

# Cthulhu Light



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This is a set of rules for adventures in Lovecraft's Cthulhu-Mythos and similar horror role-playing games. It uses a minimal approach to make rules easy to learn and quick to play. It is assumed that you are familiar with role-playing games.

## Character creation

The players decide on the name, looks and character of their investigators. Non-player characters are created with the same process, but the game master can change the number of attribute points. Investigators are defined by four attributes. When a new investigator is created, the player can spend four points on these attributes as he sees fit. These attributes are:

**Martial**, which covers fighting, using all sorts of weapons, athletics, and other physical endeavors.  
**Prestige**, which covers people skills, and lets you influence humans, animals or supernatural beings with words, charisma or body language. It also covers wealth and financial resources.  
**Research**, which covers scientific and investigative skill, looking for clues or hidden stuff, and using complicated equipment. It also covers feats of intelligence and quick wit.  
**Sanity**, which lets you keep calm when facing otherworldly entities and grisly encounters, lets you look away in time or otherwise avoid a threat through careful application of cowardice. It covers mental stability in general as well as pure luck.

Each attribute corresponds to four points, called Health. Loss of these points represents the current state of the investigator in the corresponding attribute. For example, a loss in Martial Health represents a wound or physical exhaustion. If all four Health points of an attribute are lost, the game master gains an experience point (from now on called XP), which he can use to automatically win a conflict. The player regains one hit point in the respective attribute. Additionally, the investigator suffers a negative consequence. This consequence is determined by the attribute. For example, a loss of all Martial Health might cause a severe injury. Loss of all Sanity Health might cause insanity. Loss of all Prestige Health might cause the loss of social standing or financial troubles. Loss of all Research Health might get you lost or confused. The game master determines the consequence, but the players can make suggestions. A consequence should rarely take a character out of the current adventure. It should primarily be used to make the adventure more engaging. The game master should always choose a consequence that is fun for everyone. Lost Health is restored by one for each attribute at the start of a new gaming session, or if the investigators achieve an impressive feat, as determined by the game master.

## Conflict resolution

Often in the game, there is an event with uncertain outcome. The game master can decide the outcome of the event by himself, or he can use the following procedure, called a conflict. If the outcome of an event is important, the game master should always use the following conflict rules. First, the game master decides which parties are involved in the conflict. If investigators stay back or are not present, they are not part of the conflict resolution.

Second, the game master determines the nature of the conflict. Each conflict is tied to the attribute that is most fitting. For example, a brawl is tied to the Martial attribute. The value the investigators have assigned to this attribute is then added to the dice roll that determines the winner of the conflict. Non-player characters use the values of their respective attributes. In case the conflict involves an object or situation, the game master assigns an attribute value as he sees fit, which normally is zero. For example, if an investigator tries to break down a door, the game master might assign a Martial attribute of zero which represents the average sturdiness of the door.

Third, each party decides on a clear goal they want to achieve. This goal becomes reality, if the corresponding party wins. The players can decide on a common goal, different goals or conflicting

goals. For example, if one investigator wants to flee, and another wants to fight, the goals are different, as they do not impede each other. If one investigator wants to use a gun to shoot an enemy, and another investigator wants to use the same gun to shoot open a lock, there are conflicting goals. The game master decides whether a goal is simply different or in conflict with another goal. If the investigators pursue conflicting goals, they count as different parties and will lose Health if another investigator wins the conflict. If the investigators pursue simply different goals, they do not lose Health if another investigator wins the conflict. Investigators with a common goal form a party, and if one member of the party wins the conflict, all members win. The game master defines the parties that oppose the players, and their goals. He can refuse a player defined goal if he deems it unfit. For example, the investigators might confront an eldritch abomination. The game master decides this abomination is a party that opposes the players. He decides the goal of this abomination is to kill all the investigators. The players decide their common goal to be the death of the abomination. The game master refuses, as he believes the investigators lack the methods to kill it. The players change their goal, they now try to escape unharmed. The game master accepts.

After all goals have been determined, the game master can decide that one or more investigators are not part of the conflict, if there are no conflicting goals. For example, a ghost has the goal to make the investigators flee, and the investigators also want to flee. In such a case, there is no conflict. All parties involved in the conflict roll a six sided dice (from now on called d6) and add their attribute value. Each player rolls individually for his investigator. Only the highest roll of all the members of a party with the same goal counts. The party with the highest combined value of roll and attribute wins. The winning party can describe the outcome of the conflict, but must stay within the boundaries of the previously assigned goal. Additionally, all losing parties lose a health point of the respective attribute.

In case of a tie, all parties lose one Health point, and the conflict rolls are repeated.

#### Example:

Three investigators search a haunted house, while one guards the front door. A terrible ghost emerges while the investigators search the bedroom. The game master decides that it is uncertain if the investigators can stomach this. He also decides that this is an important event, as the investigation of the haunted house is central to the adventure. Thus, the conflict rules are used to determine the outcome of the event. The game master decides that it is a Sanity conflict, as it involves the investigators ability to deal with supernatural horror. The game master also decides that the investigator at the front door is not part of the conflict, as he is too far away. Two investigators decide on the common goal to be unperturbed. One investigator decides on a conflicting goal. He is possessed by another ghost and wants to drop his flashlight to further increase the terror, making all investigators flee the house. The game master decides the goal of the ghost, which is to chase away all present investigators. Every investigator and the game master roll a d6 and add the Sanity attribute value. The game master has previously defined a Sanity value for the ghost. The game master rolls highest, and the investigators flee the house. The investigators also lose one point of Sanity health. The investigator at the front door neither flees nor loses health, as he is not part of the conflict.

#### Experience Gain

Once a gaming session is over, each investigator gets one XP. An experience point can be spent anytime, even after dice rolls, to automatically win a conflict. If both players and game master spend an XP to win a conflict, they cancel each other out, and the conflict is resolved as usual. It is possible for both game master and players to spend additional points, in which case that conflict is won by the party that spends the most XP. As soon as an experience point is spent, it can no longer be used in such a way, and goes inert. When an investigator has amassed four inert XP, he can raise an attribute by one. He can do so again with each additional four inert XP. The game master cannot use inert XP.

## Mythos artifacts

The investigators can find Mythos related artifacts like books or magical amulets. These have powerful effects, as determined by the game master. For example, a book might teach a magic spell that summons a monster. An investigators Sanity Health is reduced by one point for each artifact in his possession.

## Rule Adaption

If the gaming group prefers more conflicts during a session, or if they want more powerful investigators, they can change some numerical aspects of the game. Six health points instead of four make investigators last longer. Six attribute points at character creation make the investigators more powerful. Other rules can also be changed if the group wants a different gaming experience.

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