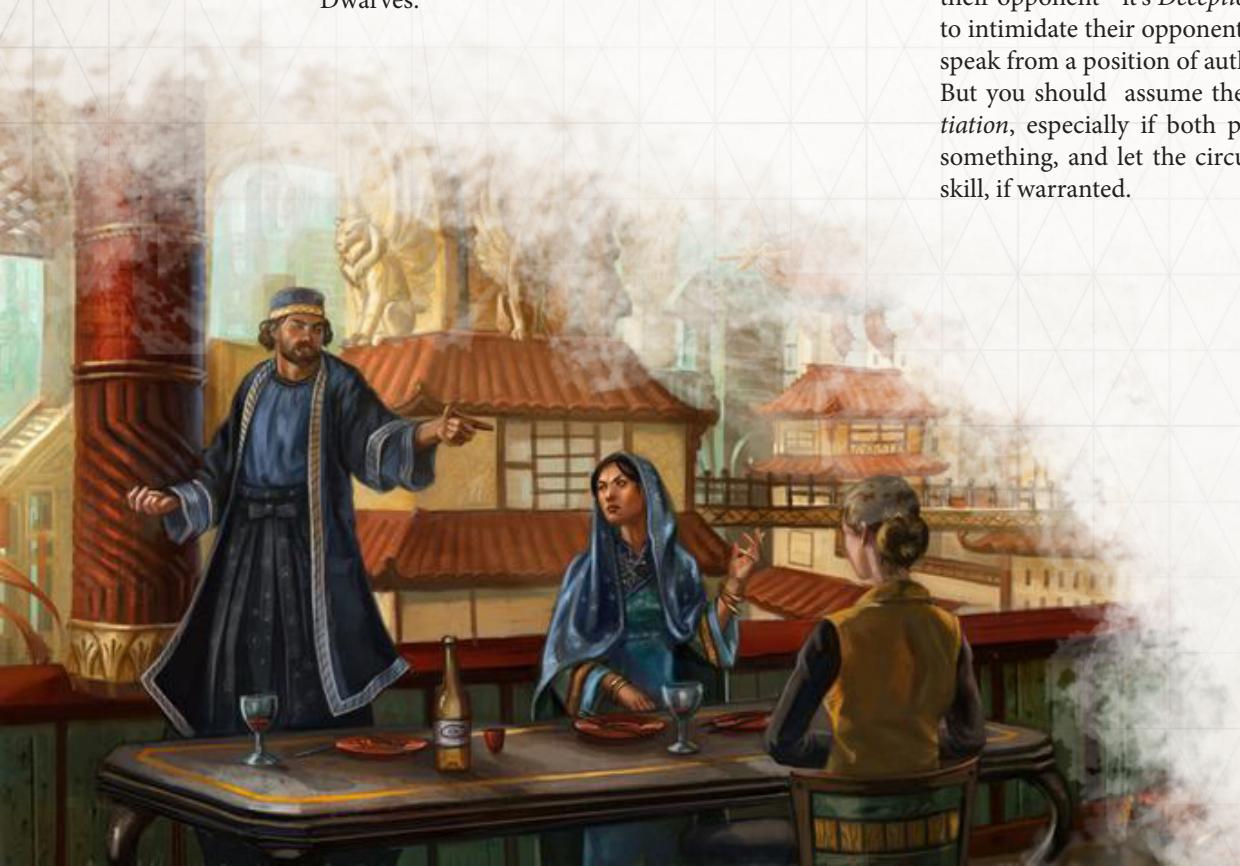
EXAMPLES

A PC wants to Charm the local prefect into providing them with the blueprints of the Lord Mayor's manor. If the PC attempts to "sweeten the pot" with money or services, it's not Charm. It's *Negotiation*.

A PC wants to lie to a security guard so they gain access to a party without invitations, but if they slip the guard some cash or a lucrative job on the side - it's not Deception. It's *Negotiation*.

NON-STANDARD USES OF NEGOTIATION

There are several ways to use the Negotiation skill outside of the standard rules. The following are several suggestions.

SKILL BLENDING

Negotiation is often used in place of all of the social skills. Remember, money and goods are not always what changes hands. There's a couple good examples we can relate.

