

HALO

THE COVENANT WAR

A Halo: Combat Evolved Roleplaying Game

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INTRODUCTION

Halo: The Covenant War is a tabletop RPG based on Bungie's *Halo* series of FPS games. It uses a variant of *Fudge*, a free system created by Steffan O'Sullivan. The complete rules are included here, but if you're interested in finding out more about the system and its endless options you can get it online, or there's a print version published by Grey Ghost Games. I went with *Fudge* basically because I'm intimately familiar with it and know how to make it do what I want. Character creation is radically changed from any existing *Fudge* variant, and the default wounding rules are replaced with health points. For more on *Fudge*, check out www.fudgerpg.com; there are zillions of different variant rules that could be plugged into this game if you're so inclined, especially in the hardcover *Fudge 10th Anniversary Edition*.

The design philosophy of this game is that the goal is to create a fun RPG that captures the feel of the *Halo* games. I've put a lot of detail into things that matter in the video games; the rest you can hand-wave, make up as you go along, or reduce to simple dice rolls. Also, while it can handle other things, H:tCW is geared primarily towards games about UNSC marines fighting the Covenant. *Fudge Points* are your friend.

Setting Information

Having the fan following that it does, there are plenty of places to find reference material on *Halo* more detailed than I could ever hope to put together. This game includes some basic setting information, but if you really want the full skinny you should check out some of the following:

- **halo.bungie.org**: This is the main fan site for all things *Halo*. Of particular interest is the Story Page, which has in-depth analyses of all different aspects of the *Halo* universe.
- **The Library**: The Library is probably the single largest and most extensive collection of information on *Halo*, with articles covering just about everything. <http://library.psyjniir.net/>
- **Wikipedia**: The free online encyclopedia that anyone can edit is at its best when dealing with pop culture stuff, and *Halo* is no exception. Through numerous articles it has a wealth of information about *Halo*. The main article on *Halo* (with many links to secondary articles) can be found at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halo_\(video_game_series\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halo_(video_game_series))

Tools of the Trade

There are a few things you'll want to have in order to play this game:

- **Paperwork**: For some reason they sometimes call these "pen-and-paper" RPGs, when you really want to be using pencil and paper. Players are going to need sheets for their characters, and everyone is probably going to want scratch paper to scribble random stuff on, especially the GM.
- **Randomizer Thingies**: Since this is *Fudge*, there are a couple of different ways to handle what happens when a character wants to try stuff and could succeed or fail. Like a typical RPG you can use dice—six-sided, special *Fudge Dice*, or ten-sided—or you can be weird and use playing cards.

- **Map Stuff:** Especially for a game that emphasizes tactical combat, having some kind of map and movable figures helps a lot. I use one of those dry-erase “battle mat” things and goofy paper miniatures, but if you want to go crazy with action figures or cool wargame type miniatures and actual 3-D terrain, more power to you.

Canon Cannon

As with any other fan activity, how close you hew to the canon continuity when playing this game is totally up to you. In the canon, Spartans are very much an endangered species, and having an entire squad of them as player characters isn’t exactly plausible. That doesn’t necessarily mean it should stop you though. Your game is by definition not part of the official *Halo* continuity, so it pays to remember you can pretty much do whatever the hell you want with it. Do you want there to be more surviving Spartan-IIs? Or a new generation of Spartan-IIIs? Or do you think it would be neat if humans and Elites teamed up against a common foe? Go for it.

Fudge Basics

Before we jump into the game, we need to introduce some of the basic elements of the Fudge system that powers H:tCW.

Characters are defined by **traits**, things that describe them. There are three main types of traits: Attributes, Skills, and Gifts. Attributes and Skills are both rated in **Levels**; for normal humans these range from -3 to +3, where +0 is average¹. Exceptional characters can have levels of +4 or more. Gifts are other beneficial traits that don’t have levels; a character either has it or doesn’t.

Level	Description
-3	Terrible
-2	Poor
-1	Mediocre
+0	Fair
+1	Good
+2	Great
+3	Superb
+4	Legendary

When a character wants to do something where the outcome is in doubt (or just where randomness could make the game more interesting), the Action Resolution rules come into play. The GM names a relevant Attribute or Skill for the action and the player uses some kind of randomizer (usually dice; see p. 14) to produce a result between -4 and +4, which is added to the level of the relevant trait. The sum of the two is called the **Rolled Degree**. If the character is acting directly against another character (an **Opposed Action**), the character with the higher Rolled Degree is the winner, and a tie is (usually) a tie. If there is no opponent and something is just difficult (an **Unopposed Action**), the GM sets a **Difficulty Level** (a number rated in Levels, depending on how hard the action is) that must be matched or exceeded in order to succeed.

So, supposing there are two characters, A and B, who have Close Combat at +2 and +1 respectively. A swings at B and B tries to parry; the GM has them roll dice. A rolls +1, so his Rolled Degree is +3. B rolls +0, so his **Rolled Degree** is +1. A beat B by 2 whole points (his **Relative Degree**), so he wins and slugs B.

On the other hand if A is just climbing a tree, the GM might decide to have him make a Body roll against a Difficulty Level of +1. Any Rolled Degree of +1 or better will let him climb the tree.

¹ H:tCW uses a variant of the standard Fudge rules; normally the descriptions listed in the table to the right *are* the trait levels. Personally I think it’s much easier to just use the numbers.

Not Done Yet

I'm intending to add more stuff to this game to make it more complete. At the moment it mostly lets you do games dealing with fighting the Covenant, but *hopefully* it'll eventually include:

- Proper character sheets, and reference sheet/GM screen type stuff.
- Stats for the stuff pertaining to the various Halo ringworlds—stats for the Flood, Sentinels, etc.
- Stats for some of the other stuff that's not *quite* official, like the flamethrower, ATV, etc., as well as getting more thorough in including all the different variants of the Covenant NPCs.
- Incorporating some more rules options, including more freeform character creation.
- Rules for running a game more in the style of *Red vs. Blue*. It'll be weird.
- *Possibly* something to deal with fighters and ship-to-ship combat. It'd be annoying to do, since there's so little to go off of from the games.

Also, I'll be putting together an adventure scenario for this game, called *Halo: Weathering the Storm*.

I'm open to contributions by the way.

Standard Disclaimers

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CHARACTER CREATION

Character creation in *Halo: The Covenant War* is intended to be quick, simple, and painless. It favors picking out templates over free-form selection of traits, mainly to save time that could be spent killing aliens. Player characters are assumed to be normal humans, often marines; if you want to create Spartans as player characters, see p. 12. If you want to go nuts and have Elites, see p. 33.

Step 1: Attributes

Characters have four attributes, Body, Perception, Reflexes, and Will. Each of these starts out at +0; you have 4 levels to assign as you wish. You can reduce an attribute below +0 (to a minimum of -3) to have points to put into another attribute, but keep in mind that there are no unimportant attributes. No single attribute can go above +3 if you're a normal human.

Body	Body is a character's overall physical conditioning: strength, stamina, and capacity for punishment.
Perception	Perception is vitally important on the battlefield; what you can or can't see can make the difference between life and death.
Reflexes	When you need to react quickly, whether it's leaping out of the way of incoming fire or just pushing a button faster than the other guy, Reflexes is the attribute you use.
Will	Will represents your character's mental fortitude. It's used for things like keeping calm under fire, not being fast-talked, and resisting torture.

Attributes and Skills

Unlike your typical RPG, in Fudge attributes and skills aren't numerically combined. In fact they're completely independent of each other, though you're encouraged to select traits that make sense together. In *Halo: The Covenant War* attributes and skills mostly cover different, unrelated things. Shooting and piloting are covered almost entirely by skills, while intelligence and social stuff are represented by the players themselves and what skills the character has.

Step 2: Secondary Values

Health

Health is the amount of damage a character can take before being incapacitated. It's determined by checking the values of the Body and Will attributes on the table below and adding the results together.

Attribute Level	Body Bonus	Will Bonus
-3	10	0
-2	15	3
-1	20	6
+0	25	9
+1	30	12
+2	40	15
+3	50	18
(+4)	60	21

Movement

If you're using maps and miniatures, Movement is the number of units (inches, squares, hexes, etc.) a character can move in one turn. As with Health, the overall value is determined by combining the values based on two attributes, in this case Body and Reflexes:

Attribute Level	Body Bonus	Reflexes Bonus
-3	0	1
-2	1	1
-1	1	2
+0	2	3
+1	2	4
+2	3	5
+3	3	6
(+4)	4	6

Starting Fudge Points

Fudge Points are very important in this game since they basically let the heroes bend reality just enough to not get obliterated when they're regularly in lethal combat situations. The GM sets the number of Fudge Points allotted to each character, but I suggest 20.

Step 3: Select Profession

Profession is a character's primary area of expertise, the thing he or she does most of the time. In *Halo: The Covenant War* player characters are assumed to be all UNSC personnel, so the professions included here are all military.

Engineer

Computer Systems +2
Drive +0
Engineering +2
EVA +0
Science (pick one) +1

Intelligence Operative

Intelligence Analysis +1
Pistol +1
Sniper +1
Stealth +2
Tactics +1

Marine

Close Combat +0
Drive +1
Heavy Weapons +2
Pistol +1
Rifle +2

Throwing +1

Officer

Navigation +1

Pistol +0

Starship +1

Strategy +1

Tactics +1

Gift: Rank

Pilot

Computer Systems +0

Gunnery +2

Navigation (Space) +0

Pilot +2

Pistol +0

Tactics +0

Step 4: Select Specialty

Each character has a single specialty, an area of additional ability within their Specialty. If both your profession and specialty have the same skill, take the higher of the two (do *not* combine them).

Engineer Specialties

Field Engineer: Demolitions +2, Drive +1, Pistol +1

Mechanic: Drive +1, Gift: Bench-Thumper

Shipboard Engineer: Engineering +3, EVA +1, Gunnery +1

Intelligence Operative Specialties

Assassin: Close Combat +2, Sniper +2, Stealth +3

Data Intrusion: Computer Systems +3, Radio +2

Demolitions: Demolitions +2, Gift: Nerves of Steel

Interrogator: Interrogation +2, Persuasion +2

Marine Specialties

Communications: Computer Systems +2, Engineering +0, Radio +2

Demolitions: Computer Systems +0, Demolitions +2, Gift: Nerves of Steel

Field Mechanic: Computer Systems +2, Engineering +2, Gift: Technology Adept

Gunner: Drive +2, Gunnery +2, Pilot +1

Medic: Medic +2, Science (Biology) +0, Survival +0

ODST: Close Combat +1, Rifle +3, Gift: Tough S.O.B.

Scout: Navigation (Land) +2, Stealth +1, Survival +2, Tracking +1

Sniper: Sniper +2, Stealth +1, Gift: Steady Hands

Space Trooper: EVA +2, Navigation (Space) +0, Pilot +0

Spec Ops: Sniper +1, Stealth +2, Tactics +2

Officer Specialties

Ship's Captain: Leadership +2 , Starship +2, Strategy +2

Communications Officer: Computer Systems +2, Knowledge (Languages) +2, Radio +2

Helmsman/Navigator: Navigation (Space) +2, Starship +2

Pilot Specialties

Dropship Pilot: Navigation (Air) +1, Gift: Favorite Vehicle (Pelican)

Fighter Pilot: Computer Systems +1, Tactics +1, Gift: Favorite Vehicle (Longsword)

Step 5: Personal Traits

Finally, you get to pick out some traits of your own that have nothing to do with your Profession or Specialty.

