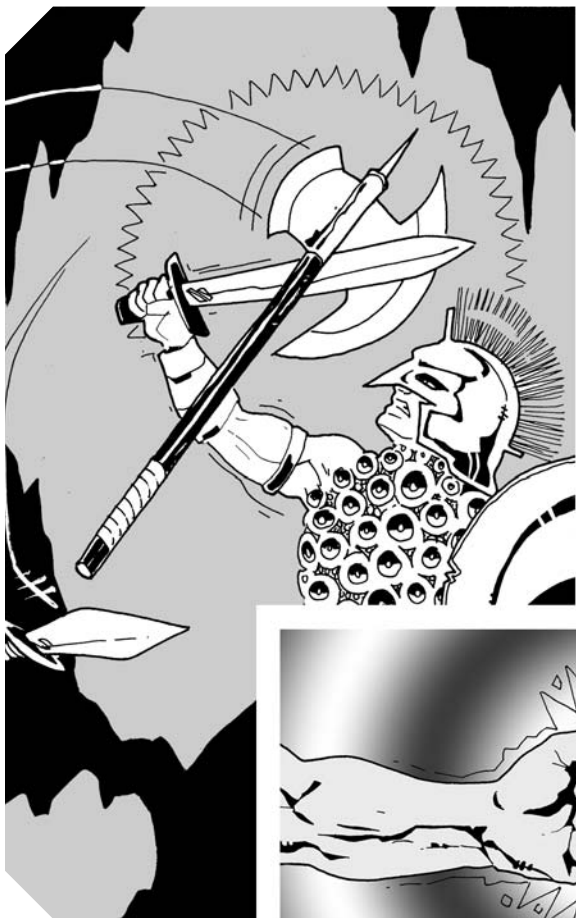


GURPS

Fourth Edition

POWER-UPS™ **1**

IMBUEMENTS



Written by **SEAN PUNCH**

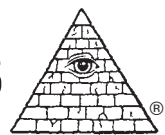
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INTRODUCTION

Ever wanted to give a character the ability to make the longsword in his hand flaming or the arrows from his bow (or bullets from his gun) armor-piercing? For one *particular* magical or otherwise “special” weapon, this is relatively easy: buy the desired Affliction, Binding, or Innate Attack with suitable gadget limitations from pp. B116-117. But a few fictional heroes are capable of imbuing *any* weapon of a particular class – perhaps *every* weapon they use – with special properties. That’s a little more complicated!

The *Modifying ST-Based Damage* rules in *GURPS Powers* might seem appropriate at first. That prescription applies the desired enhancements to ST-based damage exactly as if it was a Crushing Attack of the same size, and uses the point cost of just the modifiers as the cost to alter the nature of your bare-handed damage. Unfortunately, that system was designed for unarmed, ST-based crushing damage, and is extremely difficult to extend to weapons – especially if they’re ranged, not crushing, and/or not muscle-powered (guns, for instance, have all three problems).

You could still try, of course. You could build the most expensive attack that you’re capable of creating by imbuing a weapon and modifying its stats – the attack with the best damage, range, RoF, etc. Then you could subtract the price of the basic advantage, read the point cost of the modifiers as that of the imbue ability, and only allow the modifiers to aid weapons that, once imbued, would be no better than this best attack. But that would be a delicate exercise before the game began *and* tedious in play – whenever you grabbed a new weapon, you would have to do hasty math to determine whether the imbue pushes it over the line!

This mediocre showing isn’t surprising. Enhancements in *GURPS* assume that you have a *specific* attack to modify. They misbehave when you’re after the ability to modify something as general as “anything that may come to hand” . . . because, really, there’s no fair price for modifiers when you have no idea what they might modify at some future point. A munchkin player might even point out – not without some justification – that because ordinary guns and swords don’t cost points in *GURPS*, enhancements on them would be multiples of 0 points and hence *free!*

Fortunately, there’s a way around this headache. *GURPS* already has a set of abilities that make weapons more effective. These potent traits can increase accuracy, lower target defenses, reduce DR, raise attack rate, extend the useful range of missile weapons, and many other things. They are, of course, *combat skills*. (For the curious, lowering defenses is simply Deceptive Attack, reducing DR is targeting chinks in armor, raising attack rate is Rapid Strike, and increasing accuracy and range are basic skill effects.)

Still, ordinary combat skills don’t quite cut it when it comes to adding genuine attack enhancements. No amount of *believable* training will let you pick up any pistol and fire armor-piercing shots no matter what its actual ammunition, or grasp any broadsword and set the blade ablaze. Such feats call for a new kind of skill – an *Imbue Skill*.

Imbue Skills are akin to both cinematic combat skills like Breaking Blow and Pressure Secrets, and magic spells like Flaming Weapon and Penetrating Weapon. They channel some exotic or supernatural force – such as mana, the wielder’s chi, or super-powered bioenergy – to give the user’s weapon special capabilities. While they’re priced and bought as skills, the GM is welcome to treat them as something closer to advantages.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean “Dr. Kromm” Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985, ended up the *GURPS* Line Editor in 1995, and has engineered rules for almost every *GURPS* product since. During the *GURPS Third Edition* era, he compiled both *GURPS Compendium* volumes, developed *GURPS Lite*, wrote *GURPS Wizards* and *GURPS Undead*, and edited or revised over 20 other titles. With David Pulver, he produced the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*, in 2004. His latest creations include *GURPS Powers* (with Phil Masters), *GURPS Martial Arts* (with Peter Dell’Orto), and *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1-4*. Sean has been a gamer since 1979. His non-gaming interests include cinema and wine. He lives in Montréal, Québec with his wife, Bonnie. They have two cats, Banshee and Zephyra, and a noisy parrot, Circe.



THE IMBUE ADVANTAGE

It isn't balanced simply to let PCs buy whatever Imbuement Skills they like. Just as wizards need Magery to cast their spells and martial artists must be Trained by a Master to learn Breaking Blow, individuals who can imbue require a special advantage, which we'll define here before discussing the skills.

Imbue

10, 20, or 40 points

You can learn Imbuement Skills that grant additional capabilities to weapons ready in your hands – including your hands themselves, claws, and so on. Each level of Imbue (maximum three) gives access to more and increasingly powerful Imbuement Skills. The prerequisite level of Imbue for each skill is noted with that skill.

Special Limitations

Unmodified Imbue is a “wild” ability that works anywhere and isn't subject to special countermeasures, although protection effective against the type of attack that the empowered weapon delivers works normally. However, Imbue is often associated with a particular power source and subject to that source's drawbacks; this may even be a *requirement* in certain game worlds. Simulate this by giving Imbue a suitable power modifier; e.g., Chi (-10%), Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), or Psionic (-10%), all from **GURPS Powers**. If the power modifier is Cosmic, you only need the +50% version to bend a few limits (see individual skills) and avoid being dispelled, but you must take the +300% version if all of your Imbuement Skills can ignore DR. An upside of adding *any* power modifier is that the power's Talent adds to Imbuement Skill rolls!

One special limitation is common on both wild and power-linked Imbue:

Limited Skill Access: Your Imbue only enables you to acquire *some* Imbuement Skills (each of which you can still buy for multiple *weapon* skills). The limitation is -80% for a single skill, -60% for two, -40% for three, or -20% for four skills. Access to five or more Imbuement Skills isn't a meaningful limitation. The GM may require PCs who want two to four skills to select thematically related choices – e.g., Burning Strike and

Incendiary Weapon – rather than cherry-pick favorites. This limitation doesn't waive Imbue level prerequisites and always applies to the whole advantage; to get Limited Skill Access for skills that require Imbue 2 or 3, buy Imbue 2 or 3, respectively, and apply this limitation to the *entire* advantage (even if only one of your chosen skills is at the highest level!).

MULTIPLE IMBUE ADVANTAGES

You can buy more than one copy of Imbue provided that *all* versions have power modifiers *and* the modifiers differ. You can give any or all of them Limited Skill Access, if you wish; this is occasionally a little cheaper than Imbue for one source with the same total number of skills, but not very often – and not by much. When you have multiple instances of Imbue like this, you must learn each Imbuement Skill for a specific source; e.g., Envenomed Weapon (Bow; Magical) isn't the same as Envenomed Weapon (Bow; Chi).

