

# GURPS®

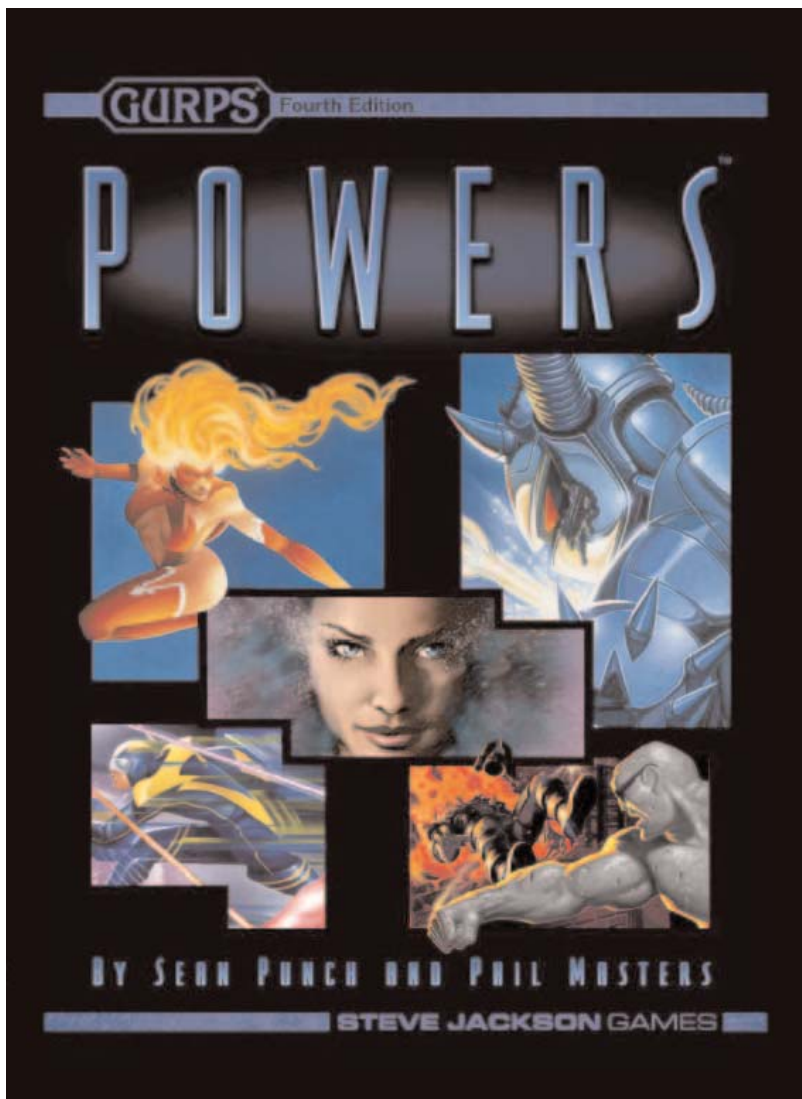
## SAVE THE WORLD . . . OR DESTROY IT!

*GURPS Powers* is the ultimate book for the ultimate characters in the new Fourth Edition of *GURPS*! Here's everything you need to create every kind of amazing, off-the-chart superhero you can imagine . . . as well as amazing wizards, wuxia fighters, shamans who command spirits . . . even gods!

Written by *GURPS* Line Editor and Fourth Edition co-author Sean Punch, *GURPS Powers* introduces some new rules, but it is mostly about using the rules that are already in the *GURPS Basic Set* to cover superpowered characters, megawizards, and earth-shattering psionics. *GURPS Powers* also includes guidelines for "special effects" and several different ways to vary a power on the fly – two crucial concepts for comic-book superheroics.

If you've got a high-powered campaign . . . or high-powered players . . . you want *GURPS Powers*!

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**GURPS**

Fourth Edition

# POWERS™



BY SEAN PUNCH AND PHIL MASTERS

STEVE JACKSON GAMES



**GURPS**® Fourth Edition

# POWERS™



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**STEVE JACKSON GAMES**

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# INTRODUCTION

Not all games feature superhuman gifts – but most do! Fantasy wouldn't be the same without mages and priests pitting their magic and miracles against monsters with exotic attacks. Space opera practically requires telepaths, not to mention godlike aliens. Horror features everything from children with uncontrollable psychokinesis to space-warping, madness-inducing Things. And the entire supers genre is *defined* by unusual abilities.

Even in less “over-the-top” backgrounds, heroes – and their foes – may have special capabilities that set them apart. The kung fu master who can kill with a touch, the psychic detective, the faith healer, the feral child who speaks with beasts . . . characters like these abound in adventure fiction.

Superhuman doesn't have to mean *supernatural*, either. Nature is full of

creatures that can do things like inject venom, spin webs, and walk on walls – and in a “hard” science-fiction setting, advances in biotechnology might let humans do all of these things without invoking the impossible. Even shooting devastating energy beams and deflecting bullets might be realistic. . . for a robot.

The common theme here is gifts that no ordinary human can possess. When designing such abilities, the **GURPS Basic Set** – with its hundreds of advantages – is an excellent starting point. But all that variety can be daunting: to get the ability you want, you might have to choose between several similar advantages, and apply many modifiers. The top priority of **GURPS Powers** is to provide advice, examples, and new options that make this process easier and more *fun*.

In particular, **Powers** gives significant thought to a matter that the **Basic Set** only touches upon, which is that a character gifted with special abilities might produce some or all of them by manipulating a single superhuman force: divine will, inner strength, life energy, mana, psychic potential, spirits, etc. Someone with the capacity to direct such energies is said to possess a *power*. **Powers** includes full rules for creating powers and using them in play – hence the title.

**Powers** also looks at how to integrate superhuman capabilities into a campaign with due respect for its genre and dramatic mode – and without blowing game balance out of the water. It's a toolkit, and the GM is responsible for choosing the right tools for the job. Before allowing the players to use the rules in this book, the GM should read it all – especially the last two chapters – to discover which options best suit *his* campaign.



## PUBLICATION HISTORY

This is the first edition of **GURPS Powers**. The **GURPS Third Edition** books **GURPS Psionics** and **GURPS Supers** were inspirational – and a few modifiers for Shapeshifting (p. 74) first appeared in **GURPS Shapeshifters** – but it's otherwise a completely new product.

### Note to Third Edition Players

If you've been playing **GURPS** since the Third Edition (or earlier!), you might ask, “What does **GURPS Powers** replace?” The answer is simple . . . and not so simple.

**Powers** covers a lot of the same ground as **GURPS Psionics** and **GURPS Supers**. By following the advice in this book, you'll be able to recreate the *effects* of psi and super abilities from those supplements. The implementation isn't the same,

however, so old hands definitely have some learning to do.

For psi powers, there's no overall "level" that rates every one of the power's abilities. Instead, the player crafts each ability separately by buying it as an advantage, choosing the level (where possible) and modifiers that fit his vision of his character's aptitude with *that one ability*. Many of the special rules and "stunts" from *Psionics* appear in *Powers*, but they're generalized to all powers and *optional*, so that the GM can better tailor them to his campaign.

For supers, the emphasis is on *active* abilities, such as flying and shooting rays. Some passive abilities – e.g., tough skin – appear, but they aren't a priority. This is because the

*GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition* covers more territory than did the *Basic Set, Third Edition*. High ST, DR, extra limbs, and gadgets are all common in supers games, but the *Basic Set* has them covered. The same goes for rules for super-speed collisions, picking up and throwing huge objects, and so on. This leaves more space for other things.

The biggest change for both psi and super abilities is that they don't require skills. We present skill use as an option (see *Skills for Everyone*, p. 162), but the GM doesn't have to use it. Talents (p. 8) fill this role, and a new enhancement (see *Reliable*, p. 109) permits fine-tuning.

*Powers* covers much more than just psis and supers, though. It's equally

capable of handling high-powered fantasy "spellcasters," *wuxia* fighters, shamans who command spirits . . . even gods. Thus, it represents a truly generic and universal advantage-based alternative to the skill-based abilities of Third Edition books such as *GURPS Martial Arts*, *GURPS Religion*, and *GURPS Spirits*. This makes it easy to mix characters with radically different powers in the same campaign.

In other words, *Powers* by itself isn't *quite* the complete book of supers or psi – it's something more. It's a "how to" guide to the *Basic Set* for these things and nearly every other kind of wondrous ability; think of it as a *Basic Set: Powers*. Combined with the *Basic Set*, it gives you the tools to create almost *any* powered character you can dream up – a claim that no Third Edition book could make.

## About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! We can also be reached by e-mail: [info@sjgames.com](mailto:info@sjgames.com). Resources include:

*Pyramid* ([www.sjgames.com/pyramid/](http://www.sjgames.com/pyramid/)). Our online magazine includes new *GURPS* rules and articles. It also covers the *d20* system, *Ars Magica*, *BESM*, *Call of Cthulhu*, and many more top games – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *Illuminati*, *Car Wars*, *Transhuman Space*, and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also get opportunities to playtest new *GURPS* books!

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*Errata*. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see below.

*Internet*. Visit us on the World Wide Web at [www.sjgames.com](http://www.sjgames.com) for errata, updates, and much more. The *GURPS Powers* web page is [www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/powers/](http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/powers/).

*Bibliographies*. Many of our books have extensive bibliographies, and we're putting them online – with links to where you can buy the books if they interest you! Go to the book's web page and look for the "Bibliography" link.

*GURPSnet*. This e-mail list hosts much of the online discussion of *GURPS*. To join, point your web browser to [www.sjgames.com/mailman/listinfo/gurpsnet-l/](http://www.sjgames.com/mailman/listinfo/gurpsnet-l/).

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean "Dr. Kromm" Punch set out to become a particle physicist and ended up as the *GURPS* Line Editor. Since 1995, he has compiled the two *GURPS Compendium* volumes, written *GURPS Wizards* and *Undead*, edited or revised over 20 other *GURPS* books, and masterminded the rules behind dozens more. Most recently, he and co-author David Pulver created the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*.

Sean has been a fanatical gamer since 1979. His non-gaming interests include cinema, computers, and wine. He lives in Montréal, Québec, with his wife, Bonnie. They have two cats and a noisy parrot.

Phil Masters has been playing RPGs since 1978; his first professional writing appeared in 1980, his first RPG book in 1990, and his first work for Steve Jackson Games (*GURPS Arabian Nights*) in 1993. Since then, he's worked on many more *GURPS* books, including the *Discworld* and *Hellboy* RPGs (the latter also with Jonathan Woodward). He's also written for White Wolf, Guardians of Order, and Eden Studios, among others. He lives in the U.K., runs a biweekly game, and sometimes helps organize RPG conventions.



# CHAPTER ONE

# BUILDING POWERS



*The thief stepped off the flat roof of the skyscraper. Falling, he gestured, and wings of fire billowed out and carried him gently to the ground. Where his feet touched the road, the asphalt melted and bubbled.*

*At the sight of him, and the flames that flared about him, civilians and guards alike fled for their lives. By the time he reached the bank, only a single figure, clad in black and yellow, stood in his path.*

*"Ah," the thief said, "the mutant freak is back. But this time, I'm ready, and you have nowhere to run. Do you really think that your telepathic trickery*

*will protect you against the power of elemental fire?"*

*His opponent frowned, as though considering this as a serious academic question. "I'm not sure," she admitted.*

*"Then die." The thief gestured again, and sent a searing blast of flame toward his opponent. But the telepath was no longer in its path.*

*"It might not protect me, but it means that I can control your visual cortex." The telepath's amused tones echoed in the thief's head. He frowned, then shrugged. "It makes no difference," he said. "You can project your voice, and maybe you can plant a picture or*

*two in my brain, but I can just burn my way into this place, and burn anything that stands in my way. The more you annoy me, the more I'll destroy. You lack power."*

*"True," the telepath replied, and suddenly, the blue sky above darkened with black clouds. "I'm a little short on raw force. But I do have range, and I have friends who'll help when I need them." From the clouds, hailstones large as fists came pounding down, quenching the thief's flames and hammering him to his knees. "And I'm told that a fire elemental is a couple of steps down from a storm god."*

From ancient demigods to costumed comic-book vigilantes, heroes with superhuman abilities abound in myth and fiction. Each has a different explanation for his gifts, but most have one thing in common: their capabilities are rooted in the energies they control, in the *power* they manipulate – be that inner strength, magic, an elemental force, or the will of the gods.

The **Basic Set** presents many advantages that *could* be attributed to such powers, but leaves their source unspecified. On their own, these traits are "wild" gifts; they work like they work. And sometimes, that's enough. In most game worlds, though, it's important to answer the following questions:

- Which advantages could logically originate from a given source of power?
- How does this source change these advantages?
- How do these abilities relate to one another?
- How do these abilities interact with *other* powers?

These are questions that **GURPS Powers** aims to answer.



# WHAT IS A POWER?

A “power” is an exotic or supernatural gift that you can direct in different ways to produce a number of related effects. A good example is Telepathy (see p. B257): the capacity to channel your thoughts in order to affect others’ minds. This might let you read minds, transmit thoughts, and lash out with bolts of mental energy. Yet *all* of these things are just manifestations of a single power – the power of Telepathy.

## Source

Each power has a *source*: the origin of the energy the wielder manipulates to produce its effects. This is normally chosen from the list under *Advantage Origins* (see p. B33) – for instance, Telepathy is “psionic” – but the GM is free to invent other sources.

The “chi” and “psionic” sources suggest that the power comes from within – from the user’s body and mind, respectively. Most other sources imply that the user is channeling external energies: the will of a god for “divine,” servitor spirits for “spirit,” mana for “magical,” and the energy of creation for “cosmic.” A few straddle the line, and suffuse the user *and* his surroundings; see *Nature* (p. 28) for a source like this. It’s important to be aware of this distinction, as it can affect how powers work in play (see *Channeled Energies*, p. 24).

For more on sources, including a discussion of which sources are appropriate for a given genre and campaign type, see *Origins* (p. 179).

## Focus

A power also needs a *focus*: the item it manipulates or the concept it revolves around. This can be broad, but should be well-defined and fit into one of these categories:

- A form of matter or energy, or its absence (e.g., air, cold, darkness, earth, electricity, fire, light, radiation, sound, vacuum, or water).
- A natural phenomenon (e.g., death, disease, volcanic activity, or weather).

- A supernatural phenomenon (e.g., astral projection, second sight, or the will of a *specific* god).

- A class of targets (e.g., animals, computers, living bodies, plants, sentient minds, or spirits – or other *powers* of one particular source).

- An abstract notion (e.g., good, evil, the future, or probability).

## ANATOMY OF A POWER

In addition to its source and focus, a power has three game-mechanical components:

1. A set of advantages that represent different ways the power can manifest. These are known as the power’s *abilities*.

2. A special modifier – most often a limitation – called a *power modifier*. This turns any advantage that has it into an ability within the associated power.

3. A *Talent* that makes it easier to use all of the power’s abilities.

## Abilities

Each power has a list of *abilities*: advantages that make sense as manifestations of the power, given its focus. For instance, Telepathy offers such abilities as Empathy, Mind Control, Mind Probe, Mind Reading, Mind Shield, Mindlink, Possession, and

Telesend (for a complete list, see *Telepathy*, p. 134). What these advantages have in common is that they lend themselves to interpretation as direct interactions between sentient minds.

A power’s abilities usually have a number of structural similarities. They might all be physical or mental, or supernatural – or perhaps they all depend on rolls against the same attribute. This is a suggestion and not a requirement, but the GM should definitely bear it in mind when designing powers. A power will seem contrived if its abilities belong to many different classes of advantages that work nothing alike.

It might be necessary to modify or qualify an advantage to better meet these goals before allowing it as an ability. For instance, Telepathy lists Affliction and Innate Attack as abilities, but only when they cause fatigue, stunning, incapacitation, temporary mental disadvantages, or DX, IQ, or Will penalties – and only with the Malediction enhancement. These restrictions serve to exclude such attacks as fire bolts and death rays, which are inappropriate for Telepathy as depicted in most fiction.

The GM need not treat a power’s list of abilities as exhaustive or prescriptive. If a player provides a *reasonable* explanation for why an advantage that isn’t on the list would suit a particular power, the GM should be generous.

## Focus vs. Source

Focus and source *might* correspond on a one-to-one basis. For instance, the power to command some spirits in order to influence others would have “spirit” as both its source and its focus. This doesn’t have to be the case, however.

Most sources encompass more than one focus. For example, the “psionic” source extends to all six powers described in Chapter 6 of the **Basic Set**: Antipsi (focus: other psionic powers), ESP (focus: knowledge), Psychic Healing (focus: healing), Psychokinesis (focus: motion), Telepathy (focus: sentient minds), and Teleportation (focus: instantaneous travel). Likewise, the “divine” source is extremely broad; in most settings, each god grants its servitors a unique power.

Conversely, a given power could have more than one source. The focus “fire” might be divine, magical, or psionic in nature, depending on the game world.

See *Choosing Abilities* (p. 9) for a detailed discussion of how to choose appropriate abilities for a power.

## Power Modifiers

Each power also has a *power modifier*: a limitation or enhancement that turns an advantage into one of the power's abilities. An advantage *must* have the relevant power modifier in order to be part of the power; there are no exceptions.

An advantage with a power modifier is subject to all the special rules that apply to the power. If the power is subject to a broad set of countermeasures or situational penalties, only works in certain circumstances, or restricts the user's actions, its power modifier is a limitation. If the power's abilities are *more* flexible than the unmodified traits, its power modifier is an enhancement. The value of the limitation or enhancement depends on just how much the restrictions are tightened or relaxed; see *Evaluating Power Modifiers* (p. 20).

## Talents

Finally, each power has a *Talent* that represents natural or learned aptitude with the power. This is similar to a mundane Talent (see p. B89), but instead of giving a bonus to skill rolls, it gives a bonus to all success rolls made to activate or use any of the power's abilities; e.g., Telepathy Talent 3 gives +3 to the IQ, Will, and Perception rolls to use telepathic

## Powers vs. "Wild" Advantages

Not everyone with advantages from a power's list of abilities possesses that power. As explained under *Power Modifiers*, an advantage only becomes part of a power if it has the relevant power modifier. The GM decides whether it's possible to buy the advantages that make up powers as stand-alone traits.

In some game worlds, many advantages exist both "in the wild" and as part of one or more powers. Without a power modifier, an advantage works exactly as per its description – none of the special rules for powers apply to it. For instance, effects that negate, drain, or enhance an advantage when it's part of a particular power have *no effect* on the wild version. Things that benefit or restrict the wild version have their usual effects on all modified versions, though!

In other settings, the *only* way to obtain certain advantages – especially exotic or supernatural ones – is as part of a power. By ensuring that unusual abilities are always subject to power modifiers, the GM can control dozens or *hundreds* of advantages by defining a small number of modifiers. Of course, unusual NPCs might still have wild versions of such traits . . .

abilities. The GM is free to interpret Talent creatively for abilities that don't normally require a die roll; see *The Role of Talent* (p. 158) for ideas.

The cost per level of Talent can vary, as explained under *Pricing Talents* (p. 29), but most Talents cost 5 points/level. No one may buy more than four levels of a given Talent without the GM's permission.

It's possible to purchase the abilities of a power without taking the associated Talent, but most empowered heroes will find Talent indispensable. Likewise, the GM may allow

Talent without abilities. Those in either situation possess the power in question, and can generally add the missing component later on; see *Adding and Improving Powers* (p. 33).

This is all you absolutely *need* to know to skip to Chapter 3 and start adding powers to a character. The remainder of this chapter is aimed at GMs who are designing powers for their campaign, and players who have the GM's permission to give their characters custom-built powers.





# CHOOSING ABILITIES

The first step in designing a power is to pick a reasonable list of abilities. The goal is to create a list that's long enough to justify the work of coming up with a power modifier and a Talent (and the special rules that go with them), but short enough that the power doesn't become meaninglessly vague . . . or the only power worth having. Ask yourself two questions before you add any advantage to a power:

1. *Does the advantage make sense given the power's focus?* A power's abilities – with *no* exceptions – must directly address its focus. For instance, if you're designing a necromantic power, *all* of its abilities should deal with death and the dead. Channeling and Medium are a perfect fit. Innate Attack would work, too, if given a reasonable set of modifiers to turn it into, say, a "life-draining touch." However, Healing would be hard to justify, and Binding wouldn't make sense at all.

2. *Does the advantage make sense given the power's source?* The ability shouldn't clash with the folkloric traditions or genre conventions normally associated with the power's source. For example, psionic abilities should *feel* like powers of the user's mind; therefore, a trait such as True Faith, which traditionally relies on a connection to a god or a spirit, would be unsuitable.

Don't put these tests ahead of creativity, though. A clever choice of special effects and modifiers can sometimes turn an otherwise inappropriate advantage into a good fit. For instance, Binding might actually be quite reasonable for a necromantic power . . . *if* it's defined as skeletal hands that erupt from the ground and seize the victim! All that's needed is an Environmental limitation: "Only in graveyards, old battlefields, and other death-aspected areas."

