



Nezumi as Player Characters

The Game Master's Guide presents rules for creating Nezumi characters. These rules were created for the sake of simplicity, and work just fine when used for NPCs. However, certain elements of Nezumi NPC creation are not satisfactory for creating player characters. When creating Nezumi player characters, the rules in this book supersede those in the *Game Master's Guide*.

Players who wish to run a Nezumi character must obtain permission from the GM. Nezumi do not fit every campaign, and many parties neither need nor want a six-foot rat. Keep in mind all that playing a Ratling amid human society implies. Though Nezumi and humans are similar in many ways, they are also wildly different. Though misunderstandings between Nezumi and samurai (or Naga!) can create interesting narrative friction, they may distract from the campaign. The GM is quite justified in denying players the right to play a Nezumi character.

Creating a Nezumi Character

Step One – Choose a Tribe

Select one of the eight tribes in this chapter, or follow the rules presented for creating your own. This determines which schools you may choose, your starting Name, and various bonus abilities.

Step Two: Choose a Profession

Select one of the schools offered by your tribe. You gain the Trait Bonus, Skills, starting Niche, and Rank 1 Technique listed under your school.

If you wish to attend a school that is not offered by your tribe, you must purchase the Tribal Wanderer Advantage.

Step Three: Customize Your Character

A Nezumi's Traits and Rings begin at 2. You may spend 30 Character Points to customize your character in the usual manner, and can gain up to 10 Character Points by choosing Disadvantages. When choosing Skills, Traits, Advantages, and Disadvantages pay special attention to the following rules for Nezumi characters. A Nezumi's Starting Outfit is determined by both his Tribe and his school.

Niche – A Nezumi's Place in Society

Nezumi have no place within Rokugani society; their Glory is effectively -10, and can never increase short of the unlikely event that they are allowed to swear fealty to a samurai family. Instead of Glory, Nezumi have a special characteristic called *Tach-cht*, or Niche.

Niche indicates how important the character is within Nezumi society, and along with Name determines how other Ratlings regard him. A starting character's Niche is determined by their school.

Unlike Glory, Niche is never awarded when a Nezumi enters battle or defeats an enemy. Niche only increases with a Nezumi's importance to the tribe. Niche awards are gained when a character proves himself worthy. When a Nezumi increases his School Rank, his importance to the tribe immediately increases as well. Niche ranks are as follows:

Niche Rank 0 – Outcast

Niche Rank 1 – Most Rank 1 characters

Niche Rank 2 – Conjuror (Rank 1 Shaman), Rememberer (Rank 1), most Rank 2 characters

Niche Rank 3 – Most Rank 3 characters

Niche Rank 4 – Nameseeker (Rank 2 Shaman) most Rank 4 characters

Niche Rank 5 – Rememberer (Rank 2)

Niche Rank 6 – Rememberer (Rank 3), most Rank 5 Characters

Niche Rank 7 – Namefinder (Rank 3 Shaman), Rememberer (Rank 4), Pack Chief (Chekchuk)

Niche Rank 8 – Namebinder (Rank 4 Shaman), Rememberer (Rank 5)

Niche Rank 9 – Tribal Chieftain

Niche Rank 10 – Nametaker (Rank 5 Shaman)

Other Niche awards

At ten years of age, a Nezumi automatically gains 1 Rank of Niche. Every four years after that, a Nezumi gains another Rank of



Niche. There is no limit to how much Niche can be gained by age, meaning that an extraordinarily old Nezumi will be granted even greater respect and deference than a tribal chieftain or a powerful Nametaker.

Nezumi who prove themselves fertile and produce offspring gain 0.5 Niche the first time they do so (both parents receive this reward). Nezumi who find a substantial resource or subtly eliminate a threat without creating greater trouble gain one point of Niche. Niche is awarded by those of higher rank than the Nezumi, and no Nezumi can grant a higher Niche rank than his own.