This has one significant drawback, of course: You have to pay extra points for two or more versions of Imbue – and possibly for several versions of your favorite Imbuement Skills to go with them. This is more than offset by two major benefits, however:

The most obvious benefit is that you'll rarely be without your imbuement abilities. If countermeasures or other problems faced by one power source cause it to fail, you can switch sources without missing a beat. If one Imbue advantage is somehow crippled or drained, you still have the other.

The most potent benefit is that you can use differently sourced versions of the *same* Imbuement Skill simultaneously, like any two other compatible skills, provided that you can make the skill rolls and afford the FP cost; see *Multiple Skills* (p. 5). This produces cumulative effects, where applicable. For instance, Envenomed Weapon gives 1d worth of poison at -3 to skill, 2d at -7, or 3d at -10, so if you knew both the Chi and Magical versions, you could avoid a tricky skill-7 roll for 2d damage by making a pair of easier skill-3 rolls for the same 2d – or, if you're skilled, you could get 6d of poison damage, circumventing the skill's normal 3d limit, by making two skill-10 rolls!

IMBUEMENT SKILLS

Imbuement Skills have no default, except across specialties (see *Specialties*, below). All are DX/VH, although the GM is welcome to make them IQ/VH if that would better suit the power source of Imbue (e.g., for psionics). Every Imbuement Skill has *some* level of Imbue as a prerequisite.

Specialties

All Imbuement Skills require specialization by particular combat skill. For instance, Multi-Shot (Pistol) – associated with Guns (Pistol) – is different from Multi-Shot (Bow), Multi-Shot (Rifle), and Multi-Shot (Thrown Knife), for use with Bow, Guns

(Rifle), and Thrown Weapon (Knife), respectively. You can specialize in any weapon skill that suits the skill type (see *Types of Imbuement Skills*, p. 5), and there are two further specialties that work slightly differently:

Throwing: This specialty lets you imbue hurled objects not covered by any specific Thrown Weapon skill, regardless of what they look like. It works with both Throwing and Throwing Art (if you have it!).

Unarmed: This specialty enables you to charge up bare-handed attacks *regardless* of what unarmed combat skill you use – although you'll find striking skills more useful. It covers kicks,

What Can I Imbue?

Imbuement Skills require specialization by combat skill. Those with weapon skill specialties can imbue any weapon covered by the associated weapon skill, those with the Throwing specialty can charge up any hurled object not covered by a weapon skill, and Imbuement Skills that have the Unarmed specialty can enhance any strike delivered by the user's natural "melee weapons" – punches, kicks, elbow strikes, knee strikes, head butts, bites, claws, stings, etc.

However, you *can't* imbue a ranged attack bought with points, whether natural (like a racial ability) or superhuman, even if it has gadget limitations. To this end, the Innate Attack skill (p. B201) is never a valid specialty for Imbuement Skills. If you want to enhance such an attack, put the desired modifiers on the underlying attack advantage and pay for them directly. Imbuement Skills exist specifically to enhance attacks for which you *can't* easily do this, like swords, guns, and fists.

You *might* be able to enhance spells and/or equipment other than weapons. These special cases have important rules of their own. For details, see *Imbuing Spells* (p. 11) and *Noncombat Imbuement* (p. 13).

punches, and blows with Claws, Strikers, Teeth, etc. It *doesn't* include natural ranged attacks such as a dragon's flame breath (see *What Can I Imbue?*, above).

Specialties of a given Imbuement Skill default to each other at the same penalty as the associated combat skills. For instance, if you know Flaming Strike (Broadsword), you can attempt Flaming Strike (Shortsword) at -2. There's no default between specialties for completely unrelated weapons.

To be able to imbue more than one weapon type, buy several specialties – possibly improving them from default, for related weapons – or purchase a wildcard Imbuement Skill.

Wildcard Imbuement Skills

Those who can truly imbue *any* weapon may learn a "wild-card" ("!") version of any standard Imbuement Skill; see *Wildcard Skills* (p. B175). Price such a skill as usual for the desired level and then *triple* the point cost. Such a skill works with every applicable combat skill – and possibly even with skills for noncombat equipment (see *Noncombat Imbuement*, p. 13). For instance, someone with Flaming Strike! could turn any weapon to flame, be it a staff, a sword, an arrow from a bow, or a bullet from a gun.

Types of Imbuement Skills

Imbuement Skills are divided into three basic classes based on what weapons they can affect (for further details, see *What Can I Imbue?*, above):

General: Any specialty is possible – Throwing, Unarmed, or any weapon skill.

Melee: Allowed specialties are those for melee combat skills (all Melee Weapon skills, plus Cloak, Garrote, Lance, Net, and Shield) and Unarmed.

Ranged: Only missile and thrown weapon specialties are available. For missile weapons, it's the *ammunition* rather than the *launcher* that's imbued.

This distinction is made on the grounds of whether the granted effects make sense for a given category of weapons. For instance, enhancements that affect ranged combat stats have no meaningful definition for melee weapons.

Imbuement Skills are also split into two large functional categories; see *Enhancement Skills* (pp. 6-11) and *Transformation Skills* (pp. 11-13). Technically, there's a third category here – Combination Skills (pp. 13-14) – but this straddles the line between the first two and isn't truly distinct.

Using Imbuement Skills

To use an Imbuement Skill, you must be holding a ready weapon of a type that skill can affect (if only at default); a missile weapon must also be loaded and ready to shoot. You cannot empower an unready weapon or unloaded missile weapon, or a weapon that you, personally, aren't using. You can *never* imbue a weapon and hand it off to someone else – the only way to give another person an imbued weapon is to charge up a projectile and attack him with it!

Imbuement Skills require no concentration or preparation. Roll before you make each attack roll. If you succeed, add the skill's effects to that attack. Failure simply means you don't get the benefit of the skill. Critical failure also costs 2 FP.

Each use of an Imbuement Skill costs 1 FP. You can pay this with standard FP or, if your Imbue advantage is part of a power, out of an Energy Reserve associated with that power. You can try to avoid this cost by making your Imbuement Skill roll at -5 (but if you critically fail, you still pay 2 FP).

Many Imbuement Skills offer variable effects. This doesn't change FP cost but gives an additional penalty, cumulative with the -5 to avoid FP cost. Without very high skill, it often isn't possible to attempt the more potent effects "for free" (or at all!).

You *can* use an Imbuement Skill multiple times per turn: roll and pay FP once per attack roll. A rapid-fire attack is just one attack roll, so roll and pay FP only once for that. Keeping the special effects of your skills "on" full-time while your weapon is in hand requires no skill roll or FP – thus, even a low level of skill can *look* cool!

Defensive Use

You can attempt to imbue a weapon on somebody else's turn for such purposes as parrying and discouraging a foe from grabbing your weapon. To do so, roll (Imbuement Skill/2) + 3, adding +1 for Combat Reflexes. The modifiers and FP cost work as usual. Success gives your weapon the skill's usual benefits for the duration of one defensive action.

Multiple Skills

You can use as many *different* Imbuement Skills as you like, provided that you can make the skill rolls and afford the FP cost. You can even use the same skill more than once if you know it for several power sources (see *Multiple Imbue Advantages*, p. 4). However, you can never use more than one Transformation Skill (pp. 11-13) of any kind per attack, certain skills are mutually exclusive, and you can't combine skills that produce exactly the opposite effect (if there's any doubt, the GM's decision is final).

Imbuement Skill Categories

For the purpose of Wild Talent (p. B99), “Imbuement Skills” is a valid category for the Focused limitation, worth the usual -20%. To choose this option, you must have the Imbue advantage *without* the Limited Skill Access modifier. You cannot spontaneously use skills above your Imbue level.

For the purpose of Modular Abilities (p. B71), “Imbuement Skills” is an allowed category for Limited when used in its trait-limited sense (see *GURPS Powers*), and is worth -20%. “Enhancement Skills” or “Transformation Skills” – or “Melee Imbuement Skills” or “Ranged Imbuement Skills” – is a -30% limitation. Anything more specific (e.g., “Ranged Enhancement Skills”) is worth -40%. You must have Imbue to select any of these, and you can’t use Modular Abilities slots for skills above your level.

Talent

If your Imbue advantage is associated with a power, that power’s Talent adds to both regular and defensive uses of your Imbuement Skills. In addition, a few advantages that aren’t always associated with powers are effectively Talents for common power sources:

Chi: Chi Talent (from *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*) and Forceful Chi (from *GURPS Martial Arts*) provide a bonus for individuals who have Imbue (Chi, -10%).

Divine: Power Investiture doubles as a Talent for holy folk with Imbue (Divine, -10%).