Personal Skills

Select any three additional skills, rated at +0. Especially if they're not related to combat, the GM may allow players to come up with new skills for personal skills.

Personal Gift

Select one Gift for your character. This can't be one that you already have from a Specialty.

Quirk

A Quirk is a character's "hook," an obvious personality trait that gives you a starting point for how to play the character. Below are some examples, but feel free to come up with your own.

- **Big Damn Hero:** You've been doing the right thing for a long time. You're not going to stop, but sometimes you get sick of it all anyway.
- **Deathwish:** You don't seem to care whether you live or die. It must suck to be on the same squad as you.
- **Green:** You're still new to all this soldiering stuff, and pretty damn naïve.
- **Ice Queen:** Chicks can be marines too. But joking around is a good way to get killed.
- **Local Flavor:** You're a (Latino/Aussie/New Yorker/whatever) stereotype, and proud of it!
- **Silent Giant:** You're pretty damn tall, and hitting your head all the time has made you a quiet, careful type.
- **Slick:** If it's worth doing, it's worth looking cool while you do it.
- **Veteran:** You've been at this a while. You come off as sort of a curmudgeon, but you know what you're doing.
- **Whiner:** Even though you're really as dependable as the next guy, you like to complain a lot and avoid danger if you can help it.
- **Wiseass:** You've got a big mouth on you.

Skill Descriptions

Close Combat: This covers hand-to-hand and melee combat of all sorts. If you want your character to use, for example, wrestling instead of karate, just declare your actions that way during play.

Computer Systems: Even in the future, you still need some kind of training to get much use out of a computer. We'll leave the details to your imagination (the computers we see in *Halo* have a typical sci-fi movie feel after all), but in general most anyone can handle basic operations of a computer, but you need the skill to do anything remotely sophisticated.

Demolitions is the ability to set or disarm explosives. You don't have to be a suicidal pyromaniac to be a demolitions expert, but if crawling under a bridge to make sure the bombs you planted are connected properly so they can explode with enough force to vaporize your fragile human form is appealing, then by all means.

Drive lets you operate ground-based vehicles, including cars, tanks, motorcycles, and even hover vehicles.

Engineering is the ability to fix and maintain things, ranging from giving the Warthog a tune-up to jury-rigging a radio to trying to get the engines back online so the ship can escape the black hole in time.

EVA: Extra-Vehicular Activity, or EVA for short, refers to being able to handle yourself in a spacesuit out in a vacuum.

Gunnery: The Gunnery skill is for operating vehicle-mounted weapons, ranging from the machinegun on the back of a Warthog, to the plasma mortar of a Wraith, to the MAC guns on a ship or defense platform.

Heavy Weapons is for the larger handheld weapons, notably rocket launchers, fuel rod guns, and flamethrowers.

Intelligence Analysis: With this skill you know how to gather, interpret, compile, and disseminate information relevant to military operations.

Interrogation is the ability to get information out of a captive who doesn't want to talk. We'll leave the exact details up to you, but the subject's Will attribute lets them resist. Covenant types can potentially be interrogated, assuming you can communicate, but most of the ones with anything useful to say are crazy fanatics (i.e. Elites) who will be very hard to crack.

Knowledge (Specify): This is kind of a weird, catch-all skill that shows you know a good amount about some particular subject. Knowledge skills should be for stuff that's not covered by other skills (scientific stuff falls under the Science skill). This can cover hobbies (comic books, heavy metal music, model trains), academics (history, cultures, etc.), or professions (law, plumbing, shipping routes). It can be useful stuff, or it can be a way to fill up Personal Skill slots with goofy color. It's *possible* to have Knowledge skills relating to the Covenant, but that should mostly be the purview of the ONI. Everyone knows the basic stuff about the differences between Elites and Grunts and what weapons they use and so on, and entirely too many people know what plasma does to the human anatomy.

Leadership: This skill gives you a knack for leading others.

Medic: Having a trained medic on hand is useful if not essential in combat situations. With this skill you can treat injuries and illness, either in the field with a medkit or with more sophisticated facilities.

Navigation (Specify): You can get around without getting lost. Specify whether you know navigation for Wilderness, Air, Space, Ground, etc.

Performance (Specify): You know how to do some kind of performing art. Specify what kind of performance you can do; playing a musical instrument, singing, acting, etc.

Persuasion: You're good at getting people to do what you want using words.

Pistol is for guns that are held in one hand, including not only the UNSC's automatic pistol sidearms, but also plasma pistols, needlers, etc.

Radio: This is the ability to operate radios, whether the simple walkie-talkies carried by marines or shipboard communications systems.

Rifle is for guns that are held in two hands, and a few others that are bulky but not so big as to fall under *Heavy Weapons*. Rifle weapons include the assault, battle, and plasma rifles, but sniping weapons fall under the Sniper skill.

Pilot: You can pilot small air and/or space vehicles. If you want your character to be able to handle a Pelican or a Longsword fighter, this is the skill you need.

Science (Specify): With this skill, you're knowledgeable about one branch of the sciences. You can be as broad (physical, biological, or social science) or narrow (marine biology, vulcanology) as you want.

Sniper: It takes some special training to properly handle a sniper rifle, whether the bolt-action type favored by humans or the particle beam rifle used by the Covenant.

Starship: Running a starship is generally a job for a large number of people with a wide array of skills, but this particular skill is the ability to actually operate the controls of the ship's movement. This is the job of the helmsman, but having others who can step in if the need arises is a Good Thing.

Stealth: Being sneaky has its uses. Anyone can try to walk quietly, but a character with the Stealth skill is specially trained and practiced at it.

Strategy is the ability to plan and coordinate combat on a large scale.

Survival: You can handle yourself in the wilderness, provided it's not too weird and alien, and there's actual stuff to survive on. A lot of stuff goes into wilderness survival, notably being able to find food and shelter, and not being eaten by predators.

Tactics is the ability to plan and coordinate combat on a small scale.

Throwing is one of the simpler skills in the game; it lets you toss things where you want to. The most obvious example of this is using grenades, but if you've got a rock you want to throw, be my guest.

Tracking: Sometimes you need to figure out where the heck someone went. Having the tracking skill means you're good at spotting footprints and other signs, and using those to deduce where someone was headed, and maybe some extra details about who that someone is. Needless to say, the different Covenant species have very distinctive footprints.

Gift Descriptions

Ambidexterity: You're equally proficient with both hands. Normally there's a -1 penalty when wielding a weapon in your off-hand.

Bench-Thumper: You have a natural knack for machines, particularly for getting them to work in a pinch. Any time you fail a roll on your Engineer skill (or something similar), you can spend a Fudge Point to roll again and take the better result.

Daredevil: You have a knack for taking insane risks and coming through, the more dangerous the better. Whenever you do something difficult and dangerous, you can ignore 1 point of penalties to the roll.

Eyes In the Back of the Head: People hardly ever manage to sneak up on you. Is it a sixth sense, or are you just really alert? I don't really care; the point is that whenever someone is trying to ambush you, you always get to make a Perception roll to see if you notice it, even if you're in a situation where you wouldn't be alert. This can work even when you're asleep, though not as well (a -1 or -2 penalty to the roll).

Favorite Vehicle: You have a certain vehicle you're exceptionally good with. Gain a +1 bonus to Pilot or Drive rolls for this particular vehicle.

Favorite Weapon: There's a certain weapon (not a general type of weapon, a single, specific model) you're exceptionally familiar with. Gain a +1 bonus when using this weapon.

Fearless: For you, fear is usually something that happens to other people. Gain a +1 bonus to rolls relating to resisting fear.

Nerves of Steel: Nothing fazes you; you're all but impossible to startle. Gain a +1 bonus to rolls relating to keeping cool, concentrating, and resisting pain.

Rank: You have a higher rank than is normal for the player characters in the campaign, giving you authority over more people, and other special privileges relating to your rank. On the other hand, the Covenant troops understand how rank works, and might just target your first.

Special Gear: You've acquired or been assigned some kind of special equipment that gives you a significant advantage. This Gift in particular needs to be discussed with and approved by the GM.

Steady Hands: Your hands are unusually steady, making you a particularly good sniper. When sniping (or doing other things involving manual dexterity) you can spend an extra round aiming/preparing to get an extra +1 bonus.

Technology Adept: You have a natural knack for understanding technology, even technology you've never seen before (which is really handy when there's some Covenant or Forerunner doohickey you need to figure out). Any time you would get a penalty to an action for technology being unfamiliar, reduce that penalty by 1.

Tough S.O.B.: You're naturally tough as nails, so you get an extra 12 Health points. They go by faster than you'd think.

Spartans

Whether as player characters or extremely buff NPCs, you probably want to know how to stat up a Spartan in this game, right? Okay, fine. Just keep in mind that Spartans are *insanely* powerful compared to normal marines. They're not invincible or immortal, but having them in the same player character group would ordinarily be just plain unfair. The group could be all Spartans, or non-Spartan PCs could get some kind of bonus; we suggest halving the number of Fudge Points given to the more powerful PCs.

Another thing to keep in mind is that a Spartan is pretty conspicuous. Even other humans have been known to look at them with suspicion and scorn, as artificially modified "freaks," and the Master Chief has become infamous with the whole Covenant as "the demon." In other words, a Spartan is a high-priority target, and plenty of Elites are more than willing to charge in to get credit for taking down the biggest threat.

Attributes: Perception starts at +1, Reflexes at +1, and Body at +2. *Then* assign the usual 4 free levels. A Spartan's attributes can be raised above +3 (the normal human maximum) by a margin equal to their bonus (so Body can go as high as +5), or as low as -3 plus the bonus (so Body can't go below -1).

Profession: Being a Spartan is considered to be the character's Profession. This includes Close Combat +2, Drive +1, Heavy Weapons +2, Pilot +0, Pistol +2, Rifle +2, Sniper +0, Throwing +2, and Special Gear (Mjolnir Armor), Tough S.O.B.

Specialty: Select one Marine Specialty.

Mjolnir Armor: The enhanced strength adds a +1 bonus to Body (doesn't increase any Secondary Values), 20 points of Armor, and it has a built-in commlink, HUD, energy shield, motion tracker, and AI port.

- **Energy Shield:** The shield has 40 health and Armor 10, and after 3 turns of taking no damage it'll regenerate to full health over the course of 2 full turns. Also, bare-handed attacks with the Mjolnir armor are considered to be done with a weapon (and thus do extra damage).
- **Motion Tracker:** The Mjolnir armor is equipped with a sophisticated motion tracking system. It picks up moving targets within a range of about 40 meters and provides a radar-like display to the user. It can distinguish between allies and hostiles, displaying them in yellow and red, respectively. This makes the user much harder to sneak up on, but it has certain limitations, notably that targets moving at 3m per round or less do not show up, and the tracker provides no indication of vertical movement. Also, it has a small blind spot behind the user's back, though it takes an exceptionally skilled assailant to take advantage of it.

RULES

Action Resolution

When the outcome of a character's action is in question, the GM can use the Action Resolution rules to determine how well the character succeeds based on a combination of his Trait level and a randomizer.

Randomizers

The dice rolled can be four "Fudge Dice," or one of the alternative methods of rolling can be used. In all cases the die roll provides a result ranging from -4 (sub-terrible) to +4 (trans-superb).

