



Powered by *The Yin-Yang Principle!* (*Attack and Defense combined!*)

by Alexandre Major

This is a pretty simple system making use of playing cards to accelerate the pacing of action-packed games. Think “Matrix”, John Woo, Jackie Chan or Quentin Tarantino. In short: it hits quick and hard. Inspired in great part from the Daniel Pond’s NAMELESS ruleset, and more specifically the Star Wars variant, and from it’s Wushu Core Rules (available from <http://www.bayn.org/games/index.html>). Keep in mind this is not meant to be a realistic game system, but one that makes possible feats of ACTION! and danger! So keep things quick, never let anything get in the way of your player’s fun, and shatter all windows in sight!

*Required:* 1 normal deck of cards per player. Jokers can be included or not. The game master might want to use two decks in case of numerous NPCs. The cards played are re-shuffled into the deck at the end of each turn.

## Character Creation

*The characters’ attributes:*

PHYSICAL		DERIVATES	MENTAL
Free Mind	Jacked In		
<b>Strength</b> From 1 to 5	<b>Focus</b> Strength + Wits	<b>Offense</b> The higher of Strength, Focus or Wits	<b>Wits</b> From 1 to 5
<b>Endurance</b> From 1 to 5	<b>Grit</b> Endurance + MindFreedom	<b>Vitality</b> Twice (Endurance or Grit + MindFreedom)	<b>MindFreedom</b> From 1 to 5
<b>Quickness</b> From 1 to 5	<b>Blur</b> Quickness + Intuition	<b>Actions</b> The lower of Quickness, Blur or Intuition	<b>Intuition</b> From 1 to 5

### *A quick overview of possible characters*

**Coppertops:** Your life as a batterie to the Machines. Coppertops are prisoners, weak and shackled, but do not know any better. Worse still, most of them still work for “the system”, ensuring that the most simple outing in The Matrix will still bear terrible danger. But given the choice, and given some time to accept reality as it is, they can be Freed and become part of Humanity’s continuing struggle. Until then, though, they are to be considered as enemies.

**Potentials:** Some individuals, from the early stages of their life in The Matrix, display a gift for unlocking the works of The Matrix. They typically do not fear much from the Agents, who for some reason fail to register them as a threat. The Resistance is still trying to unlock their potential, because awakening them always seems to kill the extraordinary gifts they possessed while they were still hardwired to the Simulation. Occasionally, some of them will perform impressive feats after being freed, but the pattern is erratic and remains to be solved.

**FreeMinds:** Minds freed by the Resistance, and now fighting for Humanity’s survival. The vast majority of your heroes will probably be among those. Past their old lives as power-suppliers for their jailers, they awoke to a much grimmer reality, and became drafted in a war they didn’t even know existed sometimes a few moments ago. They are the Resistance’s front-line soldiers, that can challenge the Machines on their own ground. They are some of Humanity’s best hope.

**FreeBorns:** Conceived “the good ol’ fashioned way” in Zion, FreeBorn represent humanity’s will to survive, and serve as an inspiration to FreeMinds as to what could be coming if they won the war. Stronger, fitter and generally a lot more bright-eyed than their Matrix-extracted friends, FreeBorn are usually assigned to ship in the role of Operators and Pilots, given that they cannot Jack In but make a very good last line of defence when their comrades are helpless in their

**Agents and other AI:** Programs of The Matrix that are in charge of keeping the collective illusion healthy. AI are programs, and as such are part of The Matrix, so cannot bend and much less break it’s rules. In comparison, they jump at impressive heights through sheer strength, not by defying the law of gravity like Free Minds do. There are rumors of Rogue AI, but do not get your hopes up too soon, those are probably going to be used as NPC by the Operator.