Magical: Magery acts as Talent for mages with Imbue (Magical, -10%). In *Dungeon Fantasy*, remember that Bard-Song is a magical power as well – so Bardic Talent works the same way.

ENHANCEMENT SKILLS

Essentially, *Enhancement Skills* do for weapons what various modifiers from the *Basic Set* and *Powers* do for advantages. In most cases, you can combine these skills with each other and with Transformation Skills (pp. 11-13) – although some are relatively useless if you transform the weapon into a non-damaging one, and a few are mutually exclusive.

Annihilating Weapon

Melee; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 2.

Your damaging melee weapon automatically gets to roll its usual damage against any weapon that parries it – in effect, it’s destructive for parrying purposes, just like a force sword. Roll its damage normally and apply it to the parrying weapon (or *body part*, if your opponent made an unarmed parry).

This effect is *always* obvious – your weapon flames, vibrates, turns to brilliant green energy, or otherwise telegraphs its destructive nature. Thus, canny foes can avoid the worst of it by

relying on Dodge instead. However, you can trigger your skill defensively (see *Defensive Use*, p. 5) so that your weapon damages a rival’s weapon or body when you parry *him*.

Arching Shot

Ranged; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 2.

This lets a ranged weapon arch up over the target and strike from the top, regardless of its normal ballistics. Effects are identical to Overhead (p. B107): the attack bypasses any cover that doesn’t offer overhead protection, negates penalties to hit for low target postures, and gives the victim -2 to defend the *first* time he’s attacked (after that, he’ll be on the lookout!). Arching Shot is useful for getting arrows and bullets to targets that are behind a barrier of finite height that blocks projectiles but not vision (e.g., a Force Wall spell).

Bank Shot

Ranged; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 2.

You can bounce your damaging ranged attack off “hard cover” in the environment in order to reach your target. The exact DR and HP of the things you’re bouncing the shot off aren’t important. What matters is that these objects are convincingly *hard*: walls and rocks, not curtains and ferns.

To use this skill, plot your course and count the bounces. If there’s nothing but floor or ground around, then only *one* bounce is possible: from you, to the floor, and back up to your target. Once you have your course, roll vs. Bank Shot.

Modifiers: -2 per bounce after the first (-2 for two bounces, -4 for three, and so on); an extra -2 for *each* ricochet off something fragile, like rice paper or window glass.

If this works, make a standard ranged-attack roll to hit with the imbued projectile. Use the *full* range along the zigzag path to the target. An alerted target always gets a defense, but this is at -1 per bounce.

Conic Blast

Ranged; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

This skill is only available for *missile* weapons (bows, guns, etc.). It converts a single ranged attack into a cone that originates from the weapon, similar to a blast of grapeshot; see *Area and Spreading Attacks* (p. B413). An unmodified skill roll gives a cone that’s RoF yards wide at the attack’s Max range. High-RoF weapons get broader cones – *not* multiple cones.

Modifiers: You can spread the attack further at -1 per extra yard of maximum width.

Continuing Attack

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

This skill causes wounds from a damaging weapon to worsen after the initial attack. Choose an effect consistent with the attack you're enhancing – acid or big grubs eating away at the victim, bleeding, rotting, sticky napalm, venom, etc. Whatever the visuals, the effect is to give the attack a form of Cyclic (pp. B103-104).

An unmodified roll means that if the initial attack injured the target at all, he will suffer the same injury again in one day's time.

Modifiers: For a shorter interval, roll at -2 for 1 hour, -4 for 1 minute, -6 for 10 seconds, or -8 for 1 second. Repeated cycles are possible: for standard 1 day intervals, roll at -1 per cycle after the first; for other intervals, multiply the time penalty by the total number of intervals (e.g., -24 for three cycles 1 second apart).

This is *injury* that comes right off HP – *not* damage that must penetrate DR again, be multiplied for damage type, and so forth. Should it matter, the effects are consistent with the original attack's damage type. For instance, enough continuing injury from a burning attack would reduce someone to charcoal, while the same HP loss to cutting injury would leave ground meat.

When imbuing an attack that has a linked or follow-up effect, you must specify which part of the attack is continuing. You can't enhance more than one part of a linked attack, or both a carrier and its follow-up attack.

Unless your Imbue advantage is Cosmic (+50% or +300%), you *must* specify some reasonably obvious way to halt the continuing injury: dousing flame, picking out grubs, applying disinfectant to rotting flesh, etc. This isn't likely to matter for short intervals, of course!

Crippling Blow

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

Lets you envenom your weapon or make a pressure-point strike in such a way that a living victim may suffer a *physical* Affliction (p. B40), as if your attack had a Side Effect (p. B109). If *any* damage penetrates the target's DR, he must make a HT roll, at -1 per 2 points of penetrating damage, or suffer a harmful effect. A blow that doesn't penetrate does nothing.

The default effect of a failed HT roll is that the target is stunned. He may roll vs. HT at the same penalty every turn to recover. More potent Afflictions give a penalty to your Crippling Blow roll, but last for minutes equal to the victim's margin of failure.

Modifiers: -1 per -2 to ST or HT; -1 per -1 to DX; -1 per -10 points of *physical* disadvantages (but never exotic or racial effects); -2 for Coughing or Moderate Pain; -3 for Nauseated; -4 for Severe Pain; -5 for Retching; -6 for Terrible Pain; -10 for Agony or Choking; and -15 for total Paralysis. You *can* combine several effects.

Dancing Weapon

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

You can cast your weapon into the air to fight on its own. This is like any other use of an Imbuement Skill: it takes no preparation, requires 1 FP, and calls for a skill roll at the usual modifiers. You cannot "stack" Dancing Weapon with any other Imbuement Skill, though, because once you activate it, the weapon isn't ready in your hand!

On the turn you activate the skill, the weapon fights on its own at a skill level equal to your Dancing Weapon skill. Its Basic Move equals your own, and its damage is identical to what it would do in your hands. It engages any *one* opponent you indicate, executing Attack maneuvers to strike him when he's within range or Reach, and Move maneuvers to get to him when he isn't. This leaves you free to do something else.

Enemies can attack the weapon at penalty equal to its SM. It can dodge at (Dancing Weapon/2) + 3, at -1 per defense after the first. Use its usual DR and HP to determine breakage. If a foe manages to seize it (a grapple with DX or an unarmed grappling skill, still with SM penalties), the imbue-ment ends immediately and your enemy acquires a new weapon!

On later turns, you may pay 1 FP to keep the weapon fighting . . . or not. If you don't, the weapon's effective skill drops by one, cumulative from turn to turn. Should skill ever fall below 3, the imbue-ment ends and the weapon falls to the ground wherever it may be. The only way to erase the skill penalty or "revive" the weapon is to grab it and reactivate the skill.

To recover a still-active weapon, it has to be within your reach and you must take a Ready maneuver. This requires no success roll (and Fast-Draw *isn't* allowed). If it's on the ground, pick it up normally.

Drugged Weapon

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

The weapon or its projectile carries a tranquilizing agent, or isn't "drugged" at all but strikes nonlethal pressure points. Such an attack gains a 1-point follow-up fatigue attack that obeys the rules for the Follow-Up modifier (p. B105). If the weapon attack fails to penetrate DR, its follow-up does nothing!

Modifiers: Higher fatigue damage gives a penalty of -1 for 1d-2, -2 for 1d-1, -3 for 1d, -4 for 1d+1, -5 for 1d+2, -6 for 2d-1, -7 for 2d, -8 for 2d+1, -9 for 2d+2, or -10 for 3d; minimum damage is 1 point in all cases.

Electric Weapon

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

The weapon crackles with electricity and gains the Surge modifier (p. B105). Targets such as electronics and robots with electrical systems that take over 1/3 HP from it must make a HT roll to avoid shorting out. Failure disables the target for seconds equal to the margin of failure; critical failure disables it until repaired. A critical hit with the charged-up weapon has the same effect as a critically failed HT roll.

On an unmodified skill roll, the surge is the only effect.

Modifiers: To add follow-up electrical burning damage, roll at -1 for 1d-4, -2 for 1d-3, -3 for 1d-2, -4 for 1d-1, -5 for 1d, -6 for 1d+1, -7 for 1d+2, -8 for 2d-1, -9 for 2d, or -10 for 2d+1. In all cases, minimum damage is 1 point and metal armor is treated as DR 1 vs. the follow-up if the carrier attack doesn't penetrate.