Fudge Dice (4dF method): Fudge Dice are six-sided dice where two sides are blank, two are marked with a "+" and two are marked with a "-". The total of a roll is equal to the number of pluses minus the number of minuses (e.g., if the roll comes up with "+ + + -" the total is +2).

3d6 Method: Simply roll three six-sided dice, add them up, and compare the result to the table to the right¹ (copying the table onto character sheets would be a good idea too).

Percentile Method: Get two ten-sided dice; one is designated as the tens digit, and the other is designated as the ones digit (having different colors is helpful); read the tens die and the ones die as places in a number from 1 to 100 (where "00" represents 100), and check the result against the table above and to the right.

Playing Cards Method: Use an ordinary deck of playing cards, but make sure there are two jokers, one black and one red. Whenever action resolution comes up, the player draws a card, and it determines the modifiers as per the table to the right.

The value of the card determines its numerical value, and the color determines whether it's positive or negative. Hence, drawing an Ace of Hearts or Diamonds is a -3, but drawing an Ace of Spades or Clubs is a +3. If you don't mind doing so and have cards that have room on the faces, writing the Fudge number values on the cards can help speed things up.

To make things a little more interesting, you can have each player draw a hand (I'd suggest 3-5 cards). Each time Action Resolution comes up, the player has to pick a card from those remaining in his hand, and he can only draw more cards when the entire hand has been used.

Rolled Degree

Rolled Degree is the quality of the result for a particular action, determined by combining the character's Trait and the result of the dice roll. The rolled result pushes the

Dice Roll 3d6	D%	FUDGE Result
3-4	1	-4
5	2-6	-3
6-7	7-18	-2
8-9	19-38	-1
10-11	39-62	+0
12-13	63-82	+1
14-15	83-94	+2
16	95-99	+3
17-18	100	+4

Card Trait	Value
2, 3, 4, 5	Zero
6, 7, 8, 9, 10	1
K, Q, J	2
Ace	3
Joker	4
Red	Negative
Black	Positive

¹ As with the percentile table below, the distribution of the dice is intended to reflect the same statistical probabilities as rolling four Fudge dice.

effective Trait level of the Rolled Degree up or down to result in a standard Fudge descriptor (e.g., a character with “Rifle” at +1 rolls a +1, so the Rolled Degree is +2).

Relative Degree

Relative Degree is how well the character’s action succeeds relative to either an opponent’s Rolled Degree or a Difficulty Level set by the GM (see below). The Relative Degree is simply a number equal to the margin by which the character’s roll exceeded the opposition. Relative Degree is most commonly used in combat.

Unopposed Actions

An Unopposed Action is one for which there is no other character opposing the character performing the action. The character rolls as normal, and he must beat the **Difficulty Level** set by the GM for the action being attempted. A Difficulty Level is simply a Trait Level describing the quality of action required to perform a given task; if the Rolled Degree is equal to or greater than the Difficulty Level the character succeeds.

Opposed Actions

An Opposed Action is one in which two characters are directly competing; combat is the most obvious use, but persuasion, arm-wrestling, racing, and any number of other activities are possibilities. In these cases both characters make rolls as usual. Opposed Actions can have both characters using the same Trait each using a different Trait depending on the situation. Two characters dueling with swords could both use Melee: Swords, while one character’s Persuasion: Seduction skill could be pitted against another’s Cool attribute.

When both characters have rolled their Rolled Degrees are compared and the character with the higher Relative Degree is the winner.

Extended Actions

An “Extended Action” is one that takes such a considerable amount of time and effort that it is not represented by one roll. Extended Actions can be Opposed or Unopposed, but in either case the Relative Degree of each successive roll is added to the previous ones until the character attempting the action is able to accumulate a number of points of Relative Degree set by the GM.

Cooperative Actions

When multiple characters work together to perform a given action it is a “Cooperative Action.” Cooperative Actions can be Opposed or Unopposed; the character with the highest Trait level makes a roll as normal and half (rounded down) of the Relative Degree of anyone assisting him is added to his effective Rolled Degree.

Modifiers

Depending on the situation the GM may opt to apply modifiers to rolls. A modifier is a plus or minus to the roll, usually by one point, but sometimes by up to three. Modifiers are usually used for Opposed Actions (they’re basically redundant for an Unopposed Action) where circumstances somehow give a character an advantage or disadvantage.

Keep in mind that in Fudge even a one-point modifier can make a big difference. Because of this, a +1 bonus or -1 penalty can sometimes be the result of a combination of several small factors that would individually be inconsequential in game terms.

Skills You Don't Have

Sometimes a character will want to try something he isn't properly trained for. This is more difficult, but far from impossible. If the character has a skill that's closely related (e.g., you want to use an assault rifle but you only have the Pistol skill), you can use that skill with a penalty of -1 or -2. Without some closely related skill, the character may be out of luck, but if it's something simple enough to use without training the character may be allowed to make the attempt as though he has a skill level of -2.

Combat

Combat in *Halo: The Covenant War* is divided into rounds. At the beginning of a round each participant makes an initiative roll, they all act in order of initiative, and then a new round begins. A round is defined as "a few seconds," and is a little fluid as dramatically appropriate.

Initiative

At the beginning of each round all characters participating in combat make **initiative** rolls. This is a Reflexes roll, and characters act in order from highest to lowest. If there is a tie, those characters act simultaneously.

Action

On a character's turn, he may opt to attack, move, shout orders, or just about anything else within reason. Below are game explanations of certain important actions:

Attack

There are a variety of ways to attack, but attacking ultimately boils down to making a roll on the appropriate skill (Firearms, Melee, etc.). This can be against a basic Difficulty Rating or as an Opposed Action with the target attempting to evade the attack.

- **Fire Weapon:** The character may fire a number of shots up to his weapon's RoF (Rate of Fire). When firing multiple shots in a turn, each shot requires a separate roll. If the target has a chance to defend and successfully defends against the first shot in a volley, he will usually automatically avoid the rest.
- **Dual Weapon Attack:** Although this can be difficult, a character can potentially hold a one-handed weapon in each hand, and thereby deliver twice as many attacks per turn. A character who doesn't have the Gift of Ambidextrous has a -1 penalty to any attacks made with a weapon held in his off hand. However, weapons that have Precise or Burst Fire lose those damage bonuses. Also, these have to be reloaded separately, so reloading a pair of one-handed weapons will typically take two rounds, during which it will be impossible to fire.
- **Melee Attack:** If appropriate, the character may attempt a physical attack against a foe that's at point blank range. When fighting *unarmed* the damage is equal to the character's Body attribute plus 3. If the character hits with a solid weapon,

even an improvised one like a rifle butt, the damage is tripled. Weapons specifically designed for melee attacks such as the energy sword and brute shot add a further bonus. A melee attack that hits a target from behind, as an ambush, has the damage tripled *again*.

- **Snapshot:** A snapshot is a quick, off the hip shot with the character’s weapon. These are usually forced on a character by circumstances, and a standard Fire Weapon or Careful Shot is invariably preferable. When making a snapshot a character can only fire a single shot, and that shot has a –1 penalty.
- **Take Aim:** The character can take a round to attempt to take more careful aim on an opponent. Make a Perception roll against the Difficulty Rating to hit (see the table below); if successful, add the Relative Degree as a bonus to a shot fired against the same target the next round. However, the character cannot move beyond a walk while doing so, and attempting evasive maneuvers will abort the aim.
- **Throw Grenade:** Characters are assumed to be able to throw grenades a distance of 10 meters plus the character’s Strength.

Base Attack Difficulty Rating

The table below shows how to determine the basic Difficulty Rating for a given attack; even if the opponent is able to make a defense roll that serves as an opposed action, the attacker still has to beat his base Difficulty Rating. Melee attacks (i.e., physically striking the opponent with something) have a +0 base; the –2 of point-blank attacks is only for firearms.

Base Difficulty Rating To Hit (Range)		Target Size Modifier		Target’s Movement Modifier	
Point Blank	–2	Very Small	+2	0-3	–1
Close	–1	Small	+1	4-6	+0
Melee	+0	Medium	+0	8-12	+1
Medium	+0	Large	–1	13-20	+1
Far	+1	Very Large	–2	21+	+2

Weapon Features

Damage is the base amount of damage a given weapon inflicts.

Reload is how many turns it takes to reload the weapon. Most UNSC weapons can be reloaded in one turn, but there are exceptions.

Payload is how many shots the weapon can fire before needing to be reloaded.

RoF is the weapon’s Rate of Fire – how many shots you can fire in a single turn.

Range: Weapons are rated for range, how far the shots can travel, as Short, Medium, Long, and Very Long.

Range	Close	Medium	Far
Short	3m	10m	20m
Medium	5m	20m	50m
Long	20m	100m	300m
Very Long	50m	250m	600m

If a weapon has a **2x scope**, it’s possible to reduce the effective range (and thus the base difficulty rating to hit) by one for Careful Shot attacks, but the modifier for the

target's speed is increased by 1. A **10x scope** has a similar effect, reducing the range class by two steps, but the modifier from the target's speed is doubles.

Armor Piercing attacks effectively halve the target's Armor rating.

Explosive attacks cover an area, and hit with some considerable force. Such attacks inflict their full damage to everything within the diameter listed. Vehicles can be flipped over, and others will be sent flying (a distance of 6 feet, minus their Body).

A **Lobbing** attack is affected by gravity as it travels, and thus can be fired over obstacles.

Certain attacks are considered **Precise**, meaning they can be used effectively to target vulnerable parts of an opponent and potentially do more damage. If a character is making a Careful Shot, or a shot following an Aim maneuver, the Relative Degree times 5 is added to the damage. One of the advantages of energy shields is that they disperse the effects of such attacks, so precise attacks provide no bonuses against shielded targets.

Hit Location?

H:tCW doesn't have any hit location rules. Characters are assumed to always be trying to hit vital areas, and weapons without the Precise feature can't really take advantage of hitting vital areas in the first place.

Movement/Preparation

Characters can go up to half (round up) their movement rate during a round with no penalties.

- **Reload:** If appropriate, the character may put a new clip/cartridge into the weapon he is using. Certain weapons (notably the rocket launcher and shotgun) may take longer than one round to fully reload.
- **Run:** All-out running lets a character go at his base Movement rate plus 3, but firing weapons is more difficult, and limited to snapshots.
- **Seek Cover:** If cover is available, a character can attempt to hide behind it to get better protection. Partial cover adds +1 to the base Difficulty Rating to hit a character, and full cover adds +2 (or sometimes more), and may even make it impossible for them to be hit.
- **Draw/Pick Up/Switch Weapon:** As a normal action the character can pick up, draw, or change weapons.

Defense

In Halo, defense against attacks is usually pre-emptive. A character who knows an attack is coming (which may require a Perception roll) can make a Reflexes skill roll, and attacks that turn whose Rolled Degree don't exceed that of his Reflexes roll will miss. If a character is about to be hit by a Slow attack that he is aware of, he may make a Reflexes roll when the attack is made, but only one such attempt can be made per round. Also, a character who is moving or behind cover will make it more difficult for attackers to hit him automatically (see the table above).

Defending In Close Combat

Close combat (i.e., either hand-to-hand or melee attacks) is a little bit different; so long as the character is aware of the incoming attack he can attempt to defend in one of the following ways:

- **Evasion:** The character tries to slip out of the way of the attack; this becomes an opposed Reflexes roll against the opponent's attack roll.
- **Parry:** The character tries to physically block the attack, and makes an opposed Close Combat roll. If the attacker's Body exceeds the defender's by 2 or more levels, the parry roll must exceed the attacker's Body as well, or the force behind it will overwhelm the defender and inflict full damage. Energy swords cannot be parried.