## *Characteristics and Abilities*

Of course everything’s up to the Operator for statistical attributes generation. But the following guideline can be used:

Level	1	2	3	4	5
Points	0	1	2	4	8

Who	Coppertop	Free Mind	Free Born	Typical Agent	The One
Characteristics	6*	12	16**	24	Sheesh
Abilities	6	8	8	8	Whoah

*\* : Still swimming in their vats, Coppertop get a score of 1 in all manners of Physical characteristics, and do not get Focus, Grit and Blur. After being freed and properly tended and trained, they get the 6 additional points Free Minds get for starters.*

*\*\* : Having been grown and raised in a more “humane” manner and free of The Matrix’s shackles, the Free Born get 4 extra points to put in their physical characteristics (Strength, Endurance, Quickness). Of course, they can’t Jack In and as such, play a supportive role and miss a lot of the fun.*

## **Tank, I need a pilot program for a V-212 helicopter. Hurry...**

### *Natural Skills*

Abilities in The Yin-Yang Principle are not meant to be extremely specific, but general classes of knowledge, more like professions or occupations. They can also be extraordinary They are ranked between 1 (novice) and 5 (expert), and are used when appropriate to the situation. The Operator is final arbiter of what is appropriate and what is not.

As a guideline, you might want to take a skill appropriate to your old Coppertop life, and one appropriate to your new functions in the resistance.

Sample natural skills include: Hacker, Policemen, Building Demolition, Movie Star, Martial Arts, Shady dealings, Public Relations, Dirty Fighting, Inventor, Hobnobbing, Gunfighter, Con Artist, Precision Works and so many more.

### *Uploaded Skills*

A Free Mind can be “overloaded” with skill and information, but learning skills in this manner is very straining for the

mind. The more complex the skill, the greater effect it has on the person's brain, and a Free Mind can only hold so many abilities "in RAM" before it's saturated.

Also, a skilled person is much more than the sum of his knowledge about the ability: it's practice, coordination, training, intuition and such that makes someone really good at something. Thus, uploaded skills are of a limited use (if of any use at all) in the real World. Such a thing is not as important in The Matrix, where the mind compensates for much of this inability.

*A Free Mind can hold up to the sum of his mental characteristics (**Wits** + **MindFreedom** + **Intuition**) "Uploaded Skills" at any time.*

### *The Matrix skill*

Of all the skills involved, there is one that has a special place, in a way that it baffles the most rigorous conceptions about it: the ability to alter and change consciously Humanity's Prison

As a final note, this skill also reflects how much a mind can alter his residual image to suit his tastes: the better the skill, the better you look.

AI can, given some time, contact "higher" AI that have a governance over it, and ask them to alter significantly The Matrix (this often results in *Déjà vu* glitches), but such a demand is never taken and accorded lightly because of the possible consequences on the batteries' collective belief.

This skill seems to blossom with the understanding and mastery of one's true nature and humanity, physical and mental ("The body cannot live without the mind"). As a result, **a Free Mind's The Matrix skill is always equal to the lowest of the character's attributes.**

Here are guidelines of possible feats, with according difficulty. Of course, the OPERATOR is always the final arbiter on this.

	<b>Matrix + Wits</b>	<b>Matrix + MindFreedom</b>	<b>Matrix + Intuition</b>
<b>5</b>	Run much quicker than possible	Handle simple acrobatics with ease	Hone your senses to a sharp edge
<b>6</b>	React with amazing celerity	Jump impressive distances	Get a "eyes in the back of the head"
<b>7</b>	Change your appearance	Run up a wall	"Cover your tracks" in the Matrix
<b>8</b>	Dodge bullets at point blank	Perform death-defying stunts	Read hidden info on The Matrix
<b>9</b>	Bend Spoons	Survive otherwise deadly falls	Anticipate The Matrix's behavior
<b>10</b>	Stop bullets in mid-air	Fly	Predict the future of The Matrix

	<b>Description</b>
<b>1</b>	<i>This is your average rookie Free Mind's skill level.</i>
<b>2</b>	<i>This is your average Free Mind's skill level.</i>
<b>3</b>	<i>This is your average veteran Free Mind's skill level.</i>
<b>4</b>	<i>This is your average Potential's skill level. (before it's awakening)</i>
<b>5</b>	<i>This is your average The One's skill level.</i>

*And then... there's Hope.*

Free your Mind! Life outside the Matrix is harsh, and every Free Mind wonders once in a while why the hell they

didn't take the Blue Pill. Humanity is on the verge of extinction, but collectively we are known to be stubborn and dependant on... Hope.