Envenomed Weapon

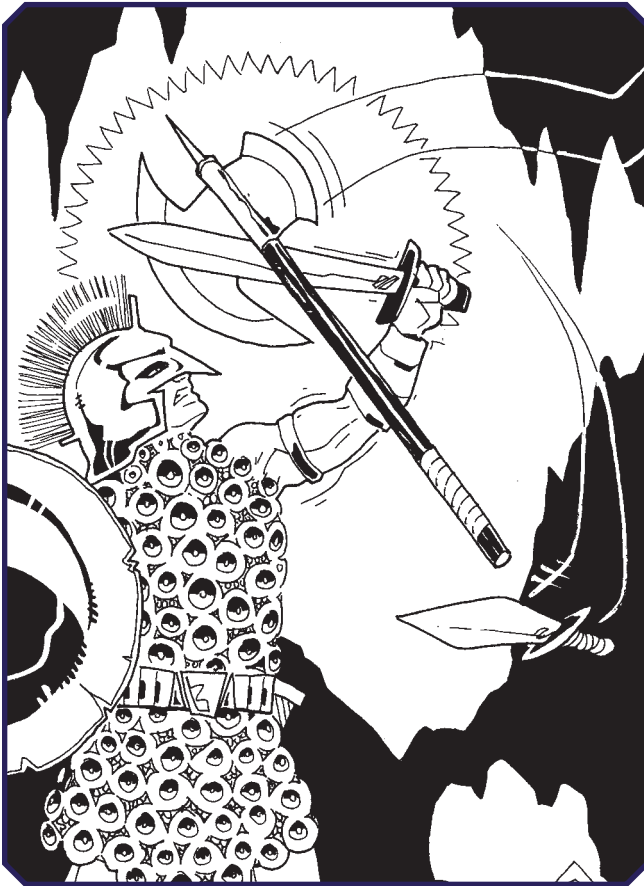
General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

The weapon or its projectile becomes envenomed. Such an attack gains a 1-point follow-up toxic attack that obeys the rules for the Follow-Up modifier (p. B105). If the weapon attack fails to penetrate DR, its follow-up does nothing!

Modifiers: Higher toxic damage gives a penalty of -1 for 1d-2, -2 for 1d-1, -3 for 1d, -4 for 1d+1, -5 for 1d+2, -6 for 2d-1, -7 for 2d, -8 for 2d+1, -9 for 2d+2, or -10 for 3d; minimum damage is 1 point in all cases.



Far Shot

Ranged; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 2.

Far Shot gives a ranged weapon more range, most often by stabilizing its flight via some form of telekinesis or force control. An unmodified skill roll doubles both 1/2D and Max.

Modifiers: -2 to multiply 1/2D and Max by 5, -4 to multiply by 10, -6 to multiply by 20, -8 to multiply by 50, -10 to multiply by 100, and so on.

Forceful Blow

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 1.

This skill enhances a damaging weapon's knockback (p. B378) – usually via focused chi or psychokinetic force. The attack effectively gains the Double Knockback modifier (p. B104).

For a crushing weapon, use double the damage rolled to find knockback. For other weapons, calculate knockback as if using a regular crushing weapon. Damage type and amount are unaffected; Forceful Blow only changes knockback.

Ghostly Weapon

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 1.

Gives the weapon the Affects Insubstantial enhancement (p. B102), allowing it to affect ghosts and other insubstantial foes.

Guided Weapon

Ranged; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 2.

Guided Weapon lets you control a projectile *after* releasing it, guiding it to its target with magical whistling, telekinesis, etc. This works just like the Guided enhancement (p. B106): the attack *ignores* range penalties and the projectile moves at 1/2D yards/second – regardless of its normal speed – until it hits the target or reaches Max range. Against distant targets, you must take a Concentrate maneuver on turns after the first to control your weapon.

Modifiers: -1 if you can turn the projectile around for a second attack next turn, at the original effective skill level, in the event that your target dodges the first one; -2 to get a third pass; and so on.

Guided Weapon cannot be combined with Conic Blast, Multi-Shot, Shockwave, or any other skill that affects multiple targets by default. It guides *one* attack to *one* target.

Homing Weapon

Ranged; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

Homing Weapon lets a projectile guide *itself* to a target using any one sense that you yourself possess. You must take an Aim maneuver and make an unmodified weapon skill roll to “lock on,” but you can *ignore* all ranged combat modifiers except for effects that obscure the chosen sense. The weapon then homes in on its target as if it had the Homing enhancement (p. B106): it ignores range penalties and moves at 1/2D yards/second – regardless of its usual speed – until it hits the target or reaches Max range.

Modifiers: -1 to enable the projectile to try a second attack next turn, at the original effective skill level, should the target dodge the first one; -2 for a third pass; and so on.

Homing Weapon cannot be combined with Conic Blast, Multi-Shot, Shockwave, or any other skill that affects multiple targets. You can only lock *one* shot onto *one* target at a time.

You can't combine Guided Weapon with Homing Weapon, either. The chief benefit of the latter over the former is that it doesn't require you to take Concentrate maneuvers when engaging foes that require multiple turns (or multiple passes) to hit.

Incendiary Weapon

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

The weapon or its projectile is wreathed in flame; in effect, it acquires the Incendiary modifier (p. B105). Treat such attacks as if they had a 1-point burning attack as a follow-up (if *any* damage penetrates DR, the target suffers 1 HP of extra fire injury). The *real* benefit here is that the weapon can retain its original damage type but still set fires!

A burning attack enjoys the same bonus injury – but since it can *already* set fires, the odds of that increase. Move the effective flammability class of anything damaged up one step. See *Making Things Burn* (p. B433).

Modifiers: -2 per additional flammability class shift (maximum five shifts – or four for a burning attack, which already gets one free shift). Higher burning damage gives a penalty of -1 for 1d-3, -2 for 1d-2, -3 for 1d-1, -4 for 1d, -5 for 1d+1, -6 for 1d+2, -7 for 2d-1, -8 for 2d, -9 for 2d+1, or -10 for 2d+2; minimum damage is 1 point in all cases.

Multi-Shot

Ranged; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

You can supernaturally split your projectile(s) in midair, increasing RoF. For missile weapons, this uses up only the usual number of shots. For thrown weapons, you just need to

have one weapon to hurl. In either case, the additional shots last for long enough to do harm and then vanish – if you go downrange to retrieve ammo (or someone examines the scene), you will only find the number of projectiles present *before* the split.

A Multi-Shot attack effectively gains the Rapid Fire modifier (p. B108). Not all shots will necessarily find targets. Follow the rules under *Rapid Fire* (p. B373).

An unmodified skill roll gives +1 to weapon RoF. This gives most thrown and low-tech missile weapons RoF 2 and most repeating handguns RoF 4. You need RoF 5+ to use *Spraying Fire* or *Suppression Fire* (both p. B409).

Modifiers: -1 per additional +1 to RoF, with no limit. If your skill is high enough to deal with -18, you're certainly welcome to try for a RoF 20 bowshot!

Penetrating Strike

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

The weapon hardens, becomes partly insubstantial, or does something else that lets it pass through DR, giving it the Armor Divisor enhancement (p. B102). The basic armor divisor is (2), but this can be improved by taking a penalty to the roll. This is cumulative with targeting chinks in armor (p. B400).

Modifiers: -2 for (3), -4 for (5), -6 for (10), -8 for (100), and -10 to bypass DR completely.

Project Blow

Melee; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

The melee weapon delivers its usual damage *from a distance* – typically by projecting chi, psychokinetic force, or similar. This ranged attack has Acc 3, Range 10/100, RoF 1, Shots N/A, Bulk -2, and Recoil 1. Use the usual melee combat skill for the attack, not a ranged combat skill. Project Blow doesn't unready the weapon for melee use.

Modifiers: -10 if used again immediately on the same turn, -9 the next turn, -8 in two turns, -7 in three, -6 in four, -5 in five, -4 in six, -3 in seven, -2 in eight, -1 in nine, and no penalty after 10 turns. Restart the counter after each use.

Shattershot

Ranged; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 2.

Shattershot causes the projectile of a damaging ranged weapon to rupture on impact, scattering harmful fragments. The attack gains the Fragmentation modifier (p. B104). Note that this destroys the projectile – be sure you *want* to sunder reusable ammo like an arrow or a spear!

An unmodified skill roll gives fragments that inflict 1d cutting damage – or *burning* damage, if the modified weapon is burning, incendiary, or simply on fire. The fragments attack everybody within 5 yards as explained under *Fragmentation Damage* (p. B414). Note that hits aren't guaranteed, cover protects, and victims may dodge.

