

Influences

The Influence system used in *Whispers of Atlanta* differs in some respects from the material that appears in the approved resources. It's more detailed and allows for a greater economy of potential Influence actions. This information supplements the basic Influence categories and actions as described in *Laws of the Night* (revised, c. 1999) on pages 96-104. Also see *Dark Epics*, pages 56-70, which goes into more detail.

Traits: Your total number of Traits in a given Influence determine what options are available to you in that Influence category. A character with more Traits can accomplish "bigger" effects and more of them. Your number of Traits determines the number of Action Points you receive.

Session: For the purposes of Influence, a "session" consists of a single game night or one downtime period. Unused Action points cannot be carried over into the next session.

Action Points: Your total number of Traits in a specific Influence category determine the number of Action Points you have available to expend on Influence actions in that category. You spend Action Points in place of temporary Traits to engage in Influence Actions. Your available number of Action Points is dependent on the number of Traits you have in a given Influence, as summarized in the table below.

Action points per trait total

Total Traits	Action Points Available per Session
1	1
2	4
3	9
4	16
5	25
6	64

Once you achieve a specific Trait level of an Influence category you only need to spend 1 Action Point to gain the benefits of that Trait level. Any additional Action Points spent on the action counts towards breaking through Blocks, can be spent to Stealth the action, or reserved for later actions. Unused Action Points expire at the end of a given session.

Descriptive narrative submitted with Influence actions can affect the outcome of the point expenditure. Extra Action Points can be awarded at the discretion of the Downtimes ST (generally ranging from 1-3 Action Points). A reasonable effort will receive 1 bonus Action Point to their actions, while phenomenal roleplay with significant character development will warrant 3 bonus Action Points.

Example: *Rico the Nosferatu has two Traits of Influence: Underworld. This grants him four Action Points available to expend in this Influence category and he can expend one Action Point to obtain a pistol (an option available because he has two Traits). In a single downtime period he can expend a single Action Point to obtain a pistol and reserve three Action Points to use at his next game session. He could decide to spend additional Action Points to Stealth the action and reserve two Action Points for a Shuffle if needed, or any other combination of actions available at his Trait level that totals four Action Points. He could even elect to spend all four Action Points to obtain four pistols if desired (one per Action Point), assuming that he doesn't care if other Kindred notice the action or he's not concerned that they might try to Attack, Block, or otherwise interfere with the effort.*

using influences

You employ your Influences by expending Action Points to achieve a desired result. The following options outline what actions your character can accomplish with such expenditures.

visible and invisible actions

Canny vampires keep abreast of affairs in their city, especially where it concerns their own kind. The Nosferatu are known for trafficking in knowledge of clandestine affairs, of course, but any vampire wily and patient enough to cultivate Influences certainly devotes a portion of their own resources to observing the schemes others and orienting their own efforts to account for them. It's therefore important to know when a given action is noticed by other Kindred.

An Influence action that can potentially be noticed is said to be *Visible*. Although the *Contacts* background better reflects a vampire's information-gathering network, actions in a given sphere of Influence tend to draw attention and word spreads among the mortals (and immortals) ensconced in a particular subculture. Gaining word of such actions is quite possible by drawing on one's Influence within that sphere.

Some actions require discretion as a matter of course, and by definition, are not known among the general populace or even within a sphere of Influence. Such actions are said to be *Invisible* and will not draw attention unless a Storyteller rules that exceptional circumstances or unusual forces are at work.

Most Influence actions are Visible unless a vampire takes precautions to disguise their efforts—bribes, blackmail, seduction, or even subtle but judicious use of the *Dominate* or *Presence* Disciplines. The *Stealth* action can be used to make Visible actions Invisible but is not fool-proof. Wise vampires insulate their ambitions between several layers of the Jihad.

visible actions

Attack
Block
Growth
Leverage
Steal
Trace

invisible actions

Combine
Overwatch
Shuffle
Stealth
Watch

Attack: You disrupt another vampire's network and infrastructure in an attempt to make it unusable, possibly even destroying it. To Attack an Influence you must first establish it as a target—doing so requires a successful Trace. (You don't have to accomplish the Trace in the same session.) Once a Trace is established spend as many Action Points as you'd like to disrupt the targeted Influence. Each Action Point spent in this fashion reduces the target's Action Point total by one. If the target's Action Point total reaches 0 it is destroyed.