Injury

The damage a character takes from attacks is subtracted from his health points. Most soldier characters have some form of armor protection, which in turn provides an **Armor** rating that is subtracted from the damage of most attacks. Energy shields, as seen on Mjolnir armor and most Elites, has its own Armor rating *plus* its own Health points, which are depleted before the wearer's.

Optionally, in order to reflect how in the games energy shields are resistant to projectile weapons but vulnerable to energy weapons, the Armor rating of a shield is increased by 3 against projective weapons and reduced by 3 against energy weapons. Explosives work like usual.

If a character loses all of his Health points, he's incapacitated and near death. If a character takes additional damage equal to half his base Health, he's definitely dead. For the ones who don't croak, quick medical treatment to patch up their wounds can bring them back up to zero Health. Injured characters regain Health equal to their Body plus 3 per day, or half that if they don't get some kind of treatment and/or rest.

Also, note that Fudge Points can be spent to cinematically reduce injuries (see p. 21).

Vehicles

Damaging Vehicles: Just like characters, vehicles have a certain amount of Health. When the vehicle loses all of its Health points becomes disabled, and in some cases may explode.

Explosions and Vehicles: Explosions can send a ground vehicle flying, and once one hits there's very little a driver can do to ensure that it lands safely. If the Relative Degree of an explosive attack is less than 2, the driver can make a skill roll to keep it running upright. If the Relative Degree is 2 or more, however, the explosive attack also does full damage to all of the vehicle's occupants.

Attacking Drivers/Passengers: Attacking those inside of a vehicle directly is possible, though usually trickier. As noted before, the speed of a vehicle makes it harder to hit. Vehicles can also provide a certain amount of cover, making it harder to hit the occupant instead of the vehicle itself; most vehicles provide partial cover (+1 to the base Difficulty Rating).

Attacking From a Moving Vehicle: Characters often find themselves trying to attack from a vehicle as it moves. When this happens, modify the base difficulty to hit based on the relative speed of the two. Shooting from a Warthog at a Ghost that's in close

pursuit is relatively easy, but shooting at it as they pass each other going in opposite directions is much harder.

Vehicle Descriptions

Health Points: Vehicles have a (large) pool of Health points, similar to a character. When a vehicle loses all its Health, it's immobilized. It depends on how the damage was done, but at best the vehicle would require extensive repairs and lots of replacement parts.

Armor: Each vehicle has an Armor rating; as with those of characters, the Armor rating is subtracted from the damage of each attack that hits it.

Speed: Each vehicle has a listing of three speed values in actual movement units. The first is Starting, which is how far a vehicle can travel in one turn starting from a standstill. The second is Accelerating, which is how far it can go in one turn after a round spent at the Starting speed. The Running speed is how far it can go after at least one round at Accelerating speed, and isn't possible while doing Evasive Maneuvering (see below).

Maneuverability: This is a simple modifier applied to especially tricky maneuvers attempted while operating the vehicle.

Crew Capacity: The number of people the vehicle requires to operate, and how many passengers (if any) it can carry.

Armament: This section details what weapons (if any) the vehicle has, and under what circumstances they can be used.

Vehicle Actions

Steady Maneuvering is driving in a normal, straight line, and has no particular modifiers.

Crazy Maneuvers: Sometimes vehicles are used for all kinds of crazy stuff, including making ludicrously tight turns, jumps, barrel rolls, etc. For these kinds of things the driver/pilot has to make a skill roll, modified by the vehicles Maneuverability rating.

Evasive Maneuvering: The driver/pilot deliberately takes a weaving course, and puts the vehicle behind cover as much as possible. When using evasive maneuvering the vehicle can't go at its top speed (it can't go above its Accelerating movement rate), but the base difficulty to hit it is increased by +1. However, doing so makes it significantly harder to shoot from the vehicle, putting a -1 penalty on any attacks made from the vehicle.

Targeting Maneuvering: A driver can choose to focus on aligning the vehicle in such a way as to make it easier to attack a particular target. This functions the same as a Take Aim maneuver, but with the Drive/Pilot roll replacing the Perception roll. However, maneuvering in this way makes the vehicle's movements relatively predictable, and gives attackers a +1 bonus during the round when it's being performed.

Ramming Attack: Ramming a vehicle into a target is potentially devastating attack, but a somewhat risky one. A ramming attack always requires a skill roll, and inflicts damage equal to triple the maximum movement rating of the movement class the vehicle is traveling in (e.g., a Warthog going at Accelerating speed does 36 damage). A vehicle that rams/runs down a target on foot can keep going without slowing down, but hitting another vehicle or obstacle always forces the vehicle to drop down by at least one movement class.

Vehicle Weapon Attack: Passengers operating even vehicle-mounted weapons do so using the usual rules. If the driver/pilot fires a vehicle's built-in weapons, he cannot use Evasive Maneuvering.

Fudge Points

"Fudge Points" are special points awarded to players that can be spent during game play in order to bring about unusual bouts of luck or otherwise help the character along. At the end of each game session the GM awards an additional one to five Fudge Points, depending on how well the players roleplayed, succeeded at the goals of the session, and in general made the game fun.

Fudge Points can be spent in the following ways:

Reducing Injury: In order to keep PCs from being overly short-lived, Fudge Points can be spent to reduce the effects of injury. This is kind of cinematic schlock, and the player should come up with some kind of vaguely plausible explanation (it didn't hit any vital organs, the bio-foam sealed the wounds so I can get up and move again, it wasn't as bad as it looked, etc.). Once per round a player can spend 1 Fudge Point to heal half of his missing Health points.

Modifying Rolls: Whenever a roll is to be made, that directly concerns a character he can spend a Fudge Point to modify it up or down by one. In especially critical moments the GM may allow multiple Fudge Points to be spent on a single roll.

Character Development: Fudge Points can also be traded to increase Traits. In order to improve a trait, the player must obtain the GM's permission *and* he must expend a number of Fudge Points (FP). The table below gives the cost of raising traits with FP; a trait can only be raised one level at a time.

Raising A Skill		
From	To	Cost
-3	-2	1 FP
-2	-1	1 FP
-1	+0	1 FP
+0	+1	2 FP
+1	+2	4 FP
+2	+3	8 FP
+3	+4	GM Permission + 16 FP
+4	+5	GM Permission + 30 FP
Additional Levels		GM Permission + 50 FP

Raising An Attribute
3 times the cost for a skill of the same level.

Adding A Gift/Removing A Fault:
GM Permission + 10 (or more) FP

UNSC EQUIPMENT, VEHICLES, AND NPCS

UNSC Weapons

This section has details on the various weapons of the UNSC. Although most of these weapons strongly resemble modern-day firearms, they are more advanced than they appear at a glance. In addition to smart-linking and similar features, all of the UNSC's projectile weapons are gas-operated and thus can in fact be used in atmospheres that lack oxygen, or even in a vacuum.

Weapon	Damage	Reload	Payload	RoF	Range
BR55 Battle Rifle	18*	1	30/clip (10 bursts)	2	Medium
M19 SSM Rocket Launcher	75	2	2/cartridge	1	Long
M6C Magnum Pistol	24	1	12/clip	3	Medium
M6D Pistol	20	1	12/clip	2	Long
M7 Caseless Sub Machine Gun	16*	1	60/clip (10 bursts)	1	Short
M9 HE-DP Grenade	70	N/A	N/A	1	Thrown
M90 Shotgun	28	1 per 4 shells	12 shells	1	Short
MA5B Assault Rifle	20*	1	60/clip (10 bursts)	1	Medium
S2 AM Sniper Rifle	60	1	4/clip	2	Very Long

BR55 Battle Rifle

The battle rifle is a more recent addition to the UNSC arsenal, a combat rifle equipped with a scope that fires only in 3-round bursts.

Special: 2x Scope

Semi-Automatic Fire: Because the battle rifle always fired 3-round bursts, it can inflict additional damage on more accurate shots. At Medium and closer range, add the Relative Degree to the damage inflicted.

M 19 SSM Rocket Launcher

The M 19 is a dual-tube rocket launcher designed to fire standard Jackhammer missiles, which are normally found in two-packs intended to be quickly loaded into the launcher.

Special: 2x Scope, Explosive (4m), Slow Shot, Blast, Slow Melee

Lock On: Newer versions of the M 19 and Jackhammer have a tracking feature that makes it particularly effective against vehicles. If the wielder uses a Careful Aim action, he automatically gets a +1 bonus, regardless of whether or not the Perception roll even succeeds.

Slow Shot: The rockets fly at 50 meters per second; an opponent at a distance of 100m or more can easily dodge the shot if they are aware of it.

M6C Magnum Pistol

The magnum pistol is less powerful sidearm than the M6D pistol, but also much lighter to carry and with a higher rate of fire.

Special: One-Handed, Precise

M6D Pistol

This automatic pistol has become the standard issue sidearm for UNSC personnel. Its rounds are powerful and precise, and the small built-in scope allows it to be used for very basic short-range sniping.

Special: 2x Scope, One-Handed, Precise

M7 Caseless Sub Machine Gun

The M7 is similar to the MA5B assault rifle in that it's also a bullet hose, but while it has the same 60-round clip capacity, it is less powerful and a reasonably strong wielder can even use it one-handed.

Special: One-Handed

Burst Fire: The M7 is a "bullet hose," throwing out several rounds at once. Instead of individual bullets, shots fired from it are tracked in bursts of 6 rounds. Because extra damage can be inflicted when more bullets hit, the Relative Degree of an attack is added to the damage at Medium Range, and 2x the Relative Degree is added at Short Range or closer.

M9 HE-DP Grenade

This is the standard type of fragmentation grenade used by the UNSC. Soldiers typically carry at most two grenades, though it's possible to carry up to 8 on a typical web belt.

Special: Explosive (3m), Lobbing, Slow Attack, Bounces

Bounces: A frag grenade tends to bounce if thrown hard enough at a hard surface, allowing it to be bounced around corners.

M90 Shotgun

The M90 Shotgun is intended mainly for battles against dangerous hostiles in close quarters, and as such it is not often assigned to the rank and file UNSC marines. It is a pump-action shotgun that holds 12 rounds, and to reload these have to be inserted manually.

Buckshot: The shotgun inflicts double damage at close range and triple damage at point-blank, but half damage at far range.

MA5B Assault Rifle

The MA5B assault rifle is the standard weapon for UNSC marines, a well-rounded fully automatic assault rifle with a 60-round clip.

Burst Fire: The assault rifle is a "bullet hose," throwing out several rounds at once. Instead of individual bullets, shots fired from the AR are tracked in bursts of 6 rounds. Because extra damage can be inflicted when more bullets hit, the Relative Degree of an attack is added to the damage at Medium Range, and 2x the Relative Degree is added at Short Range or closer.

S2 AM Sniper Rifle

The S2 AM is a powerful sniper rifle employed by UNSC marines. It uses a bulky 4-round cartridge, and it fires large anti-materiel rounds with incredible penetration. It's also equipped with a sophisticated smart-linked scope, cable of 2x and 10x magnification and nightvision capabilities.

Special: Armor Piercing, Precise, Scope (x2, x10, Nightvision)

Marine Armor

In the field, UNSC marines wear a lightweight plate armor that provides a modicum of protection from enemy fire. It has an Armor rating of 6.