Modifiers: -2 for 2d damage attacking everyone within 10 yards, -4 for 3d damage and 15 yards, -6 for 4d damage and 20 yards, -8 for 5d damage and 25 yards, or -10 for 6d damage and 30 yards. However, fragment damage can never exceed the underlying attack's basic damage.

Shattershot cannot be combined with Conic Blast.

Shockwave

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

The weapon launches *explosive* attacks. With a melee weapon, you smash your hands together, drive the charged-up weapon into the ground, or something similar, causing a blast that is centered on you but doesn't harm you; make a combat skill roll to execute this move, but *don't* attack a specific foe. For a ranged weapon, the projectile blows up or causes a massive shockwave wherever it hits; check for scatter (p. B414).

Treat the weapon's damage as if it had the Explosion modifier (p. B104), regardless of damage type. Divide damage by three times the distance in yards to each target.

Modifiers: -5 to divide by twice the distance in yards or -10 to divide by the distance in yards.

Shockwave cannot be combined with Conic Blast.

Stealthy Attack

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 1.

You can silence your weapon or make it invisible, as if it had Low or No Signature (p. B106). An unmodified skill roll gives -2 to all Perception rolls to notice the attack.

Modifiers: -1 per additional -2 to Perception rolls, to a limit of -4 to skill giving -10 to Per.

Stupefying Blow

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

Lets you envenom your weapon or make a pressure-point strike in such a way that a living victim may suffer a *mental* Affliction (p. B40), as if your attack had a Side Effect (p. B109). If *any* damage penetrates the target's DR, he must make a Will roll, at -1 per 2 points of penetrating damage, or suffer the bad effect. A blow that fails to penetrate does nothing.

The default effect of a failed Will roll is that the foe is mentally stunned. He may roll vs. Will at the same penalty every turn to recover. More potent Afflictions give a penalty to your Stupefying Strike roll, but last for 1 minute times the victim's margin of failure.

Modifiers: -1 per -1 to DX or IQ; -1 per -10 points of *mental* disadvantages (but never self-imposed ones; see p. B121); -1 for Topsy; -2 for Drunk; -3 for Euphoria; -5 for Daze or Hallucinating; -10 for Ecstasy or Seizure; and -15 for Sleep. You *can* combine several effects.

Sudden Death

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 2.

Sudden Death gives the weapon a type of Delay enhancement (p. B105). Resolve the weapon attack normally and work out what injury or other baneful effects your victim *would* suffer, given the damage roll, DR, damage type, etc. But don't apply these when you deal the blow! Instead, they happen on your command, at any future point and from any distance.

Modifiers: -5 if the damage occurs when a certain condition is met, such as "when the victim next sleeps," rather than when you actively choose to trigger it.

Unless your Imbue advantage is Cosmic (+50% or +300%), you *must* specify some way to neutralize the pending effect. Typical options are the Esoteric Medicine skill for chi effects, the Remove Curse spell for magical effects, the Exorcism skill for spirit effects, or the Neutralize Poison spell for a toxin. To be valid, this measure has to be one that exists in your game world.

You can always cancel the pending effect permanently at any time, from any distance, *instead* of activating it.

Supreme Control

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 1.

You can make a damaging strike so precisely that it has only *some* of its effects – the ones you want – and not the others. This is valuable when you're interested in shoving things around (knockback) but not breaking things (injury), for instance. An unmodified roll lets you avoid *one* of blunt trauma (see *No Blunt Trauma*, p. B111), DR reduction (if making a corrosion attack), fire hazard (if making a burning attack), knockback (see *No Knockback*, p. B111), or wounding (see *No Wounding*, p. B111).

Modifiers: -2 per additional feature switched off after the first.

Telescoping Weapon

Melee; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 1.

You can cause your melee weapon to change length briefly by physically altering it instead of changing grips. This allows it to hit a foe who's out of reach, or enables you to fight in close quarters without the usual penalties. In effect, you're able to adjust your weapon's intrinsic Melee Attack limitation (p. B112).

An unmodified roll increases or reduces Reach by 1 yard. Allowed Reach categories are, in order: C, 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Modifiers: -2 for ±2 yards, -4 for ±3 yards, or -6 for ±4 yards. Final Reach must fall within the C-4 range.

Traumatic Blow

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 1.

Enhances a damaging weapon's blunt trauma (p. B379) – possibly via a momentary density increase or an armor-deforming force field. In effect, the attack gains the Double Blunt Trauma modifier (p. B104).

Crushing weapons do 1 HP of blunt trauma per 2 points of basic damage resisted by flexible armor. Cutting, impaling, and piercing ones cause 1 HP of blunt trauma per 5 points of basic damage. Other weapons only inflict 1 HP of blunt trauma per 10 points of basic damage.

TRANSFORMATION SKILLS

These Imbuement Skills change the fundamental nature of your weapon. You cannot combine them with each other. You can combine them with Enhancement Skills (pp. 6-11).

Binding Shot

Ranged; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

Lets you convert a damaging ranged attack into a Binding (p. B40). The projectile trails silk, sprouts tendrils, turns to goo, etc., tying up the target. Roll your usual damage dice and read the result as the Binding's ST – no actual damage occurs. The Binding's DR is ST/3, rounded down.

Modifiers: You can add certain Binding modifiers by rolling at a penalty: -2 for Sticky, -6 for Engulfing, and/or -8 for Constricting or Suffocating.

Burning Strike

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 2.

The weapon or its projectile turns to flame or a scorching heat blast, converting the damage of a non-burning attack from its usual damage type to burning. For most attacks, the main benefit is that you can set fires. For impaling or piercing weapons, you end up with a *tight-beam* burning attack, which can target vital areas.

Chilling Strike

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

This skill turns the weapon into some sort of cold projector or even a blade of chilling negative energy. Roll damage as usual but interpret it as fatigue damage that works like the FP loss described for *Cold* (p. B430), which is difficult to recover from. In effect, this grants the Freezing modifier (p. B104).

Corrosive Strike

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

Coats the weapon in acid, turns it into a disintegrator, or otherwise converts the damage of a non-corrosion attack from its usual damage type to corrosion. Doing so *halves* the basic damage rolled, however.

Modifiers: -2 for 60% damage instead of 50% damage; -4 for 70% damage; -6 for 80% damage; -8 for 90% damage; or -10 for full damage.

Crushing Strike

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 1.

Imbuing Spells

If the GM wishes, mages can buy Imbuement Skills to use with Missile and jet spells (a jet spell is simply a Regular spell with "jet" in its name; e.g., Flame Jet). These require specialization by *spell* – Arching Shot (Fireball), Ghostly Weapon (Flame Jet), and so on – rather than by Innate Attack skill. For this purpose, treat Missile spells as ranged weapons and jets as melee weapons.

It's probably best to allow only Enhancement Skills. Transformation Skills for spells badly blur college distinctions. For instance, a one-college Earth mage with Stone Missile could circumvent the limitation on his Magery and a whole lot of prerequisite spells by learning Burning Strike (Stone Missile) and Impaling Strike (Stone Missile) as substitutes for Fireball and Ice Dagger. Still, the GM may be willing to live with this.

Finally, it's also up to the GM whether wizards can use any form of Imbue to affect spells or if their Imbue advantage requires the Magical limitation. In the latter case, note that Magery doubles as the Talent for magic powers in most cases, so Magery will benefit spells *and* Imbuement Skills. This may or may not be a *desirable* outcome.

Noncombat Imbuement

Optionally, imbuement can have noncombat applications. The GM may permit Imbuement Skills specialized to almost any mundane equipment-operation skill – *if* there’s a logical interpretation! Some examples:

- Cutting Strike (Forced Entry) to make a crowbar work as a fire axe.
- Dancing Weapon (Photography) to enable your camera to fly around taking pictures while you stay hidden – an interesting alternative to Telekinesis!
- Far Shot (Sensors), for Electronics Operation (Sensors), to extend the range of a radar.
- Project Blow (Explosive Ordnance Disposal), for Explosives (EOD), to deal with bombs from a safe distance.

If the GM allows this, base the Imbuement Skill on the same attribute as the mundane skill for which it’s learned; e.g., IQ for Photography.

In a campaign where noncombat specialties exist, wildcard Imbuement Skills (p. 5) encompass these, too. When using wildcard Imbuement Skills this way, base the roll on the attribute that controls the mundane skill being enhanced.

