Mephit's Guide to GMing
Advanced Rolls in *Star Trek*

There are some basic rule mechanics in *Star Trek Adventures* that get the job done most of the time. However, things get to be most interesting when you try out some of the cool bells and whistles found in Chapter 4.3 of the core rulebook. The advice here will make you feel more confident in using challenges and extended tasks.

Basic Challenges

A challenge is only slightly different from a normal Task, really just a series of normal Tasks (called "Key Tasks" in this case) that are related. These can be Extended Tasks (see below) but when you come down to it this is really just bookkeeping. You try Tasks in series all the time: you can't investigate ruins until you land the shuttle, you can't fix the warp engine until you diagnose the issue. This is just a way of calling out those relationships in a formal way, something especially good when working with technology or science.

Linear and Gated Challenges

The two easiest types of challenges you'll run into are linear and gated challenges. When you have a single series of Tasks that need to be completed in order, that's a **linear challenge**. When you have a branching flow chart of Tasks that can be followed in multiple paths, that's a **gated challenge**. Whichever one your GM hands you, make sure you have it written out and plan ahead. If you know there's a difficult Task further on, try not to waste all your Momentum and/or Determination on the easy stuff. On the other hand, when you have an easy Task that leads to more Difficult Tasks then get all the successes you can so that you generate Momentum for later.

Group and Timed Challenges

Most of the time you can have your crewmates help you with a challenge, rolling Tasks and assisting other people. This is called a **group challenge** and it's worth putting some forethought into. What's your most effective roll in a group challenge? Do you have a good target number and some solid Focuses or should you be assisting someone better suited to the challenge? Are you a command officer who would be better off generating Momentum through a *Rally* roll? What's the current Complication Range and are you better off limiting your rolls so that you don't tempt a Complication?

Added to that concern is how long the challenge might take. Most of the time you can take as long as you need to finish up a challenge: it don't matter how long it takes your engineering crew to repair your nacelles in drydock since more time just means more shore leave. However, when time *is* a factor then this becomes a **timed challenge**. In a nutshell, the GM will tell you how long you have ("The neutronic wavefront will be here in two days.") and how much time each round represents ("Everyone can make a roll every twelve hours.") which means you have to strategize the trade-off between time and success. Normally if you aren't great at a roll you might want to assist someone who is but in these case making your own roll might give you the chance to get more things done in your limited time. Figure out how many Key Tasks you're facing and how many intervals you have to give you a Task-per-interval number that you have to beat in order to finish on time. Then strategize how to meet that number.

Opposed Challenges

Opposed challenges are a different sort of situation from Opposed Tasks but you can use a lot of the same lessons from those. The thing to remember in opposed challenges is that you often want to play the long game. The GM may pick from a number of different tactics to use against you (found on page 90 of the core rulebook) but you can also use these against your opponents. While some of your crew works on the challenge, others might work to counter the enemy's **disruption** or **direct opposition** by Creating a Complication for your opponent's Tasks or providing some other issue that the other side needs to focus on. In cases of a **contest** you can even use the first two tactics against your opponents to try and foul up their progress towards the shared goal. Lastly, one side or the other (or both!) might turn the situation into a **conflict** with phaser blasts and disruptor fire going back and forth to harry the folks working on the challenge.

In addition to being just more exciting scenes, opposed challenges offer a chance for all of your party to be doing something in their wheelhouse. While the tactical officer might be able to chip in a little on an engineering project, they are far more comfortable keeping the enemy pinned down with phasers while their crewmates handle the technical stuff. Command officers might also engage in social conflict with the enemy to buy time for their engineers to finish their progress, something seen in *Star Trek* often when the captain keeps the enemy talking so that their crew can pull off some miracle improvisation.

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Extended Tasks

Extended Tasks seem like some new beast, but in fact you handle them all the time. Combat is an Extended Task and all others follow the same model: roll to see if you make progress, of you do then roll to see how much of the opposing pool you chip away at, see if there's any Resistance to your chipping away, and finally see if you have an overwhelming amount of progress. In combat, this is (respectively) the attack roll, damage, armor, and Injuries. For other Extended Tasks, it's more general.

1. **The GM tells you what the Difficulty, Work track, Magnitude, and Resistance of the Task.** There are more parts to this than your average Task but that's because this isn't a one-and-done scenario. Make sure you keep the whole scope in mind.

2. **Make a roll against that Task.** This is your roll to see if you can make any progress. It might be simple or difficult and have no real effect on the Work track. Just like a large opponent can be easy to hit but hard to take down, a project might be easily addressed but requires hours and hours of work. Or it might be hard to get a handle on but then straightforward once you're there. In either case, use your typical tactics for rolling.

3. **If you fail, you potentially lose important time.** This is the kicker. If you fail a navigation roll you might get lost or anader into hostile territory. If you fail at an Extended Task roll then you can just try again… but the plot rolls on without you. Patients get sicker, engines continue to leak radiation, or (worst of all) your GM smiles and make notes and says "alright another hour passes and… some stuff happens."

4. **If you succeed, it's time to roll for Progress.** Bingo, you made headway! Maybe! Making your check just means you have the *potential* for headway. Now you roll some Challenge Dice to chip away at the Task's "hit points," better known as its Work track. You start with 2A plus an additional A for the Discipline rating of the lead character. There are Momentum spends that can add more (see below for information on those) and social abilities but, just like when your damage roll comes up bust you can still flub things. When in doubt, try for a big pool to increase your chances of big damage.