When choosing a power's abilities – especially those available to PCs – it's crucial to make sure that they're varied enough to make the power useful for some or all of combat, stealth, transportation, information gathering, social interaction, or

simply earning a living. Below is an overview of several important categories of abilities. See Chapter 2 for rules for converting *specific* advantages into customized abilities.

## ATTACKS

In most action genres, those who have powers can hurl them at their foes. This is one of the key roles of powers in supers settings, where "elemental" powers are typically capable of a bewildering variety of attacks. For instance, Heat/Fire power might let the user conjure fireballs, flame jets, smoke, spark showers, etc. Of course, not every power is destructive. A power with many other uses – or one that's wholly nonviolent (e.g., Psychic Healing) – can get by with *no* attacks.

Because of the sheer number of modifiers available, always specify *all* enhancements and limitations needed to adapt an attack advantage to a power; see *Selecting Modifiers* (p. 99) for details. A few important examples:

- Normally ranged abilities, like Innate Attack, have the Melee Attack limitation (p. B112) if they charge up a hand or other body part for striking. Touch-only abilities, such as Neutralize and Possession, require Ranged (p. B107) to work at a distance.

- Abilities resisted by IQ or Will need the Based on HT enhancement when added to a fundamentally physical power. Those resisted by HT need Based on Will when included in a mental power. See *Based on (Different Attribute)* (p. B102).

- Curses, mental blasts, and similar supernatural attacks work best with Malediction (p. B106) or Sense-Based (p. B109).

### Direct Attacks

The beams, bolts, gazes, curses, etc. wielded as weapons by those with powers most often injure, weaken, subdue, or inconvenience their target directly.

### Affliction

The vast range of possible effects available through special

enhancements makes this the most common attack. Because of this scope, a power that includes Affliction should always specify the types of enhancements allowed.

Most nonlethal attacks are Afflictions with one of three enhancements: Attribute Penalty, for weakness-inducing attacks that drain ST or neural blasts that reduce DX or IQ; Disadvantage, for psionic or magical abilities that cause madness, decrepitude, etc.; and Incapacitation, for sleep, stunning, and paralysis effects. Lethal attacks are *usually* Innate Attacks (below), but "all or nothing" attacks could instead be Afflictions with the Coma or Heart Attack enhancement.

The Advantage enhancement is perhaps the most versatile of all. Used with Growth and Shrinking, it allows enlargement and diminution, respectively. With Morph, it can turn the target into another creature. With Insubstantiality, it can turn him into a "ghost." And with Jumper or Warp, it can make him disappear altogether!

### Binding

With suitable modifiers, Binding can hold the target in place with bonds of telekinetic force, imprison him within a block of ice, summon vines to entangle him, and so on. Like Affliction, Binding should come with a list of special modifiers that adjust it to suit the power. The Environmental limitation is among the most important of these, and is useful for describing abilities that command nature.

### Innate Attack

This is the basic "do damage" ability. Always specify permitted damage types, which should suit the power's focus.

If the focus is matter – earth, ice, metal, etc. – choose a Crushing, Cutting, Impaling, or Piercing Attack to represent a solid projectile. A liquid or gas that pushes the target around has Double Knockback (p. B104) and No Wounding (p. B111). A *poisonous* liquid or gas is a Fatigue or Toxic Attack with Contact Agent (p. B111) or Respiratory Agent (p. B108).

## Inappropriate Abilities

When narrowing down a power's list of abilities, bear in mind that a power is supposed to be an innate capacity to produce extraordinary effects – usually by actively manipulating some kind of energy. Traits that don't meet this criterion are rarely suitable. In particular, the following are normally off limits:

- *Attributes and secondary characteristics.* A hero can actively use great ST to smite foes or high Basic Move to sprint, but the benefits are mainly passive. A super with extreme scores can *call* his gift a “power” or “super-ability,” but he can't claim a discount from a power modifier or a bonus from a Talent.

- *Advantages that grant bonuses to attribute or skill rolls.* Traits such as Acute Vision, Hard to Kill, and Talents are situational attribute bonuses, and are subject to the same cautions as attributes.

- *Advantages that represent physiology, racial traits, implants, or surgery.* Advantages such as Claws and Extra Arms are just body parts, and aren't usually suitable as part of a power. Racial templates are inappropriate for similar reasons; “being a dragon” isn't a power! This applies equally to *technological* body parts: bionic arms, implanted firearms, etc. These are interesting abilities (see Chapter 3 for examples), but they rarely suit powers.

- *Disadvantages and quirks.* These render the user *less* capable, and so are unsuitable as abilities. A power might have disadvantages as prerequisites, though; see *Required Disadvantages* (p. 21).

- *Skills.* Powers can sometimes assist skill use and vice versa (see *Using Abilities with Skills*, p. 161), but this doesn't make the skills involved part of a power, however exotic they are. Skills are learned, not innate.

- *Social traits.* Legal Enforcement Powers, Patrons, Status, etc. originate from society – not powers. A power would have to be *very* unusual to include such advantages as active abilities.

Put creativity first, though. Only disadvantages, quirks, and skills are *always* inappropriate. The other traits above might be fine with suitable modifiers. For instance, attributes are explicitly permitted in some cases (see *Attributes as Abilities*, p. 13), physiological traits are fine if switchable (see *Switchable Body Parts*, p. 18), and even technological body parts are acceptable if the GM allows “Superscience” as a power modifier (see *Gadget Limitations and Powers*, p. 107).

If the focus is energy, the best option is a Burning Attack. This can represent a laser, lightning bolt, fireball, radiation blast, etc. Some force beams and sonic/vibratory attacks work more like solid projectiles, however.

Supernatural powers should use Fatigue Attack for nonlethal effects (e.g., mind blasts) or Toxic Attack for deadly ones (e.g., death rays). Such abilities frequently have the Side Effect enhancement (p. B109).

Only exotic foci are likely to have a Corrosion Attack. This might represent an acid jet, antimatter beam, or disintegrator – or even accelerating time to cause decay.

### Leech and Neutralize

Individuals who can rob others of their capabilities exist in most settings with powers. The ability to reduce the victim's FP, HP, or attributes in order

to heal oneself is Leech (p. 96). This is most often part of a supernatural power with a vampiric or necromantic bent.

The ability to remove *powers* is Neutralize (p. 97). Powers that include this advantage must specify the affected source, and might use the One Power or One Ability limitation to narrow it down further. If the attacker acquires the stolen powers, add the Power Theft enhancement to the list. This best suits super-powers.

### Environmental Control

Some advantages let the user alter his environment in order to compromise opponents in battle. These might not cause direct harm, but it's wise to count them as attacks when designing a power. A power with many of these abilities is *definitely* useful in combat.

### Control and Create

A power with these advantages should normally limit them to its focus; e.g., Control (Earth) and Create (Earth) for Earth power. Occasionally, it makes sense for a power to include Control and Create for a diametrically opposed focus, too; for instance, Air power might include Create (Vacuum) if it can move air *out* of an area. See *Control* (p. 90) and *Create* (p. 92) for details.

### Obscure

Before adding Obscure to a power, think about which senses the power's focus could block. Heat/Fire power could inhibit vision with smoke and jam Infravision with heat, while servants of Trickster, Spirit Guardian of Thieves, might have a power that includes *all* forms of Obscure. Use the Extended special enhancement for related senses, multiple instances of Obscure for *unrelated* senses.

*When narrowing down a power's list of abilities, bear in mind that a power is supposed to be an innate capacity to produce extraordinary effects – usually by actively manipulating some kind of energy.*



## Static

Static (p. 98) interferes with *all* powers of a particular source. The basic advantage is a personal defense, but it tends to have the Area Effect special enhancement in fiction – and often the Ranged enhancement (p. B107), too – making it more like an attack. If it appears among a power’s abilities, the power generally shouldn’t include any ability that stems from the affected source, with the exception of Neutralize, Obscure, and Resistant. Thus, Static works best for “anti-powers.” For instance, Antipsi (p. 122) includes Static (Psi), but doesn’t include psi abilities *other* than those that block psi.

## DEFENSES

Powers are as likely to include defenses as attacks. This might seem odd, given that the majority of suitable traits – notably Damage Resistance and Resistant – are passive, and don’t let you *do* anything. But including such advantages in a power often makes it possible to employ extra effort (see *Extra Effort*, p. 160), attempt special active defenses (see *Defending with Powers*, p. 167), and perform “stunts” (see *Stunts*, p. 170) – all of which benefit from Talent. Of course, there’s a tradeoff: anything that neutralizes the power also neutralizes the defenses it provides.

### *Types of Defenses*

Before choosing specific defensive abilities, think about *how* the power protects its user. A power might work in any or all of the following ways:

*Obstructing the attack.* Some powers interpose themselves between the user and the incoming attack, weakening the attack in a way that’s logically or dramatically consistent with the power’s focus. For example, Cold/Ice power might let the user shroud his body in ice, creating a physical barrier against damage. This best suits powers that manipulate materials (earth, ice, metal, etc.) or create energy fields (e.g., *Psychokinesis*, p. 133).

*Diverting the attack.* Other powers protect the user by allowing him to channel his focus so effectively that when he’s attacked with an item or substance he can control, he can

direct it around or away from himself, reducing the attack’s effectiveness. Examples include a telepath who can ward off the incursions of other telepaths and a fire elemental who’s largely immune to fire. This explanation makes sense for almost *any* focus.

*Negating the attack.* Certain powers let the defender wholly or partially “cancel out” attacks that are diametrically opposed in focus. This is most appropriate for powers with a clearly defined opposite: Good vs. Evil, Light vs. Darkness, etc.

## Optional Rule: Alternative Abilities

It often makes sense to define several abilities as distinct, mutually exclusive “settings” of a single, adaptable trait. For instance, Burning Attack, Ladar, and Laser Communication might be different intensity levels and modulations for a laser that can function as a weapon *or* a sense *or* a means of communication. Similarly, two Innate Attacks might represent different power settings for a ray gun.

If only one such ability works at a time, it’s reasonable to give a cost break. If the GM agrees, those with “alternative abilities” pay full price only for their *most expensive* ability. All the rest are at 1/5 cost. Find each ability’s final cost after all enhancements and limitations (including the power modifier, if any), apply the divisor, and round up.

*Example:* Jocko the psychokinetic has Flight (PK, -10%) [36], Super Jump 2 (PK, -10%) [18], and Walk on Air (PK, -10%) [18]. The GM decides that these advantages represent a *single* ability to levitate. Jocko pays full price for Flight, as it’s the most expensive trait. He pays 1/5 cost for Super Jump and Walk on Air. Each costs  $18/5 = 3.6$  points, which rounds up to 4 points. Final cost is  $36 + 4 + 4 = 44$  points.

The GM shouldn’t permit abilities with incompatible in-game explanations as alternatives. Obscure and Burning Attack in the form of smoke and a fireball are reasonable alternatives . . . but if the smoke were darkness and the fireball a laser, the combination would need superscience or the supernatural to make sense!

Alternative abilities have three drawbacks:

1. It’s impossible to use the abilities simultaneously or have a Link (p. B106) between them. To change settings requires a Ready maneuver. After switching to an attack (Affliction, Binding, Innate Attack, Leech, Neutralize, Obscure, Static, and anything else the GM views as an “attack”), switching to a different attack is a free action. If the user can make more than one attack per turn, he must use the same setting for *all* of them.
2. Anything that disables one ability disables the whole collection. If injury or critical failure cripples or burns out *any* of the abilities – or a foe neutralizes or drains one – *none* of them are available until the affected one recovers!
3. Using an ability that can’t be activated again until its duration expires (e.g., Neutralize with the Power Theft enhancement, or almost anything with the Ranged enhancement) means that *none* of the abilities are available for the duration.

For additional notes that apply to attacks, see *Alternative Attacks* (p. B61).

## Typical Defensive Abilities

Once you know *how* a power protects its user, it's easier to choose the advantages and modifiers that make up its defensive abilities.

### Damage Resistance

This works well for all three kinds of defenses. As an obstructing defense, DR should work against most or all attacks. The Force Field enhancement is especially appropriate.

As a diverting defense, restrict DR to the power's own source or focus by applying the Limited modifier. For the purposes of *Limited Defenses* (p. B46), an entire source is "Very Common" (-20%), while almost any focus broad enough to justify a power is "Common" (-40%). The Absorption and Reflection enhancements are logical additions.

As a negating defense, use Limited to restrict DR to a focus that *opposes* that of the power.

### Resistant

At the +3 or +8 level, Resistant is suitable as a diverting defense against the power's *own* source or focus, or as

a negating defense against the *opposite* focus. As with DR, an entire source is "Very Common," while a single focus is "Common."

Immunity is often appropriate, too. However, the GM is free to forbid a power from offering full Immunity to its own source if any shield capable of completely blocking its harmful energies would *also* block external energies that must reach the user to empower him in the first place. This consideration is dramatic, not game-mechanical.

### Specific Defenses

Many defensive advantages work against specific threats. The most important are Mind Shield (as a diverting defense for any mental power), Protected Sense (most often a negating defense; e.g., Darkness power might give Protected Vision by reducing glare), Radiation Tolerance (a diverting defense for energy-related powers, but also a suitable as an obstructing defense for powers that manipulate dense materials), Sealed (an obstructing defense that often accompanies DR with the Force Field enhancement), and Temperature

Tolerance (which might be diverting or negating; e.g., Heat/Fire power vs. heat or cold).

## MOVEMENT ABILITIES

Movement abilities are another staple of action genres. Most of these traits allow flashy maneuvers that make them every bit as dynamic as combat abilities.

### Types of Movement Abilities

There are *many* possible explanations for movement abilities. The most obvious is that the power has "moving things" as its focus. Powers that can move distant objects – like Psychokinesis (p. 133) – can often transport the user, too, with the most common result being Flight. "Moving things" can also mean *instantaneous* movement. Powers of this kind, such as Teleportation (p. 134), offer Jumper, Snatcher, or Warp.

Equally common in fiction are powers that let the user command or conjure his focus in such a way that it carries him along or enhances his movement capabilities. A super with Air power might ride within a miniature tornado (Flight), a hero with Cold/Ice power might slide along an icy trail (Enhanced Move (Ground)) and climb walls by freezing his hands to them (Clinging), and so on.

A few powers allow the wielder to project his focus to generate thrust, like a jet or a rocket. Any power energetic enough to do damage with a direct attack could believably work this way – especially an elemental power that lets its user project water, fire, etc. This most often grants Enhanced Move, Flight, or both.

Finally, a power that gives precise control over a focus is likely to let the user control how his body interacts with that focus. For instance, Gravity power might let a hero reduce the pull of gravity on his body (justifying Catfall, Super Jump, or even Flight), while Earth power could enable him to meld his body with stone in order to climb it (Clinging) or pass *through* it (Permeation).

## Uniqueness

A given advantage *can* belong to more than one power. For instance, Healing isn't just part of the Healing power; the Bioenergy, Good, Life, and Order powers also include it (see Chapter 3). However, variations between power modifiers do mean that the advantage might have unique strengths and weaknesses, relative to its base form, in each case.

An advantage should only be truly unique to a single power if the campaign background demands it. For example, in a world where the only powers are divine, certain abilities might be the exclusive domain of particular gods.

### Multiple Copies of the Same Advantage

You can buy the same advantage more than once as the ability of different powers – usually as insurance against one of your powers failing, or to serve as a prerequisite (see p. 31). Pay full price only for the *most expensive* ability, after all modifiers; the others are at 1/5 cost (round up). Unlike *Alternative Abilities* (p. 11), there's no connection between these abilities. The discount simply reflects the diminishing returns on buying an advantage multiple times.

If the advantage comes in levels, you can instead opt to pay *full* price for both versions. This lets you add the levels together in a situation where both powers would work, provided your powers aren't opposed in some way (GM's decision).



## Typical Movement Abilities

Most movement advantages are suitable abilities for powers, but matching them up can be tricky. Below are a few suggestions.

### Amphibious, Terrain Adaptation, and Walk on Liquid

These traits let the user function at full Move in or on a substance that normally limits movement. They're common for elemental powers that let the user adjust the interaction between his body and his power's focus: Amphibious and Walk on Liquid both suit Water; Terrain Adaptation (Ice) fits Cold/Ice, and so on. Powers granted by spirits or gods associated with nature are also candidates for such abilities; for instance, a sea god might bestow Amphibious, while a desert spirit might give Terrain Adaptation (Sand).

### Clinging and Super Climbing

Clinging and Super Climbing are logical for any power that lets the user create a bond between his body and a surface. Depending on the power, this bond might be physical (ice, stone, etc.) or due to an attractive force (gravity, magnetism, psychokinetic energy, etc.). If the bond can only form with the focus of the power, or if the focus can only form a bond with certain substances (e.g., metals, for Magnetism), add the Specific limitation.

### Enhanced Move

This movement ability nearly always occurs alongside others: Enhanced Move (Air) with Flight, Enhanced Move (Water) with Amphibious, and so on. Enhanced Move (Ground) is *extremely* flexible; it can represent elemental "matter surfing," chi- or psi-based body control, and many other things.

### Flight, Super Jump, and Walk on Air

Flight is probably the single most common ability attributed to gods, supers, psis, and others with remarkable powers. A hero might ride the wind, soar atop a column of flame, control gravity or psychokinetic energy, or summon spirits to whisk

him through the air. This is one of the few abilities that can, with a little creativity, suit almost any focus! The GM should keep an open mind.



## Attributes as Abilities

The GM shouldn't allow modified ST, DX, IQ, HT, Will, Per, Basic Speed, or Basic Move as abilities. However, *bonuses* to these scores are appropriate for powers if either of the following is true:

- The bonuses have limitations that mean they require conscious activation or don't always work; e.g., Costs Fatigue, Limited Use, or Trigger. For instance, a ST bonus with Costs Fatigue might suit a biological or chi power.
- The power modifier itself genuinely limits utility. For example, a super-power might grant ST and Basic Move bonuses that can be negated (by Neutralize and related effects) along with the rest of the power.

Price such a bonus as additional levels of the affected score, adjusted as usual for modifiers. List it as an advantage, however – don't factor it into "permanent" attributes, secondary characteristics, skills, etc. It provides the full benefits of a higher score . . . *when it works*. When the player wishes to use his bonus, he must declare this like any other ability use. This gives the GM a chance to rule on whether the bonus is available under the circumstances.

Talent doesn't affect these bonuses at all. A "Wisdom of Horus" power might offer IQ +10 as one of its abilities, and give +10 to IQ and IQ-based skills when it works, but the Wisdom of Horus Talent would give no *further* bonus.

To turn FP and ST-based damage into abilities, use the special rules under *Energy Reserves* (p. 119) and *Modifying ST-Based Damage* (p. 146) instead.

Those trying to save points should consider applying limitations such as Gliding and Lighter Than Air to their Flight. Alternatively, they might buy Super Jump or Walk on Air; either ability is suitable for a power that allows full-fledged Flight.

### Jumper, Snatcher, and Warp

In most game worlds, these abilities are the exclusive domain of powers with "instant movement" as their focus. They are frequently the *only* abilities of such powers, with the possible exception of Affliction with the corresponding Advantage enhancements. Since these traits can short-circuit adventures, the GM should be conservative about accepting "creative" explanations as to why they suit atypical powers or sources. By limiting which powers include these advantages, and restricting those powers to PCs who draw power from suitable sources, the GM can easily dampen or jam *just those powers*, allowing him to shore up his plot without robbing the heroes of all their abilities.

## Permeation and Tunneling

Powers with a specific material focus often count Permeation of that material among their abilities. A power might even encompass *several* versions of Permeation; e.g., Permeation (Earth) and Permeation (Stone) for Earth power. Conversely, more than one focus might make sense for a given form of Permeation; e.g., both Cold/Ice power and Water power could include Permeation (Ice).

Tunneling rarely suits powers other than those that deal with earth or stone.

## Telekinesis

Telekinesis is unique among movement abilities in that its chief function is to move things other than the user. The most familiar explanation for this ability is psi, but dozens of other phenomena can produce identical results: spirits, tightly focused winds, gravity beams, magnetism, etc. As a result, Telekinesis is nearly as widespread as Flight, and suits an equally broad spectrum of powers.

# MENTAL ABILITIES

Combat and movement abilities enjoy the highest profile in fiction, but *interesting* powers offer many other possibilities. Particularly important are capabilities useful for investigation and social interaction. Most of these gifts require IQ, Will, or Perception rolls to use, making them “mental” for all practical purposes – however physical their manifestations.

Any power might offer a few mental abilities. However, powers with a divine, magical, psionic, or spiritual source tend to offer *many* such abilities – or even consist solely of these abilities – because of the connections that myth and fiction draw between the supernatural and the mind. Psi powers are *defined* as mental, while divine, magical, and spiritual ones depend on faith, knowledge, and awareness, all of which are ultimately rooted in thought.