UNSC Vehicles

M12 LRV "Warthog"

The "Warthog," as it's affectionately known, is the standard ground vehicle of the UNSC marines. It's a highly rugged all-terrain vehicle, usually equipped with a powerful machine gun in the back.

Health Points: 120

Armor Rating: 10

Speed: Starting 8, Accelerating 12, Running 24

Maneuverability: +0

Crew Capacity: The standard warthog has three positions; the driver, a passenger, and a gunner.

Armament: The standard warthog has an interchangeable turret in the back, which can be equipped with a machine gun, gauss cannon, or rocket launcher.

- *M41 LAAG Machine Gun:* This is a triple-barrel light anti-aircraft gun, and the most common Warthog armament. Because of its burst fire capability, add 3 times the relative degree to the damage.
- *M68 Gauss Cannon:* This weapon uses magnetic fields to fire a 25mm round at hyper-sonic speeds. Warthogs equipped with this are designated M12 G1.
- *102mm Rocket Launcher:* Less common is this launcher, which fires the same type of rockets as the M 19. It can fire three shots before its automatic reloading mechanism pulls in three more rockets from its magazine. Warthogs equipped with this are designated M12 A1. Explosive (4m), Slow Attack

Weapon	Damage	Reload	Payload	RoF	Range
M41 LAAG Machine Gun	26*	N/A	90 bursts	2	Medium
M68 Gauss Cannon	40	N/A	60	1	Long
102mm Rocket Launcher	75	2	18	1	Long

Other Variants: There is also a troop transport 'hog that replaces the turret with a large canopied area that holds up to 6 soldiers, and a snow hog (with treads for operating on snow; its movement is 4/9/18). Finally, there's a civilian version, which is a two-seater and comes in a variety of interesting and impractical colors.

M808B Scorpion MBT

The Scorpion is an anti-vehicle tank armed with a 90mm tank cannon and a secondary machinegun for anti-personnel purposes. Its treads are divided into four independent pods that let it negotiate uneven terrain.

Health Points: 180

Armor Rating: 16

Speed: Starting 4, Accelerating 8, Running 16

Maneuverability: -1

Crew Capacity: One driver/gunner. Up to four soldiers can ride as passengers, though they are completely exposed. The driver is provided with full cover (+2 to base Difficulty Rating to hit).

Armament:

- *90mm High-Velocity Shell:* This is the Scorpion's main cannon, which fires an explosive shell at high speeds and over great distances. It takes one round for the next shell to load after each shot. Explosive (4m)
- *7.62mm AP-T:* The Scorpion's secondary weapon is a powerful machinegun mounted alongside the main cannon. Because of its burst fire capability, add 3 times the relative degree to the damage.

Weapon	Damage	Reload	Payload	RoF	Range
90mm High-Velocity Shell	60	N/A	60	1*	Very Long
7.62mm AP-T	22*	N/A	100 bursts	2	Medium

Pelican

The Pelican is a VTOL troop carrier aircraft used extensively by the UNSC.

Health Points: 600

Speed: Being an aircraft and even capable of functioning in space, the Pelican's speed is off the scale for this game.

Maneuverability: +0

Crew Capacity: One pilot, one copilot, one flight engineer and up to ten passengers (more if they're being squeezed in tightly). The Pelican can also carry a Warthog or Scorpion.

Armament: Although it is never shown in the *Halo* games, Pelicans are equipped with a cannon and rocket pods.

- *70mm Cannon:* The Pelican has a 70mm cannon mounted under its nose.
- *Rocket Pods:* The Pelican has rocket pods mounted underneath its wings, allowing up to 8 rockets to be launched simultaneously. Explosive (4m), Slow Attack

Weapon	Damage	Reload	Payload	RoF	Range
70mm Cannon	50	N/A	60	1	Long
Rocket Pods	75	N/A	36	8	Very Long

Stock UNSC NPCs

The following are a collection of "generic" UNSC characters. Where possible these are based on the same rules as player characters, though some are less powerful and blander.

UNSC Marine

The Marines are the rank and file soldiers of the UNSC. While over the past few years they've been deployed against the Covenant, historically their main job was more to do with fighting hostile human troops.

Attributes: Body +1, Perception +0, Reflexes +0, Will +1

Secondary Values: Health 42, Movement 5

Skills: Close Combat +0, Drive +1, Heavy Weapons +2, Pistol +1, Rifle +2, Throwing +1

Gifts: Favorite Weapon (Assault Rifle)

Gear: A typical marine wears UNSC armor and carries an assault rifle and two fragmentation grenades, but they can be assigned virtually any weapon from the UNSC arsenal depending on the particular mission.

ODST

The Orbital Drop Shock Troopers are the toughest, meanest, craziest of the marines. The reason they have to be so crazy is that they specialize in manning orbital drop pods, allowing them to descend into hostile territory directly from orbit, and thereby enter the action much more quickly than a conventional deployment with dropships would allow. This is insane enough by itself, but orbital drop pods can overheat, cooking the occupant alive. For this reason, the ODSTs are nicknamed "Helljumpers," and they wear that moniker with pride.

Attributes: Body +1, Perception +1, Reflexes +0, Will +2

Secondary Values: Health 57, Movement 5

Skills: Close Combat +1, Drive +1, Heavy Weapons +2, Pistol +1, Rifle +3, Throwing +1

Gifts: Tough S.O.B.

Gear: ODSTs wear a distinctive black armor with a full helmet. They favor the battle rifle, but may be assigned any weapon in the UNSC arsenal depending on the particulars of the mission.

Spartan-II

Attributes: Body +3 (+4 in armor), Perception +1, Reflexes +2, Will +2

Secondary Values: Health 77, Movement 8 (9 in armor)

Skills: Close Combat +2, Drive +1, Heavy Weapons +2, Pilot +0, Pistol +2, Rifle +2, Sniper +0, Throwing +2

Gifts: Special Gear (Mjolnir Armor), Tough S.O.B.

Gear: Spartans invariably have their distinctive Mjolnir armor when in combat. While their status as elite troops gives them access to virtually any weapon the UNSC has on hand, in practice they tend to be practical and are most commonly seen with standard assault rifles.

Limited AI

The majority of the artificial intelligences employed by the UNSC are "limited," dedicated to a specific range of functions and limited in their potential for growth.

Attributes: Body N/A, Perception +1, Reflexes +1, Will +2

Secondary Values: AIs are contained on a small chip, though much of their data can be backed up. The chip is durable, but not too difficult to destroy if one is sufficiently determined.

Skills: A limited AI is very knowledgeable about things pertaining to a specific function, and not so much for other things. As a result, they function with a skill level of +2 for things that fall squarely within their specialty and things that are of a simple, technical nature for a computer, and +0 or lower for anything else.

Gifts: Eidetic Memory; for a computer, remembering something is simply a matter of recording data, so their memory is reliable and complete.

Gear: Being primarily a data construct, and AI can't normally carry any equipment, though they can be interfaced with a starship or a suit of Mjolnir armor.

Unlimited AI

Unlimited AIs (like Cortana) are fairly unusual, and typically only employed when they're needed for a specific reason. They possess a very human-like personality, a result of being created from an actual human brain (usually a cloned one), and are capable of substantial and rapid growth. This is problematic in that an unlimited AI can actually grow too much, resulting in rampancy (a sort of AI insanity or dementia) and eventually leading to the construct's "death" as the overgrown neural pathways become so numerous that they fuse. In a high-functioning unlimited AI, this usually occurs after about seven years.

Attributes: Body N/A, Perception +2, Reflexes +2, Will +3

Secondary Values: As for a Limited AI.

Skills: The skills possessed by an unlimited AI vary considerably, but by and large it would be reasonable to assume that they can use virtually any skill relating to technical, scientific, or engineering matters at +3.

Gifts: Eidetic Memory, and select one additional Gift.

Gear: As for a Limited AI.

ONI Operative

The Office of Naval Intelligence, while undoubtedly a necessary part of the UNSC, is regarded with intense suspicion by the rest of the troops.

Attributes: Body +0, Perception +2, Reflexes +1, Will +1

Secondary Values: Health 37, Movement 6

Skills: Close Combat +1, Intelligence Analysis +1, Interrogation +1, Pistol +1, Sniper +1, Stealth +2, Tactics +1

Gifts: Nerves of Steel

Gear: The equipment assigned to operatives varies vastly depending on the type of mission.

Ship's Captain

Attributes: Body +0, Perception +2, Reflexes +0, Will +2

Secondary Values: Health 40, Movement 5

Skills: Leadership +2, Navigation +1, Pistol +0, Starship +2, Strategy +2, Tactics +1

Gifts: Rank

Gear: In terms of military equipment, the crew of a ship usually has little more than an automatic pistol as a sidearm and a standard commlink.

Ship's Crew

Attributes: Body +0, Perception +1, Reflexes +0, Will +1

Secondary Values: Health 37, Movement 5

Skills: Navigation +1, Pistol +0, Starship +1, Strategy +2, Tactics +1, and at least one additional technical skill at +2.

Gifts: Rank

Gear: Sidearm and commlink.

Pilot

Attributes: Body +0, Perception +2, Reflexes +2, Will +0

Secondary Values: Health 34, Movement 7

Skills: Computer Systems +1, Gunnery +2, Navigation (Air) +1, Navigation (Space) +0, Pilot +2, Pistol +0, Tactics +1

Gifts: Nerves of Steel

Gear: Pilots are typically assigned a sidearm, but otherwise their main equipment for when out on missions is a flightsuit and whatever craft they're piloting.

THE COVENANT

Covenant NPCs

Covenant troops are savage and merciless foes whether on the ground or in space. While the Grunts sometimes display cowardice, overall Covenant troops are fanatical in their devotion to whatever goal their superiors have placed before them. They consider humanity to be an abomination; as such a Covenant soldier would typically rather go unarmed than lay hands on any piece of human technology. Furthermore, they are brutal and utterly merciless in their treatment of humans, civilian or otherwise. Grunts and Jackals are known for tearing apart and devouring helpless civilians.

Faults

Certain Covenant NPCs have traits called **Faults**. Although they've mostly been omitted from H:tCW, in Fudge they're a polar opposite of Gifts, a trait that characters can take to get an extra Gift in exchange for being burdened with something negative. The Faults included here are mostly self-explanatory.

Fighting The Covenant

In the war against the Covenant humanity isn't doing too well. On the ground UNSC forces can actually hold their own, particularly when there aren't too many Elites around. Projectile weapons are a bit less effective against energy shields, but the human arsenal is nonetheless nothing to sneeze at. Furthermore, on the ground the Covenant aren't the greatest tacticians. Grunts are dumb and lazy and prone to panicking, while Elites tend to be too arrogant and prideful for their own good. There are of course more experienced Covenant soldiers, including deadly special forces units, but the rank and file tend to use relatively basic tactics. The weapons they use are vicious and damaging to living creatures, whether in the form of plasma burns or the terrible internal damage caused by needlers, but in terms of stopping power they aren't substantially better than what the UNSC marines are using. The problem is that Covenant spacecraft are overwhelmingly more powerful; their plasma cannons can tear through the UNSC warships' thick armor plating in seconds, and MAC guns and Archer missiles are of limited use against shielded Covenant spacecraft. And as always, air superiority trumps ground superiority.

Covenant Dialogue

One of the most memorable and amusing parts of *Halo* is the dialogue you can get out of the various Covenant types, and putting that kind of dialogue in your game will help capture the feel of the games. Jackals and Hunters don't have anything intelligible to say to humans, and Brutes frankly don't get the choice lines.

