Playing Card Initiative System

Prior to play the Initiative of the characters should be computed as follows.

(DX + IQ) / 4 (down) + (2 for Combat Reflexes) + (1 if at least one point in Tactics) ó (Encumbrance Modifiers) ó (2 for Combat Paralysis) ó (full Fatigue modifier) ÷ 2 (if HP are below 1/3 due to damage (round down))

At the beginning of each combat turn (12 seconds, approximately) roll 1d6 and add it to your Initiative, that is the number of cards that are drawn for that combat turn. The cards are spent to perform actions, starting with Aces and working down to Deuces. Ties are resolved by Suit in the order **Spades**, **Hearts, Diamonds** and **Clubs**. If the tie has the same suit, then the actions are simultaneous, though in most cases an action will be completed even if not a tie. More than one of the same cards will allow a more effective attack or action, as per the following chart. The deck is reshuffled after each turn of combat. Each second of combat is called an increment.

1 of a Kind
Move up to your Move (modify for sprinting, etc)
Step one hex and perform any action marked with a •
Make an un-aimed ranged attack, or make a wild swing or Feint at -2 skill
Block, Parry or Dodge at -1
Fire a weapon that you already Aimed at normal skill + weapon's ACC
Ready an item (some items require multiple cards to ready)
Attempt to shake off the effects of being stunned
Aim to get Acc bonus (or +1 if already aiming) and a negation of Bulk penalties
Perform any other action allowed by the GM at ó2 (Intimidate, Listen, etc)

2 of a Kind
Make a ranged attack with weapon's ACC bonus or ( ) make a melee attack or Feint at normal skill
Block, Parry or Dodge at normal level
Ready an item (some items require multiple cards to ready)
Attempt to shake off the effects of being stunned at +2
Perform any other action allowed by the GM at normal skill level (Intimidate, Listen, etc)
Do any combination of the 1 of a Kind options

3 of a Kind
Fire a weapon or ( ) make a melee attack or feint with a +2 bonus
Make a melee attack with +2 to damage or +1 per die if that is better
Block, Parry or Dodge with a +2 bonus
Ready an item (some items require multiple cards to ready)
Attempt to shake off the effects of being stunned at +4
Perform any other action allowed by the GM at +2 (Intimidate, Listen, etc)
Make any combination of the 1or 2 of a Kind actions

4 of a Kind
Fire a weapon or ( ) make a melee attack or feint at +4 to hit bonus
Make a melee attack with +4 to damage or +2 per die if that is better
Block, Parry or Dodge at +4 bonus
Ready an item (some items require multiple cards to ready)
Attempt to shake off the effects of being stunned at +8
Perform any other action allowed by the GM at +4 (Intimidate, Listen, etc)
Make any combination of the 1,2 or 3 of a Kind actions

Extra Effort, or, Mortgaging Your Future
You may always spend a õfutureö card (one for the next upcoming increment that is available) in addition to any other cards that you may be playing to gain one of the following õAll-Outö bonuses. **All of these options cost a point of fatigue to use.**
Determined Attack: Make a single melee attack at +4 to hit.
Double Attack: Make two melee attacks on the same target with two weapons or one weapon that doesnøt require readying.
Strong Attack: Make a melee attack with a +2 to damage, or +1 per die if that is better.
Ranged Option: Make a single ranged attack with a +1 to hit. (This option does **not** cost any Fatigue).
Increased Defense: Add +2 to one active defense for the rest of this increment.
Double Defense: Apply two different active defenses against the same attack (e.g.: Block and then Parry).

Fast Draw

Using the Fast Draw skill does not require a card to attempt, however it may not be attempted before the highest card in your hand is/has been played. A Fast Draw may be made in conjunction with a card being used for another action, in this way it is possible to Fast Draw a weapon and attack with it while spending only one card. If the Fast Draw attempt is unsuccessful, and the attempt was made in conjunction with a card's use, the other action is preempted and that card is used solely for that Fast Draw attempt. If the Fast Draw was failed without the use of a card accompanying it, the next highest card is spent instead (this includes Hold Cards).

Hold Cards

At any time a single card may be moved to the side and kept as a "Hold Card". The hold card is used to try to preempt an opponent's action. The hold card can be used at any time in the turn sequence after the time it would normally be played. If the hold card is used to preempt an opponent's action, a Quick Contest of skills or an applicable attribute, must be made. A tie results in a simultaneous action. A hold card may also be used to make a õpairö in conjunction with a lower card.

