



# ***Call of Cthulhu* 7th Edition**

## **Interactive PDF Character Sheets**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

**Version 1.0**

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In conjunction with the release of *Call of Cthulhu* 7<sup>th</sup> Edition we are pleased to release a series of interactive PDF investigator sheets that enable players to quickly and easily create and update their investigators. The PDF sheets automatically perform some of the routine calculations and table lookups that occur as part of investigator generation (and when statistics change), thereby eliminating most of the mental arithmetic that needs to be done to create an Investigator.

The character sheets are easy to use, but there are a couple of subtleties and limitations that you may run into as you use them. The notes below summarize the most important of these, providing answers to the most common questions about the operation of the PDF sheets.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The information provided below pertains to the set of fully-interactive PDF sheets (one per era) featuring “push buttons” for the Sanity, Hit Point, and Magic Point meters, as well as for Luck. The fully-interactive sheet version is called “**Full Autocalc.**”

For some eras, we have also created simplified versions of the interactive sheet that work better on more basic PDF readers and on tablets, these are called “**Basic Autocalc.**”

### **Part 1: Software Requirements**

#### **What software do I need on my PC/Mac to be able to use the 7<sup>th</sup> Edition Interactive Sheets?**

To use the **Full Autocalc** version sheets you will need to have a recent version of the Adobe Reader software. This free software can be downloaded directly from Adobe by visiting the page: <http://get.adobe.com/reader>. At the time of writing the most recent version is Version XI (v11) but the interactive sheets will also work with versions 9 and X (v10) as well. The Adobe website has versions of the software for various different versions of Microsoft Windows, several versions of MacOS and also for Linux. All are available for download free of charge.

#### **I normally use a different program to read PDFs, will the sheets work properly with that reader?**

Almost certainly not.

The interactive sheets exercise some of the most advanced features available to PDF forms in order to deliver their complex modes of interactivity. While Adobe's software implements the full suite of features defined by the PDF format, most third-party PDF readers only implement a subset, and unsurprisingly the more complex features are the ones most often left out.

### **What about the default PDF Reader that comes built-in to the MacOS (Preview)?**

As at the time of writing, the in-built MacOS PDF reader (called Preview) does not support the 7<sup>th</sup> Edition sheets. As a Mac user, you will need to download and install one of the free MacOS versions of Adobe Reader and use that application to open the PDFs. Alternatively, you could consider using the simplified **Basic Autocalc** version of the sheet that eliminates the heavily interactive elements that give Preview heartburn.

### **Can I read the fully-interactive character sheets on my tablet?**

No. As at the time of writing, we are not aware of any PDF reader software for either iPad or Android tablets that supports either display or editing of the advanced forms used by the **Full Autocalc** version of the sheets. This includes the versions of Adobe Reader created for those platforms – these are cut-down versions of the full application, lacking the support for advanced form features.

If you would like to use interactive PDF versions of the 7<sup>th</sup> Edition character sheet on your tablet, consider trying the simplified **Basic Autocalc** version of sheets. This version eliminates the heavily interactive elements that create problems for the cut-down tablet versions of Adobe Reader, and may work with other tablet-based readers also.

### **I've used lots of PDFs before using my favorite (non-Adobe) PDF reader, including lots of forms.**

#### **What's so special about these PDFs that they will only work properly on Adobe Reader?**

Although from the outside all PDFs look pretty much the same, when you look under the hood you quickly realize that there are several different "flavors" of PDF. This is particularly true when it comes to interactive forms. There are at least three different types of interactive form: Acrobat forms, Static XML forms and Dynamic XML forms. Each allows a different range of control over the interactive elements. In order to provide the highly interactive "push button meters" for Sanity, Hit Points, etc., in the center of the 7<sup>th</sup> Edition sheets, it was necessary to use the most flexible type of PDF form (Dynamic XML).

Adobe's PC and Mac readers fully support all three styles of forms, but most third party PDF readers only aim to support the simplest type (Acrobat forms), because this is the one which is easiest to implement and also the most common type of PDF form encountered. So, just because you have used your favorite third-party PDF reader to open lots of different PDFs and PDF forms, it doesn't mean that it supports the flavor of PDF form used by the **Full Autocalc** version of sheets.

### **When I try to open or preview the Interactive Sheet, all I see is some text saying "Please Wait ... If this message is not eventually replaced by the proper contents, your PDF viewer may not be able to display this type of document". What does that mean?**

This error message means that the PDF reader does not support Dynamic XML forms (and will not work with the **Full Autocalc** versions of the sheets).