Grunts on the other hand (whose speech the novels tell us the UNSC has managed to fully decode) are obnoxious, whiny, lazy, cowards who can't seem to shut up. Their grammar is terrible, and they tend to suck up to superiors who treat them halfway decently, but will happily abandon the same superior at the first sign of danger. When they do manage to accomplish something they can't help but babble about it.

Players of the original *Halo* are used to **Elites** going "Wort wort wort!" and not saying much else, but in *Halo 2* they started speaking English. Whether this is just that

their speech is being “translated” for the viewer or the UNSC has finally figured out the Elites’ language is for you to decide. The Covenant did figure out the English language before they’d even made direct contact with humanity, and presumably any number of Elites have learned it to better deal with the enemy. Elites love the thrill of battle and they tend to be melodramatic braggarts. In fact they tend to go around stating the obvious with great conviction. They also seem to have learned that humans are descended from primates because when they taunt UNSC troops on the battlefield they sometimes like to make lame monkey jokes (“Do not be afraid! I have a banana for you!”).

Grunts (Unggoy)

These creatures are among the smallest of the Covenant aliens; they are squat creatures are around 5 feet tall, and while they are the weakest and most cowardly of the Covenant’s forces, only a fool would underestimate them. Used as cannon fodder, they can be lazy and cowardly (some soldiers have even encountered them sleeping on the job – easy pickings for a quick blow from a rifle butt), and tend to chatter incessantly, even when shutting up would keep them alive, but they can be surprisingly effective, especially in large groups. They always wear some sort of armor that includes a life support mechanism.

GM Info: Grunts require a methane atmosphere to survive; in an Earth-type atmosphere they will quickly suffocate. They are more or less at the bottom of the Covenant hierarchy, used as cannon fodder and little else, and they know it. They’re looked down upon by most other Covenant races, and they sometimes resent their position. They see Elites, especially the fanatical ones, as overbearing and foolhardy and all too willing to throw away the lives of Grunts for their own personal glory. Jackals hate having to work with the “gas-suckers.” UNSC soldiers have seen grunts hit by plasma grenades run *towards* their Elite superiors, and one has to wonder if this isn’t sometimes on purpose.

All Grunts are relatively weak creatures, but similar to the Elites their armor is color coded to show rank. There are veteran, special ops, and even Ultra Grunts, and they can be surprisingly clever, especially when under the command of an experienced Elite.

Gear: All Grunts wear a combination armor and air supply unit (Armor rating of 4). A typical Grunt carries a plasma pistol and two plasma grenades, though they sometimes wield a needler or fuel rod gun instead. Grunts that are part of spec ops units can have active camouflage.

Orange Grunt (Standard Infantry)

Attributes: Body –1, Perception +0, Reflexes –1, Will –1

Secondary Values: Health 26, Movement 3

Skills: Drive +0, Gunnery +0, Heavy Weapons +0, Pistol +0, Throwing +0

Gifts: None

Faults: Cowardly, Lazy, Requires Methane Atmosphere

Red Grunt (Veteran Infantry)

Attributes: Body –1, Perception +0, Reflexes +0, Will –1

Secondary Values: Health 26, Movement 4

Skills: Drive +0, Gunnery +0, Heavy Weapons +0, Pistol +1, Throwing +0

Gifts: None

Faults: Cowardly, Lazy, Requires Methane Atmosphere

Green Grunt (Heavy Weapons)

Attributes: Body -1, Perception +0, Reflexes -1, Will -1

Secondary Values: Health 26, Movement 3

Skills: Drive +0, Gunnery +1, Heavy Weapons +1, Pistol +0, Throwing +0

Gifts: Special Gear (Fuel Rod Gun)

Faults: Cowardly, Lazy, Requires Methane Atmosphere

Black Grunt (Spec Ops)

Attributes: Body -1, Perception +0, Reflexes +0, Will +1

Secondary Values: Health 35, Movement 4

Skills: Drive +0, Gunnery +0, Heavy Weapons +0, Pistol +2, Throwing +1

Gifts: Fearless

Faults: Requires Methane Atmosphere

Drones (Yanme'e)

Drones (or “buggers” as most marines like to call them) are a race of flying insectoid creatures, and only recently have been put to use in combat, in spite of having relatively fragile bodies. Still, they’re cunning and can be very dangerous in large groups. Their homeworld has a very thin atmosphere, so they are resistant to vacuum, but can only fly for short periods in Earth-level gravity.

Attributes: Body -2, Perception +1, Reflexes +3, Will +0

Secondary Values: Health 24, Movement 7 (12 while flying)

Skills: Pistol +0

Gifts: Climbing Claws (Drones can use their claws to perch just about anywhere with footholds), Flight (Drones can fly at a Movement rate of up to 12, though under Earth-like gravity they have to frequently rest).

Gear: A Drone is normally equipped with a plasma pistol or a needler.

Jackals (Kig-Yar)

Although physically weak, the Jackals’ superior senses give them a place in the Covenant’s armed forces as spies and assassins. Standing around 5’8” tall with serpentine features, Jackals are usually found carrying a strong energy shield that serves as a very powerful and effective protection. A step above the Grunts, Jackals are much more clever and agile, and will use their shields and plasma pistols (particularly the charge shot) to their fullest effect. Some Jackals serve as snipers, however, and eschew the shield in favor of a particle beam rifle.

Gear: All Jackals wear a light body armor (Armor rating 4), and typically carries a shield and a plasma pistol. Certain Jackals are assigned as snipers instead, and carry only a particle beam rifle.

Jackal Shields: The shields carried by most Jackals take the form of a bracelet that creates a circular force field with a notch in it to help them shoot around the shield. These shields are colored orange or blue to denote the Jackal’s rank, but the two colors of shields function exactly the same. Projectile weapons, needler rounds, and plasma

grenades all simply bounce off. Plasma weapons weaken the shield (it effectively has 50 Health) until it collapses, but explosions and melee attacks go right through it. Shooting a Jackal around his shield is difficult but possible, and incurs a -2 penalty from the front, or a -1 penalty if the Jackal has $\frac{3}{4}$ cover from his shield (no penalty from the side or back).

Orange Jackal

Attributes: Body -2, Perception +3, Reflexes +2, Will +0

Secondary Values: Health 24, Movement 6

Skills: Close Combat +0, Pistol +1, Sniper +1

Gifts: Alertness

Blue Jackal (Veteran)

Attributes: Body -1, Perception +3, Reflexes +2, Will +1

Secondary Values: Health 32, Movement 6

Skills: Close Combat +1, Pistol +2, Sniper +1

Gifts: Alertness

Sniper Jackal

Attributes: Body -2, Perception +3, Reflexes +2, Will +1

Secondary Values: Health 27, Movement 6

Skills: Close Combat +0, Pistol +1, Sniper +2

Gifts: Alertness, Steady Hands

Elite (Sangheili)

The dreaded Elites are among the most dangerous of the covenant forces. Standing roughly 8'6" tall, these creatures are agile yet extremely strong. While they favor brute force, they can be brilliant tacticians and cunning adversaries. Add to this effective use of weapons and a recharging energy shield, and the Elites are deadly enemies that even the best marines cannot stand up to alone. Soldiers facing elites are advised to take these creatures down as quickly as possible. This is best accomplished with the coordination of a team; once an Elite's shield is taken down, he becomes vulnerable to headshots.

GM Info: Elites are second only to the Prophets in the Covenant hierarchy. They are proud creatures, raised to believe that they stand near the pinnacle of creation. Intelligent, capable, and cunning, if they have a flaw it is that they can sometimes be arrogant and even careless in battle.

Gear: A typical elite wears armor (Armor 8) with a shield generator (see below) and carries a plasma rifle and some plasma grenades. However, they can use virtually any Covenant weapons; Elites favor needlers, carbines, and of course energy swords.

Blue Elite (Minor)

Attributes: Body +4, Perception +1, Reflexes +2, Will +2

Secondary Values: Health 75, Movement 9

Skills: Close Combat +1, Drive +1, Heavy Weapons +1, Pilot +1, Pistol +2, Rifle +2, Throwing +2

Gifts: Fearless

Faults: Arrogant

Red Elite (Veteran)

Attributes: Body +4, Perception +2, Reflexes +2, Will +2

Secondary Values: Health 75, Movement 9

Skills: Close Combat +2, Drive +1, Heavy Weapons +2, Pilot +2, Pistol +2, Rifle +2, Throwing +2

Gifts: Fearless

Faults: Arrogant

White Elite (Ultra)

Attributes: Body +4, Perception +2, Reflexes +2, Will +3

Secondary Values: Health 78, Movement 9

Skills: Close Combat +3, Drive +1, Heavy Weapons +2, Pilot +2, Pistol +2, Rifle +3, Stealth +1, Throwing +2

Gifts: Fearless

Faults: Arrogant

Gold Elite (Commander)

Gold Elites are high-ranking officers, and invariably achieved their rank in part by demonstrating exceptional skill and effectiveness in combat. They nearly always carry an energy sword.

Attributes: Body +4, Perception +2, Reflexes +2, Will +3

Secondary Values: Health 78, Movement 9

Skills: Close Combat +3, Drive +1, Heavy Weapons +2, Leadership +2, Pilot +2, Pistol +2, Rifle +3, Stealth +1, Throwing +2

Gifts: Fearless, Nerves of Steel

Faults: Arrogant

Purple Elite (Spec Ops Shock Trooper)

Attributes: Body +4, Perception +3, Reflexes +2, Will +3

Secondary Values: Health 78, Movement 9

Skills: Close Combat +3, Drive +1, Heavy Weapons +2, Pilot +2, Pistol +3, Rifle +3, Stealth +3, Throwing +3

Gifts: Fearless, Nerves of Steel

Faults: Arrogant

Elite Player Characters

So, the whole Arbiter thing has you thinking it'd be neat to have Elites as player characters? No problem, as long as either they're *all* Elites, or you have some really snazzy explanation for whatever the heck is going on.

Anyway, Elites start with Body +2, Perception +0, Reflexes +1, and Will +1, and add an extra 4 free levels to their attributes. As with Spartans, the maximums and minimums of each Attribute are increased by the margin of the bonus (i.e., an Elite's body has to be between -1 and +5).

Not surprisingly, being an Elite counts as your Profession, so you get the following: Close Combat +1, Drive +1, Gunnery +1, Heavy Weapons +1, Pilot +1, Pistol +2, Rifle +2, Throwing +2, and the Gift of Fearless.

For a Specialty, select one of the following:

Banshee Pilot: Gunnery +2, Navigation (Air) +2, Pilot +2

Inquisitor: Intelligence Analysis +1, Interrogation +2, Knowledge (Covenant Lore) +2

Sniper: Sniper +2, Stealth +1, Gift: Steady Hands

Spec Ops: Demolitions +1, Sniper +1, Stealth +2, Tactics +2

Squad Commander: Leadership +2, Tactics +2

Trooper: EVA +2, Navigation (Space) +1

Hunter (Lekgolo)

Hunters are hulking behemoths, and unique among the various Covenant races in that they are actually a sentient colony organism, consisting primarily of several symbiotic worms. They're about 8 feet tall when hunched down for combat, or 12 if they stand to their full height. These creatures are largely immune to anything short of carefully directed heavy arms fire, except against attacks to a small orange area on the back. Exploiting this weakness will bring down a Hunter in short order, but doing so, especially under fire, is a challenge. Hunters are equipped with a devastating fuel rod cannon and a massive alloy shield that can deflect or absorb most attacks.