Because mental abilities manifest through thoughts more so than actions, they are especially appropriate

for contemplative characters. In conspiracy, horror, and secret-powers campaigns, the GM might decide that they are the only abilities available to *anyone*. Telepaths can read minds . . . but not fry the brains of enemies. Shamans can perceive spirits . . . but not fly. And so on.

Here and elsewhere, **Powers** splits mental gifts into “communications,” “influence,” “information,” and “senses.” These categories overlap a great deal. For example, the Medium advantage allows the user to sense and speak with spirits, raising the possibility of asking them for assistance or information; thus, Medium could fit into any or all of these classes. If it's important to categorize an advantage precisely, the GM's word is final.

## Communications

Certain abilities enable the user to communicate with others despite physical barriers (distance, sound-proofing, etc.), lack of a common language, physiological differences, and so on. Two classes of powers are especially likely to offer such abilities. Powers that focus on a type of energy often give the ability to signal with that energy, while powers that focus on entities that don't use normal human speech generally include the ability to communicate with those beings.

## Channeling and Medium

These advantages enable the user to interact with spirits. They nearly always occur as part of a supernatural power (divine, magical, psionic, or spirit), and rarely suit other kinds of powers. In settings where “spirits” are the perfectly natural residents of another dimension, however, either ability might belong to a power that allows interdimensional communication or travel.

## Mimicry

Mimicry is an obvious choice for Sound/Vibration power, and might suit a chi- or psi-based body-control power that allows voluntary reshaping of the vocal apparatus, or a power that focuses on animals or nature. Trickster spirits and gods of language might empower their servants with this ability, too.

## Speak with Animals and Speak with Plants

These abilities occur most commonly as part of powers granted by nature deities. In game worlds where psi powers can influence nonsapient life forms, they might instead be obscure telepathic abilities, or belong to distinct Beast Telepathy and Plant Telepathy powers. They also suit more generic animal-, plant-, and nature-control powers.

## Speak Underwater

Aquatic supers often possess this ability – almost always as part of Sound/Vibration or Water power. Holy folk empowered by sea gods, ocean spirits, and similar entities might enjoy this capability as well.

## Subsonic Speech and Ultrasonic Speech

These abilities mainly suit Sound/Vibration power. They *aren't* appropriate for most supernatural powers. The knowledge that some animals produce sounds at frequencies inaudible to human hearing – in fact, the entire concept of different frequencies of sound – comes from modern science, and doesn't mesh well with traditional beliefs. Druids, shamans, and the like should use Speak with Animals to talk to bats, dolphins, etc.

## Telecommunication

Telecommunication is best thought of in terms of “Telesend vs. everything else.” *Most* forms use mundane energy to transmit a signal; therefore, they suit powers that focus on the type of energy involved. For instance, Infrared Communication fits Heat/Fire or Light power; Laser Communication is an obvious choice for Light power; and Radio is logical for Electricity power. If the GM wishes, all three might be part of a broader power that focuses on electromagnetism in general; e.g., Electrokinetics.

Telesend uses many of the same rules as other forms of Telecommunication, but it's ill-suited to powers with scientific or pseudo-scientific explanations. For most people, direct thought transference *defines* “psionic.” As such, the GM might wish to reserve it for psionic powers – notably Telepathy (p. 134) – and other supernatural powers with similar foci.



## Influence

Influence abilities allow the user to read or alter others' emotions, thoughts, or perceptions. Some of these traits would fit equally well under *Communications*. The crucial difference is that the advantages listed below let the user *manipulate* others – either by giving him an uncanny degree of emotional or intellectual access to his “victim,” or by enabling him to control his victim directly.

### Animal Empathy, Empathy, Plant Empathy, and Spirit Empathy

These traits make it possible to determine the emotional state and predisposition of another being without his knowledge or consent – indeed, without even conversing with

him. This makes them especially appropriate for psionic powers (Telepathy in particular), but note that *any* power that focuses on animals, plants, or spirits could logically include the appropriate variety of Empathy, regardless of source. Healing powers might offer these abilities as well, albeit through reading vital signs instead of minds.

### Illusion

Illusion (p. 94) represents the ability to project images. In its basic form, it's appropriate for Light power, psionic Electrokinesis, etc. It often occurs with the Mental special modifier, though, which turns it into a *true* influence ability. This makes it an excellent match for supernatural powers – especially Telepathy, magical powers, and divine and spirit powers

granted by deceivers and tricksters (although believers might regard the illusions as “visions”).

### Mind Control and Possession

Mind Control permits the user to order his victim around, while Possession goes a step further and lets him take direct control of his victim's body. Both offer special enhancements that allow the emulation of countless other effects common in fiction – most of which are appropriate as psionic or spirit abilities. In fact, these capabilities are only rarely suitable for powers that *don't* have a supernatural source.

### Mind Probe and Mind Reading

These advantages are most often psionic, found as part of Telepathy power – or Machine Telepathy, if given the Cybernetic Only special limitation. Other supernatural powers could offer them, however. For instance, spirits might mentally eavesdrop for a shaman, or a deity might empower “inquisitors” to pry information from mortal minds (or, with a suitable Accessibility limitation, just the faithful).

### Rapier Wit

Rapier Wit can represent many different psionic abilities: reading the victim's mind for words guaranteed to shock or incense him, telepathically projecting emotions while speaking, etc. If its source is divine, the user might speak with the voice of the gods. It might instead be a chi-based attack – a variation on the Kiai skill (p. B203). It could even represent the ability of someone with Sound/Vibration power to modulate his voice in order to exploit the physiological effects of sounds above or below the audible range.

### Terror

The ability to instill fear is common to many powers. Fictional examples include channeling chi or divine will to intimidate others, using psi to manipulate emotions, summoning frightening spirits, and wielding the power of pure Evil. Terror needn't be supernatural; it's possible to unnerve others with subsonic vibrations (Sound/Vibration power), tuned electric fields (Electricity power), or other “natural” effects.





## True Faith

True Faith normally comes from within . . . but many fantasy and horror tales portray the wielder as a conduit for *external* energies. Either way, this gift is best reserved for divine and spirit powers. When True Faith comes from a *divine* power, it's acceptable to include the Pact limitation (see *Required Disadvantages*, p. 21) in the power modifier, as those entrusted to administer divine power by proxy are held to higher standards than True Faith intrinsically assumes!

## Information

A few abilities let the user *know* things without perceiving them with his senses (however exotic) or stealing information from others' minds. The GM should realize that any information he gives to PCs with such gifts could paint him into a corner or derail the plot; therefore, it's wise to reserve these capabilities for powers that genuinely call for them.

## Blessed and Oracle

These advantages best suit powers that represent an attunement to a divine or spiritual force that provides information directly (Blessed) or indirectly (Oracle). In either case, it's acceptable to include the Pact limitation in the power modifier, as explained under *True Faith* (above). Oracle might be appropriate for other kinds of powers – for instance, psionic ESP – at the GM's discretion.

## Danger Sense and Precognition

Foreknowledge – vague (Danger Sense) or precise (Precognition) – is the essence of ESP, making these advantages eminently appropriate as psionic abilities. Rubber-science arguments can justify either as part of a power that includes Jumper (Time) or FTL travel abilities, too. Finally, since some animals *seem* to react to events before they occur, the GM might allow these gifts to those with animal-control powers.

## Intuition

Any power that includes other information abilities could logically include Intuition. It might stem from divine guidance, ESP, or an acute awareness of events in alternate

# Finding the Right Mix

There's more to designing a power than choosing abilities that suit its source and focus. You must also ensure that its abilities work together as a set . . . and that they're appropriate for *your* game. If you're uncertain about a specific ability, test it by answering the questions below. If you answer “no” to any of them, the ability is probably inappropriate.

1. *Does it suit the genre?* Almost any power intended for an action genre – four-color supers, mythic fantasy, pulp, etc. – should include attacks, defenses, and movement abilities. Impressive physical transformations are suitable, too. Choose mental abilities for their utility in action scenes; e.g., Danger Sense to detect ambushes, Mimicry and Illusion to confuse foes in combat, and Enhanced Tracking to aim weapons.

Powers for investigative genres (including most conspiracy and horror, and more cerebral science fiction) should focus on mental abilities – perhaps exclusively. Where attacks, defenses, movement abilities, or transformations exist, they should be incidental to the power, not its centerpiece.

2. *Does it suit the realism level?* In a “realistic” game world, abilities shouldn't *blatantly* violate physical laws or generate phenomena unheard of in nature. This rules out attacks, movement abilities, and physical transformations that involve massive amounts of energy (X-ray lasers, FTL flight, etc.) or outré effects such as intangibility and teleportation. Exceptions *must* be supernatural – and subject to real-world beliefs about the supernatural (e.g., “iron is proof against faerie magic”).

In a “cinematic” setting, an ability merely needs to match the power's focus to be suitable. Rubber-science justifications and the extravagant excesses of myth are fine, as long as the result is *stylish*: Thundar the Storm God can fly and shoot lightning; Mindforce the psychokinetic super can hurl locomotives; and Ssthr the Reptile Man shaman can turn into a dragon.

3. *Does it suit the secrecy level?* If powers are a secret, they should consist of abilities that are undetectable or easily dismissed as coincidence: attacks that only affect enemies with powers or who are otherwise “in the know” (e.g., Static), defenses that can pass as luck (e.g., Resistant), mental abilities without obvious side effects (which excludes Telecommunication, Scanning Sense, and anything else that emits detectable energy), self-concealing physical transformations (e.g., Invisibility), and so on.

Bear in mind that neither “action-oriented” nor “cinematic” *automatically* means “obvious.” A cinematic action game *can* be a secret-powers game. For instance, a martial-arts master in a violent cinematic campaign might have Telekinesis as a secret ability. It's invisible and impossible to prove – and also entirely unrealistic, and handy for bashing foes!

universes. A radical but interesting origin for Intuition is a mental power that enhances the user's ability to process data, letting him make extremely accurate guesses!

## Psychometry

As explained on p. B78, this ability is most often either psionic or part of

a time-travel power of some kind. However, a power that grants its user *extremely* acute senses (see *Senses*, below, for ideas) might grant a variant form of Psychometry that can make limited guesses about the past by building up a composite image from scents, residues, and wear patterns.

## Racial Memory

Racial Memory might involve contacting spirits of the dead for counsel. If so, it's ideal for powers of a necromantic nature – spirit, magical, or otherwise. Alternative explanations tend to be psionic: usually ESP (“retrocognition”), but possibly Telepathy, if telepaths can read the minds of the dead or tap a “collective consciousness.”

## Senses

Extended senses are the most common mental abilities granted by powers. Almost *any* power that lets its wielder manipulate a focus will let him sense that focus, too. In the case of supernatural foci, powers that include communications and information abilities frequently bestow enhanced senses. Finally, it's traditional for animal-control and totemic spirit powers to provide the sensory capabilities of beasts.

## Vision

Sight is the centerpiece of the human sensorium, which is probably why storytellers attribute so many unusual visual capabilities to those with amazing powers. Possibilities include 360° Vision, Dark Vision, Enhanced Tracking, Hyperspectral Vision, Infravision, Microscopic Vision, Night Vision, Penetrating Vision, Peripheral Vision, See Invisible, Telescopic Vision, and Ultravision. The Light power is the most obvious candidate for such traits, but many of these senses are equally logical as ESP abilities (ESP is called “second sight” for a reason!) – and Dark Vision suits Darkness power, Infravision suits Heat/Fire power, and so on.

Chi powers, too, can give the user an uncanny awareness of his surroundings. This might just be the Blind Fighting skill (p. B180), but a power that includes 360° Vision, Dark Vision, and Enhanced Tracking would cover that ground and more.

## Hearing

Hearing is the “second sense” of humans, a status reflected in the relatively short list of hearing-related advantages: Discriminatory Hearing, Parabolic Hearing, Subsonic Hearing, and Ultrahearing. Such abilities might

suit an elemental Sound/Vibration power, psionic ESP, or perhaps a specialized form of Psychokinesis (“sonokinesis”).

## Smell and Taste

Discriminatory Smell and Discriminatory Taste work best as abilities borrowed from beasts using animal-control powers. They might also result from a body-control power; a matter-control power that lets the user analyze and alter chemical compositions; or even a more narrowly focused chemical power.

## Touch

Sensitive Touch and Vibration Sense extend the normal human sense of touch considerably. Either might suit Sound/Vibration power. These advantages also offer an interesting alternative explanation for chi-based sensory abilities, with Sensitive Touch allowing a martial artist to detect his opponents' subtle movements and Vibration Sense allowing him to fight blind.

## Other Senses

A few senses aren't extensions of the five human senses so much as entirely new capabilities.

*Clairsentience:* This is the generic “sensing at a distance” advantage, suitable for *any* power that lets the user displace his consciousness. It's usually psionic – part of Astral Projection or ESP – but shamans with spirit abilities often possess it as well. It's hard to justify through non-supernatural means, but powers that deal in time and dimension travel might be able to warp space sufficiently to let the user perceive a distant location as if it were nearby.

*Detect:* A power with a given focus and source can usually detect one or both of those things – and perhaps related or opposed foci, too. Earth power should include Detect (Earth), Good power might encompass both Detect (Good) and Detect (Evil), and so on. Some foci require creative thinking; for instance, Healing power could allow Detect (Disease) or Detect (Poison), while a sea god might give his servitors Detect (Sea Creatures).

*Scanning Sense:* Radar suits Electricity power, Ladar fits Light power, and Sonar is ideal for Sound/Vibration power. There are some more subtle matches, too; for instance, a psi with Electrokinetics could justify Radar *or* Ladar, and someone with Water power might have Sonar to navigate underwater. Para-Radar, on the other hand, is nothing like these other senses, and almost always supernatural. It's most often associated with ESP or a form of divine or cosmic awareness.

## PHYSICAL TRANSFORMATIONS

A few abilities enable the user to alter the structure or composition of his body. These can benefit mobility (by letting the hero turn into a fish, sprout wings, become a ghost, etc.), stealth (by altering his appearance), and defense (by healing damage), among other things.

Nearly all of these abilities affect the user only. To transform others, the power must include an Affliction that has a suitable Advantage enhancement. Such Afflictions might accompany transformations that affect the wielder (typical of powers that *focus* on transformations) or replace them.

*There's more to designing a power than choosing abilities that suit its source and focus. You must also ensure that its abilities work together as a set . . . and that they're appropriate for your game.*





## Metamorphoses

The most common transformations are those that allow the user to alter his body's size, shape, or physiology. In general, these *don't* affect composition – transformed people are still made of living flesh, vehicular transformers remain mechanical, and so on.

### Chameleon and Elastic Skin

Powers that enable conscious control of the skin might incorporate either of these traits. This is typical of body-control powers – or of beast-

control powers that let the user borrow the capabilities of squid, chameleons, etc. Such abilities might instead result from illusions that sit atop the skin, in which case they would be ideal for a dedicated Illusion power, or even a power granted by a mischievous spirit or demonic deceiver.

### Growth, Shrinking, and Stretching

These advantages involve physically improbable size changes, and so are best suited to supernatural or cinematic powers. Growth and Shrinking

occur frequently in myth; a divine power might let a man become a titan . . . or vice versa. Super-powers that bestow such abilities sometimes “conserve” mass by moving matter into or out of another dimension; thus, these gifts could occur as part of dimension-travel powers. A *cosmic* power, suitable for gods and godlike supers, might let the user convert matter to and from energy, or alter the fundamental scale of creation!

### Hermaphromorph

Many spirits and deities seem to change sex at will, and might grant similar abilities to those they bless with powers. Body-control powers might also include this capability. Since Hermaphromorph results in a fully functional change, it *isn't* suitable for illusion and deception powers that merely alter outward appearance.

### Shapeshifting

*Alternate Form:* This versatile advantage can occur as part of *many* powers. The most obvious of these are supernatural; for example, a divine power that lets a priest take on the forms associated with his god, or a spirit power that enables a shaman to become a totem animal. A dimension-travel power might give the wielder the ability to appear in different bodies, storing unused ones “elsewhere” for the duration. And a body-control power could give the user enough control that he can turn into something else.

*Morph:* All of the explanations given for Alternate Form work here, but Morph is far more flexible. It suits the most cinematic, open-ended forms of beast control and matter control seen in comic books, and provides the truest emulation of the capabilities of mythological shapeshifters.

### Switchable Body Parts

Not all transformations are broad changes in shape or size. Many powers permit a few *specific* alterations in form. The GM may allow such advantages as Claws, Extra Arms, Extra Legs, Flight (Winged), Striker, and Teeth to have the Switchable enhancement (p. 109). Any power that can justify a total metamorphosis could reasonably grant such partial changes.



## Transmutations

Some abilities *do* let the user alter his body's composition. These tend to be totally unrealistic, and best suited to supernatural powers and highly cinematic super-powers.

### Insubstantiality

Interpreted as a spirit form, Insubstantiality suits the entire gamut of divine, magical, and spirit powers. It's also a logical ability for non-supernatural powers that focus on dimensional travel: the user moves into an alternate dimension where he can see but not interact with the "real" world. Four-color supers might even gain this ability from *elemental* powers, using Electricity power to become pure energy, Sound/Vibration power to oscillate out of phase with reality, and so on.

Insubstantiality is not always a transformation. It's sometimes the result of the Astral Projection power.

This lets the user separate his consciousness from his material body, which remains unchanged.

### Invisibility

Exotic body-control and matter-phasing powers can sometimes transmute the body into something transparent. However, two common explanations for Invisibility *don't* involve body alteration – they just create the *appearance* of a transformation. Chi-based powers and psionic Telepathy work by letting the user affect others' minds so that they don't seem him, while Light and Electrokinetic powers let him vanish by bending light around his body.

### Meta-Traits

Any of the forms under *Elemental Meta-Traits* (p. B262) might be the result of a transformation. Such traits mainly suit supernatural powers associated with elemental forces or

spirits – and of course elemental super-powers. Those who can switch into and out of these forms have Alternate Form, with the relevant meta-trait as their alternate racial template.

### Shadow Form

When enabled supernaturally, this advantage usually represents a spirit form of some kind. The GM might wish to reserve it for powers that spring from sinister forces: black magic, foul spirits, the patron god of assassins, Evil embodied, etc. Shadow Form rarely occurs outside of settings that feature the supernatural, but if the GM allows a Darkness power, this ability certainly fits!

## Restorations

Traits that keep the body in good repair are considered physical transformations: they transform the body from "damaged" to "whole" or let the user adjust his physiology to cope with injury, starvation, suffocation, etc. Such abilities are frequently manifestations of powers that channel chi, psionic energy, pure Good, or the blessing of a benevolent spirit or deity. Some supers use a "generic" Healing power that stems from none of these sources, however.

### Healing

Healing is one of the few physical transformations that normally affect others. Divine, psionic, and spirit powers are the most common explanations. More unusually, those with time-warping powers might be able to hasten natural recovery by accelerating time – or by *undoing* the harm in the past.

### Metabolism Control

Control over bodily functions (such as heartbeat) is one of the best-known abilities of those with chi powers – kung fu masters, yogi, etc. – and psionic healers. This gift rarely originates from other sources.

### Regeneration and Regrowth

These abilities are generally just facets of the powers suggested above. An interesting alternative would be a dimension-travel or matter-control power that restores damaged tissue by channeling, converting, or creating matter.

## Number of Abilities

A power should offer enough choices that those who possess it don't all seem the same, but not so many *potent* abilities that players come to see it as the only power worth having. Some guidelines for GMs:

- **Attacks:** Two attack advantages is plenty. To encourage player creativity, leave these reasonably general; e.g., "Any Toxic Attack, and any Affliction that causes an incapacitating condition."
- **Defenses:** Aim for two or three major defenses. A "major" defense is one that's open-ended (like DR) or that grants *total* immunity. Add minor defenses as you think of them – there's no need to count.
- **Movement Abilities:** Again, consider two or three *major* abilities. In this case, "major" means an advantage that lets the user move in an environment previously inaccessible to him (e.g., Flight) or that provides more-or-less unrestricted mobility (e.g., Warp).
- **Mental Abilities:** Include at most two or three potentially game-changing senses or communications abilities (e.g., Para-Radar or Telesend). Count potent influence abilities – for instance, Mind Control – as attacks. Make lesser abilities as numerous as you wish.
- **Physical Transformations:** Count any ability with significant combat utility – Insubstantiality, Invisibility, etc. – as a "major defense." Otherwise, there's little need to restrict these abilities; in fiction, most powers that allow body alteration permit *many* transformations.

These limits are only suggestions. If you decide to adhere to them, be open to horse-trading. You might reduce the number of major abilities in one category to add muscle to another. You might compensate for the complete absence of a particular category by adding major abilities elsewhere. Telepathy (p. 134) is a good example: its small number of highly specialized defenses and total lack of movement abilities and transformations balance an impressive list of influence and communications abilities.