The desperation of humanity's hope is also its greatest strength. Where *The Matrix* skill is the conscious manipulation of The Matrix, Hope is the unconscious power that modulates humanity's prison. Free Minds jacking in with a pirate signal often find themselves in better situations than they expected if they believe firmly in the importance of their mission. On the other hand, hackers who have lost their faith in Humanity will often not see

The belief in one's potential is paramount to hope in humanity's future. **A Free Mind's starting Hope skill is always equal to the highest of a Free Mind's attribute.** (*This does not include Focus, Grit or Blur*)

When necessary, state to your Operator what would be "really cool if it happened". He'll see what he can do with this, and ask you for a draw against your Hope ability if necessary. But be warned, Hope is a fragile thing: relying too much on it can often be more harmful than helpful.

### *A note*

You've probably noticed the inverse relationship between The Matrix and Hope. In the short run, a character will have to choose between his conscious mastery of The Matrix and his Hope in Humanity. This is not a coincidence: how can one fully believe in Man's potential if he focuses on the Machine's technology for his liberation? With time, on the long run, comes the realization of the place of conscious manipulation and unconscious belief in oneself.

## **Game system**

Most of the time, the target number equals an attribute + an ability, for a total between 1 and 10. When a draw is made, the result must be as high as possible without busting. The higher the number, the better the success. Else, the action is a failure.

*Penalty cards:* Pick an additional card, and keep the worst result. This may void The Red Pill.

*Bonus cards :* Pick an additional card, and keep the best result. This may void The Blue Pill.

*Some cards have a special value. Color is unimportant except in the case of a "Confrontation!".*

*Past 10:* If the total to draw against is higher than 10, start by really reconsidering if you have to draw at all. If absolutely necessary, every point above 10 counts as a bonus card.

**Card values from Ace to 10:** They are worth their exact value, with the Ace meaning "1".

**Jacks:** Failure! The action is a failure, no matter what the circumstances are (attack, damage, else). In the case of Damage Draws, no damage is inflicted (not even the minimal 1). In the cas of Soaking Draws, no damages are soaked.

**Queens:** Success! The action is a definite success. If the opposed draw is also a Queen, compare ability scores. In the case of Damage Draws, maximum damage is inflicted, and adverse effects (chopped hands!) can take effect, at the discretion of the game master. In the case of Soaking Draws, all damage and adverse effects are soaked, including the minimal damage.

**Kings:** Success! The effect is identical to the Queen (and beats an opposed Queen), but in the case of an attack, another attack can be made immediately after this one, as a follow-up action.

### *Optional Cards*

**The Blue Pill (Colored Joker):** The Matrix and the Grim Reality asserts itself and gives for a miserable failure! Not

only is the action not successful, but all further actions this turn are cancelled, as the result of a serious mistake (or bad luck) from the character. What more, it is perfectly possible (at the discretion of the game master) for the character to suffer penalty cards for the whole duration of the next turn. If drawn during a *Confrontation* it also cancels another card of the color desired by the character.

**The Red Pill (White Joker):** Incredible success! The action is so complete a success that the character may attempt *two* additional actions as a follow-up. The character is in a favorable position, and the game master may give bonus cards for the whole of the next turn. If drawn during a *Confrontation* this cards counts as *two* cards of the color desired by the character.

## Actions

- *Opposed:* Opposed actions require one draw from each implied party. The one with the best result number succeeds over his adversary. A King beats a Queen, who in turn beats anything 10 and under. If both have the same figure compare their respective *combat value* + *ability*. If an absolute match is made (same combat value), the success goes to the one attacking first: this is not your defending grandfather's action game! If both fail their action nothing happens.
- *Unopposed:* An unopposed action usually requires a draw from the character, against the concerned attribute+ ability value. A draw against two attributes is possible. Do not impose difficulty numbers that would only slow the game: if necessary modify the result with bonus or penalty cards, which are a lot faster to use.
- *Combined:* If more than one character (or NPC) succeed in coordinating their efforts to attain the same goal, a combined action may be attempted. Draw as many cards as there are characters attempting, and using the best target value use the best card drawn for all characters.

