

# **Nobilis 101 Rule Set**

## **Summary of World**

This is a modified rule set of the game Nobilis, scaled down and simplified to be used for beginners in one-shot adventures.

Nobilis are somewhere between Gods and Mortals, typically they are mortals who have been granted special abilities. They are usually not immortal or invincible, but they are very tough, and each one controls a specific "domain", or aspect of reality. This can be something huge and serious, like "nature" or something generic and trivial, like "hats." Nobles can be human in form, but also animals or mythological creatures.

Typically they are charged with the protection and spread of their own domain, but larger groups will band together when greater dilemmas or threats to reality occur. These groups are known as "families" and are lead by an Imperator, which is basically a being more powerful and badass than an entire group of Nobles. *(Here I've sort of simplified the Imperator/Noble relation. In the original, an Imperator manages a group of Nobles, who he creates by imbuing once-mortals with a piece of his own soul.)*

Beyond the day-to-day maintenance of their domains, Nobles must always be on the alert for Excrucians, which are beings who are trying to erase reality, one aspect at a time. The challenge in the everyday life of a Noble comes in that he must adhere to strict Laws set forth to govern the Nobilis, most of which revolve around "don't make the mortals go insane by performing magical miracles in front of them." *(Again, I've highly simplified the role of Excrucians in the world, as well as the rules for Nobilis behavior. I stuck with the most relevant rule to my particular story, that driving mortals insane is a criminal, punishable offense. During the actual game-play, I referred ominously to the Locust Court. This is a significant entity in Nobilis, but in my game I tried to use it as a "distant mountains" sort of thing.)*

Each character will portray a Noble who is part of one family and have the following statistics:

### **Attributes, Gifts, and Handicaps**

## **ATTRIBUTES**

Every Noble has three attributes:

### **Aspect, Domain, and Spirit**

These attributes are represented by a number between 0 and 5, where 0 is of average human ability and 5 is of

near-godlike ability.

- **Aspect** represents the degree to which your body itself is imbued with power. High aspect characters can perform impossibly difficult mental and physical tasks. Low aspect characters are of typical human ability.
- **Domain** represents your control over the part of creation you embody. High Domain characters are veritable gods of what they represent. Low Domain characters are not in command of their estate, and may even be controlled by the estate without their regard!
- **Spirit** is basically your defense against miracles performed against you.

When creating the characters for the game, the Storyteller can distribute 6 points among the 3 attributes, with a maximum of 5 in any one.

*(My biggest change to the attributes was to leave out one altogether. Realm is an attribute regarding a Noble's control over their Chancel, which is the mythical pocket of reality where their Emperor is based and where they hang out when not in the mortal world. Chancels and Realms are a big part of Nobilis, but simply outside the scope of a one-shot adventure. Again, I used references to "graduating and setting up a Chancel somewhere" as a "distant mountains" sort of deal in my story.*

*I also drastically reduced the role of spirit. In the original game, it has much more of a role in regards to Anchors, which was another element of the game I eliminated for simplicity. There are other things that spirit does, but it's complicated, and it was best for my purposes to use it as a sort of "miracle defense" stat)*

## GIFTS

Each Noble gets 2 points worth of Gifts. You can either have 2 1-point gifts, or 1 2-point gift. This is in addition to Durant, which I just gave to everybody.

*(In the original game, Gifts are determined from leftover attribute points, and have a range of costs. My change was so that a character could easily have either 2 "simple" gifts or 1 major gift).*

**Durant** (default for all characters for the purposes of one-shots): free. You are difficult to injure and heal quickly.

**Venomed bite or acidic spittle:** 1 point. Good for a variety of beasties.

**Fire-breathing:** 1 point. Popular with characters who are dragons in their true forms.

**Flight:** 1 point. Handy for winged characters. Unnecessary for winged characters with an Aspect of 5, who get it

automatically.

**Petrify with a look:** 1 point. A must for cockatrices, gorgons, basilisks, etc. Does not affect Nobles, Excrucians, or Imperators.

**Shapeshifting:** 1 point for one or two shapes.

**Shapeshifting–advanced:** 2 points for comprehensive shapeshifting ability. Very chic for dragons, vampires, werewolves, etc.