Name (Charathathich)

All Nezumi begin with an Honor rank of zero. Nezumi cannot increase their Honor unless they purchase the Rokugani Culture Advantage and behave appropriately. A Nezumi's Honor Rank can never increase higher than their Rank in Rokugani Culture. A starting Nezumi that purchases Rokugani Culture may spend three Character Points to increase their Honor by one rank. Non-Nezumi must obtain the Nezumi Culture Advantage and behave appropriately if they wish to gain Ranks of Name.

Nezumi obey a code of behavior they refer to as Name. Name increases or decreases in the same way Honor does, but depends on different actions. The amount of Name a character begins with depends upon his tribe.

Starting characters may spend three Character Points to raise their Name by one Rank, or gain 2 Character Points by reducing their Name by one Rank. Name may only be increased or decreased by one rank during character creation.

Like Honor, Name is ranked on a scale of one to five, with ten points per Rank.

Differences Between Name and Honor

The values of a Nezumi are very different from the values of the average samurai.

For example, Nezumi value bravery, but a Nezumi considers it braver to run away so that he can live to defend his tribe. Nezumi value survival ahead of valor. Whatever action leads to the survival of the most Nezumi possible is an action of great Name. If cornered with no escape, a Nezumi with strong Name never surrenders, fighting fiercely so that he can kill as many of the tribe's enemies as possible.

Nezumi value any act that increases their quality of life. Treating an ally in a trustworthy manner is an act of great Name. Playing a trick on an enemy is likewise an act of great Name, unless the Nezumi is caught, as this could bring trouble. Acquiring tools, food, or treasure are also acts of great Name. Stealing from one's allies is

a gray area – in the end it depends whether the ally or the item stolen is more valuable.

A sense of identity is very important. A Nezumi who makes quick decisions has performed an act of great Name – so long as his decision was the right one. Making quick but clumsy decisions implies weak Name. Seeking advice from the wise is by no means an act of weak Name, so long as the Nezumi does so quickly. Nezumi are not expected to obey their tribal leaders without question the way samurai are, but are expected to realize that their leaders are the most qualified judges of the tribe's actions. Nezumi walk a fine line between individuality and loyalty, and oftentimes the road is difficult.

Loyalty to other Nezumi is another important part of Name. Choosing one's tribe over one's selfish desires is always an act of great Name. Bearing children is an act of extremely great Name, as this assures the survival the next generation. Saving the life of a child at the risk of your own is perhaps the greatest act of Name. Nezumi tribes rarely fight amongst themselves. If two tribes are on poor terms they prefer to avoid each other than stage a direct confrontation. Starting a fight with other Nezumi is an act of weak Name. Stealing from or tricking a rival tribe is certainly an action of great Name, and happens often.

Name Rank 0: Nameless

You are hardly a Nezumi. Either your actions are foolish and troublesome, or you care nothing for your kind. Perhaps you do not even care about yourself.

Name Rank 1: Soiled Name

You are considered erratic, perhaps a bit touched in the head. Maybe you like to start fights. Maybe you don't work hard enough. Maybe you're just lazy.

Name Rank 2: Good Name

Most Nezumi hover somewhere around this Rank. You usually do what is right for the tribe, but you're sometimes tempted to see to your own needs first or carry out vendettas. Though you fail from time to time, you usually *try* to act appropriately.

Name Rank 3: Great Name

You have great strength of character, and place the needs of the tribe before your own as much as possible. You are not afraid to make sacrifices to better the lives of your people, and will gladly flee before a superior force. You have a highly developed sense of self worth, and know your proper place.



Name Rank 4: Legendary Name

At this rank, you are deep-set in your sense of self and purpose. You *always* put the needs of the tribe before your own, and constantly seek methods to better the quality of life for all Nezumi. You know that it is better to be practical than brave, and have little doubt how to react to a given situation – the needs of the tribe will guide you.

