Combat Hacking

As a game master, dealing with hacking can be challenging. On one hand, you want to ensure that players of hackers are having just as much fun as everyone else, that they get enough time in the spotlight. On the other hand, you need to ensure that game play isn't bogged down to the point that the other players don't become bored. Indeed, this has been a huge problem in other cyberpunk games. We've all been there. The hacker decides to penetrate a computer system, and because of complex game rules, the process takes a long time. I've been in game sessions where the rest of the group took a break and did something else while the hacker did their thing. I've seen games devolve to such a point where GMs ruled that only the NPCs performed the hacks. It was frustrating.

When we began development of Interface Zero, the main priority was to create a process by which characters who hack can quickly do their thing with just a few dice rolls. We also wanted to avoid situations where the hacker did their thing remotely while the rest of the group was somewhere else. This concept of "Hacker Overwatch," while cool in theory, felt stale, and also didn't work well with our ideas about how anti intrusion technology would evolve. Air-gapping, buildings with faraday cages built into their core structures, and especially core computer networks unconnected to the Global DataNet meant that a hacker needed to be onsite to do their job. But it wasn't simply about keeping the hacker with the group, however.

Interface Zero has always treated hacking as something that happens in real-time, with hackers being able to act in combat in a support capacity. Combat hackers are able to manipulate their environment, hack into security systems, vehicles, weapons, cybernetics, and things like that. We want to give hackers a reason to stay with the group. This is why hacking is action-based. Unfortunately, because it's action-based, it can take multiple rounds for a hacker to be effective in a combat situation. On average, a hacker will need to spend 3 or 4 actions to accomplish a hack. In a Savage Worlds game where combat can be over in a few short rounds, That's too long.

Enter Hacking Tests.

Hacking Tests

Hacking tests are a slight variation on the Savage Worlds rules for tests. They are used in two different ways: against an individual, or against an object.

Tests against Individuals

When hacking a person, the hacker makes a Hacking roll against the target's Smarts, modified by the IDS penalty of the person's Tendril Access Processor. If the target of the hack doesn't have a TAP, they cannot be hacked in this fashion. Success makes the target **Compromised**. Success with a Raise renders the Target Shaken. At your discretion, further Raises can make people **Distracted** or even **Vulnerable**.

Tests against Objects

When hacking an object, the hacker makes a Hacking roll against the target's IDS rating. The rank of the IDS (Intrusion defense Rating) rating reflects the die type the object uses to resist the roll. See The Object IDS Table for more information. Success makes the object **Compromised**. Raises have no further effect.

Object IDS Table	
IDS	Die Type
1	d4
2	d6
3	d8
4	d10
5	d12

Compromised

When the target of a hack becomes Compromised, the hacker can immediately perform **one** of the following actions as a free action; Activate/ Shutdown Device, Edit Device, Operate Device, or Overload Device.

Activate/Shutdown Device

Shutting down a device is a great way to temporarily gain an advantage over an opponent or even the immediate environment. For instance, The hacker might choose to *"Lockdown all Trash Compactors on the detention level!,"* deactivate someone's cyber eyes, or their smart weapons. Furthermore, hackers might turn off lights in a room, or co^2 scrubbers on a space station. The possibilities are endless.

Edit Device

The character can overwrite security protocols, jam radio transmissions, change passcodes, and anything else involving editing something. The hacker might choose to or alter/delete logs, alter security settings on a smart weapon, etc. You should use your best judgment when this happens.

Operate Device

Perhaps the most interesting (and fun!) option is to take control of something. If a character chooses to operate a device, they can take control of trucks, cars, drones and even weapon systems. Characters can also operate various types of machinery such as robotic arms, security cameras, elevators, and much more. Characters must make the appropriate skill rolls (when applicable) to successfully operate the device.

Note: This option comes with the following caveat. Characters may never use a npc's weapon or cybernetics against them. Oh, Game Master: You can't do that to player characters either!

Overload Device

In 2095, electronics technology has advanced to such a degree that devices can repair themselves, provided they haven't been completely destroyed. CPU's have redundant systems, heat sinks, nanomachine colonies and even circuit breakers to prevent and even recover from near-catastrophic damage. But it takes time to repair the damage.

When a character overloads a device, they disable it for (d6x10) +1 minutes by overheating the device's processors, which in turn damages circuitry, wiring and other components that make the device work. Overloaded devices cannot be re-activated until the allotted time has passed. A successful Repair roll reduces the time by half to a minimum of 1 minute. Raises can cut the remaining time by five minutes per raise to a minimum of 1 minute.