The industrious GM could even dream up new Imbuement Skills with few or no combat applications. These might have narrow applicability – but that need not mean “useless.” For instance, a Video Transmission skill that bestows the Video enhancement for Telecommunication (p. B91) would let the user transmit a video signal over any phone, radio, or similar device, using his eyes as cameras. This could be a real boon to a super-powered spy or journalist! Skills like this should normally require only Imbue 1 – or Imbue 2 if they’re *remarkably* handy.

Blunts the weapon or engulfs it in a broad force field, converting the damage of a non-crushing attack from its usual damage type to crushing. This lets it work with other Imbuement Skills that function best with crushing attacks, improves knockback (p. B378) and blunt trauma (p. B379), and lets a deadlier weapon “merely” beat a victim senseless.

Cutting Strike

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 2.

Narrows or sharpens the weapon in one dimension, converting the damage of a non-cutting attack from its usual damage type to cutting. Good for severing limbs.

Dazzling Display

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 2.

Lets you convert a damaging attack to Obscure (p. B40) directed at vision. A melee weapon becomes a shaft of darkness or brilliance, or generates a visible shockwave that warps light, affecting a two-yard radius or a radius equal to its Reach,

whichever is *larger*, on any turn when you use this skill; this effect is centered on you. A projectile fills a two-yard radius with darkness, glare, smoke, or something similar where it hits, which lasts 10 seconds.

Roll your usual damage dice and halve the result (round down). Read this as the Vision penalty, to a maximum of -10. No actual damage occurs.

Modifiers: You can add the Defensive modifier (the Vision penalty doesn’t affect *you*) by rolling at -5.

Deafening Display

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 1.

Lets you convert a damaging attack to Obscure (p. B40) directed at hearing. A melee weapon cracks, hums, rattles, etc., making a din that affects two-yard radius or a radius equal to its Reach, whichever is *larger*, on any turn when you use this skill; this effect is centered on you. A projectile goes off like a string of firecrackers or otherwise makes a racket, making hearing difficult in a two-yard radius for the next 10 seconds.

Roll your usual damage dice and halve the result (round down). Read this as the Hearing penalty, to a maximum of -10. No

actual damage occurs.

Modifiers: You can add the Defensive modifier (the Hearing penalty doesn’t affect *you*) by rolling at -5.

Fatiguing Strike

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 2.

Winds the target by hitting nonlethal pressure points, charges the weapon with a kind of stunner field, or otherwise converts the damage of a non-fatigue attack from its usual damage type to fatigue.

Impaling Strike

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

Greatly narrows or sharpens the weapon in two dimensions, converting the damage of a non-impaling attack from its usual damage type to impaling. This gives -1 per die on the basic damage roll, however.

Modifiers: -5 for *full* damage.

Piercing Strike

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 2.

Gives the weapon a narrow-but-blunt profile by reshaping it, projecting a force field, etc., converting the damage of a non-piercing attack from its ordinary damage type to piercing. This improves blunt trauma for most non-crushing attacks and allows crushing attacks to target vital areas.

Modifiers: +2 for small piercing, -2 for large piercing, or -5 for huge piercing.

Strike of Negation

Melee; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3 with suitable power modifier.

Lets you deal a melee attack that neutralizes a specific group of supernatural effects *instead* of causing damage. Normally, the effects canceled are those that have the same source as your Imbue advantage; e.g., magic spells, if your Imbue is Magical. However, if the source of your Imbue is split into clearly opposed powers – for instance, Moral (-20%) typically has Good and Evil powers – then the Strike negates effects associated with the power that *opposes* yours. And if your Imbue is Cosmic, the Strike can negate any *one* source at a time (choose when you roll) at the +50% level, or *all* paranormal effects at once at the +300% level! Fighters with “wild” forms of Imbue can’t learn the Strike at all.

If your attack hits, roll its usual damage dice. Treat the result as the effective skill of the “dispel.” Roll a Quick Contest of this “dispel skill” vs. the skill used to activate each ongoing effect of the correct type on the target; victory means that a temporary effect (like most spells) is dissipated for good while a permanent one (like an enchantment) ceases to work for minutes equal to margin of victory.

If the target has active, ongoing effects due to advantages in the affected category, also roll a Quick Contest against his Will. Victory means that all such advantages are shut off until he reactivates them.

Modifiers: -4 to target one *specific* ongoing effect on the target.

Strike of Negation offers a unique option: if the user is capable of two or more attacks per turn with his weapon, and one of these hits *and wounds* the target, then he can waive a later attack on that turn to roll against Strike of Negation with the usual modifiers and FP cost. If it works, roll the Quick Contests above. Effective skill of the “dispel” is the earlier attack’s basic damage roll or the *injury* that attack caused, whichever is higher.

Toxic Strike

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 1.

Sprays poison, strikes lethal pressure points, or otherwise converts the damage of a non-toxic attack from its usual damage type to toxic. Toxic damage only harms living things and has no special damage effects – but it also leaves no bruises or, in this case, any other evidence! In effect, it’s *dim mak*: the hand of death.

Vampiric Weapon

Melee; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

You’re capable of converting the injury you inflict with a melee weapon into a “life force drain” that can heal your own injuries. For every *full* 3 HP of injury your weapon inflicts on a *living* victim, you heal 1 HP. You can’t raise your HP above normal.

Modifiers: -5 to heal 1 HP per full 2 HP of injury, or -10 to heal 1 HP per HP of injury; -5 to “heal” an Energy Reserve *instead* of HP at the same rate, *if* your Imbue advantage has a power modifier and you have an ER for that power.

Withering Strike’s effects are obviously supernatural: The weapon visibly drains the target’s vital bodily fluid.

Withering Strike

General; DX/Very Hard

Default: Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

Prerequisite: Imbue 3.

This skill’s effects are obviously supernatural: The weapon penetrates DR as usual but leaves no wound. Instead, it visibly drains the target’s vital bodily fluids. Roll damage as usual but interpret it as fatigue damage that works like the FP loss under *Dehydration* (p. B426). This skill gives the Dehydration modifier (p. B104), in effect.

OPTIONAL RULE: COMBINATION SKILLS

A nice thing about Imbuement Skills is that you can mix and match them as noted in *Multiple Skills* (p. 5). For instance, if you know Burning Strike (Unarmed) and Project Blow (Unarmed), then each turn you can choose to barbecue enemies in close combat with burning punches, *or* project crushing punches, *or* blast distant targets with fire. But this flexibility doesn’t suit every setting or every character concept. What if you want *only* the ability to hurl fireballs that do punching damage?

The solution is a *Combination Skill*. Construct such a skill by choosing two or more *compatible* Imbuement Skills whose effects you wish to combine and merging them into a single skill with a fitting name; e.g., “Project Burning Strike.” This custom Imbuement Skill is DX/VH like the any other, and has the highest Imbue level prerequisite among the skills involved. It counts as *one* skill if you have Limited Skill Access on your Imbue advantage.

Combination Skills have both upsides and downsides. The biggest benefit is that they cost fewer points: you can buy just one skill instead of two and pay half as much, one skill instead of three and pay 1/3 as much, and so on. Another nice feature is that *one* roll produces the effects of *all* the merged Imbuement Skills, which means that high skill makes your combined imbue-ment more reliable (and easier to affect with Luck!).

The most significant drawback is that you *can't* separate the skills. For instance, that Project Burning Strike skill always shoots ranged fireballs with a “cool down” penalty between uses; you can't give yourself burning fists or hurl ordinary crushing punches.

Another downside is that the cost to use the skill is 1 FP per merged skill (although critical failure still only costs 2 FP). For

instance, Project Burning Strike costs 2 FP – and Project *Penetrating* Burning Strike would cost 3 FP. It's still possible to reduce this cost, but at -5 to skill per -1 FP.

A further difficulty is that while you can generate all the effects of every constituent skill, the penalties for “advanced applications” listed for both skills apply to the single skill roll. Between this and FP reduction, points you save by not buying multiple skills might well end up spent anyway – to get your Combination Skill to the level where it's as effective as two separate skills.

Finally, note that while Combination Skills can be “stacked” with other Imbuement Skills, you *can't* use them with any skill that isn't compatible with a constituent skill – the incompatibility extends to the entire Combination Skill. For instance, if you know both Project Burning Strike and Impaling Strike, you can't project impaling strikes, because Burning Strike and Impaling Strike are both Transformation Skills, and thus exclusive.

