

Guile and Conviction

In a world of egomaniacal demagogues, conniving scoundrels, greedy merchants and corrupt courtiers, a character's ability to distinguish between lies and truth can be as important to the success of a quest as being able to parry the axe of an angry barbarian. Occasionally, and despite being paragons of virtue and heroism, there may even be times when characters wish to employ deception themselves, either by lying directly or hiding their true motives and emotions.

A character's Guile and Conviction scores measure his ability to deceive and see through other's social deceptions, respectively. As with all secondary ability score contests, a Guile vs. Conviction contest is resolved by rolling 2d10.

$2d10 + \text{Conviction} \leq \text{Guile} =$

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At first rank, adventurers are young and relatively naïve, represented by their low Conviction scores, although the confidence they have gained from their years of professional training make it slightly easier for them to bluff less worldly NPCs. Remember, though, that the adventuring professions are not all that are out there and whilst Mystics and Explorers may be able to see through the deceptions of their fellow adventuring professionals more easily than most, there are many non-adventuring

professionals, like gamblers, merchants and statesmen, all of whom are much better at deceiving and detecting deception than the adventuring professionals.

Consider these other examples of where a hero may wish to employ Guile: the characters may be hiding their true intentions to bring down the bandit group from the bandit leader they are attempting to convince to let them join. Secondly, a character may attempt to bluff a dragon into parting with a few coins. Conversely, the characters may have their Conviction tested on many occasions – is the suspicious peddler they have encountered telling them the truth about the road ahead? Is the evil Duke they have brought to his knees truly repentant and deserving of mercy or just biding time for an opportunity to strike down the characters when their defences drop?

Intoxication

Intoxicated characters are at -4 to their Conviction scores.

Language, Lore and Culture

Guile and Conviction are subject to many social modifiers – being abroad in unfamiliar lands with limited language skills dealing with alien cultures and customs can have a significant impact on social interactions, as can attempting to bluff (or be bluffed) on a topic about which a character is deeply learned (or ignorant).

Language

Language is the key to social deception and if the two parties do not have a language in common, Guile and Conviction scores do not apply (although visual or other auditory deceptions might, such as disguise – and would be contested with Perception). However, a superior grasp of a language can make it easier to deceive or pick up on cues that might indicate a deception taking place.

The character with the higher language skill receives a +2 bonus to either Guile or Conviction for each rank in the language skill he is higher than his opponent.

Lore

If the topic of conversation, and the deception, is something about which either party has some knowledge, the character with the higher lore skill in the area gains a +1 bonus per difference in skill rank to either Guile or Conviction, as appropriate.

This is especially appropriate if someone is attempting to bluff where the specific nature of the deception relies on knowledge. In this case, the GM may choose to increase this bonus to +2 per difference in skill rank.

Culture

People from different cultures may speak the same language, but may have different mannerisms, body language, et cetera, that can be hard for someone not familiar with that culture to read.

A different country would typically impart a -4 penalty and a different species (fey, dragon, et cetera) with which a character interacts could impose as much as -6, or more, at the GM's discretion. Note that only one modifier applies – a dragon from a distant land would still only be at -6 to the character's Guile.

Familiarity with a culture may evolve over time and the Supplemental Companion discusses ways for the GM to manage this. However, for simplicity, the GM may simply allow characters to purchase Common Knowledge for a particular culture as a skill, the ranks in which may be used to offset cultural penalties to Guile and Conviction tests.

These penalties also apply to a character's Conviction when they are the 'tourist' being duped by a native.

Friends and Enemies

Friends tend to be more trusting of one another than enemies. Attempts to deceive friends, whilst morally suspect, are easier than attempts to deceive one's enemies.

Depending on the level of friendship and/or animosity between the two parties, the GM should award modifiers of up to ± 4 , as he deems appropriate. However, being caught deceiving a friend may have consequences for the friendship.

Also note that if a known ally of the character has attempted to deceive the target in the past, he will be warier of the character's suggestion. The character will suffer a -1 penalty to his Guile for each failed guile attempt against the same target by an ally.

Roleplaying Conviction

A player is not expected to be as strong, fast and agile as their characters, nor do GMs hand their players swords when it is time for combat and ask them to demonstrate their combat prowess to determine the outcome of a melee. However, players are usually expected to substitute their character's intelligence and social skills with their own – hardly fair! There are two ways a GM can address this imbalance and keep the role-playing element within this mechanic:

Firstly, at the beginning of the encounter, the GM secretly makes the roll and then plays out the role-playing encounter based on the results of the roll.

Secondly, the GM can play out the encounter, applying modifiers based on the player's performance.

Whichever mechanism is used, remember that the players should not know they are being deceived (unless their Conviction holds), nor do they know if the NPC they are trying to deceive has been duped by their charade.

Dragon Warriors Rule Reference – Guile & Conviction

Consider a scene in which a hero is haggling with a merchant over the price of some jewellery he is selling (i.e., the character uses his Guile against the merchant's Conviction). Rather than just roll dice, the players want to roleplay this encounter. Using the first method, the GM rolls the result of the merchant's Conviction in secret using the modifiers above. The result of the roll indicates that the merchant's Conviction holds and he will not be budged on price. Even if the player comes up with some inventive reasons to justify an inflated price, the merchant has already seen through their deception and will not be swayed. This does not remove the roleplaying from the game, as the encounter is still played out and is still an opportunity for the player to earn roleplaying experience for his character. However, some players may feel that this approach removes the creativity from their own gaming, as nothing they say will affect the outcome of the encounter and they may not feel they have to put any effort into resolving the encounter.

Using the second method, of only checking the merchant's Conviction at the end of the encounter, puts a lot of emphasis on the skills of the GM and the player to create and counter arguments on the fly, which one or other of them may not feel comfortable doing. Always remember that Dragon Warriors is a game and should be fun for everyone – nothing in the game should make any of the players feel uncomfortable or disadvantaged.

A compromise might be to employ method one, but to apply modifiers during the roleplaying of the scene that could sway a narrowly made (or failed) result one way or the other, thereby combining the player's and character's skills into a satisfying scene for the player.

In either case, professional merchants are likely to have a high Conviction score and the hero is likely to be better off attempting to find a private buyer!