Example: Frank decides to hold an Ace as he continues to keep his gun trained on Patrick the IRA terrorist. After several rounds of staring at each other, Patrick decides to use the 3 7's that he drew to fast draw a pistol and still take an aimed shot at Frank (1 card to fast draw, and 2 to make an attack with Aim bonus). Frank decides to preempt this and drop Patrick in the dust. Frank's Ace would normally be played before Patrick's 7's, so there is no problem with that, (if Frank had foolishly held a 6 instead of an Ace, he would not be able to preempt the action). Frank must now beat Patrick in a Quick Contest of DX vs DX, if Frank wins he gets to fire before Patrick, otherwise Patrick can shoot first. If Patrick does fire first, Frank still would get to fire back at him, though it would now be a Snap Shot if he was damaged.

Jokers

A Red Joker can be used as a Wild Card and may be used to create multiples of any card(s) that are being played, including a five of a kind, (add the bonus from a 3-of-a-kind to the bonus for a 4-of-a-kind). If kept as a Hold Card, the Red Joker will automatically preempt any action without the Quick Contest. It may also be sacrificed in any situation where you are required to lose cards, in which case it is the only card that need be lost.

Example: Nancy gets impaled by an arrow and takes 8 points of damage. Normally she would be required to lose half that amount (4 cards), but in this case, she has the Red Joker as her hold card and opts to lose it, instead of the four she would lose normally.

A **Black Joker** is a "Fumble" card. It must be immediately discarded along with the highest card in your hand. A Hold Card is automatically assumed to be the highest card in your hand. It also costs a point of Fatigue.

Stunning & Damage

If damage or surprise or a Fright Check stuns a character, the player immediately loses the highest card in their hand. Failed Fright Checks cost an additional number of cards equal to the number specified in the Fright Check table. Each card spent after the initial loss must be in an attempt to shake off the effects of the stun, or to make an Active Defense attempt at the usual -4 for being stunned. Multiple cards played will give a bonus as follows; a pair gives +2, three of a kind +4 and four of a kind +8.

If a character takes damage the player loses cards equal to the half the amount of damage taken (round up, maximum is 4 cards) and invokes the Stunning rules above if damage is over Hit Points/2 in one blow. A character reduced to 1/3 or less HP by damage has their Initiative reduced by 50% (down).

Moving at Full Speed

While this system works well for the give and take of a melee, special consideration must be given to certain situations. A character that is running, a galloping horse or a speeding car should not be hampered by a lack of cards. In any situation that involves continuous motion, a number of hexes equal to the normal Movement must be moved in each of the 13 increments of the card countdown. Remember that a character running in a straight line gains an extra point of Move from the Sprinting rule (B354). This allows only almost straight-line travel; sharp turning or performing other maneuvers requires that a card be used. If applicable, Riding, Driving or Piloting may be substituted for Weapon skill in determining Initiative. This movement is not increased by the use of cards. Once you have committed yourself to full speed movement you must continue until a card is used to perform some action and it is declared that you will no longer be moving at full speed. Cards may be used normally while moving at full speed and the use of a card does not cancel the movement. Most things cannot stop instantly, and at least 33% (round up) of the current speed must be moved in the final move increment. It is possible to specify a target location for your movement and cease moving once that target is reached (e.g. a doorway).

Example: Tim's character Risley Dunshill decides to start running at full speed in order to escape from 3 pit bulls, which are also running at full speed. His Move is 5 and he is unencumbered and does not have Combat Reflexes, he rolls a 3 on 1D and adds it to his Initiative of 6, for a total of 9 cards. He draws A, Q, 10, 10, 7, 6, 6, 4, and 4. Tim decides to use the Queen as a hold card, that way he can begin moving immediately with the Ace. Tim declares that he will use the Ace to move 5 hexes and to start to run at full speed. Risley's Move is 5+1 for Sprinting so he travels 6 hexes per increment. At K, Q, and J Risley will move forward in a straight line, at 10 Tim decides to have Risley turn left and head for a farm in the distance, the turn will use one of his 10's. The other 10 is used to draw Risley's rapier; he would also move 6 hexes this turn, as the movement is no longer using up cards.

Communication

Verbally communicating during combat increments may be attempted as a free action that may occur simultaneously with any other actions and may be continued throughout the turn. Verbal communication occurs at a rate of four syllables per increment. Visual communication requires a number of cards to õreadyö, usually two for a simple hand gesture. The GM must determine the number of cards needed for more elaborate signals. A gesture must be seen to be effective and the GM should require a Vision roll to notice the signal if the observer is involved in fighting or simply not paying attention to the character making the gesture.