# EVALUATING POWER MODIFIERS

After determining which advantages best suit the power, it's time to work out the modifier that makes those traits part of the power. This enhancement or limitation is the *power modifier*.

The power modifier converts any advantage that has it into one of the power's abilities. If that's *all* it does – if it implies no additional restrictions or capabilities – it's worth +0%. This is comparable to the situation for advantages that don't belong to a power: the source is background color, a “special effect,” and doesn't affect game play. The buyer pays the listed cost for the advantage and gets its benefits as written.

But a power's source or focus often suggests restrictions. Most powers let the user channel some kind of energy, and energy can run out . . . or be choked off at the source. If the power is supernatural, the wellspring might be *willful* – an entity that demands propitiation or attaches conditions to the gifts it bestows. Super-powers frequently have dramatic “fatal flaws.” And all but the mightiest powers can meet their match in the form of manmade countermeasures or diametrically opposed powers. *Any* of these things would make the power modifier a limitation.

More rarely, the opposite is true, and the power increases the scope of advantages tied to it by letting them ignore built-in limitations or making them useful in situations where they normally wouldn't be. If so, the power modifier is an enhancement.

In all cases, the final value of the power modifier is found by adding up the individual limitations and enhancements it encompasses.

## COUNTERMEASURES

A *countermeasure* is anything that blocks or negates an advantage or its effects. Even “wild” advantages (those not associated with powers) face countermeasures. For instance, Terror is worthless against those with the Unfazeable advantage, and someone with Night Vision can be blindfolded. But when a countermeasure that

doesn't affect the wild version of an advantage *does* affect the version a power provides, that's a limitation. The size of the limitation depends on the nature of the countermeasure and how likely it is to appear during an adventure.

### Mundane Countermeasures

If the power loses much of its utility – or just doesn't work – in a reasonably common environment likely to occur in nature, and enemies could exploit this weakness using only everyday items and knowledge (*not* just specialized technology or training, or other powers), add -10% to the power modifier. Individual abilities can't claim a further discount for an overlapping limitation such as Accessibility, Environmental, or Terminal Condition, however.

*Example 1:* Because fire requires oxygen, the GM may rule that *no* ability of the Heat/Fire power works without it. For instance, if the user is underwater or in a vacuum, he can't use his jet-like Flight, “ignite” his Body of Fire, or launch fiery Innate Attacks. Even if oxygen *is* present, his enemies might be able to extinguish his Body of Fire and blunt his attacks using water, sand, or a fire extinguisher. This gives a -10% limitation – and rules out Accessibility limitations such as “Not underwater” and “Not in a vacuum” on specific abilities.

*Example 2:* Sound/Vibration power requires the user to have a direct path through air, water, or another fluid to anything he wishes to affect. His Innate Attacks don't work in a vacuum, his Rapier Wit and Terror rely on subtle vibrations that radio can't transmit, and so on. In a soundproof room, his abilities would stop at the walls. These drawbacks add -10% to the power modifier – and individual abilities can't *also* claim “Only with a direct fluid path” as an Accessibility limitation.

As the examples suggest, this modifier suits elemental powers best. The GM may allow it for other

powers. Neither an “environment likely to occur in nature” nor “everyday items and knowledge” is likely to affect a *supernatural* power . . . but “the will of a true king,” “true love,” or something similar just might. If the GM doesn't mind powers being contingent on intangibles, he's welcome to permit such things as mundane countermeasures.

### Anti-Powers

If the setting includes natural or artificial countermeasures expressly intended to knock out the power – perhaps even *all* powers of the same source – that's a limitation. The size of the limitation depends on how extensive the countermeasures are:

- If the countermeasures are specific capabilities found only in the hands of those with unusual advantages (notably Neutralize and Static) or skills (including cinematic skills and magic spells), add -5% to the power modifier. For instance, the Dispel Magic spell (p. B250) and Mana Damper advantage (p. B67) can knock out magical powers, so magical powers can claim this -5%.

- If the countermeasures consist of specialized technology that works for anyone who possesses it (jamming fields, shield helmets, drugs that shut down the power or grant immunity to it, etc.), add -5% to the power modifier. For example, if particular drugs and frequencies of sound disrupt the biofeedback needed to make a body-control power work, the power gets this -5%.

- If *both* situations apply, add -10% to the power modifier. This is the case for psionic powers, which are blocked by Antipsi power (p. 122) *and* by shield helmets, dampers, etc. This is also true for “generic super-powers” (see *Super*, p. 29), which are traditionally subject to Neutralize, Static, and a plethora of weird-science gadgets.

These limitations *are* cumulative with the -10% for mundane countermeasures.

## Opposed Powers

Some powers “oppose” others; e.g., Heat/Fire vs. Cold/Ice, Good vs. Evil, or Antipsi vs. any psi power. A power *might* be able to claim an opposed power as a countermeasure. The effects, if any, on power modifiers depend on how the two powers interact.

If it takes a specific, active use of one power to cancel out each specific, active use of another, *neither* power qualifies as an anti-power, and their power modifiers are unchanged. Consider Heat/Fire vs. Cold/Ice: the environmental effects of their respective abilities often cancel each other out, and fire and ice attacks might be able to shoot each other down (see *Defending with Powers*, p. 167), but neither power can completely prevent the other from working.

If a power is subject to mundane countermeasures that another power just happens to emulate, it gets only the -10% under *Mundane Countermeasures* (p. 20). There’s no *additional* discount for the existence of a power that can exploit its flaws. For example, Heat/Fire power receives -10% because vacuum, water, and cold can negate it. It gets no extra bonus if Vacuum, Water, and Cold/Ice powers exist. Next to the world’s oceans, the boundless vacuum of space, and so on, a few people with powers is insignificant.

An opposed power normally only counts as an anti-power if it contains Neutralize and Static abilities that can negate all of the other power’s abilities at once. In this situation, the affected power *can* claim the -5% described under *Anti-Powers*. The number of anti-powers is irrelevant – the limitation is a flat -5%, not -5% per anti-power.

The GM may rule that other powers rate as anti-powers. Two possibilities are powers that offer Afflictions with Negated Advantage enhancements intended to cancel another power’s Talent or abilities, and those that include Obscure for the express purpose of blinding a power that focuses primarily on enhanced senses. A power should never receive the -5% discount unless another power specifically targets it, though.

Bear in mind that a power can negate another power without being negated by it. For example, Antipsi interferes with Telepathy, but Telepathy doesn’t foil Antipsi – indeed, *no* power can block Antipsi! On the other hand, fiction is full of powers that *are* mutual anti-powers (e.g., Good and Evil), in which case both powers have a -5% limitation.

### No Countermeasures

Powers that face no countermeasures except those that affect the wild versions of their abilities add +0% to their power modifier. This is the “default” situation; it applies to *any* power that can’t claim a limitation under *Mundane Countermeasures* or *Anti-Powers*.

*Example 1:* It’s traditionally impossible to neutralize chi powers. Two such warriors can use their powers to block one another – and in most tales, the stronger fighter eventually exhausts the weaker. However, neither warrior can deprive the other of all of his abilities in an instant . . . and few

legends suggest that mundane or technological factors can render such powers useless. Thus, chi powers get +0%.

*Example 2:* In myths where gods bestow powers upon their servants, no mortal can rob the blessed of their powers. Divine powers therefore have +0%.

The fact that a power faces no unusual countermeasures doesn’t mean that its abilities can bypass things that would *normally* negate them. For example, if Invisibility belongs to a power that gets +0% for countermeasures, the *power* has no special flaws that people without See Invisible can exploit to see the user.

This doesn’t render Invisibility immune to its usual countermeasures, though – it’s still useless against those with See Invisible, because that’s a weakness built into the *advantage*.

A few powers – such as those of deities and godlike supers – *do* offer abilities that aren’t subject to the countermeasures that affect wild advantages. For powers like this, the “countermeasures” aspect of the power modifier is actually an enhancement. This is the equivalent of the Cosmic enhancement (p. B103); therefore, we refer to such powers as “cosmic powers.”

Cosmic powers add +50% to their power modifier. This lets their abilities ignore the things that normally block, shut down, or nullify wild versions of those traits, unless those countermeasures are themselves cosmic; e.g., only a cosmic barrier can block cosmic Insubstantiality and only cosmic vision can penetrate cosmic Invisibility. Furthermore, *nothing* can take away the wielder’s power – his abilities work on *any* world he visits, are present in *any* body he occupies, and so on.

This power modifier counts as the first +50% of all Cosmic enhancements added to the power’s individual abilities. For instance, if the ability includes an irresistible attack, it costs +250% over and above the +50% in the power modifier, for a total of +300%. See p. 101 for two additional versions of Cosmic useful when designing cosmic abilities.

The basic +50% for a cosmic power enables the power’s abilities to work normally *against* attacks and opposing abilities enhanced with more expensive Cosmic options.

## REQUIRED DISADVANTAGES

Some powers stem from dedicated exercise, meditation, prayer, etc. The devotee walks a path that limits his freedom or puts significant demands on his time. In return, he enjoys special abilities. Should he deviate from his chosen path, he loses his power until he takes suitable steps to set things right. This might be merely inconvenient . . . or downright *dangerous*.





Anyone who wishes to possess a power like this *must* take certain self-imposed mental disadvantages (see p. B121) to reflect his dedication. The GM determines these traits – not the buyer. They are prerequisites for all of the power’s abilities, and also for its Talent.

The most common “required disadvantages” are Disciplines of Faith and Vows – but Code of Honor, Fanaticism, Honesty, Intolerance, Sense of Duty, and Trademark are also appropriate. In general, required disadvantages should total between -5 and -15 points. See *Suggested Disadvantages* (below) for guidelines.

Required disadvantages give the usual number of points. This reflects their effects on the taker’s day-to-day life – he *must* live up to the standards they demand. If he fails, he suffers whatever mundane effects the GM feels are appropriate: loss of standing in his religion or community, psychological breakdown, or just fewer bonus character points.

Since the power-wielder also loses his power if he falters, he has further to fall than an equally dedicated individual who lacks powers. This gives him a discount on the cost of his abilities. See *Required Behavior and Power Modifier* (p. 23) to work this out.

### *Suggested Disadvantages*

Some powers require just one self-imposed mental disadvantage; others prescribe behavior complex enough to justify several. Below are suggestions that suit particular sources and foci. All have variable point costs. The more severe the disadvantage, the harsher the ultimate limitation will be.

#### **Code of Honor, Honesty, and Sense of Duty**

These disadvantages are appropriate for powers that emanate from gods or spirits that actively monitor their servants’ moral conduct – that is, divine and spirit powers. The most likely result of a holy man failing to uphold his deity’s moral code is the *immediate* and *total* loss of power. To recover his abilities, he must atone. This might include a time-consuming cleansing ritual, a sacrifice, or an ordeal (possibly involving privation or scarification).

*-5 points:* A Code of Honor or Sense of Duty that applies to a small group, such as “all shamans,” would suit certain spirit powers and the divine powers of lenient deities. A “good” deity of this kind might instead require Honesty (15).

*-10 points:* A Code of Honor or Sense of Duty that affects a large group, such as every member of a religion, is appropriate for *most* divine powers. Honesty (12) is equivalent – again, mainly for “good” deities.

*-15 points:* Honesty (9), or a Code of Honor or Sense of Duty that applies to *everyone*, is only really suitable for those who wield the power of pure Good, or the divine powers of the most benevolent (or *just*) deities.

#### **Disciplines of Faith and Vows**

Disciplines of Faith and Vows often indicate a personal commitment to a program of diet, physical exercise, and meditation. This is the traditional origin of chi powers: the master balances *yin* and *yang* in every aspect of his life, and contemplates the nature of the universe. His efforts provide the physical and mental discipline that fuels his power. But should he neglect his exercises and meditation, his abilities will fail under stress! To recover them, he must spend time in contemplative isolation, or undertake a quest for “re-enlightenment.”

These disadvantages can also be religious in character, and suitable for divine and spirit powers. In this case, use the point-cost guidelines under *Code of Honor, Honesty, and Sense of Duty* (above).

-5 *points*: Disciplines of Faith (Ritualism) is suitable for spirit powers. A minor Vow, such as chastity, fits almost *any* supernatural power, whether it comes from within or without.

-10 *points*: Disciplines of Faith (Monasticism) and (Mysticism) suit both chi and divine powers. Major Vows (e.g., “Never draw blood in battle.”) also come in at this point level, and suit many divine powers.

-15 *points*: Disciplines of Faith (Asceticism) or a great Vow (e.g., “Only fight in self-defense.”) would only be appropriate for divine powers granted by exacting deities – or for chi powers that demand complete, life-long dedication.

### Fanaticism and Intolerance

A few powers spring from the wielder’s unswerving dedication to a set of beliefs rather than from his purity or enlightenment. This is typical of powers that focus on fundamental moral principles, such as Good and Evil, and of divine and spiritual powers given – often grudgingly – by amoral gods, primeval spirits, and Things Man Was Not Meant To Know. In fiction, such powers are nearly always *frightening*, whatever their moral bent.

Fanaticism demands unquestioning loyalty. If the fanatic refuses *one* order, makes *any* concession that might weaken his cause . . . he’s cut off, and his abilities might even turn against him! Intolerance requires an active effort to convert, enslave, or destroy the target group. Any gesture of clemency leads to immediate power loss. In both instances, the nature of the needed reparations mirrors the harsh character of the disadvantage, with sudden injury or affliction being likely.

-5 *points*: Intolerance of one particular group – possibly fairly abstract (e.g., “Evil”) – is suitable for many of the divine powers and pure moral powers of fantasy, which often rely on their opposition to some *other* force for definition.

-10 *points*: Intolerance of everyone who doesn’t worship the same god is appropriate for almost any divine power. Fantasy tends to reserve this for evil deities; good deities are more

likely to demand -10-point Honesty or Sense of Duty.

-15 *points*: Like other -15-point traits, Fanaticism only suits divine powers bestowed by demanding, judgmental deities. It’s also a perfect fit for the powers of pure Good and Evil in settings where compromise is impossible.

### Trademark

Trademark is the least common required disadvantage. It works just like the rest of these traits, but with a twist: the user must leave a physical sign of his work wherever he uses his abilities. Otherwise, his power fails him the next time he calls upon it. The *only* way to rectify the oversight is to return to the neglected site and mark it appropriately – which might prove difficult if it’s a bloody urban battlefield crawling with detectives, or an enemy stronghold. This is most suitable for spirit powers.

-5 *points*: A simple Trademark might be a single rune or holy symbol, left behind by the user of a divine or spirit power to honor the entity he serves.

-10 *points*: A complex Trademark resembles a simple one, but the mystic marks are more elaborate and time-consuming, and might offer clues as to the ritualist’s identity (his totem, tribal mark, etc.).

-15 *points*: An elaborate Trademark means the sorcerer must conduct a cleansing ritual after using his power in order to dissipate dangerous spiritual residues that could rebound upon him. He might leave behind fetishes, animal sacrifices, or his *own* blood.

### Required Behavior and Power Modifier

If a power requires disadvantages, *any* violation of the behavior code that those traits imply costs the user all of his abilities. The limitation value depends on how taxing the code is, how rapidly the power departs after a transgression, and how difficult the power is to recover. The GM should calculate the effects of these factors on the power modifier using the following guidelines:

1. Choose the required disadvantages, normally worth between -5 and -15 points, and apply a limitation numerically equivalent to the point value of those disadvantages. For instance, a -10-point Vow is worth -10%. This part of the modifier is identical to the Pact limitation (p. B113); you can’t take that a second time.

2. Decide on the speed with which the power vanishes (choose one):

- Gradually, with enough warning to escape a dangerous situation: +5%.
- Quickly enough to endanger the user in combat: +0%.

Add -5% if the power doesn’t just vanish but *turns against the user!*

3. Determine the act necessary to restore the power (choose one):

- A day out of adventuring to pray, meditate, etc., or sacrifices worth a day’s income: +5%.
- A week out of adventuring, or sacrifices worth a week’s income; a minor quest; or minor harm (1d injury or an irritating affliction): +0%.
- A month out of adventuring, or sacrifices worth a month’s income; a major quest; or serious harm (4d injury, crippling, or an incapacitating affliction): -5%.

4. Add all of the above together to find the final adjustment to the power modifier. If positive, reduce it to +0%. If a power requires minimal devotion, only departs gradually if the user neglects this, and returns if he takes a day to set things right, it isn’t limited (the wielder can use it in the current situation and make amends before the next time he needs it) – but it isn’t *more* useful than a power without this modifier.

It’s possible to get large limitations – up to -25% – using these guidelines. The GM may allow such modifiers, but they’re only appropriate for powers granted by a merciless god who would strike down his own servant for the slightest impure thought. The GM *must* enforce this . . . and the players have no room to complain, because they’re getting a big discount on a wide array of useful advantages.



## CHANNELED ENERGIES

Every power involves directing *some* kind of energy. “Channeled energy” is energy that originates from a source outside the user. If an external influence can cut this off in transit, that’s usually a limitation – for obvious reasons! To understand which powers qualify for this discount, though, it’s necessary to know which ones *don’t*.

Powers that originate from bioenergy, personal charisma, the mind, or the soul don’t qualify, because the energies involved are *internal*. This definitely includes all chi and psi powers. The only external factor likely to interfere with a power like this is an anti-power (see *Anti-Powers*, p. 20). That’s a different limitation, because it doesn’t cut the target off from his power source – it just keeps him from directing it.

Divine powers don’t qualify, either. A holy man *does* channel the will of his patron deity, but the only force that can intercept divine might in transit is another deity. Since a god has cosmic powers that can interfere with a lesser being’s capabilities in any case, this weakness isn’t a particular limitation of divine powers. A deity might cut off the powers of an unfaithful servant – but again, that’s a separate limitation (see *Required Disadvantages*, p. 21).

Powers that only work in a particular environment also don’t qualify. Heat/Fire power might not work without oxygen, Sound/Vibration power might fail without a medium to transmit it, and so forth, but such restrictions don’t cut the user off from his power source – they limit his ability to *project* his power. See *Mundane Countermeasures* (p. 20) for the appropriate limitation.

This leaves two broad categories of powers that *do* qualify for this limitation.

### *Ambient Energies*

A power might let its user shape and direct energy already present in the environment. In the absence of this energy, it *doesn’t work*. The effect on the power modifier depends on how likely the user is to be cut off from his power source:

- If the power commands a form of energy that suffuses the entire universe, and that can’t be screened out or drained by any means, add +0% to the power modifier. This is the case for cosmic powers that channel the energy of existence – the absence of which implies nonexistence, which makes power failure irrelevant.

- If the power directs energy that surrounds and permeates all things, and that only esoteric insulators or supernatural intervention or catastrophe can cut off, add -5% to the power modifier. A power that relies on the life force emanating from all living things or the psychic energy field set up by the minds of all sapient beings qualifies; so does a Gravity power that manipulates ambient gravity. This -5% also applies to powers that work at a penalty, or not at all, in certain *places*; e.g., magical powers, which rely on the area’s ambient magical energy, or *mana* (see p. B235). A power that gets bonuses for location about as often as it gets penalties doesn’t qualify – that’s worth +0% (see *Zero-Cost Modifiers*, p. 27).

- If the power manipulates ordinary, natural energy that mundane insulators can block, add -10% to the power modifier. This might be true for certain elemental powers, such as a Light power that lets the user shape ambient light or a Radiation power that concentrates and directs cosmic rays.

Fiction often fails to distinguish these things from countermeasures. Anything that could be an esoteric insulator *or* a technological countermeasure gives -5%; anything that

could be a mundane insulator *or* a mundane countermeasure is worth -10%. A power can only claim one limitation per shortcoming – the GM decides which.



### *Fickle Forces*

A few powers channel *willful* energies. The user petitions some kind of intermediary to invoke his power. The game effect is that he must make a reaction roll whenever he wishes to use one of his abilities. Normal reaction modifiers don’t affect this roll; neither does Talent. The GM may apply situational modifiers, of course.

Such powers have the Fickle limitation (p. 110), which adds -20% to the power modifier. Fickle is intended chiefly for spirit powers, and is most suitable for powers that command *capricious* spirits: demons, faerie, loa, etc. Powers granted by angels, genii, totems, and the like tend to have required disadvantages instead. Of course, a given spirit power could have *both* limitations!

The GM is free to allow Fickle on any power. It fits many visions of magical powers – even those that don’t involve spirits. However, it’s rarely suitable for divine powers, save perhaps those granted by tricksters. Required disadvantages are much less random, and better suit the decisive nature of most deities.

*Every power involves directing some kind of energy.*



## OTHER FACTORS

The possibilities discussed so far are merely the most common components of power modifiers. The GM is free to add an enhancement if the power is hard to counteract, or if its abilities are otherwise better than wild advantages. Conversely, he might assess a limitation if the power isn't always available, or if its abilities are somehow *less* useful than normal.

