

GUMSHOE 101 for Players

General Abilities are how you get stuff done.

Sneaking, fighting, running... all these are done with General Abilities. If you have a General Ability rating of **8 or higher, you're incredibly talented** at that activity (and may get access to cool bonus stuff when using it, depending on which GUMSHOE game you're playing). If you don't have any rating at all in a General Ability, you stink at it and won't generally succeed at non-trivial tasks. A 0 in Driving, for instance, lets you drive to the store and back but you'd fail at any driving maneuvers difficult enough to require a die roll. In comparison, an 8 in Driving makes you an expert wheelman. Similarly, a 0 in Shooting means you're no good whatsoever at using firearms, while an 8 or higher in Shooting makes you an expert marksman. You get the idea.

It's traumatic for your dicebag, but **in GUMSHOE you'll only need one die: a d6**. Roll it. **Your Target Number is usually 4**; remember that. If you roll a 4 or higher with a General Ability like Athletics, you probably succeed.

Obviously, that would mean you only succeed half the time. **You raise these odds by spending points from your General Ability pools and adding them to your d6 roll**. Want to shoot someone? Spend 2 points from your shooting pool, add it to your d6, and you usually only fail if you roll a 1. Spend 3 points and you're guaranteed to hit even on a d6 roll of 1 (as $1 + 3 =$ the target number of 4). When your pool drops to 0, you're stuck just rolling a d6 until you get a rest and the GM says your pool refreshes.

Don't be shy about spending these points. Dropping enemies quickly is a great idea, and you'll have chances for your pools to refresh.

Investigative Abilities are how you learn stuff.

They're what makes GUMSHOE games unique. Ignore your General Abilities for a second and look over at your **Investigative Abilities**. These are broken into three sections to make things easier to find – *academic*, *interpersonal* and *technical* knowledge – but they all work pretty much the same way. **If you have 1 or more points in any of these, you're an expert at it**. This matters because during the game, all you need to do is **tell the GM that you're using an appropriate ability and you'll automatically get the clue** if there is one. Yes, automatically, no roll required. The fun here is in what you do with that information, not how you get it.

So let's say you're searching a private library for vital information. The GM may ask, "Do you have any points in Research?" Say yes and she'll tell you everything you can find out. No roll is ever required. Same thing with Interpersonal Abilities; if you have Flattery, tell the GM you're flattering someone (or better yet, roleplay it) and it will pay off.

Spend these points to get cool in-game advantages. Take the interpersonal ability Flirting, for example. You meet the evil mastermind's stunningly attractive protégé. Tell the GM you're Flirting with the NPC, and he or she will let slip important clues during the banter. Tell the GM you're spending 1 or more Flirting points to get cool stuff, though, and you'll get a special benefit; in this case, the protégé may become infatuated with you and double-cross his or her boss at the best possible time.

Just remember, **spending a point from an Investigative Ability doesn't stop you from knowing that topic**. It just limits how many times in a game you can ask for special cool stuff.

And really? That's it. Your GM can tell you anything else you need to know.