*Note:* it is normally not possible to combine all combat actions : an effort must be made (usually with actions dedicated) to do so, or special abilities/strategies used. *Super Blaster Combo Attack!*

- *Called shots:* The characters can attempt called shots with penalty cards imposed by the game master.
- *Confrontation!:* When Opposed Draws turn out the same figure (Jack, Queen, King or Joker), there is a *Confrontation!* taking place. We're taking about the flurry of blows between sworn enemies, the mind-numbing combinations of manoeuvres or the lightsaber-lock between masters. All further actions by these characters are discarded, as are actions against them by everyone else (who can be redistributed elsewhere). Note that in the case of a *Confrontation!* with a mook, the game master may simply elect not to have it take place. Be it by fear of a lost blow or by a matter of honor, the rest of the characters are not allowed to interfere. Characters draw in a flurry as many cards as their combat value while describing the actions, and count the number of cards matching their color of choice (usually red for the good guys and black for the bad guys). The character drawing the most cards of the good color wins the *Confrontation!* In the case of a draw, describe the slashing standstill, and start over! The effects of winning are left at the discretion of the game master, but can be defaulted as the effects of drawing a White Joker.

*Note:* A viable alternative is to use the « karmic » value of the characters, be it their psychic abilities, their Hope or their talent with the Force.

## Combat

- *Initiative:* Actions are declared step by step in order of decreasing Blur or Quickness. A character may declare any or all his actions, and the targets of those actions may declare to oppose one of their actions if they have any available. Note that it is usually a good idea to keep an action or two “up your sleeve” to answer actions made against you further in the turn. Two characters with the same Speed score declare their action in simultaneously, in alternance.

- *Attacks and Defenses*: There is no such thing as a « defense action » in this system : there is only one winner that takes the advantage and can attempt to inflict damage. If a target can't match an action made against him with one of his own action, only a marginal success by the attacker is needed to make the Damage Draw, but the target can still attempt a Soaking Draw. Remaining (un-matched) actions are spent simultaneously at the end of the turn, but cannot carry onto the next turn.

A draw is made by each, usually against *combat value + combat ability used*.

The antagonist with the best result wins and makes an Damage Draw, while the victim makes a Soaking Draw. When two attacks are opposed, the winning character becomes the « aggressor » and can attempt to damage his opponent.

- *Movement*: This is all about ACTION! not R&R! If you really want to impose “spend one action to get to the guy and then another to hit him”, that's your choice, but it's altogether unnecessary. An interesting fight is nothing if not chaotic: people jump, swing and scream everywhere. To hamper movement wouldn't be very constructive: you can even give them bonuses if they swing from chandeliers...

## Damage

A Damage Draw is a simple affair, made only once for any pair of opposed attacks by the winner: the victim makes his Soaking Draw to resist. The victim suffers the difference between the two draws from his Vitality. When brought to 0 Vitality, the character suffers 1 penalty card on all actions. When brought below 0, he's unconscious and will probably die if not taken care of soon. You'll remark that there is not much wound accounting taking place, and for good reasons: hindered characters can't be very active!

### Weapons and damage

A Damage Draw is made against a *damage* value which may be constituted A) of the character's Strength value + the weapon's damage value (from 1 to 5) in the case of Strength-adjusted weapons or B) A single value (from 1 to 10) in the case of Strength-independent weapons (like missile weapons). The draw is made normally, but a minimal damage of 1 always inflicted except in the case of a drawn Jack.

#### Strength/Focus-dependant weapons

Brass Knuckles	1
Bowie Knife	3
Katana	4

#### Non-Strength/Focus-dependant weapons

Slingshot	1
Gun	2
Rifle or shotgun	3

**Armures**: Idem que pour les armes, mais c'est l'endurance du personnage qui est ajouté au jet d'Encaissement s'il y a lieu.

Quelques valeurs:

#### Valeurs ajustées par l'endurance

Cotte de mailles ou Kevlar	2
Armure de plaques complètes	4
Robocop	5

#### Valeurs non-ajustées par l'endurance

Champ magnétique (cette armure ne prends pas l'Endurance en compte) de 1 (personnel portatif) à 10 (Étoile Noire)	Variable, de 1 à 10
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