GM Info: Hunters seldom interact with other Covenant races, the main exception being the Elites, who were responsible for “taming” the Hunters and making them a part of the Covenant in the first place. They can be surprisingly intelligent, but their battlefield tactics are very simple; they shoot at long range and lunge at close range. Hunters are always found in pairs, called “bond brothers,” and killing one means facing the wrath of the other.

Gear: Hunters are always equipped with an alloy shield and a heavy fuel rod cannon.

The alloy shield carried by the Hunters can deflect virtually any non-explosive attack, including sniper fire. When a Hunter holds the shield up in a defensive position, attacks to the front have a +1 modifier to the base Difficulty Rating to hit. The shield can also be used for melee attacks, in which case it adds +20 to damage.

Hunters are equipped with a heavy fuel rod gun attached to one arm. It contains a small reactor that gives it a virtually unlimited payload, but it takes two rounds to recharge between shots. Explosive (3m), Lobbing

Weapon	Damage	Reload	Payload	RoF	Range
Heavy Fuel Rod Gun	80	N/A	N/A	1*	Medium

Attributes: Body +5, Perception +1, Reflexes +1, Will +2

Secondary Values: Health 85, Movement 8

Skills: Close Combat +1, Heavy Weapons +1

Gifts: Heavy Armor (Armor rating of 40!)

Faults: Achilles Heel; Hunters have a soft spot that's bright orange. Attacks that land there do double damage and ignore its armor. From the front this is a very small spot and attempts to hit it are at a -2 penalty. From the back it's more clearly visible but still small, and the penalty is -1.

Brutes (Jiralhanae)

Brutes are a recent addition to the Covenant, a race of massive apelike creatures whose strength, durability, and brutality exceed even the elites. During the Ninth Age of Reclamation one of the Hierarchs is assassinated by the human soldier known as the Demon (i.e. the Master Chief), and the Elites are stripped of the privilege of having their most honored warriors serve as the Honor Guard of the Prophets. Elites and Brutes never fully trusted one another, and this will have the makings of an all-out civil war.

Attributes: Body +4, Perception +0, Reflexes +1, Will +4

Secondary Values: Health 81, Movement 8

Skills: Close Combat +2, Drive +1, Pistol +2, Rifle +2

Gifts: Fearless

Faults: Berserker; when Brutes are acting in a group in combat, should all but one be killed the last remaining one will go berserk. He abandons any pretense of civilization, and charges at the nearest enemy, bringing devastating hand-to-hand attacks to bear.

Gear: Brutes most often wield the weapons made specifically for them: the brute plasma rifle and brute shot.

Other Covenant Races

Humanity has no doubt not seen all of the races that comprise the Covenant, and there's no telling when more could join either, as we witnessed with the Brutes. The following are some of the known non-combatant Covenant races.

Engineers (Huragok): The Engineers are one of the more mysterious Covenant races. They appear as amorphous floating purple things with many tentacles, and they exist to fix things. In fact they'll happily repair even devices belonging to enemies.

Prophets: The Prophets are the rulers and founders of the Covenant, a race of spindly and comparatively feeble humanoids of great intellect. Needless to say they avoid combat whenever possible, though particularly in the case of the Hierarchs they can bring considerable technological power to bear, not to mention calling down an avalanche of Covenant muscle.

Covenant Weapons

Most Covenant weapons are based on some form or other of energy, plasma or otherwise. Many of these have some kind of interchangeable magazine or power cell, but the plasma weapons that are by far the most commonly used Covenant weapons have a built-in battery that has a long life, but cannot be interchanged.

All plasma weapons cause "**plasma stun.**" That is, the visceral impact, energy discharge, and so on cause targets to be slowed down. It takes many hits for this to kick in—so much so that it usually only happens when multiple attackers are pouring on the plasma fire—but when it does it can be devastating. A character that takes 40 or more damage (before armor is applied) in one round has their Movement halved and takes a -1 penalty to all physical actions. A character that takes 60 or more damage from plasma in one round (and somehow survives) is immobilized and loses his next turn entirely.

Weapon	Damage	Reload	Payload	RoF	Range
Brute Plasma Rifle	24	N/A	40	3	Medium
Brute Shot	40	1	4	1	Medium
Covenant Carbine	20	1	18/clip	2	Long

Energy Sword	+50	N/A	N/A	Melee	Melee
Fuel Rod Gun	70	1	5	1	Long
Needler	24	1	30/clip (6 bursts)	2	Medium
Particle Beam Rifle	60	N/A	20	2*	Very Long
Plasma Grenade	60	N/A	N/A	1	Thrown
Plasma Pistol	16	N/A	80	1	Medium
Plasma Rifle	20	N/A	60	2	Medium

Brute Shot

The Brute Shot is a weapon used exclusively by Brutes, a grenade launcher with a large blade attached.

Special: Explosive (2m)

Melee Attack: The massive blade attached to the front of the Brute Shot adds a +20 bonus to the damage of melee attacks.

Covenant Carbine

The Carbine is an accurate, long-range weapon employed by Elites. It fires a beam of greenish energy, and requires special interchangeable energy cartridges as ammunition. Though an effective weapon, wielders need to keep in mind that the energy beam can reveal one's position.

Special: 2x Scope, Precise

Energy Sword

The energy sword is a weapon used by some Elites; it consists of plasma energy held in a sword shape, capable of cutting through most targets with ease. However, unlike most weapons, an energy sword remains visible when active camouflage is engaged.

Special: Armor Piercing

Fuel Rod Gun

This powerful weapon is essentially the Covenant's answer to the rocket launcher, firing off a powerful explosive blast of energy. Grunts sometimes use these in especially dangerous situations.

Special: Explosive (3m), Lobbing, Slow Attack

Self-Destruct: Some fuel rod cannons are equipped with a self-destruct feature; upon the death of the wielder the cannon will discharge its energy, creating an explosion equivalent to a plasma grenade.

Needler

The needler is perhaps the least understood of the Covenant weapons. Unlike most other Covenant weapons it uses clips of a sort – oval-shaped things containing glowing pink elements – and can be reloaded quickly in the field. The shots it fires are glowing pink needle-shaped crystals, which are fired in bursts and soar through the air, tracking towards available targets. If a needle round hits, it sticks into the target briefly before exploding, though energy shields will absorb the shock of this discharge. Unshielded targets are not so fortunate, and will suffer intensely painful internal damage.

Special: One-Handed, Slow Attack

Delayed Detonation: The needles fired by this weapon appear to stick into the target; this in itself does no damage at all, but the round after they land the needles explode, inflicting the damage listed to the target. If the Relative Degree of the attack is 2 or more, the needles have a large-scale detonation; the attack inflicts double damage, ignores armor and shields, and inflicts its base damage to other targets within 1 meter.

Tracking: Needles move slowly, but naturally adjust their course towards living targets. They can make shallow turns (about 30 degrees at most) to veer towards a target, giving them a +1 bonus to accuracy.

Particle Beam Rifle

The Covenant's sniper rifle type weapon fires a powerful beam of whitish-purple energy.

Special: 2x Scope, 10x Scope, Precise

Overheating: Although the particle beam rifle can fire two shots in one turn, doing so causes it to overheat immediately, requiring two full rounds to cool down enough to fire again.

Plasma Grenade

The grenades used by the Covenant use not a chemical reaction but a release of contained plasma. The explosive force of these is comparable to that of fragmentation grenades, but plasma grenades have a unique property that allows them to adhere to vehicles or living targets, thereby making the explosion inescapable and allowing the blast to ignore both armor and energy shields.

Special: Explosive (3m), Lobbing, Slow Attack

Sticky: One of the unique and dangerous attributes of the plasma grenade is its ability to adhere to targets, both living creatures and vehicles. If it is successfully attached, its explosion will ignore armor and shields, making it an extremely lethal weapon.

Plasma Pistol

Special: One-Handed

Charge Shot: The plasma pistol has a unique feature that allows it to concentrate several shots worth of energy into a single blast. Although the pistol is not usable in the following round as it discharges the excess heat, the charge shot will totally disrupt an energy shields (including an overshield!) and plasma shields, and inflicts triple damage to non-shielded targets. A charge shot cannot be used on a snap shot because it takes a moment for the energy to ramp up, and afterwards the pistol will always be unusable for one round during which it discharges the excess heat.

Overheating: Although it is capable of rapid fire, the plasma pistol will also overheat after extended periods of firing. If 5 shots are fired consecutively it will overheat and become unusable for a full round as it discharges the excess heat.

Plasma Rifle

Special: One-Handed

The plasma rifle and plasma pistol are the most common weapons of the Covenant ground troops. These weapons fire blasts of plasma energy, and the burns they cause are incredibly painful on unprotected flesh. Plasma weapons cannot be reloaded, at least not in the field; it is believed that these weapons are recharged on ships and bases. The plasma rifle is larger, more powerful, and capable of firing in bursts, but lacks the charge shot function of the plasma pistol.

Overheating: Although it is capable of burst fire, the plasma rifle will overheat after extended periods of firing. If 6 shots are fired consecutively, rifle will stop functioning for 1 round as it dissipates the excess heat.

The **Brute Plasma Rifle** is a variant of the standard plasma rifle used by Brutes. It's colored red and has a higher rate of fire, but the increased rate of fire makes it easy to overheat.

Other Covenant Equipment

Active Camouflage

Active camouflage is a technology employed mainly by the Covenant's special forces troops. It is used primarily by Elites, but even Grunts have been seen using it from time to time. It works by surrounding the user with holograms that copy the scenery, creating a "transparency" effect. The user appears only as a glassy rippling in the air, and can be very hard to see. If a user of active camouflage is immobile, noticing them requires a Perception roll, usually with a -2 penalty, but if they're moving at more than a crawl (2 movement units per round) the roll has no penalty. If the user attacks with a weapon, whether with a human projectile weapon or an alien energy weapon, it will disrupt active camouflage, making the wearer momentarily visible. With single shots, opponents need to make a Perception roll to catch sight of them, but burst fire leaves them visible long enough that being seen is a certainty. Active camouflage can cover up even large weapons like a rocket launcher, but if the wearer uses an energy sword, the sword itself will remain visible. Normal melee attacks, however, do not disrupt the camouflage.

Older versions of active camouflage were incompatible with energy shields, resulting in the camouflage's power being drained within a few minutes. As a result, Elites who made use of it had to either sacrifice their shields or use short-term, recharging active camouflage units. The newer versions, which currently are usually reserved for special forces shock troopers, can be switched on and off at will (takes one turn), and are unaffected by shields.

Armor

Many Covenant troops wear armor of some kind. The armor ratings of these are as follows:

- **Grunt:** Armor 4
- **Jackal:** Armor 4
- **Elite:** Armor 8

Energy Shields

All Elites are equipped with special recharging energy shields (which the humans copied in the Mjolnir armor). The shield has 40 health and Armor 10, and after 3 turns of taking no damage it'll regenerate to full health over the course of 2 full turns.

Plasma Turret

The Covenant employs two types of plasma turrets. One is a heavy sit-in triple-barreled turret called a Shade, while the other is a portable turret that even a Grunt can carry (with some effort) and set up as needed.