The GM has the final say on whether Combination Skills are allowed, which ones exist, and whether players can define their own.

IMBUEMENT IN THE CAMPAIGN

It's up to the GM whether to allow imbue-ment at all. In general, it *is* balanced against other abilities. The best Imbuement Skills need Imbue 3, which – at 40 points – is in the same ballpark as Magery 3-4, Trained by a Master, and Weapon Master. Imbue doesn't grant any “hidden benefits” in its own right, unlike those other advantages. And while Imbuement Skills cost just 1 FP and work quickly, they're also either Very Hard skills specific to one weapon type (allowing the GM to disable them temporarily by taking away those weapons) or triple-cost wild-card skills. The choice to use imbue-ment comes down to a matter of campaign style: imbue-ment competes with other superhuman gifts, especially cinematic martial arts and magic, so it best suits games where the GM *wants* lots of competing options.

Next, the GM has to decide what power modifiers to allow on Imbue. It's logical to permit any modifier allowed on advantages in the campaign, and to make Imbue one of the abilities of any power it suits. Imbue need not coexist with powers, though – it could be the only advantage with a power modifier in the entire campaign, making it the most important manifestation of chi, magic, psi, etc.

After that, the GM must decide what Imbuement Skills to allow, and to whom. He might use the whole list or only a small subset. He may even associate particular skills with specific power modifiers in order to emphasize the differences between different types of Imbue; e.g., the Chi modifier could give access to skills comparable to Breaking Blow and Pressure Points, while the Magical modifier allows the ones that deal in flashy elemental energies.

Finally, there are all the decisions explicitly left to the GM throughout these rules. Are Imbuement Skills IQ-based rather than DX-based for some (or *all*) power modifiers? Can wizards imbue spells? Do Combination Skills exist – and if they do, which ones? Is noncombat imbue-ment allowed, and are there unique skills for *that*? All told, these rules are highly customizable.

GURPS DUNGEON FANTASY

Imbue-ment works well in *Dungeon Fantasy* – particularly in campaigns that aim to ape computer RPGs, which often use “skills” to refer to something closer to Imbuement Skills than to Broadsword or First Aid. When using character templates, niche protection is best served by giving each role access only to *suitable* skills. The GM should probably require professions that use powers to apply their power modifier to Imbue, but possibly give them access to more skills. Some suggestions:

Barbarian: The barbarian can put his great strength to good effect smashing weapons (Annihilating Weapon), hammering his breastplate (Deafening Display), tossing enemies around (Forceful Blow), hurling projectiles hard enough to rupture them (Shattershot), causing small quakes (Shockwave), and putting big dents in things (Traumatic Blow).

Bard: Dancing Weapon could be a bard's best friend while he strums. Both Dazzling Display and Deafening Display fit a flamboyant performer. Singing an arrow to its target with Guided Weapon has fictional precedent. And of course Stupefying Blow fits with the bard's other mind-control tricks. Bards should buy Imbue with Bard Song (-30%).

Cleric: Clerics will have Holy (-10%) on their Imbue advantage. Imbuement Skills should suit the gods – blows from the heavens (Arching Shot), strikes that affect ghosts (Ghostly Weapon) and dispel evil (Strike of Negation), and so on.

Druid: All manner of natural venoms could work their magic via a druid's weapons, justifying Crippling Blow, Drugged Weapon, Envenomed Weapon, Fatiguing Strike, Stupefying Blow, and Toxic Strike. Burning Strike and Incendiary Weapon, on the other hand, are *inappropriate* for a forest guardian. Druidic (-10%) will apply to Imbue.

Holy Warrior: The advice for clerics applies here, too. As masters of slaying evil, holy warriors might have a few extra options, such as cleansing fire (Burning Strike and Incendiary Weapon) and the ability to drive even the bluntest weapon into a vampire's heart (Impaling Strike). *Unholy* warriors will fancy Chilling Strike, Withering Strike, and Vampiric Weapon.



Knight: The knight's Imbuement Skills should be limited to those that imitate shoves (Forceful Blow), blows aimed at chinks in armor (Penetrating Strike), careful subduing attacks (Supreme Control), and similar effects that could pass as pure skill at arms.

Martial Artist: Most Imbuement Skills work here – but especially good are the ones easy to justify as pressure-point strikes (Crippling Blow, Drugged Weapon, Envenomed Weapon, Fatiguing Strike, Stupefying Blow, Sudden Death, and Toxic Strike) or chi projection (Far Shot, Guided Weapon, and Project Blow). Apply Chi (-10%) to the Imbue advantage.

Scout: If the GM is fine with scouts being essentially mystic archers, then almost any Imbuement Skill in the Ranged category will work. Popular video games have depicted Arching Shot, Bank Shot, Conic Blast, Far Shot, Guided Weapon, Homing Weapon, Incendiary Weapon, Multi-Shot, and Penetrating Strike.

Swashbuckler: The advice for knights applies here, too, but the focus should be more on finesse than on power; e.g., Dazzling Display, Penetrating Strike, Stealthy Attack, and Supreme Control.

Thief: Most of the poison-oriented skills noted for the druid suit the thief, as do subtle tricks like Penetrating Strike, Stealthy Attack, and Sudden Death.

Wizard: Wizards should apply Magical (-10%) to Imbue. The major attractions here are imbuing Missile spells with the Imbuement Skills suggested for scouts and dispelling magic with Strike of Negation (Staff). Remember that Magery acts like a power Talent!

GURPS MARTIAL ARTS

Imbuement Skills *definitely* suit the martial arts depicted in video games and comics. The underlying Imbue advantage will often be modified with Chi (-10%) – although the drawbacks of that limitation don't especially suit truly over-the-top fighters! Imbue will usually give access to few enough skills to justify Limited Skill Access as well.

Some Imbuement Skills mirror standard cinematic martial-arts skills. Crippling Blow can produce stunning and incapacity, much like Kiai and Pressure Points; Forceful Blow is similar in purpose to Push; Guided Weapon and Homing Weapon are alternatives to Zen Archery; Impaling Strike resembles Pressure Secrets; Penetrating Strike is akin to Breaking Blow; and Stupefying Strike is like beefed-up Hypnotic Hands. Imbuement Skills might replace these other skills or "stack" with them, allowing *very* potent effects.

Other Imbuement Skills are more extreme, allowing martial artists to shatter weapons with fists (Annihilating Weapon), punch out robots (Electric Weapon), and hurl swarms of throwing stars (Multi-Shot).

Combinations of skills can produce the most outré effects seen in the source material. For instance, Project Blow can work with Burning Strike to turn punching damage into a ranged fireball, with Binding Shot to tie up foes, or with Chilling Strike to freeze them. And of course the dreaded *dim mak* mixes Toxic Strike with Sudden Death.

Combination Skills (pp. 13-14) are often very suitable here!

The choice of Imbuement Skills might be the player's. The GM could let each player pick a theme for his martial artist and use Imbuement Skills to define signature moves. This is excellent when trying to simulate fighting video games, where one ninja ensnares his enemies with Binding Shot and finishes them with Burning Strike, while his brother freezes foes with Chilling Strike and spears them on icicles created with Impaling Strike. The GM decides how many skills each fighter can have – perhaps simply by requiring that Imbue always have Limited Skill Access.

On the other hand, the industrious GM could go through the martial-arts styles in the campaign and associate suitable skills with each. A modest number of Imbuement Skills and specialties for each style would help distinguish different martial arts and fighters, which is a crucial element of any *Martial Arts* campaign. For instance, Dagger Fighting might offer Envenomed Weapon (Knife), Penetrating Strike (Knife), and Stealthy Attack (Knife); Sumo could instead proffer Forceful Blow (Unarmed), Shockwave (Unarmed), and Traumatic Blow (Unarmed); and Kung Fu styles associated with particular elements might give suitable elemental skills. Such an approach would still justify Limited Skill Access.

Finally, the GM may wish to build entirely new styles around Imbuement Skills, designed to capitalize on their strengths. Below is one such example, intended for a fantasy setting. See *Martial Arts* for explanations of the terms and abilities.

Sample Style: Way of the Flaming Fist

6 points

Legend has it that this style was born in a long-forgotten blood feud. On one side was a faction of imperious lords who forbade commoners to carry weapons. On the other was a society of wizards who claimed a monopoly on magic. In the middle were defenseless villagers, being chopped up and cursed. Horrified by this turn of events, the monk Wei Yu developed a way of shaping chi into effects that could rival spells *and* weapons, and taught it to villagers as a means of self-defense.

