

# BOLT & BLADE

## Character Sheet Working Draft

*A layout foundation for the Bolt & Blade grimdark d20 system*

### **Design Intent**

This document breaks the first-pass Bolt & Blade character sheet into individual sections so each piece can be reviewed, rewritten, moved, or cut on paper before the full rules are locked in.

Working premise: Bolt & Blade is a grimdark d20 adventure system inspired by familiar D&D-style play, but built around Fate, Corruption, cover, wounds, psychic danger, wargear, and setting-native classes.

# Sheet Overview

The character sheet should be familiar enough that a D&D player understands it quickly, but distinct enough that it feels like Bolt & Blade first. The sheet is the system scaffold: it tells us what rules need to exist and what players will actually track at the table.

- Keep the sheet readable at the table: no hidden bookkeeping for core survival resources.
- Make Fate and Corruption visible because they are signature mechanics.
- Make cover, weapons, armor, wounds, and scars easy to find during combat.
- Let class, race/path, origin, and future specialties slot into the sheet without rewriting the whole layout.
- Support a future website sheet and Forge VTT sheet using the same conceptual structure.

## Recommended Digital Tabs

Tab	Contents
<b>Overview</b>	Identity, attributes, Fate, Corruption, Vitality, Defense, and quick status.
<b>Combat</b>	Weapons, armor, cover, conditions, wounds, and combat features.
<b>Features</b>	Race/path traits, class features, origin features, and future talents.
<b>Powers</b>	Psychic powers, Acts of Faith, machine rites, or class-specific power systems.
<b>Equipment</b>	Weapons, armor, wargear, relics, ammunition, tools, and notes.
<b>Notes</b>	Bonds, scars, allies, enemies, secrets, campaign notes, and narrative details.

# 1. Header: Character Identity

*Who is this character before the dice start ruining their life?*

The header should be the top banner of the sheet. It should identify the character at a glance and define the major choices that later systems will reference.

Field	Purpose / Notes
<b>Character Name</b>	The character's name.
<b>Player Name</b>	Optional, useful for shared sheets and VTT play.
<b>Race / Path</b>	Broad identity such as Human, Forge-Bound Human, Astartes, Aeldari, Ork, etc.
<b>Class</b>	Setting-native class such as Guardsman, Psyker, Arbites, Skitarii, Tactical Marine, Librarian, etc.
<b>Level</b>	Character level. The system can stay level-based while using Bolt & Blade class names.
<b>Origin</b>	Specific source/upbringing such as Hive Worlder, Voidborn, Schola Progenium, Forge Worlder, Fleet-Based Chapter, etc.
<b>Background</b>	Personal life history, prior duty, social role, crime, station, training, or institution.
<b>Specialty</b>	Future system. Optional for now; likely used for advanced focus such as Kasrkin, Death Cultist, Terminator Honours, etc.
<b>Portrait / Token</b>	Useful for the website and a future Forge VTT version.

Example combinations:

- Race / Path: Human | Class: Arbites | Origin: Hive Worlder | Background: Former Precinct Enforcer
- Race / Path: Astartes | Class: Apothecary | Origin: Fleet-Based Chapter | Background: Veteran of the Helion Purge

## 2. Core Attributes

*Familiar d20 bones, renamed only where it helps the setting.*

The system can keep six core attributes while giving them Bolt & Blade language. Each attribute should show a score, modifier, and save bonus.

Attribute	Primary Uses
<b>Strength</b>	Melee force, carrying, shoving, grappling, brute force, heavy physical action.
<b>Agility</b>	Shooting, reflexes, stealth, initiative, acrobatics, quick movement.
<b>Toughness</b>	Vitality, endurance, poison, disease, wounds, fatigue, survival under punishment.
<b>Intellect</b>	Lore, technology, investigation, tactics, analysis, data, forbidden knowledge.
<b>Willpower</b>	Fear, corruption resistance, psychic resistance, perception, discipline, instinct.
<b>Presence</b>	Command, intimidation, persuasion, deception, authority, social pressure.

Open design question: do we keep attribute scores plus modifiers like D&D, or use modifiers only? Scores are familiar; modifiers-only is cleaner for a new system.