Discretionary modifiers must be balanced with respect to standard ones. A good way to ensure this is to base them on the general modifiers in Chapter 2 and the *Basic Set*. If *all* of a power's abilities have an ordinary enhancement or limitation, make this part of the power modifier. Doing so has the additional benefit of making the power modifier "shorthand" for a long list of modifiers.

A few examples:

- **Accessibility:** Most GM-defined limitations fall into this category, and affect *when* or *where* the power works. Try to keep the value between -10% and -30%. Limitations that restrict the power to certain targets are only appropriate if *all* of the power's abilities affect others.

- **Costs Fatigue:** This is one way to balance powers against cinematic skills and spells that cost FP. It adds -5% per FP per use – but note that continuing effects follow special rules (see p. B111). If the FP *must* come from an Energy Reserve (p. 119), rendering the power ineffective when the ER is empty, add a further -5%.

- **Nuisance Effect:** A power's abilities might have negative side effects. Be creative! For instance, using each ability might trigger a distinct, loud tone, interfering with stealth and social interaction, and letting the hero's enemies know what he's up to. Most Nuisance Effects are worth -5%.

## FINALIZING THE MODIFIER

After calculating individual modifiers for countermeasures (or *no* countermeasures), required disadvantages, channeled energies, and anything else you wish to consider, add them together to find the final power modifier. There are no firm limits on this, but

there are practical reasons to keep *limitations* between -10% and -20%.

A -5% limitation simply isn't *meaningful* on an advantage worth less than 20 points – point costs round *up*, so 5% off a cost under 20 points means paying full price. Since few players will suffer the restrictions of a limitation without receiving a discount, a -5% limitation encourages players to ignore appropriate and interesting low-cost traits. By contrast, a -10% limitation is meaningful for advantages worth as little as 10 points, and a -20% limitation is significant for traits down to 5 points.

And of course since players *are* frugal with points, the more substantial the discount, the more likely the limitation – and hence the power – is to see use. If you end up with a -5% limitation, consider going back and finding another -5% or more.

If you *want* a trivial limitation, dispense with formal limitations and

make the power modifier +0%. That way, the power's abilities are no less useful than wild advantages worth the same number of points, and the players won't be faced with a restriction that doesn't give a fair discount. For more on this option, see *Zero-Cost Modifiers* (p. 27).

Power modifiers much beyond -20% also have problems. Many special limitations are worth -50% or -60% . . . but since a net limitation more severe than -80% becomes -80%, players may avoid these interesting options if the power modifier is large. In fact, suffering the restrictions of -85% or more in limitations in return for an 80% discount is the kind of rotten deal that can steer players away from the *power*. Some will compensate by adding heaps of inappropriate enhancements to balance the limitations, which can ruin character concepts.

## Quick Reference: Power Modifiers

When calculating power modifiers, it's useful to have all the numbers in one place. Unless indicated otherwise, all modifiers are *cumulative*.

### Channeled Energies

*Ambient energies blocked by (choose one)\*:*

Esoteric or supernatural item/condition: -5%

Mundane item/condition: -10%

*Fickle:* -20%

**Cosmic Power:** +50%\*

### Countermeasures\*

*Mundane countermeasures:* -10%

*Special advantages or skills:* -5%

*Technological countermeasures:* -5%

### Required Disadvantages

*Code of conduct:* Point value of required disadvantages, expressed as a percentage.

*Power disappears (choose one):*

Gradually: +5%

Immediately: +0%

*Power turns against user:* -5%

*Restoration requires (choose one):*

A day: +5%

A week, a minor quest, or minor harm: +0%

A month, a major quest, or serious harm: -5%

\* Cosmic powers can neither be blocked nor have countermeasures.



In addition, when a severe limitation is rigidly enforced, it tends to limit an advantage so much that it's no longer fun. When it *isn't* enforced, some PCs get a free lunch, which can unbalance the game. Either outcome is bad – but it's especially damaging in the case of powers, as the effects extend across *many* advantages.

In general, if a power modifier is a limitation more severe than -20%, consider paring it down to -20% by removing elements that aren't truly necessary to convey the “feel” of the power.

### Giving It a Name

Give each power modifier a unique name. Make this descriptive, so that it's clear which power it represents: Animal Control, ESP, Good, Light, Magical, Power of Thor, Psychic Healing, Psychokinesis, Telepathy, etc.

## SAMPLE MODIFIERS

Below are examples of power modifiers appropriate to broad categories of powers. They attempt to stay true to

the way novels and movies depict those powers. Each lists its individual subcomponents to make it easier to customize and to demonstrate the principles of design. The overall modifier is the sum of these parts – don't apply the component modifiers a second time! Be sure to change the generic names to suit specific powers.

### Biological

**-10%**

Your power is a physical capability of your body. It's fatiguing to use because your metabolism must supply *all* of the energy: pay an extra 1 FP whenever you use an active ability (Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%). Anything that upsets your unique metabolism might deprive you of your power – including targeted pathogens, drugs, and nanotech designed by your enemies (technological countermeasures, -5%).

### Chi

**-10%**

Your power emanates from your life force – a mysterious energy often called *chi* or *ki*. To strengthen your chi

to the point where you can channel it for superhuman feats, you must engage in exercises and meditation for a few hours each day. This requirement is a -10-point disadvantage (-10%), most often Disciplines of Faith (Monasticism or Mysticism) or a comparable major Vow. Should you neglect this, your power fails you the first time you call upon it under stress (+0%). To restore it, you must take 1d days to rebalance your chi (+0%). Until you do, you feel ill; the GM should choose one of these afflictions from *Irritating Conditions* (p. B428): Coughing/Sneezing, Drowsy, Nauseated, or Pain.

### Cosmic

**+50%**

Your power originates from the energy of creation! Your abilities ignore the ordinary countermeasures that work against wild advantages, and you *always* have access to them – nothing can neutralize your power or cut off its energy source. This is identical to the +50% level of the Cosmic enhancement on p. B103. If you have individual abilities with more expensive versions of Cosmic, your power modifier only covers the first +50% of their value; after that, you must pay for Cosmic normally.

### Divine

**-10%**

A deity grants you your power. Nothing can prevent your god's power from reaching you . . . but your patron expects certain behavior in return. The precise details depend on your god.

A good god expects you to lead a virtuous life. The required moral code is a -10-point disadvantage (-10%), typically Honesty (12), Sense of Duty (Coreligionists), or a major Vow. Should you transgress, your god will suspend your power – but since he's benevolent, he won't cut you off if this would endanger you (+5%), save for the most egregious of sins. To make amends, you must offer *significant* penance: up to a month of fasting, questing, or equivalent (-5%).

An evil god lets you do as you wish, provided you make suitable sacrifices, corrupt the innocent, etc. These



## Zero-Cost Modifiers

A power modifier can be +0%. This means that, on average, the power's abilities are neither better nor worse than wild advantages. It doesn't mean that they are *identical* to wild advantages.

A power might end up with a +0% modifier because its benefits and drawbacks cancel out. Whether this is by design or coincidence, it's important to spell out the effects to keep players from assuming that zero cost implies zero effect. For instance, Things Man Was Not Meant To Know might grant cultists an unstoppable power (Cosmic, +50%), but they might be fickle (-20%) and demand extremely strict behavior (-25% for required disadvantages) – and using the power might have unpleasant consequences (Nuisance Effect, -5%). The total modifier is +0%, but certainly not *irrelevant*!

The rules for countermeasures, required disadvantages, and channeled energies can also result in a +0% modifier. A power might face countermeasures different from but no more common than those that affect wild advantages . . . or require minor upkeep that the user can safely put off for a day . . . or channel energy that isn't prone to interference. All of these things are worth +0%, but you should still note them, because they can matter in play.

Finally, the GM can add a +0% modifier as a "special effect," possibly for the sole purpose of marking the power's abilities as part of the power. Even then, the modifier isn't *irrelevant*. If nothing else, it determines which advantages benefit from the power's Talent and what traits those who have the power can add later on (see *Adding and Improving Powers*, p. 33). It might even make the power mutually exclusive with some other power.

requirements are worth -10 points (-10%), most often in the form of Intolerance or a heinous major Vow such as "Kill someone on the night of the full moon." If you forget, your deity will revoke your power *instantly* (+0%). It will turn on you in horrible ways until you make amends (-5%). A single killing or desecration will get you back in favor – since you've already sold your soul, this should be easy for you (+5%).

An ineffable force of nature only rarely concerns itself with mortal affairs, leaving you free to act in its name as you see fit. But it *has* principles – often strange, confusing ones – that constitute a -10-point disadvantage (-10%), perhaps a Code of Honor such as "Respect nature, and violently oppose those who do not" or a complex Trademark that few can understand. It will immediately cut you off for any perceived improbity (+0%). To get back in good standing, you must complete a minor quest (+0%) suggested to you through omens.

## Elemental

-10%

Your power lets you manipulate an "element": one particular kind of natural matter or energy, or its absence. Examples include Air, Cold/Ice, Darkness, Earth, Electricity, Heat/Fire, Light, Radiation, Sound/Vibration, and Water. This power *isn't* psionic or channeled from an elemental god; powers like that are Psionic or Divine, respectively. Instead, you're cosmically attuned to your element; in effect, you *are* an elemental spirit.

The GM should choose a mundane countermeasure *or* insulator that can interfere with your elemental energy. Either way, this is worth -10%. If your element would not logically merit the full -10% for countermeasures or channeled energies, the GM may rule that this limitation is a little of both. It's fairest if every elemental power is more or less equally limited.

## Magical

-10%

Your power channels ambient magical energy (*mana*). This is difficult to block and found almost everywhere. "No-mana zones" – areas where your power doesn't work at all – occur only rarely in nature. However, *low-mana* zones are more common, and all rolls to use your abilities are at -5 in such regions. This aspect of the limitation is worth -5%.

In addition, a variety of anti-powers can thwart your abilities. The Mana Damper advantage simulates the effect of a low- or no-mana zone, while Magic Resistance shields others from your attacks. Moreover, spells that dispel or protect against magic affect your abilities exactly as if they were spells. This is worth another -5%.

This modifier is identical to the Mana Sensitive limitation on p. B34.

## Moral

-20%

Your power comes from some cosmic moral principle – Chaos, Evil, Good, Order, etc. – that transcends the mortal and even the divine. This isn't a true cosmic power . . . it's more like *half* a cosmic power, because it has an opposing anti-power (-5%): Chaos vs. Order, Evil vs. Good, and so on. This anti-power offers its wielders Neutralize and Static abilities (and perhaps other gifts) that they can use against you. Your power gives you similar weapons, of course.

Your ability to tap this power stems from your dedication to a moral code, to which you must adhere at all times. This is a -15-point disadvantage (-15%), usually Fanaticism – although Honesty (9) or Sense of Duty (Humanity) is just as likely for Good. If you falter, even for a moment, you lose your power instantly (+0%). To get it back requires an extreme demonstration of commitment that costs at least 2d days of lost time or earnings (+0%). Details are up to the GM, who should pick something appropriate to your power; e.g., a large donation to charity, for Good.

This modifier only exists in settings with absolute morality, where moral forces battle openly in the world and are both tangible and detectable.



## Nature

-20%

Your power channels the vital energy that surrounds all living things. This exists even in the driest deserts and on the most barren peaks, but the ravages of civilization interfere with it, acting as a mundane insulator against your power (-10%). You're at -1 to use your abilities in a despoiled wild place such as a clear-cut forest, -3 in a city, -5 amidst ordinary pollution, and -10 in a poisoned wasteland.

Technology – not technological countermeasures, but *any* technology – also impairs your power. In effect, it's a mundane countermeasure (-10%). You're at a penalty equal to *half* the TL (round up) of the most advanced manufactured item you're carrying, wearing, or riding in or on. Use the *full* TL of implants. Thus, a TL3 sword gives -2, while a TL8 pacemaker gives -8.

An ability that requires no die roll loses 10% of its effectiveness (bonus to reactions or skills, DR, etc.) per -1 instead. If the penalties total -10 or worse, you're *powerless*.

This modifier best suits Animal Control, Plant Control, and Weather Control powers.

## Psionic

-10%

Your power is an innate capability of your mind. The energy comes from within, but a large number of countermeasures exist, including anti-powers in the form of Antipsi power (-5%) and technological countermeasures in the form of "psychotronic" or "psi-tech" defenses (-5%).

The **Basic Set** includes several specific examples of psionic powers: ESP, Psychic Healing, Psychokinesis, Telepathy, and Teleportation.

## Spirit

-25%

Your power comes through commanding spirits: you give orders and the spirits do the work. Since only those with powers of their own are likely to realize this, it's often hard to distinguish your abilities from chi, psi, etc. But there are some important differences.

## Stacking Power Modifiers

A power modifier works like any other limitation or enhancement. It obeys all the usual rules for modifiers. It applies to *all* of the power's abilities (but *not* to its Talent, required disadvantages, or Unusual Background, if any).

If an ability has other modifiers, add the power modifier to them normally. For example, an advantage with +150% in enhancements and -50% in limitations would cost +100% – but as the ability of a power with a -10% power modifier, its final modifier would be +90%.

Power modifiers *aren't* exempt from the rule that modifiers can't reduce cost by more than 80% (see p. B110). If the total modifier on a given ability, *including* the power modifier, is worse than -80%, treat it as -80%.

No advantage can have multiple power modifiers. (*Exception:* A power can be both Elemental and Super.) It's legal to have multiple *powers*, but their modifiers never apply simultaneously. When someone takes an ability that several of his powers have in common, he must decide which power it comes from and apply the modifier for *that power only*. If he wants the ability for more than one power, he can buy multiple copies – see *Uniqueness* (p. 12).

The discount pricing schemes under *Uniqueness* and *Alternative Abilities* (p. 11) use the final, modified costs of the traits involved. Add all modifiers, including power modifiers, to all relevant abilities, and *then* apply any special discount.



Spirits are *fickle* (-20%), and whether they answer your summons at all depends on an unmodified reaction roll. You can command them, but you must show basic respect. This imposes a -5-point disadvantage (-5%) – typically Disciplines of Faith (Ritualism), Sense of Duty (Servitor Spirits), or a simple Trademark in the form of a small offering or token. If you fail to live up to this, the spirits turn against you, depriving you of your power at the worst possible moment (-5%). Since they ultimately *want* you to turn them loose on the world, though, it's easy to make amends – a minor sacrifice, such as a food offering, is usually enough (+5%).

The spirits associated with an individual ability might be more or less friendly, giving from -4 to +4 on reaction rolls. If so, that one ability has an extra -5% modifier per -1, or +5% per +1, on top of the basic power modifier that applies to all abilities.

In some settings, spirits aren't this capricious and the GM might dispense with the reaction roll. This reduces Spirit to -5%.

## Super

**-10%**

Your power is a “generic super-power.” Details depend on the game world. What’s common to all such powers is that they face Neutralize and Static – as wild advantages and as part of various anti-powers (-5%) –

and that weird-science devices built by gadgeteers can block them or even steal them (-5%). In effect, this is just a special form of the Psionic limitation. In many settings, the two are one and the same.

Certain super-powers are subject to mundane insulators or countermeasures that limit their ability to affect

the world. For instance, being underwater might be as effective as Static or a power-suppressing serum for negating a fire-related power. If your power is like this, you may give it both the Super *and* Elemental modifiers. This is an exception to the restriction against “stacking” power modifiers.

# PRICING TALENTS

The final component of a power is its Talent. This advantage comes in levels and gives a bonus equal to its level on *any* success roll made to use *any* of the power’s abilities. This includes DX rolls to maneuver with movement abilities; Innate Attack skill rolls to hit with attacks; IQ, Will, and Perception rolls to use mental abilities; and any other success roll the GM requires for the power.

Talent doesn’t modify rolls for the *effects* of abilities; e.g., damage rolls, the target’s resistance roll, or rolls on the *Fright Check Table* (p. B360). It applies only to success rolls made by the user. Talent doesn’t normally modify reaction rolls, either, but the GM might make exceptions for entities directly conjured by the power (such as Allies with the Summonable enhancement) and beings associated with the power’s source (such as angels that serve the god behind a divine power).

Talent also doesn’t affect rolls to work around limitations on the power’s abilities. For instance, it doesn’t benefit the activation roll called for by the Unreliable limitation. In particular, it never affects the reaction roll required for fickle channeled energies, even if the GM rules it affects *other* reaction rolls.

Talent for a power only gives a bonus with the abilities of that one power. Since individuals with multiple powers must assign each of their abilities to a specific power, no die roll ever benefits from two or more Talents.

To prevent heroes from becoming too capable, and to avoid watering down the value of attributes and skills, the GM should set a limit on how many levels of Talent are available. Four levels – just as for mundane

Talents (see p. B89) – is reasonable for most games. In highly cinematic games, the GM is free to allow as much Talent as he can tolerate.

Most Talents cost 5 points per level. A Talent with a wide range of applicability, comparable to Magery, costs 10

points/level. Talent for a power so broad as to encompass nearly anything (e.g., “Cosmic Talent”), or that otherwise transcends the normal limitations of source, costs 15 points/level. No modifier of any kind ever applies to the price of Talent.

*In highly cinematic games, the GM is free to allow as much Talent as he can tolerate.*

## Existing Advantages as Talents

The GM may opt to interpret advantages from the *Basic Set* as Talents for suitable powers. To qualify, a trait must come in at least four levels that cost between 5 and 15 points apiece, act mainly as an aptitude that gives a bonus to some kind of success roll, and *not* be appropriate as the ability of a power in its own right.

Most importantly, the advantage must suit its new role! The best examples are Magery (*without* any special modifiers) as Talent for a magical power and Power Investiture as Talent for a divine power. Even mundane Talents may be suitable; e.g., the GM might rule that Green Thumb represents Talent for a plant-control power.

This is a useful tool when introducing powers into a campaign that formerly lacked them. For instance, a traumatic supernatural ordeal might lead a mage to discover how to use the abilities of a magical power . . . because he had its Talent all along.

The GM can get creative, too. For example, he could use these rules to model *political* power, with nations for sources and economic and military interventions as abilities. What would be appropriate as Talent? Status, of course!

Identifying an existing advantage as the Talent of a power doesn’t change its point cost.

# RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN POWERS

Once you know a power's source, focus, abilities, power modifier, and Talent, you have everything you need to start using it in play – *if* it's the only power in the campaign, or one of a small number of intentionally unrelated powers. If the game incorporates *many* powers that are likely to interact with one another, though, things will run more smoothly if there's an overarching logic to it all. This sometimes means revisiting a few powers to do a little "fine tuning."

## POWERS WITH SIMILAR SOURCES

In fiction, powers with similar sources often differ in focus and have dissimilar abilities. They might even oppose one another. But they generally resemble each other in *composition*. In game terms, they offer comparable options during character creation: they're close in scope, their power modifiers are equal in value (if not effect), and their Talents have the same price. Thus, two characters with the same number of points to spend on a power will enjoy about the same degree of flexibility no matter which power they choose. Below are three cases of particular importance.

### *Elementals*

In settings with elemental powers, individual powers should have roughly the same number of abilities per major category. Each power might include Alternate Form combined with the appropriate elemental meta-trait; Create, Control, and Detect with respect to its element; Innate Attack for lethal elemental bolts; one of Binding or Obscure as a nonlethal attack; a suitable movement ability, such as Tunneling for Earth or Flight for Air; and DR with the Limited modifier for that one element.

Variations are reasonable – perhaps even desirable – as long as they're *balanced*. For instance, if one of the above abilities doesn't make sense for a particular element, its power should get a suitable replacement (e.g., Sound/Vibration power might get Mimicry instead of Alternate Form). And to keep things interesting, each power ought to have a list of unique abilities, too – but these lists should be comparable in scope.

To keep one element from seeming obviously "better" or "worse" than the others, use the Elemental power modifier (p. 27) for *all* of these powers. Spell out its precise effects in each case. Finally, give each power a Talent – Heat/Fire Talent, Sound/Vibration Talent, etc. – priced in line with the scope of elemental powers in general, so it costs the same in all cases.

### *The Pantheon*

If the game world features many divine powers, each should mirror the sphere of influence of the deity that bestows it. This means that abilities will vary widely from power to power. For instance, Innate Attack is fine for the Fire God, the Death God, and the God of War, but hard to justify for the Patron God of Masons, and just silly for the Goddess of Healing. But the Goddess of Healing might be the *only* deity who grants the Healing advantage!

It's still important to make the powers comparable in scope. Perhaps each god offers five Great Blessings (or Curses) and 10 Lesser Blessings, or a different ability for each of the 13 lunar months, or some similar arrangement. It *shouldn't* be possible to tell which god is most influential just by looking at what faithful mortals can do . . . not unless you intend that as part of the setting!

A few abilities should be common to *all* divine powers. Details depend on the genre and game world; for instance, in fantasy settings, Blessed and True Faith seem almost universal.

Of course, these abilities are likely to manifest differently from deity to deity, and it's important to note the differences.