Weapon	Damage	Reload	Payload	RoF	Range	Health
Portable Plasma Turret	26	N/A	N/A	2	Medium	60
Shade Turret	14	N/A	N/A	2	Long	100

Covenant Vehicles

The Covenant employs several different distinctive vehicles in combat. All of these are of the same purple colors as their capital ships, and all are powered by small plasma reactors. Furthermore, the various Covenant ground vehicles all use boosted gravity propulsion drives, allowing them to hover a few feet above the ground and thereby ignore rough or slippery terrain.

Apparition

The Apparition is the older model U-shaped dropship that is slowly being phased out by the Covenant¹ in favor of the Phantom (see below). It's equipped with a single plasma turret.

Health Points: 900

Armor Rating: 40

Speed: The Apparition is a transatmospheric dropship, and thus capable of traveling at speeds that are too fast for this game's ground-based combat system to represent.

Maneuverability: +0

Crew Capacity: One pilot, one copilot/gunner, and up to 16 passengers.

Armament: The Apparition is equipped with a single plasma turret, which is identical to the Shade turret (see above).

Banshee

The Banshee is a small and highly maneuverable aerial assault vehicle, equipped with dual plasma cannons and a fuel rod gun.

Health Points: 60

Armor Rating: 10

Speed: Starting 16, Accelerating 18, Running 36

Maneuverability: +1

Crew Capacity: One Elite. The pilot is completely enclosed by the vehicle, and cannot be attacked separately.

Armament: The Banshee is equipped with dual plasma cannons and a fuel rod gun. The fuel rod gun can only be fired directly forward, but the plasma cannons are on a

¹ This is the dropship seen in the original Halo: Combat Evolved. Like the Halo Library, I went with the name it was given in the Homefront Halo mod.

turret that can pivot in a forward-facing 30-degree arc. The fuel rod gun takes time to build up a charge, so once fired it takes 3 rounds for it to build up the energy to fire again. It's also an Explosive (3m) and Lobbing attack.

Weapon	Damage	Reload	Payload	RoF	Range
Dual Plasma Cannons	20	N/A	N/A	5	Medium
Fuel Rod Gun	60	N/A	N/A	*	Long

Ghost

The Ghost is a one-man light reconnaissance hover vehicle equipped with dual plasma cannons. It is most commonly used by Elites, but Grunts, Jackals, and Brutes can all ride Ghosts if need be.

Health Points: 60

Armor Rating: 12

Speed: Starting 16, Accelerating 20, Running 26

Maneuverability: Good

Crew Capacity: One. The Ghost provides partial cover (+1 to base Difficulty Rating to hit) from the front, but no cover from the sides or back.

Armament: The Ghost is armed only with fixed mount dual plasma cannons.

Weapon	Damage	Reload	Payload	RoF	Range
Dual Plasma Cannons	20	N/A	N/A	5	Medium

Phantom

The Phantom is the newer model of dropship that is now being employed by the Covenant. Unlike the Apparition, it has three plasma turrets, and can carry Covenant ground vehicles.

Health Points: 900

Armor Rating: 40

Speed: Dropship; out of scale.

Maneuverability: +0

Crew Capacity: One pilot, one copilot/gunner, and up to 18 passengers.

Armament: The Phantom has three plasma turrets; treat these as Shades. They can be destroyed separately (they have 100 Health), thereby disarming the craft.

Scarab

The Scarab is one of the Covenant's most fearsome weapons, a four-legged walking tank equipped with a single massive plasma cannon and several needler turrets. They're very difficult to take down, and employed as much to spread terror as for their destructive capacity. They aren't impossible to take down, but the best way to do so is to fight one's way inside.

Health Points: 1200

Armor Rating: 60

Speed: Fair. The Scarab walks at a constant speed of up to 12, and its legs let it climb over rough terrain with relative ease.

Maneuverability: -2

Crew Capacity: Scarabs are usually operated by at a minimum a pair of Elites, but a crew of a dozen or more assorted Covenant troops mans the vehicle, operating the turrets and using the main deck as a platform to fire from.

Armament: The main weapon of the Scarab is a devastating heavy plasma cannon that can destroy a Scorpion tank in a single shot. Thankfully, it requires six rounds to recharge between shots. The needler turrets are essentially larger versions of the handheld needler, and have the same Delayed Damage, Tracking, and Slow Attack features.

Weapon	Damage	Reload	Payload	RoF	Range
Heavy Plasma Cannon	300	N/A	N/A	*	Very Long
Needler Turrets	46	N/A	N/A	8	Long

Shadow

The Shadow is essentially an armored personnel carrier; in addition to its driver and gunner it can hold up to eight passengers.

Health Points: 160

Armor Rating: 10

Speed: Starting 8, Accelerating 12, Running 24

Maneuverability: +0

Crew Capacity: One driver, one gunner, and up to eight passengers. The driver has full cover, and the gunner and passengers have partial cover.

Armament: The Shadow is armed with a single plasma turret. Treat this as a Shade turret.

Spectre

The Spectre is a hovering troop transport equipped with a rear-mounted plasma cannon; some have called it a Covenant equivalent of the Warthog. It can carry a driver, gunner, and two riders, and although slow it's very maneuverable.

Health Points: 120

Armor Rating: 10

Speed: Starting 6, Accelerating 10, Running 20

Maneuverability: +1

Crew Capacity: One driver, one gunner, and two passengers on the sides.

Armament: One plasma turret on a swivel mount at the rear of the vehicle; this functions the same as a portable plasma turret (see above).

Wraith

The Wraith is the Covenant's plasma mortar tank, and a terror on the battlefield. Though equipped with point defense plasma cannons, its main cannon fires a massive ball of plasma that takes an arcing path and explodes on impact. The Elites who operate Wraiths can hit distant targets with unnerving accuracy.

Health Points: 120

Armor Rating: 20

Speed: Starting 4, Accelerating 8, Running 18

Maneuverability: Fair

Crew Capacity: One Elite

Armament: The Plasma Mortar has Explosive (6m), Lobbing, and Slow Attack.

Weapon	Damage	Reload	Payload	RoF	Range
Point Defense Plasma Cannons	18	N/A	N/A	3	Medium
Plasma Mortar	80	N/A	N/A	1/2	Very Long

RUNNING THE GAME

Setting Things Up

The *Halo* universe is big enough to provide any number of opportunities for adventure, so it pays to consider what your particular game is going to be about.

- **Marines:** This game is by default mainly geared towards marines running around fighting the Covenant. It's in the nature of the conflict that marines are going to be short-lived, and there are a few different ways to handle this. By default, this game just assumes that the PCs are among the lucky ones who manage to survive all kinds of scrapes, so they get to spend Fudge Points on not getting killed. An alternative is to simply let the PCs get killed; that way a marine who does survive a long time will be that much more valued by the player.
- **Spartans:** As mentioned before, in the canon *Halo* setting Spartans are an endangered species. Even if we take the novels *and* DOA4 as canon, then there's still only a handful left. But if you really want to have a game about a bunch of Spartans going around kicking ass, that shouldn't stop you. For a mixed group of marines and Spartans the Spartan should get half as many Fudge Points, considering. Another option is to have the Spartan be an NPC that the players can give ideas to or temporarily control by spending Fudge Points.
- **AIs:** I don't know that I can recommend having a player take on the role of an AI. A routine complaint in cyberpunk RPGs is that decker characters' one useful shtick is something that forces them to stay out of the action that the rest of the players are involved in. AIs are better off as NPCs, but it's also possible to work out something different, like giving the player of the AI more metagame ways to involve themselves in the campaign using Fudge Points.
- **ONI Spooks:** The Office of Naval Intelligence is not terribly well liked by the rest of the UNSC, but that's because they do the stuff no one else would be willing to. When dealing with the Covenant infiltration is not an option, so their job has more to do with collecting and analyzing intelligence data, and to a lesser extent manipulating things as the ONI considers necessary on the home front.
- **Elites:** In *Halo 2* we got to see a closer look at the Elites, and found them to be a bit more nuanced than just alien killing machines. The main problem with trying to roleplay as Elites is that there are a lot of cultural details you'd want to know that haven't been pertinent enough for inclusion in the games or even the novels. If you're willing to hand-wave, make things up as you go along, or write your own version of what Elite culture is like, then this could be a very fun way to go about setting up a campaign. Having them fight and kill UNSC marines *could* be fun, but it's kind of in bad taste, while quelling heretics or dealing with the looming civil war that begins in *Halo 2* provides plenty of opportunities for going to town.
- **Civilians:** The ilovebees.com audio drama showed a very different side of the *Halo* universe, in which people other than the Master Chief got to do something important. This game isn't really geared towards that kind of campaign (GURPS seems better suited if you ask me), but Fudge is nothing if not customizable.

Freeform Character Creation

If using the Profession/Specialty combination instead of letting people pick stuff out on their own just completely annoys you (the GM), you can instead opt for “freeform” character creation, where players get points to allot to different things. It goes like this:

- **Attributes** are handled just like usual.
- **Skills:** Don’t select a profession or specialty. Instead, each character gets 30 free skill levels. The cost of a skill at a given level is as per the chart below.

Skill	-3	-2	-1	+0	+1	+2	+3
Cost	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

- **Gifts:** Each character gets two free Gifts.
- **Trading Traits:** If the GM allows, players can swap levels between different kinds of traits. 1 Gift = 2 Attribute Levels = 6 Skill Levels (and 1 Attribute Level = 3 Skill Levels).

There are plenty of other options for character creation in Fudge, including Subjective Character Creation and Five-Point Fudge. Use whatever works for you.

Video Game Physics

Halo: The Covenant War is mostly modeled after the physics of the *Halo* video games, but with some exceptions made for plausibility. If you don’t care about plausibility, liberally apply the following to your game:

- **Indestructible Vehicles:** Who says vehicles have to be destructible? Imagine a world where absolutely nothing can disable or destroy a vehicle (though explosions can still throw them around quite a bit). They also never run out of fuel, which is pretty darn handy.
- **Infinite Vehicle Ammo:** Even in *Halo 2*, vehicle weapons never actually run out of ammo. Seriously, the payloads listed for the vehicles were stuff I had to make up myself.
- **The Magic of Health Packs:** First aid kits are amazing; you just have to touch one and there’s a flash of white and your wounds are completely healed.
- **Power-Ups:** So, scattered here and there around the landscape are these thingies. One looks like a blue ball inside a glass pyramid, and the other looks like a reddish-purple ball inside a glass cube. If you touch either one it vanishes, but gives you some special power. The pyramid makes you mostly invisible, just like Covenant active camouflage, for, oh, let’s say 16 rounds. The cube gives you an overshield. You get 80 Health points worth of shield added on top of what you already have, but the extra Health points go away at a rate of 4 per turn, and never regenerate. No one knows why they exist or who put them there, but since they’re so handy very few people complain.
- **Finders Keepers:** Guns and such are always scattered everywhere, ripe for the taking. Don’t worry about having someone come after you for taking these guns, because new ones will appear in the same place in a minute or two anyway.
- **Respawning:** This is where things get *really* whacked. After dying, you come back a few seconds later, good as new (except whatever cool weapon you might’ve picked up are replaced with bland, ordinary ones, usually), though if you did something bad before you died it’ll take longer for you to come back (like, 15

seconds instead of 5). On the other hand, it's kind of unnerving how the dead bodies always vanish after a minute or two, though not so fast that you can't run into your own dead body sometimes. Where you reappear is really strange and random too. Sometimes you'll wind up far away from your friends, and other times you'll wind up underneath the wheels of a Warthog and have to wait to respawn again.