**I'm sending a character sheet to a friend by attaching it to an email; the preview window on my email program doesn't show the sheet properly. Is the PDF corrupted in my email?**

Probably not. When email clients (or web browsers) show you a preview of the file that is attached to an email, they make use of a PDF reader to create that preview. If your computer is set up such that this preview is being created by something other than an Adobe program, chances are that it will not correctly reflect the contents of the attachment. If in doubt, save the attachment to disk and open it with Adobe Reader.

**Are Chaosium looking at creating an 7th Edition Interactive Sheet that works with other PDF software and on tablets?**

Yes. You can download the **Basic Autocalc** version of the 7<sup>th</sup> Edition character sheet. This entirely eliminates the "push button meters"— the elements that cause problems for cut-down PDF readers.

## **Part 2: Auto-Calculations and Restricted Fields**

**I've noticed that most fields on the investigator sheet let me type whatever I'd like into them, but a few seem to restrict what I can enter. Which fields are restricted in this way?**

Most fields allow the free entry of arbitrary text, however a few are limited to numeric values, sometimes in a particular range.

The following fields are numeric: Age, the large boxes for all eight Characteristics (STR, CON, SIZ, DEX, APP, INT, POW and EDU), the large boxes for all skill values, and all items in the "Regular" column of the Weapons block.

**What are the upper and lower bounds on characteristic values, age values, and skill values that the sheets enforce?**

- Age must be between 15 and 90.
- Characteristic scores must be between 0 and 200.
- Skill values and the Regular hit chance for weapons have no upper or lower bounds enforced by the PDF sheet (although some values may not make sense in the game).

**Why are two "Dodge" skill boxes shown on the sheet? How are they related?**

Dodge appears both in the main list of skills and again in the Combat box in the bottom right of the front side of the sheet. The second of these is an automatic copy of the first, and is provided merely as a quick-reference during combat. You cannot change the value of the copy in the Combat box, since it is automatically generated and "read only" – if you want to increase or decrease a character's Dodge score, apply the change to the box included in the normal skill list.

**Which other fields are automatically calculated?**

The sheet automatically calculates "half" and "one-fifth" values for every Characteristic score and Skill value entered. Additionally:

- Movement Rate is automatically calculated from STR, DEX, SIZ, and Age.
- Maximum Hit Points is automatically calculated from CON and SIZ.

- Starting Sanity and Maximum Magic Points are automatically calculated from POW.
- Maximum Sanity is automatically calculated from the character's Cthulhu Mythos skill value.
- Damage Bonus and Build are automatically calculated from STR and SIZ.
- In the Weapons block, the "Regular" chance for Unarmed combat is automatically calculated from the character's Fighting (Brawl) skill value.
- Also in the Weapons block, a "Hard" and "Extreme" chance is automatically calculated based on each weapon's "Regular" chance.

All automatically calculated fields are read only; you cannot edit their values directly. Editing the values on which they depend does, however, trigger a recalculation of the field value.

#### **Why do the auto calculated fields start off as blank?**

When the calculated value for a field depends on one or more other fields that are currently blank, then that field is itself shown as blank. This is the situation where no sensible value can be calculated because you're still only part way through making the character. So, for example, the Damage Bonus box on the sheet is blank; adding a value for one of the two characteristics it depends upon (*i.e.*, STR or CON) doesn't make it show a value, but adding values for BOTH values causes it to display a calculated damage bonus.

This way of working has the beneficial side-effect that in its initial state, the sheet is completely blank. So if you just want a blank sheet to fill in by hand you can open up the PDF and print one out.

#### **I've just made a new character and the "Max" field above the Sanity meter is still blank. How do I get it to show the "99" maximum sanity value that brand new characters should have?**

Just add a "0" value in the large blank box next to Cthulhu Mythos.

#### **When do the auto calculated fields return to being blank?**

If you blank out the value in a field (by deleting its contents), fields which depend on that field for their value will also become blank. Continuing the example above: if both a STR and CON have been entered, that allows a Damage Bonus to be calculated. If, sometime later, the value for either STR or CON is selected and deleted, the Damage Bonus box will go back to being blank.