INTERROGATION

Coercion is the default skill in a good interrogation. However, the moment a PC offers their subject a reduced sentence, time served, or the quashing of their offenses in exchange for giving up info or snitching on someone else - that's an exchange. A PC could easily substitute their *Negotiation* skill instead.

MERCENARY MOTIVATION

The default choice for a rousing speech to inspire your character's military battalion before a battle is obviously *Leadership*. But if they're mercenaries, or being well-paid for their efforts, a good GM should allow the PC to use *Negotiation* in that circumstance.

RE-TRYING A FAILED SOCIAL CHECK

Never underestimate the power of greed or self-interest in NPCs. For example, if a group of PCs failed to *Charm* their way past a guard, or lie their way into the records vault using *Deception*. Are they done? Maybe not. The GM can suggest that they try again using *Negotiation*. The guard didn't fall for the PCs honeyed words or transparent lies, but a pouch of coin may assist him to look the other way.

Even "noble" NPCs, immune to promises of financial reward, still struggle with self-interest. The Paladin guarding the holy sepulchre would normally refuse a PC's tainted money. However, knowledge of the whereabouts of the Paladin's missing mentor, followed by a *Negotiation* check to trade that knowledge for entrance might just work!

TALENTS

The easiest way to create new uses for the *Negotiation* skill is through the creation of custom talents! Below are several talents suitable for your table. We recommend testing them first. Remember that your GM has final say to their inclusion in your campaign.

ALTERING THE DEAL

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No

Once per session, your character may spend a Story Point as an incidental. If they do so, the next *Negotiation* check they make that turn may use *Coercion* in place of the *Negotiation* skill.

FLASHING THE CASH

Tier: 2
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: No
Once per session, your character may spend a Story Point as an incidental. If they do so, the next *Charm*, *Deception*, or *Leadership* check they make that turn may use *Negotiation* in place of the normal skill. (A true exchange does not have to be made in this instance, even though *Negotiation* is being used.)

IT'S A STEAL!

Tier: 1
Activation: Active (Incidental)
Ranked: Yes

When selling something with a *Negotiation* check, your character may suffer a number of strain to use this talent to add an equal number of successes to their *Negotiation* check. The number may not exceed your character's ranks in It's a Steal!

The Furnace: Magic - Rules of Thumb (Part 2)

We continued to build on our Rules of Thumb for creating spells and other abilities using the Genesys Role Playing Game magic mechanics.

9. **Magic should be hard to pull off, with penalties applied if things aren't perfect.**

- *The inherent difficulties of spells assume everything is "perfect." No environmental conditions, no distracting combat, full use of a free hand, a clear voice, and not carrying bulky loads or encumbering outfits or armor.*

- *If any of those conditions or combinations of apply the GM must apply the required penalty whether that be setback, additional difficulty, or upgrades.*

- *Proper and regular execution of this is crucial to the balanced mechanics of magic.*

10. **Magic should be dangerous and risky, with negative outcomes being much worse than normal compared to other activities.**

- *Good GMs (being good GMs and doing good GM things) have often learned to have an "instinct" about what is fair and balanced when applying threat and despair. But magic is very different and often worse.*

- *For balance's sake, treat magic as having much worse consequences for negative results. Get nasty. Magic is supposed be wildly dangerous. Treat it as such, and so will your players.*

11. **Easy access to magic skills should be restricted by theme, as appropriate.**

- *Restrict having Magic skills on career's skill lists.*

- *If your setting has multiple sources of magic, represented by disparate magic skills, wielded by characters with radically different themes and roles; then the "default assumption" should be that a character will only use a single magic skill.*

- *This means that a single magic skill is what should appear on a career skill list - when in a setting with multiple magic types.*

We recommend playtesting the contents of this document before using them in your game.

Feedback is always appreciated. You can contact use via e-mail at forgegenesys@d20radio.com or through any of our social media channels by searching @forgegenesys.

CREDITS

Creative Driectors
Ian Houlihan & Chris Witt

Editing
Ian Houlihan

Publisher
Ian Houlihan & Chris Witt

Graphic Design
Ian Houlihan

Artwork
Anna Christenson
www.annachristenson.com

Special Thanks
Fantasy Flight Games
The Forge Patreons
d20 Radio Studios

Special Episode Guest
David Morris

THE FORGE
A Genesys RPG Podcast

www.forgegenesys.com