

Character Development

What can be improved?

Most characters in the Vale can work to improve their initial abilities by gaining *Techniques*; these are improvements to existing skills. As a general rule it is only possible to gain the core abilities (*Styles*) during character creation.

Combat Ability

A character's combat ability is determined when the character is created and cannot generally be improved subsequently.

A character is limited to learning techniques up to the level of their combat ability. Thus, if you have combat ability I you may only develop first tier techniques; if you have combat ability II you may develop first and second tier techniques and you may only develop third tier techniques if you have combat ability III.

Magical Ability

A character's magical ability is determined when the character is created and cannot generally be improved subsequently.

A character who has only magic I knows some petty magic but does not have a magic style. A character who has magic II is sufficiently skilled that they have a magic style (which they select at character creation); they are limited in the techniques that may be learned and may not learn any third tier techniques. Only a character who has magic III may freely learn magically techniques from those available to them.

Medical Abilities

Characters select their medical abilities when created. It is not generally possible to learn further abilities after character creation (so a barber may not train to become a surgeon).

It is possible to train your abilities as a surgeon so that you develop new techniques of surgery.

Crafting Abilities

It takes many years to learn the skills of a craft. It is therefore not generally practical for characters to learn these skills after entering play. Full guildsmen and senior tinkers have additional skill as well as status in their organisation. Even if a character managed to join a guild in play they would still not be able to actually craft items themselves.

Priests and Shaman

It takes many years to learn the skills and knowledge required and also a calling. Even if a character gains faith (or the equivalent) they would still not be able to actually perform in the role (although this has no impact on their titles and secular authority).

Nobility and Warlords

Kingdom nobles gain such power and authority as they have as a result of their birthright and the poise of training from birth. A character who manages to gain ennoblement does not gain either of these things and will therefore struggle to be able to exercise noble authority.

Warlords in the Khan's Camp have for some reason been born with a special connection to the demons. While the Khan can make someone a warlord, they will lack this special connection.

So what can be learned?

Characters can learn new formulae, rituals and rites, they may learn new techniques which combined with the right equipment will allow them to greatly augment their capabilities.

Renown

Characters who come to the Vale with either the Duchess' forces or those of the Lich or the Khan all have the potential for greatness and all of them (whether they admit it or not) are seeking to build their reputation. Some will seek a wide reputation, to be known across the Northern Alliance as a great swordsman or a champion of justice while others will be seeking a much more discrete and exclusive reputation known to only those few who need to know or perhaps to only the demons themselves.

Epithets

- Reputation is recorded as a growing list of epithets, for example: Strong, Just, Loyal or Heartless, Cruel, Bloodthirsty. Anyone can lie about their reputation but those who are able to see a character's soul are able to see the truth (and to know their level of power although not its exact form).
- The first point of renown that a character gains produces an epithet, after that each further epithet takes an additional point of renown (2 then 3 then 4 and so on).
- The OC mechanism for this is that a character's epithets are recorded their soul card so that those with the power to examine it can see the true nature of their reputation.
- Beings that do not have their own soul are not subject to this process, for example the Undead.

Gaining Renown

- Simply coming on an expedition to the Vale gains a character a point of renown
- You can gain an extra point of renown by handing in a training certificate (these are rewards given by certain NPCs which represent additional training)
- A player character who has greater skills than you can seek to provide a point that they gain to you instead of using it themselves (this cannot be combined with a certificate)
- Certain successful actions can also gain you an extra point of renown

Advantages of Reputation

As a character's reputation grows they also gain access to new techniques. In character this can come from self-confidence and personal practice or from training provided to the champion by the guilds and other masters or any other reasonable explanation. Out of character you will be able to pick from the tree of techniques for which you have the pre-requisites between events.

Generally each epithet gained will represent a new technique. Some, simpler techniques can be gained more easily (possibly two at a time) while others may require more work to develop. (If you think of an epithet as worth 2 developments, a few techniques take one development, most take two and a few take three or even four).

Other ways to gain skills

Training

As the system set out above represents training, there are ways to make training more efficient so that a character is able to learn more quickly. The most obvious of these is to train under a person who already has the skill. This is even more effective if the trainer has the correct facilities, for example: the Lionguard have exceptional training facilities.

The person doing the training is forced to invest their time and energy into the process which means that it is not going to normally be an attractive option for player characters.

The gift of gods and bargains with demons

As is stated elsewhere, it is possible to benefit from gifts from the gods (with the intercession of the clergy) or to negotiate with demons (with the aid of shaman).

The greatest gift of the gods is to become one of their blessed but they have the power to offer lesser gifts to their mortal followers.

Similarly, the demons will negotiate to offer lesser gifts to those who dare treat with them some of these could involve technique development.

Ritual Magic

The undead do not have their own souls and they do not gain renown. Improvement for the undead requires the use of powerful ritual magic. The ritual is required to promote a minion to one of the three forms of greater undead and then to promote within the chosen path.

These rituals are progressively more difficult and more costly to perform. They require a skilled ritualist, an undead bodycrafter and the undead to be “improved”. The materials required for the ritual include shards, magical materials and substantial numbers of mana crystals.

The rituals are known to the Lich King and the leaders of the undead groups and necromancers are advised to speak with them once they are ready to proceed.

Night time in the camps

Once the patrols are returned as the nights draw in and darkness falls the people of the Northern Alliance gather round the fire to tell stories of the prowess of their champions hoping to attract the attention of the Duchess and her household and thus the king. They also hope to gain the notice of the priests and perhaps even the gods themselves.

In the Khan’s camp the warlords similarly gather round the fires laying the tales of their prowess before the shaman of the free people hoping to attract the demons notice.