**Glorious:** 2 points. Your physical appearance, in some ways, stirs strong emotion in all mortals and (to a lesser extent) Powers. The emotion could be lust, fear, respect, a desire to cause you no harm, etc.

**Elemental:** 2 points. You are so close to your estate that you can replace your body with a construct of your domain, and turn yourself into living lava or telephones or bacteria or angular momentum or whatever your domain happens to be.

**Constant Domain:** 2 points. Your estate will serve you even without your explicit command, acting in your best interest and protecting you.

**Unblemished Guise:** 2 points. You can disguise yourself as a human, more or less impenetrably.

You can also make up other gifts as you see fit

## HANDICAPS

Handicaps are flaws that your character has. Each character can have 1 handicap. If your handicap comes up in the role-playing setting and causes some sort of obstacle, then you gain miracle points back (miracle points are how you “do stuff” in the game, more on them later)

*(In the original game, you can have several handicaps. A lot of people choose to leave out handicaps when they run Nobilis one-shots, but they are one of my favorite parts of character creation in Nobilis. Forcing your character to have a flaw can make for great role-playing opportunities. I did, however, simplify the amount of miracle points you receive from each handicap, and simplified the original division between “limits” and “restrictions”)*

Sample Handicaps :

**Cannot lie.** 1 MP refreshes when a lie would have been very useful.

**Cannot enter a house uninvited.** 1 MP (depending on circumstances)

**Cannot cross running water.** 1 MP (depending on circumstances)

**Can be summoned and can't leave an unbroken pentagram.** 2 MP paid whenever it comes up. (I love this one.)

**Cannot kill.** 1 MP (depending on circumstances)

**Cannot use modern technology.** 1 MP, but it comes up often.

**Must feed of human blood or no reflection.** 1 MP when it gives you away.

**Hated (or loved too well) by animals.** 1 MP when they're a threat, or when they give you away.

**Bound to friendship with anyone they share a smoke with and cannot resist an offered smoke.** 1-3 MP depending on who or what they end up bound in friendship to . . .

You can also make up other handicaps as you see fit

## **MIRACLE POINTS and “DOING STUFF”**

Miracle points are magical energies which can be expended to perform magical feats beyond the natural abilities represented by your attributes. So if you are an aspect 2 character and want to perform an aspect 4 miracle, you have to spend a few miracle points to do it.

Each character gets 5 Miracle Points for each attribute to spend throughout the adventure. The maximum amount of Miracle Points you can spend to increase one of your attribute levels at a time is 4. For example, if you are an aspect 2 character, you can't perform an aspect 7 miracle, because that would require you spend more than 4 miracle points.

If you are fighting with another Nobilis, or an Excrucian Shard, you can use Miracle Points to break through their Spirit defense. For example, if you performed the Aspect miracle of throwing a bus at another Noble who had a Spirit of 1, it would bounce off their Spirit defense, like a force field (called an Auctoritas). If you spent 2 Miracle Points, it would break through the defense and hit them, ouch!

There are a couple of ways to replenish your supply of Miracle Points throughout the game.

- 1) If your Noble's handicap comes up as an obstacle in the game, you get Miracle Points back
- 2) If you find a particularly clever way to use your domain, the GM (Lisa) may award you Miracle Points.
- 3) If you do anything role-playing-wise that Lisa feels is extremely clever and worth of reward.

For the GM: this cheat sheet is a handy guide for figuring out how many action points a particular miracle should cost:

<http://thedeadone.net/moc/wp-content/Nobilis%20-%20Cheat%20Sheet.pdf>

*(My way of using Miracle Points is fairly close to the original game, but I left out some of the more complicated tricks you can use to convert them.*

*As far as the rest of Nobilis, there were huge chunks I left out for simplicity's sake: Anchors, Bonds, Affiliations, the role of the Chancel and other Nobles, the World Tree, the role of Flowers and the Nettle Rite, the distinction between Mythic Reality and Prosaic Reality, etc. These all make Nobilis a rich and engaging world, but for the purposes of a one-shot, especially with beginners, they were not necessary to my story.)*