

# FENG SHUI: MISSION CRITICAL OBJECTIVES

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[by Justin Alexander - March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021](#)



*Feng Shui* is the action movie RPG of fast and furious combat inspired by the classic Hong Kong films of Jackie Chan, John Woo, Tsui Hark, Michelle Yeoh, and Jet Li. It uses a [really cool initiative system](#) featuring a shot counter:

- Your initiative check determines your initial shot count in the sequence.
- Each action is rated by the number of “shots” it will take to resolve.
- This shot cost is subtracted from your initial shot count to determine the next shot count on which you’ll be able to act.
- When everyone’s shot count hits 0, the current sequence ends and a new sequence begins with fresh initiative checks.

I describe this mostly to provide context for the cool new toy we’re talking about today: **mission critical objectives**.

Most fight scenes end when everybody on the opposing team is incapacitated. You stand triumphant with bruised knuckles over their unconscious, dead, or groaning forms.

But sometimes, that’s not the point.

Sometimes you’re fighting the bad guys because they’re trying to launch their hijacked nuclear missile or open the gates to the Mongol invaders. And sometimes they’re trying to stop YOU from uploading the virus to their computer network or destroying the Crystal of All-Knowledge.

One way to stop an opposing force, of course, is the aforementioned carpet of corpses. But often these goals can be logically achieved in the middle of the fight (“Hold off those Nazis while I disable the V-2’s fuel line!”), and ideally we’d like to capture the frenetic thrill of the struggle, creating fight scenes that are more varied than just punching hit point pinatas.

The problem is that these scenarios often become anti-climactic when combined with the turn-based nature of most RPG combat systems: On the hacker’s turn they make a Computer Systems check and...

that's it. The virus is uploaded. It's over. There are ways to work around this, but they can be extremely situational and difficult to pull off.

Fortunately, the *Feng Shui* initiative system makes it easy to implement a solution.

## MISSION CRITICAL OBJECTIVES

Attempting mission critical objective requires a 5-shot action, often accompanied by a skill check (i.e., a Sabotage check to cut the fuel lines). If successful, then the character can achieve the mission critical objective on their next action.

While a character is attempting a mission critical objective, however, other combatants can attempt to interrupt them as a 3-shot action.

If a hero is attempting to stop a GMC from achieving a mission critical objective, they can attempt either an attack stunt or an appropriate skill check (with the foe's skill AV as the difficulty). If they succeed, the GMC fails to achieve the mission critical objective (although they can try again later). If they fail, the GMC achieves the mission critical objective.

If a GMC is attempting to stop a hero from achieving a mission critical objective, the hero must make an appropriate skill check (with the foe's skill AV or Speed as the difficulty). On a success, the hero achieves the mission critical objective. On a failure, they've failed (although they can try again later).

### ADDITIONAL OPTIONS

**Multi-Step Objectives:** It can often be satisfying to have multiple mission critical objectives that have to be achieved. (For example, you might need to shut down all three etheric turbines to prevent the Martian death laser from firing.)

**Tug-of-War:** As a variant of a multi-step objective, each mission critical objective might exist as a kind of "toggle" that can be swapped back and forth. For example, you might need to cut the three pirate harpoon lines to free your ship and sail away. While you can attempt mission critical objectives to cut a line, the pirates can attempt one to resecure a line you've cut.

**Mission Critical Boost:** Characters can spend 1 Fortune to grant a +3 bonus or +1d6 (their choice) to a character attempting a mission critical objective.

**Non-Critical Mission Objectives:** For objectives that are involved but not the ultimate goal of the confrontation, you might choose to attempt them as 3-shot actions (instead of 5-shot actions).

**Just One Chance:** For some mission critical objectives, you might only get one chance. If the mission critical objective is attempted and fails, it cannot be attempted again.

### ENDING THE FIGHT

Achieving the mission critical objective means that victory has been attained... but there may still be a bunch of bad guys. So what happens next?

One option, of course, is to just finish the fight - i.e., keep fighting until everyone on one side has been KOed. But this can be rather unsatisfying: Victory (or defeat), after all, has already been achieved.

Mission done? Time to leave! *Feng Shui* conveniently includes rules for doing that! (See the *Cheesing It* mechanics on p. 111 of the rulebook.)

Probably the key thing to keep in mind here is the central lesson of the [Art of Pacing](#): The question we used to frame the fight scene ("Can we achieve the mission critical objective / prevent the bad guys from

achieving the mission critical objective?") has been answered. The scene is, therefore, functionally done. And when a scene is done, it's okay [to just wrap it up, cut away, and start the next scene](#).

## CODA: IN OTHER SYSTEMS

Although well-suited to *Feng Shui*, this same basic concept can be hacked into other roleplaying games. In D&D, for example, mission critical objectives can be actions that take 1 round to complete, finishing on the character's next turn and allowing other combatants to potentially interrupt them.