Name Rank 5: Perfect Name

Few Nezumi ascend to this level of identity. You do not follow the rules of Name – you *make* the rules. You *dictate* what is best for tribe and clan, and the rest follow your lead. Your actions are never thoughtless, but are always deeply driven by experience. You seldom lead your tribe astray of the truest path to survival and prosperity.

Sample Name Awards and Losses

Losses and gains are cumulative. Outsmarting an enemy by stealing from him, for example, would gain 2–6 boxes of Name. Causing the death of a Nezumi child would net a loss of 8–12 points.

The GM is the final arbitrator in whether any points are gained or lost.

Tests of Name

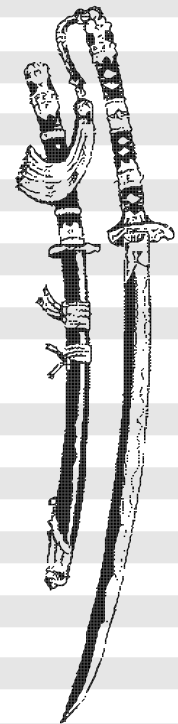
Like Honor, a Nezumi may rely upon his strength of character to resist temptation. If a Nezumi is forced to perform an action that he feels is of weak Name, he may choose to make a Name Test. This functions exactly as an Honor Test (see page 169 of the *Player's Guide*) except that Name is used in the place of Honor.

If a character with both Name and Honor finds both are applicable in a given situation, he must use one or the other, not both.

Nezumi and Void

Like all living creatures, Nezumi are composed partially of Void. To reflect this, they have a Void Ring. Unfortunately, the use and focus of Void is a human talent, one that the Nezumi lack. Nezumi cannot spend Void points for any reason, and cannot use any Rank Technique or ability that requires Void.

Action	Name Points Gained or Lost
Killing an enemy	+0 to 1
Running away from an enemy	+1 to 2
Outsmarting an enemy	+1 to 3
Stealing from an enemy	+1 to 3
Making a friend or ally	+2 to 4
Obtaining new food, treasure, weapons, or tools for the tribe	+1 to 2
Inventing a new tool or weapon	+2 to 5
Making quick, correct decisions	+0 to 1
Seeking advice	+0 to 1
Fathering children	+1 to 2
Bearing a litter	+4 to 5
Saving the life of a child at the risk of your own	+4 to 6
Getting into an unnecessary fight	-0 to 1
Stealing from an ally	-1 to 3
Allowing something to be stolen from the tribe	-2 to 4
Stealing from your tribe	-3 to 5
Wasting resources	-0 to 1
Abandoning the tribe	-2 to 5
Making an enemy	-1 to 3
Destroying food	-1 to 2
Making a poor decision when advice was available	-0 to 1
Causing the death of any Nezumi, by action or omission	-3 to 5
Causing the death of any child, by action or omission	-5 to 7





Nezumi and Rokugani Schools

Under most circumstances a Nezumi should not be allowed to attend a samurai school. The dishonor a sensei would accrue for teaching a Ratling is too high with Rokugani prejudices as they are. That being said, sometimes strange things do happen (see Tchickchuk in Chapter Four for an example). The GM should allow whatever he deems appropriate in his own campaign.

Keep in mind that Nezumi cannot use Rank Techniques that require expenditure of Void Points.

Nezumi and Skills

Many skills normally available to starting characters are prohibited for Nezumi. The Rokugani Culture Advantage is designed to circumvent this drawback, as Nezumi are extraordinarily adaptive. Those who become familiar with the culture of the samurai may learn their skills.

This table lists skills that are restricted for Nezumi. The prerequisite listed is the rank of Rokugani Culture required in order to learn the skill at any rank. Obtaining Rokugani Culture does not automatically grant expertise in any skills; they must be learned and paid for normally.