Once again, power modifier and Talent shouldn't vary from power to power. All divine powers call for the Divine modifier (p. 26), suitably renamed (e.g., "Power of Thor"). Use Power Investiture (p. B77) as Talent; most divine powers are sufficiently broad in scope to justify the expense (10 points/level).

### *Moral Forces*

Moral powers are in many ways a hybrid of the elemental and the divine. On one hand, they deal with "elemental" Good, Evil, Order, Chaos, etc., and like true elemental powers, should include a shared tool kit of abilities that channel their respective foci. In a cinematic setting, this analogy might be complete, with moral powers offering Innate Attack (bolts of power for smiting foes in the eternal struggle for the hearts of men) – and even Create and Control, if the GM wishes to define them.

On the other hand, moral forces – like deities – have different spheres of influence in the world, so the associated powers tend to have unique capabilities, too. For instance, abilities that pertain to light, healing, and warmth suit Good, while those that deal in darkness, harm, and cold befit Evil. All that matters is that the powers are comparable in scope, and that power modifier (see *Moral*, p. 27) and Talent are identical in size for each power.

## POWER VS. POWER

It's also important to consider which powers can cancel out which other powers – and how. Below are the two most common cases. For more information, see *Opposed Powers* (p. 21).



## Opposing Foci

If two powers have opposing foci – Light and Darkness, Heat/Fire and Cold/Ice, etc. – but neither can disempower users of the other, there needn't be any game effect. But it's more *fun* if those with such powers can use their abilities to “block” and “parry” one another (see *Defending with Powers*, p. 167) – and in fiction, it's often *impossible* for an individual to possess both powers. Either consideration merits a brief note in the power description.

However you handle it, there's little need to revisit the abilities, power modifier, or Talent of either power . . . although the game will be more exciting if you go back and make sure that the powers have a few abilities that can shoot each other down or cancel each other out in battle!

## True Anti-Powers

If the campaign includes powers that receive a discount for having an

anti-power (see *Anti-Powers*, p. 20), the implications are more profound: you must create an entire anti-power. At minimum, an anti-power needs Neutralize and Static against any power that names it as a countermeasure. Most anti-powers include other “anti-abilities” as well: Resistant, Obscure, Afflictions that negate abilities or Talent, etc. Further details depend on the nature of the anti-power.

## Structure Within Powers

The GM needn't let those who possess a power spend points freely on any of its abilities. Some *reasonable* restrictions can curb abuse and give the power more depth. A few suggestions appear below. These assume that powers are just about the only way to acquire exotic and supernatural advantages. They're meaningless if *every* advantage is available “in the wild.”

These stipulations *don't* make the power cheaper. If nothing else, access to the special options in Chapter 4 more than makes up for them. Be sure to note all applicable restrictions and options in the power description – they're as much a part of the power as the abilities themselves.

### Prerequisites

Some abilities have other abilities or a minimum level of Talent as prerequisites. To be able to purchase advanced abilities, the buyer must first get the basics. The power might have *several* chains of prerequisites, which might run parallel to one another or converge at the power's “apex” abilities. Usually, the more expensive and powerful the advantage, the further up a chain it is.

A given ability is likely to have a different set of prerequisites for each power that offers it . . . and might itself be a prerequisite for something different in each case. The abilities of one power *never* count as prerequisites for those of another power!

### Secret Abilities

Not every user is aware of all of the power's abilities. Perhaps the force that grants the power or the teachers who instruct others in its use deliberately keep the most potent abilities secret, or perhaps certain abilities have been forgotten – or haven't been discovered yet.

A power like this has two lists of abilities: a “public” one, known to all users, and a “secret” one, known only to the GM. To gain access to deliberately hidden abilities, the hero must first prove his worth to his god, masters, etc., or achieve a minimum level of Talent. To

discover forgotten or unknown abilities, he must research them.

The GM should decide what specific deeds, skill rolls, and prerequisite traits unlock the abilities on the secret list. Those who wish to *start* with secret abilities must buy an Unusual Background.

### Level Limits

Users can't spend as many points as they wish on open-ended abilities or those that come in levels. Instead, each trait has a maximum point expenditure or level – GM's decision – and this defines the limits of the power's capabilities.

Level limits might apply across the board to all users (“Maximum Innate Attack is 8d.”) or depend on the user's Talent (“Maximum Innate Attack is 2d × Talent.”). They might also vary between powers; for example, the destructive power of Chaos might leave Innate Attack open-ended but limit Damage Resistance, while the protective power of the Mother Goddess might do just the opposite.

### Required Modifiers

Particular advantages must have certain modifiers to qualify as abilities of the power. General limitations that apply to *all* of the power's abilities are just part of the power modifier, but the power's source or focus imposes additional modifiers on *specific* abilities.

Required modifiers are frequently enhancements. These make abilities more expensive – which in turn helps curb abuse. For instance, the attacks of cosmic powers must take a +50% or +250% enhancement over and above the power modifier to be lingering or irresistible (see *No Countermeasures*, p. 21).

Required modifiers might instead be limitations. These give the GM a way to control the affected ability in play. For example, the Telekinesis advantage must have the Magnetic limitation when it occurs as part of the Magnetism power.

## One-Way

Some anti-powers are strictly one-way: they negate other powers, but nothing negates them. To prevent those who have such powers from striking with relative impunity, which is neither fair nor fun, special design considerations are in order.

A one-way anti-power should *only* include anti-abilities. Since it's almost by definition immune to things that interfere with powers, its power modifier should never be less than +0%. Particularly far-reaching anti-powers might even qualify for the +50% Cosmic enhancement! Finally, the power should be mutually exclusive with any power it negates . . . and perhaps even with *all* other powers.

Contrary to the Antipsi power on p. B255, though, it *isn't* an absolute requirement that powers like this lack a Talent. Many anti-abilities are active, not passive – and even those that are “passive” can be used actively to perform the special feats in Chapter 4.

For examples of powers like this, see *Anti-Magic* (p. 121), *Antipsi* (p. 122), and *Anti-Super* (p. 122).

## Two-Way

Not all anti-powers have “negating other powers” as their sole focus. Many are broader powers that happen to include the capacity to disrupt another power – and the flaw that another power can disrupt *them*. There are many possibilities: a pair of opposing foci taken to an extreme (A negates B, B negates A); powers arranged in a “ring,” with each power affecting one other (A negates B, B negates C, C negates A); or something more complex.

Be sure that a two-way anti-power possesses abilities that can interfere with the power it's supposed to negate. It might include other abilities, too; this isn't particularly unbalanced, since another power can negate it. For instance, Good and Evil powers might include Neutralize and Static with respect to one another as well as the other abilities mentioned under *Moral Forces* (p. 30).

When calculating the power modifier for such powers, take care that it includes the -5% discount for an anti-power. Some of the modifiers on pp. 26-29 already include this.

# POWERS, GREAT AND SMALL

Ordinarily, two advantages that interact in a particular way in their wild form interact no differently when one or both belongs to a power – even if their power sources are very different. For example, Mind Shield resists *all* mental attacks, of any source, whether it's a wild advantage or a chi, psi, or magical ability. Similarly, Damage Resistance subtracts from the damage inflicted by Innate Attack, regardless of the source of either trait, unless the DR is limited not to work against the attack or the Innate Attack is enhanced to bypass DR. Cosmic powers are the sole exception; see p. 21.

If you wish, though, you can set things up so that certain powers operate on a higher plane than others. To do so, arrange the powers into “tiers.” Whenever a power interacts with a higher-tier power, treat the higher-tier power as if it were cosmic. For instance, if there are three tiers, then bottom-tier See Invisible can only defeat bottom-tier Invisibility; middle-tier See Invisible can pierce bottom- or middle-tier Invisibility; and top-tier See Invisible can penetrate *any* Invisibility.

In this model, *truly* cosmic powers add +50% to their power modifier and are superior to all other powers. The “least” powers add +0% and are inferior to all others. Powers in between add an intermediate value that depends on which tier they occupy and how many tiers there are, as follows:

*Two tiers:* Tier 1 (Cosmic), +50%; Tier 2 (everything else!), +0%.

*Three tiers:* Tier 1 (Cosmic), +50%; Tier 2, +25%; Tier 3 (least), +0%.

*Four tiers:* Tier 1 (Cosmic), +50%; Tier 2, +30%; Tier 3, +15%; Tier 4 (least), +0%.

*Five tiers:* Tier 1 (Cosmic), +50%; Tier 2, +35%; Tier 3, +25%; Tier 4, +10%; Tier 5 (least), +0%.

*Six tiers:* Tier 1 (Cosmic), +50%; Tier 2, +40%; Tier 3, +30%; Tier 4, +20%; Tier 5, +10%; Tier 6 (least), +0%.

For powers less than cosmic in importance, add this modifier to the other components of the power modifier. It's the premium for being able to brush aside lower-tier powers.

Apply an *additional* enhancement equal to the basic tier enhancement to any attack with a lingering effect that no lower-tier power can extinguish. Apply an enhancement five times as large if the attack can *ignore* the defenses of lesser powers. Other forms of Cosmic on attacks have their full cost, less that of the tier modifier. For instance, in a three-tier system, the middle-tier power has a basic +25%; pays an extra +25% (total +50%) on lingering attacks and +125% (total +150%) on irresistible attacks; and pays +25% less for all other Cosmic attack modifiers.

These not-quite-Cosmic enhancements don't let powers bypass *wild* advantages! Wild traits exist outside the hierarchy – only truly cosmic powers can ignore them. In a setting where powers are this ordered, though, only mundane and racial advantages should be wild.

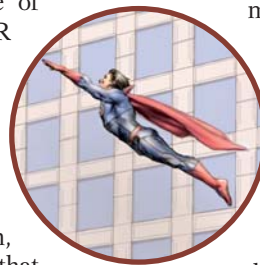
*Example:* Supernatural powers in a particular fantasy world are arranged in five tiers. At the top is the raw power of existence, wielded only by the gods. This is Cosmic, +50%.

On the second tier are grand moral aspects of existence, such as Good and Evil. These powers add +35% to the usual -20% for Moral, for a net +15%.

Next come the powers that the gods bestow upon their servants, “stepped down” so that mortals can use them safely. As third-tier powers, they get +25%. Combined with the -10% for Divine, the final power modifier is +15%.

Fourth are spirit powers, which flow from entities that are more than mortal but less than divine – elementals, demons, etc. They get +10% for being fourth-tier powers. With the -25% for Spirit, this comes to -15%.

Last come the mortal disciplines of chi control, magic, and psionics. These have no links to the divine, and are the least of powers. They use Chi, Magical, and Psionic as written, for -10% each.



# ADDING AND IMPROVING POWERS

As the GM, once you've designed or chosen a set of powers for your campaign, and specified how they interact, it's time to consider their impact on character design and growth. Unless you enjoy chaos, you should be ready to answer your players' questions on which powers and abilities are available to PCs, and with what restrictions; how many different powers one person can possess; and how many points each hero may spend on powers. Your answers will often differ for starting characters and those in play.

Chapters 5 and 6 take a detailed look at these matters, but the most important rule fits in one sentence:

You can always say "no" to anything you feel is inappropriate for a PC.

Still, the game is more fun if you don't have to say "no" all that often. Below are some suggestions for keeping powers under control without being heavy-handed. None of these are hard-and-fast rules, and most offer multiple choices. Where several

options exist, you are free to choose just one for your entire campaign – but it can be more *interesting* if you make such decisions independently for each source or power.

## STARTING OUT WITH POWERS

In a "powers-centric" game – e.g., a horror campaign that features psychic abilities, an over-the-top kung fu campaign with chi powers, or almost *any* supers campaign – the PCs might have access to powers from the start. Before anyone spends a single point, though, you should decide on the extent of this access.

### Allowed Powers and Abilities

Make a list of the powers available to PCs. Clearly state the source of each, and spell out any limitations inherent in its power modifier. If some powers exclude, supersede, or are superseded by others (see

*Relationships Between Powers*, p. 30), let the players know ahead of time. Also indicate which abilities of each power are subject to the special restrictions under *Structure Within Powers* (p. 31).

### How Many Powers?

Specify how *many* powers a given PC can start out with, too. This usually depends on the scope of the available powers.

### Powers, Unlimited

If powers are narrow, with relatively few abilities, then it's reasonable to allow each hero to have several, as long as none of them are mutually exclusive by design. A PC who buys an ability common to more than one of his powers must assign it to a specific power. It only benefits from that power's Talent and counts as a prerequisite for that power's abilities.

### One Power Per Hero

On the other hand, if powers are very broad – or in a secret-powers campaign where each hero is supposed to have a single special gift – you might wish to limit each PC to just one power. Specify whether powers are mutually exclusive by nature or if this is just a starting condition. In the latter case, it might be possible to gain new powers in play.

### One Source Per Hero

An in-between option is to restrict each hero to a single source but impose no limit on the number of individual powers he may have. For instance, a psi could have multiple *psi* powers but no *other* powers. Treat each deity or moral force as a distinct source. In most settings, it's impossible to have multiple patron deities – or to wield the power of Good *and* Evil.

### Points in Powers

It's wise to limit the number of starting points the PCs can spend on powers. This can be as important as how many starting points they have in

## PC Powers vs. NPC Powers

A "player character power" is one that players may buy for their characters, either during character creation or in play. It should be *balanced* above all, with a modest power modifier – say, a -10% to -20% limitation – and abilities that are useful but unlikely to short-circuit the plot. The GM should realize that the players won't be impressed by such a power when it shows up in the hands of an NPC opponent . . . they'll be ready for it!

A "non-player character power" is reserved for NPCs under the GM's control. It might include abilities that *could* harm the plot, or have a power modifier that no player (or every player!) would want, or simply be a secret. It should still be fair in cost-to-benefit terms. "Ultimate powers" might befit gods, but the powers of ordinary foes ought to be comparable in strength to those of the PCs – although the effects and trappings may differ.

There's no *rules* distinction between these categories. As the GM, you may assign any power to either category – or move powers between them during the course of the campaign.



the first place. A 200-point game with no limit on powers can get out of hand faster than a 300-point game with a 50-point limit – or even a 400-point game with *no* powers. The point costs of individual traits are balanced, but it's hard to predict every possible abuse of capabilities that don't exist in the real world.

## Special Starting Conditions

Here are some additional options that can help keep powers under control at the start of a campaign.

### Ability Without Talent

The PCs can buy abilities for their powers (subject to any *other* restrictions you wish to impose) but can't start out with Talent – they must acquire this in play. This has the effect of making powers somewhat imprecise. In effect, the heroes are “just starting out,” and must learn to wield their abilities with finesse.



### Talent Without Ability

The heroes can only possess powers in the form of Talent. They can't enter play with *any* abilities! They must buy their abilities in play as explained under *Talented Beginners* (p. 35). This is an excellent option for campaigns where powers are supposed to be secret or emergent. It especially suits a common theme in supers settings: the unusual global event – virus, comet, mysterious rays from Sirius, etc. – that triggers special powers in only a few talented individuals.

### Dormant Ability

Starting characters can only have abilities they don't know how to use. They must buy these as “potential abilities” and activate them in play, as described under *Potential Abilities* (below). Whether they can have Talent depends on what Talent is: if it's a natural gift, it makes perfect sense for those with potential abilities . . . but if

it represents *learned* aptitude, only those who can actively exercise their abilities are likely to have it.

## ADDING AND IMPROVING POWERS IN PLAY

Those with a power's Talent or any of its abilities (that is, any advantage with its power modifier) are said to possess that power. In most settings, they can spend earned points to improve their Talent and abilities in play.

Individuals who have neither Talent nor ability lack the power – even if they have wild advantages that appear among the power's abilities. But they *might* be able to acquire the power later on, if the GM wishes.

As the GM, you're free to rule on either situation on a case-by-case basis. To avoid arguments, though, it's best to determine these things in advance and apply your decision fairly and consistently during the course of the campaign.

## Improving Existing Powers

Anyone who has at least one of a power's abilities can buy more Talent or abilities if he has enough unspent points to pay for the desired improvement or addition. To keep character development consistent with character experience, it's advisable to enforce a few additional rules:

- To add or improve Talent, the PC must have actively used at least one ability of the associated power during the previous game session or adventure.

- To improve an *existing* ability, the PC must have actively used *that ability* during the previous game session or adventure. Allowed improvements include purchasing more levels of an advantage that comes in levels, reducing or buying off a limitation, and increasing or adding an enhancement.

- To add a *new* ability, the PC must first experience suitable “trigger” conditions; see *Awakenings* (p. 36). He must also meet the ability's prerequisites, if any. At the GM's option, those

who gain new abilities must buy them with one or more of Uncontrollable, Unreliable, and Untrainable (see p. B116). Later improvement can remove these limitations.

To keep the heroes from developing so quickly that they become unrecognizable, the GM should allow each PC to do only *one* of the following per game session:

1. Add *one* level of Talent. Those without Talent may buy the first level.
2. Add *one* level to an existing ability that comes in levels. For abilities that allow the buyer to spend any number of points, such as Morph, a recommended limit is 5 points per game session.
3. Add *one* level of an enhancement that comes in levels to *one* ability that already has that enhancement.
4. Add *one* new enhancement to *one* ability. This means the first level of an enhancement that comes in levels.
5. Remove *one* limitation from *one* ability – or reduce it by one level if it comes in levels.
6. Add *one* entirely new ability. This means the first level of an ability that comes in levels. The new ability can have any combination of enhancements or limitations that suits the power. Regardless, if the GM rules that all new abilities come with a limitation such as Uncontrollable, Unreliable, or Untrainable, the buyer *must* take that limitation and cope with it for at least one game session. He can buy off such limitations, one at a time, during later sessions.

Finally, note that it's impossible to add, remove, or alter a power modifier. Power modifiers are *permanent*.

## Latent Powers

A power is “latent” if its possessor can't actively use any of its abilities. This might be because his abilities are dormant and as yet unrealized . . . or because he has *no* abilities, just Talent. The two are dramatically equivalent, but lead to important differences in play.

### Potential Abilities

Anyone with a power might have abilities that he hasn't yet discovered or learned to use. These “potential

## Learning Powers

It might be possible to acquire or improve powers through special training. This only suits a few powers – and only in certain genres. For instance, the greatest martial-arts masters reputedly school their best students in chi powers, elderly shamans traditionally train their successors in spirit powers, and “psi academies” feature in many space-opera settings. In all cases, the GM has the final say.

If it is possible to learn powers, the GM must decide how this works. Below are three sets of *independent* options to consider.

### *New Powers or Existing Ones?*

Students who *completely* lack a power might be able to acquire it at the feet of a teacher. This is typical of chi powers and many kinds of spirit powers.

On the other hand, instructors might only be able to educate those who *already* possess the power, although latent power is usually enough (see *Latent Powers*, p. 34). Magical and psionic powers often work this way.

### *Hours or Points?*

Each point of Talent or abilities learned from a teacher requires 200 hours of instruction, like a skill. This might be the *only* requirement, with every 200 hours giving the student 1 point to spend on his power. The GM might even rule that Talent gives the same 10%-per-level reduction in learning time that mundane Talents give for skills (see *Talents*, p. B89).

Alternatively, training might provide no points – just the opportunity to spend earned points more freely. If the student puts in sufficient hours and has enough unspent points, he can buy any improvement that his teachers know about (GM’s decision). This option is valuable because it allows heroes to develop previously unneeded abilities *before* they go into dangerous situations where those abilities would be useful. It’s especially suitable for supers.

### *Required or Optional?*

If training is the *only* way to improve powers, it may take a long time for the heroes to improve. This can be for the best if powers are supposed to be subtle or mysterious. If instruction is an *additional* option for improvement, however, it actually accelerates the rate at which the PCs gain new capabilities.

These situations aren’t necessarily exclusive. Those with latent powers might require training to gain control of their abilities, after which instruction is optional. Conversely, those with potential might be able to learn to use, even improve their formerly untapped gifts on their own – but need a teacher if they wish to add *new* abilities.

abilities” cost half as many points as usual. Halve cost *after* applying any modifiers – don’t treat this as a -50% limitation. These points represent a placeholder, not the cost of a more restricted ability.

To be able to use a potential ability, the possessor must pay the residual point cost, in full, out of earned points. Until then, the ability does

*nothing* . . . unless the GM wants it to manifest unpredictably. See *Potential Advantages* (p. B33) for ideas.

It’s up to the GM to decide *when* those who have potential abilities can pay to activate them. A few possibilities, which can vary from power to power:

- Activation requires points alone. If the PC has enough unspent points,

he can activate a potential ability at any time simply by paying the remaining cost.

- Activation works just like adding a completely *new* ability. See *Improving Existing Powers* (p. 34). The PC needs more than points – he must experience suitable “trigger” conditions.

- Activation requires training. See *Learning Powers* (box). An interesting twist is to limit starting PCs to potential abilities *only* and require those who wish to activate their abilities to pay the residual cost at the usual rate of 1 point per 200 hours of instruction.

