

Converting the d10 system of WhiteWolf to a 2d10 system

Premise

The d10 system that WhiteWolf currently employs is flawed. This is an inherent issue with all table top games, but, like governments, some are less flawed than others. The point of the WhiteWolf system is to create a smoothly flowing game system. This is what draws and attracts players to the WhiteWolf universe. However, WhiteWolf went a little too simplistic and the dynamics of the roll do not give adequate credit to the time and effort that a player spends in developing his character.

Let's say you buy up your character's Dexterity to a 4 (Exceptional) and the secondary skill Karate to a 4, for a total dice pool of 8. Each of those 8 dice you are rolling has a 10% chance to come up as a 1, so while, yes, you have a greater chance to succeed phenomenally, you also have a greater chance to kill your character phenomenally, too. That leads to the question, "What point is there to buying up a skill when it adds one more chance to screw your self over?"

However, anything that replaces the WhiteWolf rolling system needs to be at least as simple to grasp as the one it replaces. Described below is my suggestion to enhance the rolling mechanics. Please note that I am not trying to totally replace the gaming system, simply to more accurately reflect the descriptions given in the WhiteWolf books of the various attributes and abilities. I leave it to you to judge whether I have succeeded.

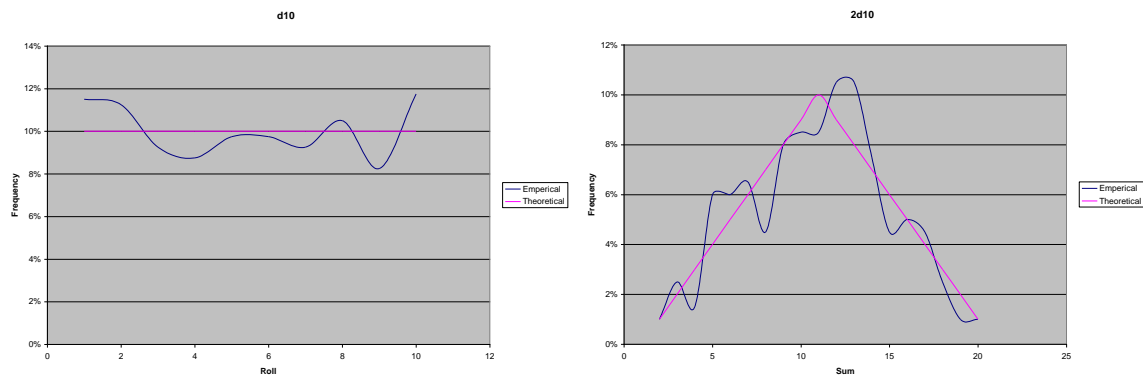
(NOTE: Cliff originally came up with the concept of the 2d10 system in the WhiteWolf universe, but I have tweaked the thought. So, if you like it, thank Cliff; if you don't, blame me).

The 2d10 Concept

Making the Roll

The main problem with the WhiteWolf system is that all the dice rolled are independent of each other. This effectively flattens the bell curve, which is the statistical measurement of occurrences. What I propose is that we switch to a 2d10 system where we add the two dice together. By adding the two rolls together, we create a dependence that allows us to get a meaningful bell curve

The theory for this is that when you roll one ten-sided die you have an equal chance to get any of the numbers 1 through 10. In other words, each side should show up 10% of the time (1 roll divided by 10 sides = 10%). However, when you sum the results of two rolls, you find that there is only one way to get a 2 and one way to get a 20 – rolling two 1's or two 10's respectively. The closer you get to the middle sums the more ways there are to get those numbers. With two ten-sided dice, there are 10 ways to add up to 11, 9 ways to come up with either 10 or 12, 8 ways to sum up to 9 or 13, etc. and blah-blah-blah. For a visual, please refer to the below charts. The pink lines are the theoretical possibilities and the blue lines are the results of empirical testing. Purely by the numbers, the 2d10 system gives you a better chance of doing an average job of things, using the middle value for the difficulty (6 for the d10 and 11 for the 2d10 systems).