### 3. Combat Core

*The numbers players need every time violence starts.*

Combat should feel familiar but more firearm-aware. Defense, cover, exposure, wounds, and weapons need to be visible without opening three submenus.

Field	Purpose / Notes
<b>Vitality</b>	HP equivalent. Current survivability before wounds, death saves, or critical injury rules matter.
<b>Max Vitality</b>	Maximum Vitality at full health.
<b>Temporary Vitality</b>	Temporary protection from stims, class abilities, shields, or faith effects.
<b>Defense</b>	AC equivalent: the target number enemies roll against.
<b>Armor</b>	Worn armor name and quick note.
<b>Movement</b>	Speed / movement rate.
<b>Initiative</b>	Usually Agility-based.
<b>Proficiency Bonus</b>	Proficiency-style scaling number added when a character is trained in a relevant proficiency.
<b>Cover State</b>	None, Light, Heavy, Total, or equivalent final terms.
<b>Conditions</b>	Pinned, Bleeding, Burning, Frightened, Exposed, Suppressed, etc.

#### Initial Combat Design Notes

- Cover should matter more than in normal fantasy d20 games.
- Standing exposed under ranged fire should be dangerous.
- Astartes can survive exposure better, but should not make cover irrelevant for everyone else.
- The sheet should make current cover/exposure state visible during combat.

## 4. Fate

*The Emperor protects. The dice do not.*

Fate is one of the core signature mechanics. It explains how ordinary humans survive impossible adventures and gives players a heroic survival tool without making the setting safe.

Field	Purpose / Notes
<b>Current Fate</b>	Spendable Fate available right now.
<b>Maximum Fate</b>	Normal Fate pool before permanent burns.
<b>Burned Fate</b>	Permanent Fate lost to survive the impossible.
<b>Fate Uses</b>	Quick reference for what Fate can do during play.

### Draft Fate Uses

- Reroll a d20 you just rolled, keeping the new result.
- Reduce incoming damage.
- Stabilize immediately at 0 Vitality.
- Ask the GM one instinctive yes/no question about the current scene.
- Burn Fate permanently to survive something that should have killed you outright.

Design note: burned Fate needs its own tracker. It is too flavorful to hide. “You lived, but destiny has fewer bullets left in the magazine.”

## 5. Corruption

*Not damage. Evidence.*

Corruption is the dark mirror of Fate. It tracks exposure to the Warp, daemons, forbidden knowledge, heresy, xenos artifacts, and choices the character can justify but never fully wash off.

Field	Purpose / Notes
<b>Corruption Points</b>	Current corruption total.
<b>Corruption Stage</b>	Touched, Marked, Claimed, Lost, or final stage names.
<b>Mutations / Taint</b>	Cosmetic, narrative, or mechanical changes caused by corruption.
<b>Corruption Triggers</b>	Optional quick reference for common ways Corruption is gained.

### Draft Corruption Stages

Stage	Draft Meaning
<b>Touched</b>	Early signs: eyes flicker, shadow moves wrong, prayers taste like ash.
<b>Marked</b>	The taint becomes noticeable. Social and spiritual consequences begin.
<b>Claimed</b>	The Warp can occasionally reach through the character.
<b>Lost</b>	The character is no longer a player character unless the table explicitly chooses that kind of story.

Design note: Corruption should be difficult to remove. Cleansing should require penance, holy sites, sacrifice, investigation, or major story action, not a routine spell slot.

## 6. Wounds & Scars

*Survival is not the same as being fine.*

Bolt & Blade should not constantly kill player characters, but violence should leave consequences. Wounds and scars let the campaign continue while making combat feel heavier than normal fantasy damage.

Field	Purpose / Notes
<b>Active Wounds</b>	Current injuries affecting play.
<b>Lasting Scars</b>	Permanent marks, story consequences, trauma, reputation, or character-defining injuries.
<b>Lost Limbs / Augmetics</b>	Where maiming and replacement parts are tracked.
<b>Damaged Gear</b>	Armor or weapon damage caused by critical hits, explosions, or narrative consequences.
<b>Trauma / Fear Notes</b>	Optional notes for lingering fear, nightmares, battlefield shock, or specific phobias.

### Design Intent

- NPCs can die fast; player characters survive horribly.
- Serious hits can create wounds without ending the campaign.
- Augmetics should be both a reward and a reminder that something awful happened.
- Scars should matter narratively even when they do not always impose penalties.