### Talented Beginners

Heroes who possess only Talent can normally add abilities. But gaining that *first* ability might be difficult or traumatic! Options include:

- A talented individual can buy his first ability as soon as he has enough unspent points.

- A hero with Talent can buy his first ability only after he experiences suitable “trigger” conditions. If the GM normally requires die rolls to acquire new abilities, the roll may be at a penalty for a hero’s *first* ability. For details, see *Awakenings* (p. 36).

- Those with Talent must gain their first ability through training; see *Learning Powers* (box). This might require a roll against the student’s IQ, the instructor’s Teaching skill, or both (GM’s option). Anything that modifies trigger rolls is likely to apply to these rolls as well. Talent *always* gives a bonus.

- Talented beginners have *no* control over their first ability. The GM chooses an ability and decides when and how it appears. If this is *completely* outside the player’s control, the GM shouldn’t require the player to pay points, as the ability might not be what he wanted. Instead, the points are effectively a gift – see *Traits Gained in Play* (p. B291). On the other hand, the GM and the player could agree on a list of abilities from which the GM will pick one at random, in which case the ability has its usual cost. See *Paying the Price* (p. 37) for other ideas; most of the suggestions for heroes gaining completely new powers are equally appropriate for someone buying the first ability for a power he already possesses.

All of these options assume that it's possible to add abilities in play. As the GM, you're free to rule that the PCs *can't* acquire new abilities – but if you do, be sure to inform your players so that they don't waste points buying Talent without abilities.

## Adding New Powers

Mythic and fictional heroes often acquire powers in the course of their adventures. In settings where this is possible, the GM should decide which powers are only available at character creation and which are also available in play – or *only* available in play.

The GM should determine the *conditions* under which new powers are available, too. These might differ from power to power. The justifications suggested under *Learning Powers* (p. 35) and *Awakenings* (box) for improving existing powers are equally good as explanations for new powers. For the sake of consistency and drama, though, the GM ought to tailor such rationales to the game world and the specific powers found in it.

In technological settings, accidental exposure to power-inducing forces is the most common origin of powers. Aliens, mad scientists, secret super-soldier programs, and so on can sometimes reproduce such effects *intentionally* through drugs, surgery, genetic engineering, etc. These influences most often give rise to biological and psionic powers – and, in supers settings, elemental powers and “generic super-powers.”

In worlds with active supernatural forces, divine intervention might grant *any* power – although deities traditionally grant divine or moral powers, or pledge the assistance of servitor beings (spirit powers). A god might bestow powers on those who ask properly, those in need, those who show great faith, or those who make a generous donation to the temple. In fantasy settings, magical wishes are another possibility. These often result in magical powers, and typically *can't* give divine or moral powers.

In nearly *any* background, adventurers might discover special regimes of exercise and meditation that can awaken powers. Those who persevere and “stay with the program” might

eventually gain chi or psi powers. Study is another possibility, with martial-arts masters teaching chi powers, shamans training apprentices in spirit powers, and so on.

Finally, a stressful situation could awaken almost *any* kind of power that exists in the setting. Stress might be the final trigger needed to activate weird-science forces . . . or the “push” that drives a hero to pledge his life to a god or a moral cause . . . or the ordeal that enlightens a novice.

Cosmic powers are an exception to all of this. They represent the powers of the gods or all creation in most

universes. Unless the heroes achieve godhood in play (which *does* occur in some myth), such powers are likely to be forever out of reach.

## What Comes First?

If the heroes *can* add powers in play, it's important to specify exactly what they gain when that fateful trigger roll succeeds, they complete their training, their god empowers them, or whatever. This usually depends on the origin of the power. Some options:

*Everything!* Newly empowered heroes gain fully functional abilities – and possibly Talent, too. This suits

## Awakenings

At the GM's option, points alone aren't enough to justify new abilities for an existing power, awaken a latent power, or acquire an entirely new power. In order to spend points on a power, the subject must *also* experience a suitable external “trigger,” which is likely to be different for each power. Some common triggers:

- A deliberate, brute-force attempt to awaken the ability or power *instantly*. In fiction, such an effort is usually either technological (experimental drugs, surgery, etc.) or supernatural (e.g., divine intervention or a magical wish) . . . and there's often a down side, even if it works.
- Intensive exercises, meditation, and so on aimed at gradually awakening the ability or power.
- A stressful or dangerous situation in which the new (or newly activated) trait would *directly* reduce the stress or danger. For example, a heroine's distress at seeing her child mortally wounded might activate her potential Healing ability.
- Unwitting exposure to power-inducing chemicals, microbes, radiation, weird science, supernatural forces, etc. This might be something normally present in the environment; a natural disaster; an accident, weapon, or curse; or spillover from a deliberate attempt to give *somebody else* powers.

## Trigger Rolls

A trigger doesn't necessarily work *automatically* – the GM might require the subject to make a “trigger roll.” This is a HT roll for physical abilities, a Will roll for mental ones. It's up to the GM what to roll against to acquire a new power with a mixture of physical and mental abilities.

*Modifiers:* The power's Talent, if the subject has it. A particularly strong or weak trigger might give a bonus or penalty (GM's decision). The subject's *other* abilities also give a modifier, as follows:

- +5 to activate a potential ability (see *Potential Abilities*, p. 34).
- +0 to acquire a new ability in a power where the subject already has at least one other awakened ability (see *Improving Existing Powers*, p. 34).
- 5 to acquire the *first* ability of a power for which the subject has only Talent (see *Talented Beginners*, p. 35).
- 10 to acquire any element of a completely new power (if this is possible at all; see *Adding New Powers*).



powers bestowed by deities and magical wishes, and those taught by the best instructors.

*Well, almost everything.* As above . . . except that the new abilities come with one or more limitations: Uncontrollable, Unreliable, Untrainable, etc. This is appropriate for *any* new power, particularly one granted by half-understood rituals or weird science.

*Potential.* A new power gives one or more potential abilities, subject to the usual limits; see *Potential Abilities* (p. 34). This fits powers that result from accidents: the trigger event plants a seed that blossoms into a power at a later date.

*Talent.* Those who gain powers get a level of Talent. To develop abilities, they must follow the usual path of those with Talent but no abilities; see *Talented Beginners* (p. 35). This is typical of powers gained through exercises, meditation, or training.

### Paying the Price

As the GM, you also need to determine whether the PCs must pay for powers gained in play – and if so, *when* and *how*. A few suggestions:

*The price of admission.* To acquire a new power, the PC must have enough unspent points to buy its abilities or Talent when the opportunity arises. This is the best option for powers the hero is actively working toward – especially if he’s earning the necessary points through study.

*The installment plan.* As above, but if the hero doesn’t have enough points to pay for his new power, he can “go into debt.” Until he pays off his debt, he must put all earned points toward reducing it. Since this option curtails ongoing character development, it’s best reserved for divine and moral powers that truly demand *total* devotion, and for powers that arise from ongoing activities (intensive training, quests, etc.) that constitute an actual adventure on which the hero can earn points.

*The gift.* The hero gets his power for free: raise his point total and get on with the game. This is a good option for true accidents, divine decrees, and other events that happen to the character without the *player* having a say in the matter. The fairest way to approach this is to award powers

*instead* of bonus character points. For instance, if the player roleplays his priest character especially well, a divine power might be a more suitable reward than mere character points.

*The gift horse.* The power comes with disadvantages that partly or wholly “pay” for it. There are many

possibilities; for instance, a Duty to a master for a learned power, a strict Vow for a divine power (see *Required Disadvantages*, p. 21), or physical disadvantages as side effects of powers that stem from accidents, drugs, or surgery.

## Player-Designed Powers

This chapter leaves all the important decisions about what powers include, how they’re structured, and how PCs can acquire them up to the GM. This is because it’s the GM’s job to design powers for his campaign.

Still, the GM might wish to let players design powers for their characters. This has several benefits – the most notable of which is reducing the GM’s workload in campaigns where dozens of gods grant divine powers, each super has a unique power, and so on. And the players might dream up *good* ideas that didn’t occur to the GM.

A few tips for GMs who wish to allow player-created powers:

*Specify which sources are allowed.* Only allow sources appropriate to the game *you* want to run. If you don’t want your game to include supernatural beings, tell your players that they may not design divine and spirit powers. If you’re running a sci-fi game where all powers must be biological or psionic, say so. And if you want to keep certain sources *secret*, or save them for NPCs, you’re under no obligation to let on that they even exist. Sources affect the fundamental nature of the setting, and such matters are far too important to leave to the players.

*Veto foci that don’t fit the setting.* Even if the underlying source is acceptable, a particular focus might be unsuitable for the campaign. For instance, a fantasy game could allow elemental powers, but only Earth, Air, Fire, and Water – not Gravity and Radiation. Likewise, if the fundamental moral conflict in the setting is Good vs. Evil, you don’t have to allow Chaos power.

*List any abilities that are strictly off-limits.* If you think a particular advantage is inappropriate, or if you find it hard to cope with or simply dislike it, you don’t have to allow it as an ability – even if it would “make sense” for a power. If a trait is strictly off-limits to *all* PCs, then *how* a PC obtains it should be unimportant.

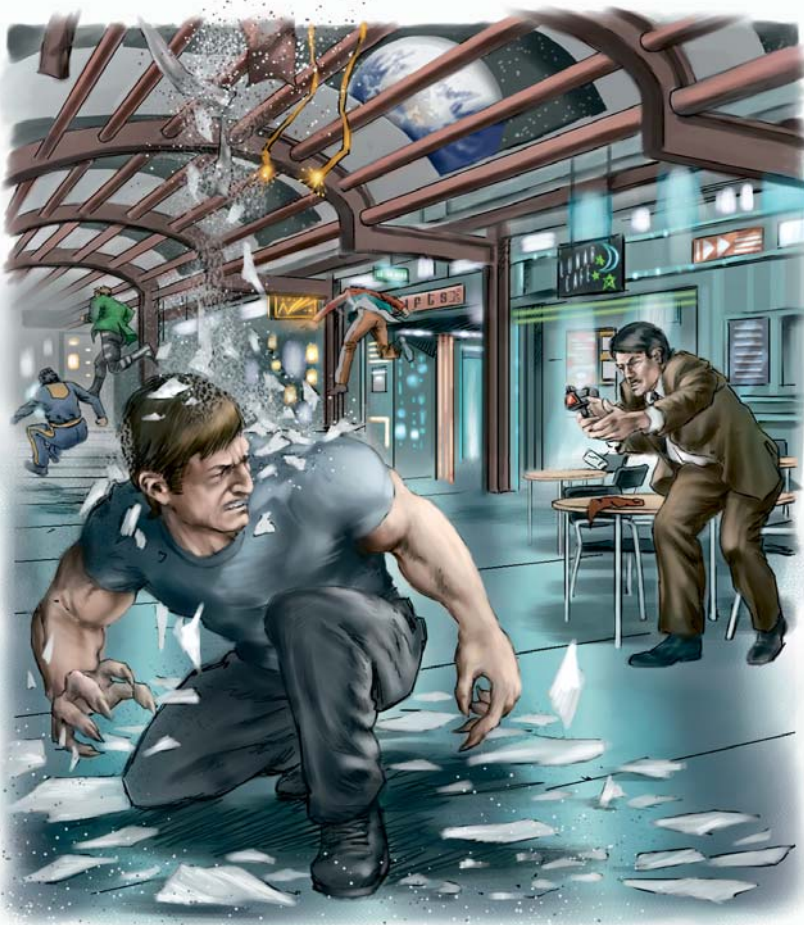
*Consider level limits and required modifiers.* Even allowed abilities can get out of hand if players can buy high levels of open-ended traits or apply modifiers at will. Be sure to set general limits on effect – especially damage – and indicate forbidden enhancements or required limitations. For further thoughts on this, see *Structure Within Powers* (p. 31).

*Keep an eye on scope.* Some players will cook up creative reasons to include every advantage in the **Basic Set** in a power. To avoid this, consider limiting each power to a fixed number of abilities per category – e.g., no more than two attacks, three defenses, three movement abilities, four mental abilities, and one physical transformation – and requiring those who wish to trade between categories to seek permission.

*Set limits on power modifiers.* It’s advisable to restrict players to the subset of “stock” power modifiers on pp. 26-29 that match the sources you wish to allow. If you decide to permit custom power modifiers, set strict limits on their size. Few powers truly *need* a limitation outside the -10% to -20% range, and even a flat +0% limit can accommodate plenty of interesting powers.

## CHAPTER TWO

# BUILDING ABILITIES



I'd been after Anton Makram for three weeks before I tracked him to Tranquility City. He wasn't hard to locate, once I'd got hold of his full profile. He had various peculiar dietary requirements that made his purchasing records light up like a fusion drive when I ran the right queries.

I wanted to supervise the arrest without any comm lag, so I took a flight down. I wasn't anticipating any real trouble, though; Makram was born into the Schmied Kameradschaft, who are terribly old-fashioned and predictable in some very important ways.

Unfortunately, however, by sheer blind stupid bad luck, before I could locate him precisely, I ran into him in person. I was sitting in a café on a small pedestrian concourse when Makram walked out of a side passage and spotted me. I hadn't had time to have my face changed since our last run-in, and I suddenly saw him staring right at me from 30 yards away.

He leapt instantly, popping claws from his fingertips as he came. Like I said, the Schmied Kameradschaft are terribly old-fashioned, and they have a

deeply paranoid cultural memplex; they think it's smart to give their children boosted reflexes, augmented musculature, and built-in weapons. Strangely enough, at least three percent of them end up as active sociopaths. Makram's idea was doubtless to get to me in a single leap and rip my throat out.

Unfortunately for him, things didn't quite work as he intended. I think I even heard the impact when his head met the ceiling. He landed heavily, 10 yards short of me, and staggered. His so-called "survival-oriented" genemods didn't include any great ability to adjust for different gravities.

Unlike mine. By the time he hit the ground, I was already out of my chair and going for my electrolaser. I'm not quite as fast as him, and his skull was evidently good and solid – but then again, I don't have those stupidly expensive dietary requirements. He was still five yards away from me when I fired and he fell.

People began screaming a second later. I slapped a neurocuff and comm-blocker on Makram, and then turned my carefully designed smile and fine-tuned voice on my audience. They worked just fine, of course; my genemods are **useful**.

I mean, really – claws!

An ability is an advantage customized to fit a particular game world or work like a specific fictional example. For instance, Innate Attack is an advantage – but Dragon's Breath, defined as Burning Attack 4d (Cone, 5 yards, +100%; Limited Use, 3/day, -20%; Reduced Range, x1/5, -20%), is an ability.

Abilities typically have four parts, but only the first of these is truly a requirement:



1. *Advantage(s)*. This determines what the ability *does*, on the most basic level. The simplest ability is a single, unmodified advantage. On the other hand, complex abilities might require *several* advantages, possibly connected with Follow-Up (p. B105) or Link (p. B106).

2. *Modifiers*. Most abilities have at least one enhancement or limitation, if only a power modifier, but this is

optional. Not every ability belongs to a power – and in some game worlds, *all* abilities are “wild,” unmodified advantages.

3. *“Special effects.”* These are small ways in which the ability differs from the underlying advantage. They might have a nontrivial effect on *game play*, but there’s no effect on *point cost*. Special effects are essentially informal +0% modifiers. Think of them as “quirks for advantages.”

4. *Name*. A “stock” advantage name will do in a pinch . . . but the more advantages, modifiers, and special effects the ability involves, the handier a simple, descriptive label becomes.

The purpose of this chapter is to help you create interesting abilities, either for use on their own or as part of a power designed using the rules in Chapter 1.

## ADVANTAGES

The first step in creating an ability is to visualize what you want it to do and select the advantage that comes closest to this. The choice might be clear (e.g., Innate Attack for Fire Breath), but the most suitable advantage isn’t always obvious – and even when you do hit upon it, you might need a new special modifier to get it just right.

### EXISTING ADVANTAGES

Below is a list of advantages from the **Basic Set** that are especially useful for building abilities. Each entry includes comments on the fictional roles the advantage can fill, and one or more sets of additional notes:

*Alternatives*: Similar traits that might be more appropriate in certain cases.

*New Special Enhancements/Limitations*: Additional modifiers that let the advantage simulate effects seen in fiction.

*Powering Up*: Thoughts on whether the advantage makes sense as part of a power – and if it does, advice on suitable types of powers and suggestions on how Talent might work. Abilities *don’t* have to be part of a power, though; you can ignore this section in campaigns that don’t use the rules in Chapter 1.

#### 360° Vision

see p. B34

This trait most often represents extra eyes, eyestalks, etc., but it doesn’t *have* to be physiological. Espers,

martial-arts masters, omniscient deities, and the like might know what’s going on behind them without having to look.

#### Alternatives

To follow several things going on around you at once, take Enhanced Tracking (p. 49) instead or as well. Without this, you must focus on one thing at a time.

#### New Special Enhancements

*Panoptic 1*: You can see all around you without turning your head and without the need for extra eyes. This is an enhancement because your gift isn’t obvious – you can visibly stare in one direction and actually be looking in another! You still need eyes, though. If you’re blindfolded, dazzled, blinded by injuries, etc., you cannot see. +20%.

*Panoptic 2*: As above, but you *don’t* need eyes. You can always perceive everything going on around you, even if blinded or blindfolded. You still need light, unless you have something like Dark Vision. Blows to the eyes injure you normally but won’t blind this sense. +60%.

#### Powering Up

Those with body-alteration or shapeshifting powers often add Switchable (p. 109) to temporarily grow extra eyes. Light power might let the user direct light coming from all directions to his eyes; this calls for Panoptic 1. Panoptic 2 is for those with supernatural powers – ESP, chi, divine omniscience, etc. In all cases, Talent adds to the user’s IQ and Vision rolls to notice the presence of “interesting” activity in parts of his visual field he isn’t currently focusing on.

### Affliction

see p. B35

Affliction covers any attack that causes an effect other than injury (see *Innate Attack*, p. 53) or physical restraint (see *Binding*, p. 42). General forms of Affliction often seen in fiction include:

*Beam*: A ranged attack that affects one target; e.g., a paralysis beam or a shrinking ray. This is the most basic form of Affliction. It’s especially suitable for supers, gods, and ultra-tech beam weapons. Roll against Innate Attack (Beam) to hit.

*Curse*: Fantasy and horror Afflictions are more often “spells” than “bolts of power,” with the attacker calling upon supernatural forces to weaken or incapacitate his foe. The only requirement is Malediction 1 (+100%). To simulate the spells on pp. B242-253, add suitable levels of Costs Fatigue (-5%/level) and Takes Extra Time (-10%/level). Most mental effects are Based on Will (+20%). There’s never any roll to hit; Maledictions use a Will roll instead.

*Field*: The user constantly emits a baneful effect; e.g., a demon might cause those who approach too closely to suffer Agony (+100%). If he affects everyone around him *once*, when they first come within range, take Area Effect (+50%/level) and Emanation (-20%). If he automatically attacks anyone he touches or who touches him *each time* he makes contact, use Aura (+80%) and Melee Attack (-30%) instead. In either case, add Always On. This is a -10% limitation, as Afflictions are socially inconvenient but not physically troublesome for the *user*. No roll



to hit is required, but those with Aura can actively try to affect a victim by making a melee attack.

*Gas:* Sleeping gas, paralysis gas, and the like. Such Afflictions have Area Effect (+50%/level) and *one* of Respiratory Agent (+50%), Blood Agent (+100%), or Contact Agent (+150%). For a mobile gas cloud, add Drifting (+20%) and Persistent (+40%). A gas that surrounds the attacker has Emanation (-20%) instead. Insidious gases have No Signature (+20%) and possibly Onset (variable). There's no roll to hit; gas has a chance of affecting everyone exposed to it.

*Gaze:* A gaze is a common vehicle for supernatural Afflictions. For instance, a hypnotic gaze might cause the target to sleep. If the gaze works on any target the attacker can see, it has the Vision-Based *enhancement* (+150%). Roll against Innate Attack (Gaze) to hit. Gaze attacks by fantasy monsters tend to be short-ranged and curse-like; apply Malediction 1 (+100%) and the Vision-Based *limitation* (-20%) instead. To affect the target, make the usual Will roll for Malediction.

*Mental Blast:* Direct mind-to-mind attacks that stun or daze are common psi abilities. Such Afflictions have Malediction 2 (+150%) and Based on Will (+20%). If the attack is *totally* undetectable, add No Signature (+20%). As with all Maledictions, the only roll required is a Will roll.

*Sensory Attack:* Some Afflictions affect everyone nearby though their senses. Such attacks have Area Effect (+50%/level) and Emanation (-20%). Bright flashes are Vision-Based (+150%), with a Disadvantage enhancement that inflicts Blindness (+50%); howls, thunderclaps, etc., are Hearing-Based (+150%), and cause Deafness (+20%). As with gas, no roll to hit is necessary – everyone in the area is exposed.