Asterisks indicate skills which have an equivalent in both Nezumi and Rokugani society, and may be learned as separate skills for either. For example, any Nezumi can take Etiquette (Nezumi) to behave properly around Nezumi, but must obtain Rokugani Culture and learn Etiquette (Rokugani) to know the proper things to do and say around samurai. Skills with "Never" listed under the prerequisite have a Rokugani version that may not be learned by Nezumi.

A human or Naga wishing to learn the Nezumi version of any asterisk-marked listed skills must purchase the appropriate rank of Nezumi Culture.

Nezumi and Meditation

Nezumi cannot spend Void, but they can learn Meditation normally. This skill is only of use to shamans, who may make a Void/Meditation roll vs. TN of 20 to recover a spell slot after

meditating for one hour. Other Nezumi who practice this skill do so merely out of an attempt to understand human behavior.

Nezumi and Craft Skills

Nezumi can learn human or Naga Craft skills with little trouble. Any Nezumi with even one Rank of Rokugani Culture may learn any Craft skill he wishes, though items crafted by Nezumi are often drastically different from Rokugani versions in appearance and function.

Nezumi and Social Skills

Nezumi who purchase social Skills and Advantages gain all the normal benefits. However, the GM can assign whatever penalty he deems fit when a Nezumi character interacts with those prejudiced against Nezumi. The ordinary TN penalty ranges from +20 to +30 or more when dealing with a Naga or other hostile individual. This penalty can be reduced gradually if the Nezumi wins the trust of those with whom he is dealing. These penalties should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, and common sense should rule overall. A Nezumi scout attempting to seduce a geisha will face a harsh penalty no matter how well-liked he is.

Non-Nezumi using social skills in Nezumi society face the same penalties.

Interactions between Nezumi and Crab characters usually face no penalty.

Nezumi Racial Abilities

The Nezumi's unique physiology grants them the following abilities:

Burrowing

A Nezumi can burrow through three feet of soft earth per hour, leaving a tunnel if he wishes. Make a Stamina check vs. a TN of 5 plus 5 for each hour of burrowing. When this check fails, the Nezumi must rest for six hours before burrowing further. The tunnel a Nezumi creates is unstable unless shored with other materials.

Climbing

The long tail and claws of Nezumi make them expert climbers. When climbing, a Nezumi rolls three extra unkept dice as if he were using climbing tools. A Nezumi is never considered to be unskilled when climbing.



Skill	Rokugani Culture Rank
Astrology	4
Acting	2
Advanced Medicine	5
Animal Husbandry (Horse)	Never
Armorer	1
Artisan	3
Autopsy	5
Bard	4
Calligraphy	1
Cipher	3
Commerce*	1
Courtier*	5
Dance (see Mee-i'thich)*	1
Engineering	1
Etiquette*	2
Explosives	3
Forgery	3
Gambling*	1
Go	1
Hand to Hand (see Mochatchikkan)*	1
Heraldry (see Tribal Lore)*	3
History (see Remembering)*	3
Horse Archery	Never
Horsemanship	Never
Iaijutsu	Never
Law*	5
Locksmith	1
Lore: Ancestors	5
Lore: Bushido	2
Lore: Festivals and Ceremonies	4
Lore: Literature	3
Lore: Nemuranai	4
Lore: Shadowlands (see Lore: Deep Shadowlands)*	1
Lore: Shugenja*	4
Lore: Tropical Fish	3
Manipulation*	5
Music*	2
Oratory*	3
Oratory/Rhetoric*	3
Origami	1
Painting (see Th'Kwee)*	2
Poetry (see Tloo'cha'thrr)*	2
Political Maneuvering*	5
Research*	4
Seduction*	5

Skill	Rokugani Culture Rank
Shintao	2
Sincerity*	4
Spell Research*	Never
Spellcraft (see Name Lore)*	5
Tea Ceremony	Never
Theology*	3
Torture*	2
Weaponsmith*	1
Yomanri	2

Contortion

A Nezumi's spine and skeleton are extremely flexible. Generally, a Nezumi can fit through any opening that accommodates his head. A Nezumi must make a raw Agility roll vs. TN 25 to squeeze through an opening without harm. If he fails, he takes one die of Wounds and does not make it through, but may try again. The TN for contortion is increased by 15 while wearing Light samurai armor, and is impossible in Heavy Armor.