## 7. Weapons

*The Ammo Die belongs on the weapon row.*

Weapon entries need to support firearm-heavy play, melee brutality, and special weapon behavior without tracking individual bullets.

Field	Purpose / Notes
<b>Weapon</b>	Name of the weapon: Lasgun, Boltgun, Chainsword, Power Sword, etc.
<b>Attack</b>	Attack bonus.
<b>Damage</b>	Damage dice and type.
<b>Range</b>	Normal / long range or melee reach.
<b>Traits</b>	Recharge, Ammo, Burst, Spread, Heavy, Overheat, Detonator, Power Field, Chain, Slow, etc.
<b>Ammo Die</b>	d8, d6, d4, Dry, or blank for weapons that do not use it.
<b>Notes</b>	Blessed, damaged, bayonet, relic, custom mod, issued by patron, etc.

### Weapon Design Notes

- Las weapons are reliable and should feel like the Imperium's baseline answer to logistics.
- Bolters should feel powerful, loud, scarce, and socially meaningful.
- Plasma should be frighteningly strong and personally dangerous.
- Melta and heavy weapons should feel like problem-solvers with serious constraints.
- Melee weapons should still matter because grimdark climaxes love chainblades and power fields.

## 8. Armor & Wargear

*Gear says who trusts you, who owns you, and how expendable they think you are.*

Armor and wargear need their own visible block. This is where the system can make equipment feel issued, sacred, stolen, restricted, or owed rather than casually purchased.

Field	Purpose / Notes
<b>Armor Name</b>	Flak armor, carapace armor, power armor, etc.
<b>Defense Value</b>	Defense contribution or final Defense if armor determines it.
<b>Armor Traits</b>	Sealed, bulky, stealth penalty, auto-senses, blessed servos, etc.
<b>Repair Status</b>	Damaged, field-repaired, degraded, sanctified, jury-rigged.
<b>Wargear List</b>	Medi-kit, stimms, auspex, vox-caster, rebreather, grenades, servo-skull, tools, relics.
<b>Quantities / Uses</b>	Stimm doses, med-kit uses, grenades, charges, limited-use gear.

## 9. Features & Talents

*Where class, race/path, origin, and future specialties live.*

This section is the home for mechanical identity. It should support expandable cards in a digital sheet and short printable summaries on paper.

Field	Purpose / Notes
<b>Race / Path Traits</b>	Human Fate traits, Forge-Bound augmetics, Astartes transhuman traits, future xenos traits.
<b>Class Features</b>	Guardsmen orders, Psyker powers, Arbites enforcement, Sister Acts of Faith, Skitarii protocols, etc.
<b>Origin Features</b>	Hive Worlder survival, Voidborn ship sense, Schola discipline, Chapter origin, forge-world conditioning.
<b>Specialty Features</b>	Future subclass-like layer or talent path.
<b>Talents</b>	Future feat-like customization system.

Design note: class names should remain setting-native. No visible Fighter, Rogue, Cleric, Paladin, Sorcerer, or Artificer labels in the public system UI.

## 10. Psychic Powers & Perils

*You can be powerful. You cannot be safe.*

This section appears for Psykers, Librarians, and future warp-touched classes. It should make psychic power feel stronger than normal class abilities, but risky enough to scare the entire table.

Field	Purpose / Notes
<b>Psychic Discipline</b>	Telepathy, Biomancy, Pyromancy, Divination, Telekinesis, Warding, etc.
<b>Psychic Save DC</b>	Target number enemies roll against.
<b>Psychic Attack</b>	Attack bonus for offensive powers.
<b>Powers Known</b>	List of known psychic powers.
<b>Push</b>	Reminder or toggle for using a stronger effect at Perils risk.
<b>Perils Roll</b>	Quick access to the Perils table or roll button in digital tools.
<b>Warp Notes</b>	Lingering weirdness, daemonic attention, visions, corruption triggers.

### Core Psyker Loop

- Use power normally for controlled effects.
- Push a power for greater effect.
- When you Push, risk Perils of the Warp.
- Perils can damage, corrupt, summon attention, twist the scene, or create story consequences.