#### **The various "meters" in the center of the sheet (for Sanity, Hit Points etc.) start off as blank, showing no circled value. Is there any way of returning them to blank once a value has been selected?**

Experimenting with the meters, you will quickly find that clicking on a number different to that which is currently circled will cause the circle to shift to the newly clicked number. However, if you want to blank out the meter (leaving no value circled), simply click on the value currently circled and it will toggle to being unselected.

#### **What are the "+1" and "-1" boxes next to the Move Rate field for?**

Some investigator backstory events that occur during character generation (or, potentially, events that occur in-play) can make an investigator slightly quicker or slightly slower than normal. To allow for such minor tweaking of the automatically generated Move Rate, small boxes showing "+1" and "-1" are shown next to the field. Only one of these can be selected at any time,

and clicking on a box that is already marked with an “X” will cause that box to become emptied (leaving neither “+1” or “-1” selected).

### **Part 3: Multi-Line Text Fields and Font Scaling**

**The free-text fields for Investigator Name, Occupation, etc. seem kind of short; am I going to be able to fit the text I want into them?**

The text in these fields auto-scales to allow for longer entries to be made. Once you have filled the available space, the text shrinks to allow you to keep typing. Be aware, however, font size can only be shrunk down so far.

**Lots of the boxes on the back of the sheet support multiple lines of text. How do I get text to span across those multiple lines?**

The ten fields in the Backstory block, the Assets field, and the two halves of the Gear & Possessions box are all multi-line text fields. You can treat these a bit like a word processor document, adding new lines by hitting the Enter key or allowing the cursor to extend past the write of the box to wrap around to the next line of the field.

**What happens if I run out of space in a multi-line field on the back of the sheet?**

Like the single-line text boxes, the multi-line fields also scale down the size of the font to allow more text to be entered after the field has filled up.

### **Part 4: Fellow Investigators**

**What information can I record on the back of the sheet about the relationship between my investigator and other players’ characters?**

The back of the investigator sheet includes space to record information about 8 other characters that can describe some form of relationship with. For each “fellow investigator” three items can be recorded – the character’s name, the player’s name, and the relationship between the named character and this character.

**How are the fields arranged around that weird tentacle thing?**

Each square box surrounding the tentacle thing captures information about one “fellow investigator,” specifically the investigator’s name and the player’s name. There is also a field next to the tentacle arm touching the box – use that to record the relationship between characters.

### **Part 5: Adding a Character Portrait**

**How do I add a portrait to the character sheet?**

Adding a character portrait is easy – simply click on the silhouette in the upper right corner of the sheet front. A file browser dialogue box will pop up, asking you to pick an image file to load into the sheet.

**What size image should I use for the portrait?**

The image will be scaled to fit the space on the character sheet, so size is less important than the ratio of width to height. The space on the sheet is 206 pixels wide and 252 pixels high. Picking a file which is much smaller will cause pixilation of the image as it is scaled up; picking a much larger image will simply cause it to be shrunk down to fit.

**Can I use an image from an online source?**

Yes. One nifty feature of recent versions of Adobe Reader is that, although the image file browser opened makes it look like it can only select a file already on disk, you can type a URL into the “File Name” field which points to an image somewhere on the Web. This image is then downloaded and inserted into the character sheet.

One practical application of this feature is that you can search for an appropriate character image using a site such as Google Images and, once you have found one you like simply copy the URL and paste it into the Adobe Reader dialogue box. This gives you literally millions of options for pre-made character portraits.

**Part 6: Saving or Printing a Character Sheet for Later Use**

**Once I’ve finished creating my character how can I save his or her character sheet so the information is there when I come to play?**

Saving a completed character sheet is easy – just pick “Save As” from the file menu and choose a different file name and location for the completed PDF sheet. Be careful not to overwrite the blank (master) version of the sheet, since you will likely need it next time you create a character.

When you re-load a saved sheet, all fields (including the character portrait, circled meter values, and any check marks) are restored exactly as when the sheet was saved.

**Can I create “templates” which are partially filled in?**

Yes. If for some reason you find that character generation can be streamlined by partially filling in the sheet and re-using this “template” over and over, you can create and save a PDF which records this partial information and re-load it later, as many times as you like.

**Can I print a version of the sheet?**

Yes. Just use Adobe Reader’s Print option (on the File menu or on a toolbar) to create a hardcopy version of your character sheet. The sheet as provided is optimized for US Letter paper, but you can easily print it on other sized paper using the flexible scaling options on Adobe Reader’s Print dialogue.

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