

## THE ASCENDED — QUICKSTART v1.2

### WHAT THIS GAME IS

The Ascended is a post-collapse tabletop RPG about power, consequence, and survival in a world shaped by humanity's last great mistake.

This is not a heroic power fantasy.

This is a game where:

- Power always has a cost
- Survival is often smarter than victory
- Specialization creates brilliance — and volatility
- The world reacts to what players do

Characters are not defined by classes or levels, but by deliberate trade-offs between skill, risk, and supernatural exposure.

### THE WORLD IN BRIEF

Three hundred years ago, humanity deployed Aetherion — a hyper-concentrated radioactive material — as a planetary shield against a gamma ray burst.

The shield worked.

The aftermath did not.

Irradiated Aetherion atomized, fell back to Earth, poisoned water and land, and eventually returned as meteorites that shattered civilization. Humanity survived by adaptation, not salvation.

Today the world is divided by belief, logistics, and power:

- The Church of the Pure rules N'Amur through doctrine and control
- Cascadia survives through cooperation and refusal to dominate
- The Territories endure through negotiation and fragility
- Ascended individuals are feared, hunted, or exploited

The world did not end.

It became harder.

### CORE MECHANIC — HOW ROLLS WORK

Every meaningful action is resolved using TWO dice:

- 1) A Skill Die — representing training and experience
- 2) A Crit Die — representing risk, volatility, and fate

Roll:

Skill Die + Stat Modifier

Compare the total to a Target Number (TN).

Meet or exceed the TN → Success.

Fail → Failure.

The Crit Die does NOT add to your total.

It determines how cleanly or catastrophically things resolve.

## **SKILLS & STATS**

Stats range from 1–10 and represent natural capability.

Stat Modifier = Stat – 1.

Skills use graduating dice:

Untrained d4 → Novice d6 → Trained d8 → Expert d10 → Master d12 → Legendary d20

As you improve, you roll larger dice.

Progress is tangible.

## **SUCCESS TIERS**

- Normal Success: Meet the TN
- Strong Success: Exceed TN by 5+ → 50% better result
- Critical Success: Max value on Crit Die → 100% better result

Critical successes always succeed — even if the TN would normally be impossible.

## **CRITICAL FAILURE — THE COST OF POWER**

If you roll a 1 on the Crit Die:

- Reroll the Crit Die
- Roll another 1 → Critical Failure

Critical failures are catastrophic:

equipment breaks, allies are endangered, situations worsen.

**IMPORTANT:**

Lowering your Crit Die (to crit more often) ALSO increases failure frequency.  
This is intentional.

Specialists are powerful — and unstable.

**AETHERION — POWER WITH CONSEQUENCES**

Some characters can harness Aetherion.

All Aetherion users have a 5-charge gauge.

Base uses (1 charge, All Tolerant or Ascended character can use):

- Extra Attack
- Burst of Speed
- Desperate Save

**ASCENDED:**

- Regain 1 charge per hour
- Immune to Aetherion poisoning
- Less starting refinement

**TOLERANT:**

- Gain charges by consuming Aetherion
- Charges cause escalating penalties
- High charges cripple performance

At high charge levels, you will act slower, fail more often, and risk death.

Aetherion is not mana.

It is radiation you choose to gamble with.

**COMBAT — EXPECTATIONS**

Combat is dangerous by design.

- Injuries impose penalties
- Armor degrades
- Bad positioning snowballs fast
- Fair fights are rare and foolish

Survival often means:

- Ambush
- Retreat
- Negotiation
- Environmental advantage

## **COMBAT EXAMPLE**

This example demonstrates how combat works in The Ascended and makes one thing clear:  
Almost every attack in The Ascended is an OPPOSED ROLL.

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### SCENE SETUP

Rook, a scavenger with emerging Aetherion tolerance, is ambushed in the flooded ruins of Apel by a Church Enforcer.

#### ROOK

Coordination 6 (+5)  
Ranged Weapons: Trained (d8)  
Evasion: Trained (d8)  
Crit Die: d20  
Armor: Light (Average)

#### CHURCH ENFORCER

Coordination 5 (+4)  
Firearms: Expert (d10)  
Evasion: Trained (d8)  
Crit Die: d20  
Armor: Medium (Average)

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### **STEP 1: INITIATIVE**

Both characters roll:  
1d4 + Coordination modifier + Perception modifier

Rook wins initiative and acts first.

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### STEP 2: ROOK ATTACKS (OPPOSED ROLL)

Rook fires a salvaged rifle from partial cover.  
This is NOT a roll vs a static target number.  
Both characters roll at the same time.

#### ROOK ATTACK ROLL

Ranged Weapons d8  
+ Coordination (+5)  
+ Crit Die (tracked separately)

#### ENFORCER DEFENSE ROLL

Evasion d8  
+ Coordination (+4)  
+ Crit Die  
+ Cover bonus (+2 for light cover)  
- Firearm defense penalty (-4)

#### ROLL RESULTS

Rook:  
d8 roll = 6  
Total = 11  
Crit Die = 14 (no crit)

Enforcer:  
d8 roll = 5  
Modifiers = +2  
Total = 7  
Crit Die = 19 (no crit)

#### RESOLUTION

Rook's total (11) beats the Enforcer's total (7).

Hit confirmed.

Because Rook did not exceed the defender by 5 or more, this is a normal success.  
Damage is rolled normally and reduced by armor.

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### STEP 3: ENFORCER ATTACKS (STILL OPPOSED)

On his turn, the Enforcer fires back.

Again: this is NOT a TN roll.

#### ENFORCER ATTACK ROLL

Firearms d10

+ Coordination (+4)

+ Crit Die

#### ROOK DEFENSE ROLL

Evasion d8

+ Coordination (+5)

+ Crit Die

+ Cover bonus (+2)

- Firearm defense penalty (-4)

#### ROLL RESULTS

Enforcer:

d10 roll = 8

Total = 12

Crit Die = 20

Rook:

d8 roll = 6

Modifiers = +3

Total = 9

Crit Die = 11

#### CRITICAL CHECK

The Enforcer rolled the maximum value on the Crit Die AND won the opposed roll.

Critical Hit.

Damage is doubled.

Armor still applies.

Injury thresholds may be crossed.

Armor degradation may trigger.

#### ADVANCEMENT & XP

There are no levels.

Characters begin with 1000 XP +/- depending on GM preference.

Everything is purchased with XP:

- Stats
- Skills
- Abilities
- Aetherion type

Normal Humans start refined.

Ascended start powerful but raw.

Tolerant characters walk between.

Every advancement is a choice.

### **WHAT MAKES THIS GAME DIFFERENT**

- No classes
- No levels
- Dual-axis risk system
- Power escalates danger
- The world responds to player action

You are not heroes by default.

You are people deciding how much you are willing to risk.