The Way of the Flaming Fist is almost exactly what it sounds like: a punching art that mixes in fire-related Imbuement Skills for good measure. The style assumes that the user will be going up against weapons and armor – and possibly magic – with nothing but his bare hands. It therefore focuses on tactics and abilities that compensate for a lack of equipment and minimize the odds of losing important body parts to weapons.

The style includes two Combination Skills (pp. 13-14):

- *Annihilating Burning Strike:* This combines Annihilating Weapon (p. 6) with Burning Strike (p. 11).
- *Project Burning Strike:* This combines Project Blow (p. 9) with Burning Strike.

Against an enemy with a ranged weapon, the practitioner uses Dazzling Display to make himself a difficult target. This can often drive off weak-willed foes through sheer intimidation (see the Fiery Resolve perk, below). A more determined rival is forced to get closer. As he does, the martial artist softens him up with Project Burning Strike.

If the battle starts at or moves to melee range, the warrior waits for a weapon attack, parries with Karate, and tosses in Annihilating Burning Strike against a polearm, spear, or other weapons with wooden parts. Then he hits back with a Counterattack carrying Incendiary Weapon, combined with whatever hand strike suits the situation – Ear Clap or Eye-Poke to incapacitate without killing, Hammer Fist against armor, Spinning Punch against poorly trained rivals, or Exotic Hand Strike or Uppercut to finish the fight. Most of these are thrown as Deceptive Attacks. Other common tactics are disarms to take the weapon out of the equation and feints that minimize the odds of the rival successfully parrying a fist with a blade.

Advanced students are *fast* – both on their feet (Basic Speed) and with their punches (Rapid Retraction). Most have vast reserves of chi, allowing them to use even powerful Imbuement Skills at will. They often learn advanced skills that have little to do with fire, including Telescoping Weapon to give fists reach comparable to weapons, Penetrating Strike and Traumatic Blow for overcoming armor, and Forceful Blow for shoving around foes too well-armored for even these skills to harm. Traditionalists often learn Ghostly Weapon for striking down ethereal wizards and the ghostly undead that serve them, and may have Magic Resistance as well.

Masters are even more frightening. They learn deadly secret hand strikes (Lethal Eye-Poke and Lethal Strike), often delivered with Iron Hands. Many learn ways to reduce the deadliness of weapons, such as the Roll with Blow technique and even exercises that turn the skin to armor. They combine their Imbuement Skills with other chi abilities like Hypnotic Hands and Power Blow – and frequently develop Forceful Chi, which benefits these skills *and* their chi-based Imbuement Skills. Masters can be more than a match for wizards, too, as they can resist spells with Body Control and Mental Strength.

These days, a *kwoon* can be found in almost any large city. However, as students need many years to learn how to fight and to develop the basic gifts required (Imbue 3), even *before* they learn the more extraordinary methods, the style remains relatively rare. A PC seeking training will have to demonstrate that he has the commitment (or gifts) to learn the style – and traditional masters simply won't train mages or members of the warrior class.

Skills: Annihilating Burning Strike (Unarmed); Dazzling Display (Unarmed); Incendiary Weapon (Unarmed); Karate; Project Burning Strike (Unarmed).

Techniques: Counterattack (Karate); Disarming (Karate); Ear Clap; Exotic Hand Strike; Eye-Poke; Feint (Karate); Hammer Fist; Spinning Punch; Uppercut.

Cinematic Skills: Body Control; Hypnotic Hands; Mental Strength; Power Blow.

Cinematic Techniques: Dual-Weapon Attack (Karate); Lethal Eye-Poke; Lethal Strike; Roll with Blow.

Perks: Chi Resistance (Any); Iron Hands; Rapid Retraction (Punches); Shtick (“Fiery Resolve”: Vision penalty from Dazzling Display acts as Intimidation bonus of the same size); Special Exercises (DR 1 with Tough Skin); Special Exercises

(FP can exceed HT by 100%); Technique Mastery (Any punching technique).

Optional Traits

Secondary Characteristics: Improved Basic Speed and FP.

Advantages: Energy Reserve (Chi); Enhanced Parry (Bare Hands); Forceful Chi; Magic Resistance; Temperature Tolerance. Imbue 3 (Chi, -10%) [36] is *required* to learn the Imbuement Skills, and hence the style.

Disadvantages: Overconfidence; Pyromania; low Status.

Skills: Acrobatics; Breath Control; Crippling Blow (Unarmed); Forceful Blow (Unarmed); Ghostly Weapon (Unarmed); Impaling Strike (Unarmed); Meditation; Penetrating Strike (Unarmed); Telescoping Weapon (Unarmed); Traumatic Blow (Unarmed).

GURPS SUPERS

Just about any super-power *might* include Imbue among its abilities; apply the power modifier and you're almost done. It's up to the GM which powers *actually* offer Imbue, though. Powers that project elemental forces (Air, Earth, Fire, Water, etc.) and similar energetic effects (Bioenergy, Electricity, Sound/Vibration, and so on) are good choices – as are those that exert force at a distance, like Kinetic Energy, Magnetism, and Psychokinesis. Other powers may require some negotiation between player and GM.

In all cases, the GM should limit the Imbuement Skills available to those that truly suit the power. The Fire power, for instance, could easily justify Annihilating Weapon, Burning Strike, Dazzling Display, Incendiary Weapon, Shockwave, and even Withering Strike, as it sets things on fire, blows them up, and dehydrates them. Chilling Strike, on the other hand, wouldn't make a lot of sense here – but it would be perfect for the *Cold* power.

Remember that Imbuement Skills are for fists and weapons, not for attack abilities. If you want an enhancement on your advantage, buy the enhancement! What Imbuement Skills do is let Captain Sarin use his Poison power to doctor weapons (Drugged Weapon, Envenomed Weapon, Toxic Strike, etc.) *as well as* to project poison bolts, poison gas, and so on. The knack of projecting super-powers through ordinary weapons – as opposed to via unique gadgets – is a common super-ability, and one that's incredibly difficult to get right using advantages alone.

Don't forget, too, that the goal of imbuement is to let heroes “power up” *ordinary weapons* – for instance, to enable a supermarksman to pick up any Smith & Wesson .38, Colt .45, or Desert Eagle .50 and make it work better. Supers who rely on a specific gadget weapon with an array of effects should simply define a set of alternative attacks (p. B61) and apply gadget limitations (pp. B116-117); such gadgets have well-defined limits and don't *need* imbuement to define them. Still, the GM may allow gadget limitations on Imbue, which means that the owner's Imbuement Skills work only on one specific weapon (although if that's a missile weapon, the skills can imbue any type of ammo the weapon can shoot).

One final option is especially suitable for a *Supers* campaign: a power that focuses on imbuement. Below is one possible take on such a power. If it exists in a setting, the GM should limit the number of Imbuement Skills available to other powers that offer Imbue – or even make this the *only* power with Imbue.

Imbuement

Sources: Chi, Divine, Magical, Psionic, or Super.

Focus: Weapon power-ups.

This is the power to enhance weapons with amazing capabilities. If these effects are produced by an energy that originates from the body thanks to esoteric exercises (Chi) or mutation (Super), the resulting Imbuement Skills are DX-based. If the power arises from the mind (Psionic), gods (Divine), or ambient mana field (Magical), those skills are IQ-based. Imbuement abilities only affect the world *indirectly*, by powering up an attack for the user to wield with his combat skills.

Imbuement Talent

10 points/level

This costs 10 point/level instead of the more usual 5 points/level because it modifies all of the power's abilities *and* a wide selection of potent skills (*every* Imbuement Skill).

Imbuement Abilities

Detect, for imbuement or others with this power; Imbue; and Protected Power.

Any number of Afflictions, Bindings, and Innate Attacks are allowed, but these must have the modifier Follow-Up (Any Melee or Weapon Attack), +50%. This is priced the same as the +50% version of Cosmic because it circumvents the normal requirement that Follow-Up be associated with a specific carrier, allowing any weapon (melee or ranged) or bare-handed attack – that is, anything that an Imbuement Skill of the General variety could empower – to carry the attack advantage.

The skills enabled by Imbue receive the Imbuement Talent bonus but aren't abilities of this power per se.

Power Modifier: Imbuement. The advantage belongs to the Imbuement power. This modifier is usually Chi (-10%), Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), Psionic (-10%), or Super (-10%).

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