(NOTE ON THE DATA: The empirical numbers are based on 200 2d10 rolls. I used some nifty formulas in Excel to count the sums of the 2d10 rolls and to count the individual rolls for the charts above, which means that the 2d10 empirical data has a pool of 200 rolls while the d10 has a pool of 400.)

How Skills Factor In

But what about all the time and effort you put into increasing your character's abilities and attributes? As WhiteWolf runs things, you get an extra die to roll for each point you take in the respective ability or attribute. Whether the extra die is a blessing or curse is pretty random, dependant mainly on how the dice are rolling for you in any given gaming session.

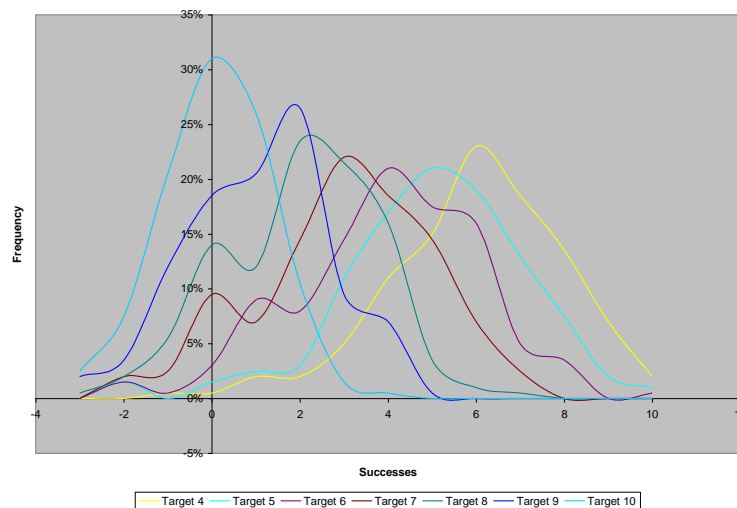
With the 2d10 system, each point you take would boost the sum of your roll. Because of this, I suggest setting the default difficulties no lower than 12, with the argument being that having a 2 in any attribute is human average, so anything lower is supposed to give you a disadvantage. Rolling an unmodified 2 is always a botch, rolling an unmodified 3 is always a failure, and rolling an unmodified 20 is always a success. Successes are cumulative up to 5 over target. If you go seven under the target, you botch. There is no double or triple botching.

Let's illustrate this:

You have a ten dice pool. Based on empirical data, with the WhiteWolf system at the standard difficulty you will fail approximately 6% of the time, of which you botch half of that (that's the lump sum of the single through quadruple botches in my data). You will achieve a minimal success (1-2 successes) 17% of the time, a complete success (3-4 successes) 35%, and a perfect success (5 or more) 42% of the time. Not that bad, right?

With the 2d10 system, having 10 points across your attributes and abilities means that you just need to roll a 4 for a 14 (2d10 + dice pool = your roll), so your chance to fail is 4%, including the 1% that you botch. You will succeed minimally 8% of the time, completely 13% and perfectly 77%.

If you have a 10 dice pool, your attribute is probably a 5, "outstanding" and your ability is also at 5, "Master" level. Using the Dexterity and Dodge descriptions for illustration, "you should be able to dance along the edge of a precipice while blindfolded" and "over time, you've actually learned to sidestep bullets." (Mage, p.121, 123). Doing these at the same time might require a higher difficulty, but that's why you have a 10 point bonus!



The chart above illustrates the number of successes a character with a 10 dice pool can expect with the various targets. The numbers above are all from empirical data and I used a 200 roll pool (yes, there are times when I think I have too much time on my hands).

At this point I would like to interject an optional idea. Obviously, if you're going to try something substantially more difficult than the average, you will need all those 10 dice. However, I rather like the idea that if you do not need all of your points to achieve a minimal success, that each point you do not need could be used as an opportunity to turn a botch into a simple failure (never a success) by rolling an unmodified roll against the difficulty

of the original target. In the above example, a ten dice pool in a standard roll would normally give you 2 points above the minimum you need to succeed. By declaring that 1 point a "botch buffer" or what-have-you, you would have one chance to roll a 12 or better to fail instead of botching if you should roll a 2.

Now that's at the perfect side of the scale. What about if you're only Joe Average?