Enhanced Hearing

Nezumi can hear a higher register of sound than humans, but cannot hear low, bass tones.

Enhanced Scent

Nezumi sense of scent is acute. A raw Perception roll vs. an appropriate TN allows a Nezumi to detect a strong scent in the air, and identify it if he has encountered it before. Nezumi cannot track by scent unless the smell is overpowering. All Nezumi are skilled at detecting the subtle odor of pheromones.

Immunity to the Taint

Nezumi cannot contract the Shadowlands Taint by any means, and can heal normally within the Shadowlands with no danger of infection. Name Magic cast in the Shadowlands receives no TN penalty.

Leaping

A Nezumi character can leap a distance equal to his height times his Water from a standing start, and his height times half his Water straight up. Increase either of these distances by half with a running start. The GM may require an Agility or Athletics/Agility roll vs. an appropriate TN for complex leaping maneuvers.



Nezumi and Skill Groups

Nezumi may purchase any skill groups presented in *Winter Court: Kyuden Asako*, so long as they can legally learn the skills they select. The following are new Skill Groups for Nezumi characters.

Ratling Culture Group	Ratling Survival Group
Courtier (Nezumi)	Athletics
Etiquette (Nezumi)	Defense
Mee-i'thich	Lore (Deep Shadowlands)
Name Lore	Scrounging
Remembering	Stealth
Th'Kwee	Hunting
Tloo'cha'thrr	
Tribal Lore	

Night Vision

Nezumi are nocturnal, and can see well with little light. A Nezumi ignores TN penalties inflicted by darkness, up to a maximum of +10. Nezumi have only limited color vision (they see greens and blues as shades of brown) and have only half the visual range of a human, one quarter in bright sunlight.

Pheromones

The average Nezumi can leave a pheromone that indicates his gender, tribe, and the direction in which he is traveling. These pheromones can be detected up to twenty feet away by other Nezumi and linger until washed away. The TN to detect these pheromones by scent is 5, plus 5 for each additional week of age. Creatures with a strong sense of smell (such as dogs and horses) can detect Nezumi pheromones, but do not know what they mean. Some animals become inexplicably aggressive when they encounter Nezumi pheromones.

Speed

A Nezumi may move a number of feet per round equal to his Water x 7, or Water x 10 if running on all fours with nothing in hand. If they wish to run at top speed, they may move twice this distance but may take no other action in that round. Nezumi face no penalty

during the round after they run at top speed, as humans do (see page 164, *Player's Guide*).

Teeth

A Nezumi can gnaw through a foot of wood per hour, or an inch of soft metal (gold, lead, etc.). The Nezumi must make a Stamina check vs. a TN of 5 for each hour of gnawing, plus five for each additional hour. When this check fails, the Nezumi's teeth are dulled and he must wait twenty-four hours before he may gnaw again. A Nezumi skilled in Mochatchikkan can use his teeth to bite an opponent, inflicting normal unarmed damage (Strength k1).

Toughness

The strong Nezumi constitution makes them resistant to illness. A Nezumi can eat nearly anything without harm, and has a +10 bonus on all rolls to resist disease, including magical disease.

Wounds

Nezumi can endure more pain than humans, and remain active until knocked out entirely. To reflect this, a Nezumi determines Wounds on each Rank by multiplying Earth by four, rather than two. PC Nezumi are also somewhat hardier than the NPC Nezumi described on page 122 of the *GM's Guide*, and have five Wound ranks instead of four: +0, +3, +6, +10, and Dead.