# 11. Proficiencies

*The fields of action, knowledge, and pressure-tested competence.*

Proficiencies are the sheet's core check categories. When a character attempts something uncertain, choose the most relevant attribute and add the character's Proficiency Bonus if they are proficient in the matching field.

Example: forcing open a blast door might be Strength + Athletics, while crossing collapsing gantries under fire might be Agility + Athletics. The proficiency stays the same; the attribute changes with the approach.

Field	Purpose / Notes
<b>Proficiency Name</b>	The field being used, such as Awareness, Tech, Medicae, or Guile.
<b>Linked Attribute</b>	Usually chosen by the GM based on approach: Strength, Agility, Toughness, Intellect, Willpower, or Presence.
<b>Proficient</b>	Checkbox or rank marker showing whether the character adds Proficiency Bonus.
<b>Bonus</b>	Final roll bonus after attribute modifier, proficiency, gear, and situational modifiers.
<b>Focus / Notes</b>	Optional specialty, tool link, situational bonus, lore focus, class interaction, or campaign note.

## Core Proficiency List

Proficiency	Covers
<b>Athletics</b>	Climbing, jumping, swimming, grappling, hauling, forcing doors, resisting physical strain.
<b>Stealth</b>	Sneaking, hiding, shadowing targets, concealing gear, moving quietly through hostile spaces.
<b>Fieldcraft</b>	Survival, navigation, tracking, ambushes, traps, ash wastes, trenches, ruins, hostile terrain.
<b>Awareness</b>	Spotting threats, hearing movement, noticing ambushes, reading a battlefield, sensing danger.
<b>Inquiry</b>	Investigation, searching scenes, interrogation, research, gathering information, following clues.
<b>Tech</b>	Machines, locks, cogitators, auspex use, repairs, vehicles, machine spirits, technical rituals.
<b>Medicae</b>	First aid, surgery, poison, disease, anatomy, stabilizing the dying, battlefield triage.
<b>Lore</b>	Imperial history, creed, xenos, the Warp, war, noble houses, forbidden knowledge. Add a focus if needed.
<b>Command</b>	Orders, leadership, morale, battlefield coordination, intimidation through authority.
<b>Guile</b>	Deception, persuasion, disguise, streetwise instincts, black markets, criminal contacts.

Design note: weapon and armor proficiencies should be tracked separately from these general proficiencies. Ballistics, melee weapon groups, heavy weapons, power armor, and restricted wargear are likely equipment proficiencies rather than general checks.

## 12. Narrative Block

*The part of the sheet that makes the character worth remembering.*

Bolt & Blade needs the character's pain, duty, and secrets visible. These fields should be on the sheet, not buried in notes.

Field	Purpose / Notes
<b>The Imperium took...</b>	Prompt: "The Imperium took _____ from me."
<b>I keep fighting because...</b>	Prompt: "I keep fighting because _____."
<b>Oath / Duty</b>	Who owns your loyalty? Chapter, regiment, shrine, forge, Inquisitor, oath, grudge, or debt.
<b>Enemy / Rival</b>	Who wants you dead?
<b>Ally / Handler / Patron</b>	Who sends you into the dark or keeps you alive?
<b>Secret</b>	What would get you executed, exiled, mind-wiped, or burned?

## 13. First-Pass Sheet Checklist

*Build this before we over-engineer anything.*

The first version of the sheet should track only what we know we need. The goal is a playable scaffold, not a finished rules encyclopedia.

- Identity: name, player, race/path, class, origin, level, background, portrait/token.
- Six core attributes with modifiers and saves.
- Vitality, Defense, Movement, Initiative, Proficiency Bonus.
- Fate, maximum Fate, and burned Fate.
- Corruption points, stage, mutations/taint notes.
- Wounds, scars, augmetics, damaged gear.
- Weapons with attack, damage, range, traits, and Ammo Die.
- Armor and wargear lists.
- Features grouped by race/path, class, origin, and future specialty.
- Psychic powers and Perils section for relevant classes.
- Proficiencies grid.
- Narrative prompts: Imperium took, keep fighting, oath, rival, patron, secret.

### Rules on the Docket

- Fate
- Corruption
- Cover & Exposure
- Wounds & Scars
- Psychic Powers & Perils

Once the sheet feels right, the rules can be written around it instead of guessing in the dark.