The Attack action is Visible.

Block: You get your people to disrupt the efforts of others. This is not a specific attack as much as "red tape." It makes things more difficult or even impossible to accomplish. (For example, attempts to use *Influence: Police* might discover that an internal affairs investigation is keeping all the local lawman on the straight and narrow this month. The officers that are willing to take your bribes have to lay low or were removed from the force, thus making their efforts ineffectual.)

The Block action is Visible.

Combine: You may loan another character your Influence Traits for a single action. This requires you to expend two Action Points for each Action Point you want available to the receiving character.

The Combine action is Invisible.

Growth: You spend Action Points to improve mortal institutions and their infrastructure, allowing you greater leverage over them in the future. The Growth action allows you to gain additional Influence Traits over time. Action Points spent towards Growth are targeted first by Attack actions, serving as a defensive measure.

The Growth action is Visible.

growth thresholds

Trait Improvement	Number of Action Points Required
0 to 1	Direct Storyteller approval
1 to 2	8
2 to 3	27
3 to 4	64
4 to 5	125
5 to 6	216

Leverage: You spend an Action Point to execute an effect based on your total Traits in a specific Influence category. This is the basic method of using Influences as described in *Laws of the Night* (revised, c. 1999).

The Leverage action is Visible.

Overwatch: You carefully observe the ebb and flow of the Jyhad around you while reserving some of your Influence to counter the moves of others. The Overwatch action cannot be conducted independently but as part of the Watch action. When you take a Watch action you designate an additional number of Action Points to react or use the Stealth action with (you must specify how many Action Points are allocated to reactions and Stealth separately).

As an extension of the Watch action, the Overwatch Action is Invisible.

Shuffle: When your influences are being tailed you advise your people to lay low and cover their tracks carefully. Spend a number of Action Points equal to the given Trait value's available Action Points (for example, 9 Action Points for an Influence rated at three Traits). Doing so removes all Trace or Steal actions currently targeting that particular Influence.

The Shuffle action is Invisible.

Steal: You attempt to wrest control of a mortal group or Institution from the grip of another vampire, making it unavailable for their use while simultaneously enriching your own coffers. To Steal an Influence you must first establish it as a target—doing so requires a successful Trace. (You don't have to accomplish the Trace in the same session.) Once a Trace is established spend as many Action Points as you'd like to secure the targeted Influence. The number of Action Points you must expend to Steal a specific Trait value of Influence is outlined in the table below.

The Steal action is Visible.

action points required to steal

Number of Traits	Number of Action Points Required
1 to 2	4
2 to 3	14
3 to 4	32
4 to 5	63
5 to 6	108

Stealth: You make a specific action Invisible. The Stealth action cannot be conducted independently but only as part of another action. Expend a number of Action Points when taking another Influence Action—the base action is then considered Invisible to all Watch and Overwatch actions that do not spend more Action Points than you did on Stealth.

The Stealth action itself is Invisible.

Trace: You get your people to uncover a specific mortal group or institution used in a specific Influence action. Inform the Storyteller of how many Action Points you want to spend on the Trace effort. If you spend enough Action Points to overcome the target's Stealth value you discover the source of the action and may target it with an Attack.

The Trace action is Visible.

Watch: You monitor a specific Influence category for activity in the current session. You learn of all Influence actions in which fewer Action Points were spent than you spent on the Watch. The Watch action is blocked by Stealth of equal or greater value.

The Watch action is Invisible.

using *contacts* in affairs of influence

The entire purpose of the *Contacts* background is to provide information; it's therefore invaluable in any war of Influence. *Contacts* can be used to uncover the identity of a character behind a specific Block, Growth, Leverage, or Trace action. In this case, treat the *Contacts* background as if it were an Influence action itself that is Invisible and can be Combined.

It's important to note that such use of *Contacts* reveals the *openly known* persona behind the action, not necessarily their true identity.

Example: *Frankie Giovanni wants to cause trouble for the Prince by initiating a series of mob hits. He cannily assumes the false identity of "Frankie Valli" to call in the wiseguys with. When the local Ventrue use their Influence: Police to crack down on the mafia the mortal police interrogators only turn up the name "Frankie Valli." It doesn't matter how many Action Points the Ventrue spend to uncover the Kindred identity of the perpetrator—the mafiosi don't know his real name, so leaning on them hard (or even using Disci lines) is a futile effort.*