Let's say you've got 2 for your attribute and 2 for your ability, for a total dice pool of 4. Again going for standard difficulties, in the WhiteWolf rolling system you're looking at a failure rate of 15% (botching 5% & simply failing 10%), marginally succeeding 58%, completely succeeding 27% and never making a perfect success.

In the 2d20 system, you fail 28% (botching 1%), marginally succeed 17%, completely succeed 19%, and perfectly succeed 36%. Going back to the Dexterity and Dodge descriptions, "you can walk and chew gum at the same time" while "you've been in enough fights to know when to stay down and safe." Need I point out that walking and chewing bubble gum is not impressive, nor does knowing when to stay down imply that you're all that good at getting out of the way of slamming bodies, debris, etc.?

Making the conversion

Below are my suggestions for converting d10 targets to 2d10 targets.

Difficulty Level	d10 Target	2d10 Target / Botches
And we're rolling this why?	3	6 / 2
Melee with Knife	4	9 / 2
Biting	5	11 / 4
Damage	6	12 / not possible
Standard	6	12 / 5
Kicking	7	14 / 7
Auspex 2	8	16 / 9
Well, there's a chance ...	9	18 / 11
... in hell ...	10	20 / 13
... for a snow ball ...	10, complete successes	25 / 13 *
... but we're not talking Antarctica.	10, perfect success	30 / 13 *

*** I suggest that the botches for the incredibly difficult feats remain at 13 because the highest the dice will take you is 20.**

A natural 2 (1&1) is always a botch.

A natural 3 (1&2 or 2&1) is always a straight failure.

A natural 20 (10&10) is always a success.

Each extra success normally needed (for extraordinary events) would translate to an extra point of difficulty.

The player adds the points they have spent in the related attribute and ability to the total of their roll. This is their bonus. It is the same as their dice pool under the d10 system. The player adds their bonus to their roll to get their total.

Damage

Option 1

When rolling damage, the difference between the attack roll and the attack target, up to 5, are bonuses to the damage. Example:

John is attacking with a knife. He has dexterity of 2 and melee of 3. He rolls a 5 and a 6 for an 11. He adds his ability and attribute (2 & 3 in this case) for a 16. The Storyteller decides that the target is the suggested 9, so, since 16 gives him more than the 5 successes we're counting, John has made a complete success. The Storyteller tells John to add 4 to his damage roll (5 counted successes – 1 success needed to hit). The roll is unopposed.

John makes his damage roll. A knife does Strength + 1, so he rolls 2d10, gets a 6 and a 3 for a 9. His Strength is 2. With the 4 success bonus, his total roll is 15. The target for damage is 12 so he has done 4 points of damage (12, 13, 14, and 15).

Option 2

When rolling damage, $\frac{1}{2}$ the difference between the attack roll and the attack target, un-capped, are bonuses to the damage. Example:

As above, John attacks with a roll of 16 and therefore has eight successes (9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16). One of those, the 9, is the attack success. That leaves seven. Half of seven is $3\frac{1}{2}$. Discard the half and John now has three successes to add to his damage roll. His total roll is then a 14, which does 3 points of damage.

Either way, rolling snake eyes (2) simply means that the player inflicts the weapon's unmodified base damage (1 for a knife), the same as if they rolled a 3 for an auto fail. The chance to botch is with the attack, otherwise double jeopardy is introduced.

Merits, Backgrounds, & Disciplines

Merits, disciplines, etc. that lower your target would be added to your bonus, the same as your attributes and abilities.

Those merits, such as Dare Devil and Charmed Existence, which allow you to ignore botches would instead grant an extra +2 to your bonuses.

So, to illustrate:

Anita has Enchanting Voice, which is written to lower her target by 2 when making rolls that encompass the use of her voice. Under the 2d10 system, she gets an additional 2 to her bonus pool. When she rolls her Manipulation (of 3) and Subterfuge (of 2) to successfully tell a lie, she gets a +2 because speaking a lie involves her voice. Her total bonus is $3+2+2$, or 7. If the Storyteller decides that her target is 15 and she rolls a 4 and 6 (for a 10), she adds her 7 bonuses to get a 17. 15, 16, & 17 are three successes, so she completely succeeds.