5. **The GM rolls for Resistance.** Tasks might have Resistance (just like adversaries, it's more common that they don't) as if they do then the GM rolls to try and cancel out some of your precious Work.

6. **Check for Breakthroughs.** If you get five or more Work at once or if the Work track is filled and you get more progress then you get a Breakthrough. Just like you need to deal an Injury to actually kill someone, you need to achieve Breakthroughs to actually beat an Extended Task. The Breakthroughs you already have reduce the Difficulty of the base task (or add to Challenge Dice if the Difficulty is already 0), so don't let your GM forget that.

Getting the Most Out of Your Rolls

You can generate **Momentum** on the base roll for an Extended Task just like another sort of roll and you can spend it for all the normal ways (including pulling from a team pool). However, you also get specific benefits from Momentum for this sort of scenario.

- The most common one that you should probably go for most of the time is *Additional Work*: you spend a Momentum to get another point of Work done, easy peasy.

- If the Task has a lot of Resistance, though, consider *Piercing* instead which lets you ignore two points of Resistance for one Momentum. If your Task has at least 2 Resistance then this is more economical than *Additional Work* (1:2 instead of 1:1) but most of the time you won't need it.

- Lastly, for those times when the dice seem to hate you then you can get *Re-Roll Work* which lets you reroll any number of Challenge Dice. If two or more of your dice come up blank then this is more economical than *Additional Work* and it's a better and better deal the more blanks you roll.

What about **Effects**? Well, there are some special Effect abilities too but you have to get those through some special ability. However, you might want to talk your GM into entertaining the idea since those abilities (core book, p. 91) are pretty sweet. If you have some special equipment or asset then maybe ask if you can get one of those abilities for 2 Momentum instead of the normal use of the Create Advantage Task.

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The Scientific Method
Coming up with crazy science-solutions to problems is something that happens all the time in *Star Trek*. There's an argument to be made that this is *the biggest* defining aspect of the series. So why have so complicated a system to simulate it? Well, when you get down to it this is just the Extended Task with a Gate Challenge thrown in and sometimes with a Timed Challenge as well.

Know the Basics
As with everything, you should know what you're doing before you blunder in.

1. **Make an Observation check, if you want.** This is the first Task in the Gated Challenge and it involves taking stock of the situation, and mechanically it will tell your team what Discipline you'll be using. Normally this is a Difficulty 0 roll so you automatically succeed (except for Complications and truly bizarre situations) but you can choose to roll anyways to try and gain some valuable Momentum. Of course, you also risk generating Complications but… no one said this was easy.

2. **Spitball ideas until the Research Lead sees several that they'd like to try.** This can be the trickiest part of the whole thing as there isn't a mechanical way to try this. Just think about what makes sense in the story, and also try to tie it to Focuses that one or more of your crew has. If the line of research is explicitly tied to a Focus then you can definitely use that Focus. For any Gamemasters reading this, I recommend you see what you're group comes up with and then adjust the narrative to one of those if you can. At the least, tell them if they have no good ideas so far.

3. **The Research Lead picks out Assistants.** This is where we get into strategy again. Read the Group Challenge section above, as well as the part about Timed Challenges as well if that's a factor. You want to find that optimal balance between succeeding on your rolls (you don't want to waste time or resources) and generating Momentum (for those *Additional Work* spends). The rules for the Scientific Method (page 158) say that you need a Discipline rating of 2 or better to assist; anyone else (and maybe those who just barely qualify) should be doing supportive rolls like *Create an Advantage* or *Rally* for team Momentum.

4. **Test stuff out with Extended Tasks.** All the advice above regarding Extended Tasks applies to these rolls as well. Chip away at the problem until you break it open, then you can see if it holds up or not. If it doesn't try the next one. Since this is like combat in many ways, I recommend the "focused fire" approach to this: unless there's a really pressing reason keep working on a specific line of research until it's done rather than jumping from one to the next.

A special case for the Scientific Method is the Research & Development Guidelines discussed on pages 159-160 of the core rulebook. For the Engineering Department on your ship (and, arguably, many of the scientific departments) this is a chance to have some long-term improvements going on. Come up with something you'd like to boost and make sure you get your roll in every story. You can boost the performance of your ship and then keep track of when it would be applicable as a Trait in the game. If if you don't get extra dice from a 5% precision boost to ship sensors, you can make an argument that they are able to scan things that most ships couldn't or that you should be able to spend Determination on the roll when the Task would normally not have an appropriate Value.

Below is a summary of the Research & Design rules, including ship Departments you can suggest to your GM as Benefits (and which they can consider for Drawbacks).

SYSTEMS	SENSORS AND COMPUTING TECH	HIGH ENERGY POWER SYSTEMS	WARP AND SUBSPACE SYSTEMS
EXAMPLES	Sensors, tricorders, medical scanners, holodecks, and non-powered technology.	Reactors, impulse drives, EPS conduits, weapon systems, shield systems, and powered technology.	Warp coils, subspace communications, transporters, tractor beams, deflector arrays.
ATTRIBUTES & DEPARTMENTS	Sensors, Computers, Structure. Science, Medicine	Engines, Weapons. Conn, Engineering, Security.	Engines, Communications. Conn, Engineering.
WORK	5-10	7-15	10-15
MAGNITUDE	1-3	2-5	4-5
DIFFICULTY	2	1	3

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