*Touch:* Monsters, wizards, and supers often have to touch those they wish to afflict. The simplest form of this is Melee Attack (-30%). Attacks that must touch bare skin or an open wound have Contact Agent (-30%) or Blood Agent (-40%), respectively, while supernatural attacks that bypass DR get Malediction 1 (+100%). Make an unarmed melee attack to hit. For

## Optional Rules for Afflictions

Afflictions don't *have* to do bad things to living targets. These rules address two common exceptions.

### *Beneficial Afflictions*

If an Affliction's effects are so unquestionably positive that no one would ever object to them, the GM may reverse the sign of the HT modifier; e.g., Affliction 3 gives a HT+2 roll instead of a HT-2 roll. Duration becomes minutes equal to the subject's margin of *success*, not his margin of failure.

If such an Affliction has Malediction, the subject can *waive* his right to resist. The ability works if the user can make an unopposed Will roll (at the usual range penalties). In this case, duration in minutes equals the *user's* margin of success.

### *Afflictions and Inanimate Targets*

An Affliction can affect anything with a HT score . . . *if* the target is susceptible to its effects. Most inanimate objects – including all machines – have Immunity to Metabolic Hazards. This stops most Afflictions, with two exceptions.

Afflictions restricted to inanimate targets via Accessibility modifiers (such as “Only on Electrical”) affect those objects *instead* of living beings. This is only acceptable in conjunction with effects that make sense for the intended targets. You could render a machine “unconscious” by cutting its power, but you couldn't inflict nausea.

Afflictions that cause Invisibility, Shrinking, and other transformations through the Advantage modifier affect *everything*. To prevent those with low levels from zapping planets, the GM should let unliving, homogenous, and diffuse targets add their SM to their resistance roll (an Earth-sized planet is SM +43). If modified HT comes to 21+ after applying SM and the Affliction's HT modifier, resistance is *automatic* – nothing happens.

Malediction, roll the Quick Contest to see if the Affliction works only *after* scoring a hit.

*Venom:* Toxins often cause weakness, paralysis, unconsciousness, coma, or heart attack. Those borne on fangs, claws, etc. have Follow-Up (+0%), while poisonous spray or spit has Contact Agent (-30%) or Blood Agent (-40%). Many poisons take time to work; if so, add Onset (variable). Make a melee attack to hit with a natural weapon. Roll against Innate Attack (Breath) to hit with spray or spit.

Afflictions that do more than stun have special enhancements, too. Effects might be inconvenient (Irritant, Negated Advantage, or modest levels of Attribute Penalty or Disadvantage),

crippling (Incapacitation, or extreme levels of Attribute Penalty or Disadvantage), or lethal (Coma or Heart Attack). Note that Choking *isn't* usually lethal – it responds to mundane treatment that takes two seconds and a First Aid roll (artificial respiration, oxygen mask, Heimlich maneuver, etc., depending on “special effects”).

The Advantage enhancement is a special case. It's useful for specialized attacks; for instance, it might shrink the target (Shrinking, +50%/level) or turn him into a specter (Insubstantiality, +800%). However, it's also a key element of many *beneficial* abilities, which use special rules; see *Beneficial Afflictions* (box).

Remember that an Affliction can have multiple effects. If an effect applies only if the victim fails his HT

roll by 5+ or rolls a critical failure, it's "secondary" and worth 1/5 as much. If the GM wishes, effects that require a critical success on the *user's* roll (attack roll, Will roll for Malediction, etc.) can also be secondary.

Finally, note that it's often more cost-effective to add the Malediction enhancement than to buy high levels of Affliction. Against a high-HT target, a Quick Contest of Will vs. HT is more likely to succeed than an unopposed HT roll (even at a penalty) is to fail.

### Alternatives

An Innate Attack with the Side Effect or Symptoms enhancement (see p. B109) can have Affliction-like effects in addition to damage. Side Effect is better than Affliction for simulating "reduced lethality" weapons. Symptoms are generally superior for poisons and diseases that incapacitate with only moderate injury.

Healers should note that the Healing advantage (p. 31) costs *far* less than Affliction with Advantage, Regeneration.

### New Special Enhancement

*Negated Disadvantage:* The victim loses a specific disadvantage for one minute per point by which he fails his HT roll. If he lacks that disadvantage, there's no effect. This is worth +10% per point the disadvantage is worth. If the disadvantage comes in levels, specify the level negated.

### Powering Up

Most powers can justify some kind of Affliction. Even wholly *beneficial* powers – Psychic Healing, the divine power of the God of Medicine, etc. – are likely to include Afflictions enhanced with Advantage or Negated Disadvantage, or with Ecstasy, Sleep, or Unconsciousness for use as an anesthetic. Talent gives a bonus to rolls to hit with Afflictions, and benefits Will rolls in the case of Malediction.

### Allies

see p. B36

The Summonable enhancement converts Allies from a social trait to a supernatural ability to conjure beasts, monsters, spirits, etc. The GM, with the player's input, decides whether each use summons the *same* beings or



*new* ones. In the latter case, the GM must make a reaction roll whenever new Allies appear, to determine their willingness to obey orders. If they're killed, the summoner must wait a full day to call replacements. The drawbacks of conjuring entities with no memory of or devotion to the summoner offset the benefits of being able to replace slain Allies; Summonable costs +100% either way.

Summonable often calls for the Minion enhancement as well. If it brings forth new Allies each time, the GM should *require* this, as the summoner won't know his charges well enough to have any special obligation to them. Other modifiers depend on the ability's origin; Accessibility and Costs Fatigue are common.

The GM determines how long it takes summoned beings to appear. This can vary with the circumstances: fire elementals might appear instantly in a volcano but not at all at sea, animals might need to reach the summoner on foot, and so on. This variability makes most modifiers that affect time requirements inappropriate.

### Alternatives

Summoned entities that do little but harass and attack foes – insect swarms, animated shadows, etc. – work better as Afflictions (p. 39) or Innate Attacks (p. 53) with Area Effect, Homing, Mobile, and Persistent. To conjure illusionary creatures, take Illusion (p. 94).

### Powering Up

Summonable Allies suit many powers: elemental powers that conjure elemental spirits, magical powers that bring forth familiars, nature powers that call on animals, divine and spirit powers that summon servitor spirits, and so on. Talent never affects appearance rolls but *does* add to the summoner's rolls to influence his Allies and his Allies' reactions toward him.

### Altered Time Rate

see p. B38

Altered Time Rate (ATR) is typical of super-speedsters and over-the-top cinematic martial artists. It's also appropriate for those who control time, and even suits the fastest computers and robots.



## Alternatives

To *react* quickly, improve Basic Speed and consider either Combat Reflexes (p. B43) or Enhanced Time Sense (p. B52). High running speed calls for Enhanced Move (p. 49) – or just a good Basic Move. For multiple attacks, take Extra Attack (p. 49). To speed up learning, get Super-Memorization (see *Modular Abilities*, p. 62).

## New Special Enhancement

*Super-Speed*: You're even faster out of combat! When performing *mundane* or *repetitive* tasks – building things (including new inventions), reading, making repairs, etc. – look up your ATR level in the *Size* column of the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550) and divide the time required by the number in the *Linear Measurement* column. For example, ATR 6 gives a divisor of 20, which means a repair that normally requires an hour takes you just three minutes. You can reduce time further by taking a skill penalty (see p. B346). You can't hasten learning, special abilities (making magic items, concentrating on Mind Control, etc.), Concept rolls when inventing, or interactions with people or machines incapable of matching your speed. The GM may wish restrict Super-Speed to super-heroic speedsters. +20%.

## New Special Limitation

*Non-Combat Speed*: You enjoy the benefits of Super-Speed out of combat, but get no additional maneuvers in combat. You *can* buy some of your ATR with Super-Speed and the rest with this limitation. -60%.

## Powering Up

ATR is most suitable for time-control and dedicated super-speed powers, but might also suit cinematic chi powers. Talent never provides a bonus, but offsets penalties for taking less time to execute a task.

## Amphibious

see p. B40

This trait is normally a permanent morphological adaptation, but with Switchable (p. 109), it might represent a minor form of body control, the ability to project a "force bubble" that enables easy movement through the

water, or supernatural command over water or water spirits.

## Powering Up

When Amphibious occurs as part of an elemental Water power, the power of the Sea God, etc., the associated Talent benefits all Swimming and Aquabatics rolls.

## Binding

see p. B40

Most forms of Binding seen in fiction fall into one of these categories:

*Bonds*: In its simplest form, Binding ensnares the target with some kind of physical "rope." This doesn't require special modifiers – but the two most common examples are webbing, which is Sticky (+20%), and the ability to cause existing vegetation to entangle the target, which is Environmental (-40%).

*Encasement*: Individuals with the power to command elemental forces can sometimes materialize ice, stone, etc. around a foe, sealing him inside.



Simulate this with Engulfing (+60%). Almost any attack can *eventually* chip away the material, so Only Damaged By X and Unbreakable are rarely appropriate.

*Entombment*: Another common elemental attack is turning the earth beneath the victim's feet to mud or quicksand, causing him to sink into the ground. Wizards and evil priests might even command the ground to open up and swallow him! This is Engulfing (+60%), Unbreakable (+40%), and likely Suffocating (+75%). Since it only affects those who are touching the ground and *not* flying or standing on an artificial surface, it's also Environmental (-20%).

*Force Fields*: Supers and wizards often restrain opponents with mysterious forces. Such Bindings are Unbreakable (+40%) and in most cases One-Shot (-10%). If the target is actually "tied up" – not just rooted in place – add Engulfing (+60%).

*Goo*: Some monsters "slime" their prey with sticky goo. This glues the victim's arms to his sides, clogs his mouth, and leaves him helpless. Represent this with Engulfing (+60%), Only Damaged By Burning or Corrosion (+20%), and Sticky (+20%). Range is often limited; if so, add Reduced Range (-10%/level).

These attacks bind a single foe. To affect more than one target by blanketing the area with webbing, quicksand, creeping vines, etc., add Area Effect (+50%/level). If the effect endures, and affects anyone who blunders into it, take Persistent (+40%), too. And if the persistent effect forms a vision-impeding barrier (like dense spider webs), stack Wall (+30% or +60%) on top of *that*.

## Alternatives

Binding assumes *external* restraints. If the victim is frozen by magical or psionic control, transfixed by divine will, paralyzed by venom or a superscience weapon, etc., that's an Affliction with a suitable enhancement – most often Attribute Penalty (DX) or Paralysis.

## New Special Enhancements

Standard Binding leaves the victim's head poking out and gives him sufficient room to breathe. Certain types of Binding would logically



## *Supers and wizards often restrain opponents with mysterious forces.*

suffocate or squeeze the target, but this *isn't* automatic. To add such effects, buy one of these enhancements:

**Constricting:** Your Binding actively constricts the victim. Until he breaks free, the Binding attacks him each turn with a Constriction Attack (p. B43), at a ST equal to that of the Binding. +75%.

**Suffocating:** Your Binding cocoons the target or blocks his breathing passages. While it's in place, the victim cannot breathe. If he runs out of breath before he breaks free (see *Holding Your Breath*, p. B351), he starts to suffocate; see *Suffocation* (p. B436). +75%.

### Powering Up

Powers that project force fields – Gravity, Psychokinesis, etc. – almost always include Binding. It makes sense for powers that can summon matter, too; e.g., Water power might encase the target in ice or turn dry earth into muck. Talent adds to rolls to hit, but *not* to ST rolls made for the Binding. For that, buy a higher level of Binding!

### Blessed

see p. B40

Despite its name, Blessed doesn't have to be a divine gift. The forces that inform the user might be demons, his *genius* (guardian spirit), or shades from the future. To convert Blessed into a generic, paranormal information-gathering ability, keep the requirements for divination (1 hour, 10 FP, and an IQ roll) but drop both the obligation to serve a deity and the reaction bonus from the faithful. This has no effect on point cost.

### Alternatives

Compare Oracle (p. 65), which has no FP cost, and Precognition (p. 68), which is much more controllable

(and a better choice for superscience abilities).

### Powering Up

Blessed suits any power that admits the existence of supernatural entities that are better informed than mortals. Talent gives a bonus to the IQ roll to use the ability.

### Catfall

see p. B41

Unmodified Catfall represents the ability to twist in midair in order to land softly. This might be inborn or the result of secret acrobatic techniques. With suitable modifiers, it can represent other fall-breaking measures, from parachutes or retrorockets to super-powered gravity control.

### New Special Enhancement

**Feather Fall:** You *always* enjoy the benefits of Catfall, even if bound and dropped on your head. +20%.

### New Special Limitation

**Parachute:** You have a natural parachute, such as wings or skin flaps. This works like unmodified Catfall for falls that take two seconds or more, but deploys too slowly to affect shorter falls (distances of 6 × g yards or less). Your parachute needs open air in a radius equal to your height to function; it's worthless if falling down a narrow passage, and is of no use in "very thin" or thinner atmospheres. -30%.

### Powering Up

Any power that can lower gravity or density, or justify Flight, might include Catfall. For Gravity, Psychokinesis, etc., add the Feather Fall enhancement. Those who have chi powers can use unmodified Catfall to simulate "body lightening" (*karumi-jutsu*). Talent adds to DX rolls to halve damage in all cases.

## Chameleon

see p. B41

This ability is suitable not only for natural chameleons but also for illusionists of all stripes and those with built-in ultra-tech camouflage.

### Alternatives

Those who can actually alter their body should take Morph (p. 74), while those who can disappear completely will find Invisibility (p. 56) more effective.

### New Special Enhancements

**Controllable:** You can consciously select your surface pattern. The effects are mainly aesthetic, but there's a useful side benefit: you can assume a high-visibility pattern that gives +2 per level to your attempts to signal others and distract enemies, and to others' rolls to spot you. This is mutually exclusive with Always On. +20%.

**Dynamic:** Your surface pattern adapts instantly to new surroundings and corrects for "motion blur." You get your *full* Stealth bonus (+2 per level) when moving. +40%.

### Powering Up

Any kind of body-alteration or illusion power might include Chameleon. Talent adds a further bonus to Stealth skill rolls to avoid being seen.

## Channeling

see p. B41

Channeling normally lets the user serve as a conduit to the spirit world, but the GM may permit variant forms that enable contact with the dream world, the past, parallel universes, cyberspace, etc., instead. Each form of Channeling is a separate advantage.

### Alternatives

To *speak* with spirits, take Medium (p. 59). Those who experience possession by a spirit that grants superhuman capabilities should take an Alternate Form (see *Shapeshifting*, p. 74) – possibly with the Uncontrollable limitation – that represents their possessed self.

### New Special Enhancement

**Aware:** You remain aware of the world when using your ability, and can move and act normally while spirits speak through you. +50%.

## New Special Limitations

Channeling often requires a ritual or séance to use. If so, add Preparation Required (p. B114). Another limitation is common in many settings:

*Specialized:* You can only channel one specific class of spirits. Possibilities include angels, demons, elementals, faerie, ghosts, and anything else the GM wishes to allow. -50%.

## Powering Up

Channeling suits almost any supernatural power. Talent adds to Will rolls to enter the trance and resist Possession (or other mental attacks) by channeled entities.

## Clairsentience

see p. B42

With suitable modifiers, Clairsentience can emulate almost any kind of remote viewing. In a “realistic” setting, most psychics should have Clairaudience (-30%) or Clairvoyance (-10%), as few claim to have full Clairsentience. On the other hand, high levels of Increased Range (p. B106) are appropriate – global range (Increased Range 19, +190%) appears to be commonplace among remote viewers.

Supers, gods, and other high-powered types know no such limits. They’re likely to have one or more of the powerful special enhancements below.

## Alternatives

Use Detect (p. 47) for abilities that let the user know “something is there” but little else. Penetrating Vision (p. 66) is a better choice for the hero who can see *through* distant objects. Scanning Sense (p. 72) – notably Para-Radar – is more suitable for extrasensory abilities with pseudo-scientific explanations.

## New Special Enhancements

*Aware:* You can sense the environment around your body while using your ability. You can still only *pay attention* to one set of senses. At the start of each turn in combat, state whether you’re giving priority to your natural senses or your remote ones. Concentrating to move or change the facing of your displaced senses

# Projection

Projection – an enhancement for Clairsentience (see left), a limitation for Insubstantiality (p. 55), Jumper (p. 57), and Warp (p. 88) – makes it possible to send forth a projection while the body lies unconscious in the physical world. The projection’s visibility and potency depend on the underlying advantage, but a few rules always apply.

Most importantly, the body *isn’t* in suspended animation. If the projector must eat and drink, he’ll suffer starvation or dehydration if he stays away for too long, unless he arranges for artificial feeding. (The GM can always let projections take sustenance – spirit energy, astral food, or whatever – that satisfies these needs, if it suits the setting.) If the projector must breathe, his comatose body needs air, too.

Anything that can injure or fatigue the body has its usual effects while the projector is away. Similarly, lack of sleep, attacks enhanced with Affects Insubstantial, and so on affect the projection. All HP and FP losses come out of the *same* pool, regardless of which form suffers them. The projection suffers any negative effects: shock, stunning, etc.

If the projection would become “unconscious,” it vanishes instead. The mind snaps back to the body, which remains unconscious until it recovers.

If *death* results, consequences depend on which form suffered the killing injury. If this was the projection, the projector’s personality and mind are gone, but his body may survive as a mindless husk; use the *Mortal Wounds* rules (p. B423), but the victim can never awaken. If the body died, the projector gets a Will-15 roll, modified by Talent, at the moment of death. Success means he swaps his projection ability for the Astral Entity meta-trait (p. B263) and becomes a “ghost” in the realm his projection was in. Failure means he’s just dead.

*Projected Form:* These rules also apply to Alternate Form with Projected Form (p. 75). However, *both* forms are physical, and if either dies, both do. If HP or FP differ, use the unconscious body’s scores and scale all losses in projected form proportionally; e.g., if a man with 10 HP has 20 HP as a beast, and loses 8 HP in beast form, he marks off 4 HP.

*Compartmentalized Mind:* Projectors with this trait send out *all* instances of their mind when they project. They can’t “leave behind” a mind to control their body. To get two conscious bodies, take Duplication.

*automatically* gives them priority, unless you also have Second Nature (below). All tasks that depend on the senses you aren’t prioritizing – including attack rolls, defense rolls, and Sense rolls – are at -4. +50%.

*Projection:* You don’t merely send your senses out of body . . . you send out your *consciousness*. Your body falls unconscious unless you also have Aware. Your projected self is only vulnerable to spells, mental abilities, Maledictions, etc. See *Projection* (box) for other rules. +0% if you can only affect the insubstantial world (a new capability that balances leaving your body unconscious, not just

insensible); +140% if you can use spells, mental abilities, and Maledictions on the material world from your viewpoint, too. If others can see your projection, take Visible (p. 112) as well.

*Second Nature:* Your ability is reflexive. You can initiate it as a free action and change viewpoints as quickly as you can shift your gaze. You still need to concentrate for a minute and make an IQ-5 roll if your desired viewpoint is out of sight, with the usual bad effects on a failure. This enhancement is cheaper than Reduced Time, but only applies to Clairsentience. +70%.

## Powering Up

This advantage (often limited with Clairaudience, Clairrosmia, or Clairvoyance) is one of the definitive abilities of ESP. With the Projection enhancement, it's also a perfect fit for Astral Projection. Modifiers can adapt it to many other supernatural powers – notably spirit powers. Talent adds to IQ rolls to activate the ability and shift viewpoints, and to all Sense rolls to spot things while using this ability.

## Clinging

see p. B43

This advantage is most suitable for natural creatures that cling to surfaces, and for robots and supers that stick to walls and ceilings using adhesives, magnetism, suction, etc. Realistic Clinging for human-sized and larger characters calls for the Requires Low Gravity limitation (below) – but supers are free to ignore this.

### Alternatives

Flight (p. 50) with the -25% level of Low Ceiling better models the abilities of those who glide along surfaces without touching them. Individuals who rely on exceptional balance and strength of limb to make seemingly impossible climbs are more likely to have Brachiator (p. B41) and Super Climbing (p. 79).

### New Special Enhancement

*Attraction:* You can cling to a surface with any part of your body – you don't need to assume a crawling posture. You can walk "upright" along a vertical surface, leaving your arms free, or even hang from the top of your head or your back in order to use all of your limbs. +25%.

### New Special Limitation

*Requires Low Gravity:* Your ability doesn't function in gravity fields over a certain, maximum strength. For humans, this is typically 0.6G. -5% per 0.1G under 1G (-5% for 0.9G, -10% for 0.8G, and so on – down to -50% for 0G).

## Powering Up

Clinging is often mediated by some kind of attractive force, making it suitable for such powers as Psychokinesis, Gravity, and Magnetism (with the

Magnetic limitation). An equally common explanation is the ability to form a bond with a particular substance. This requires the Specific limitation (p. 112), and is appropriate for elemental powers – Earth power in particular. Talent adds to all ST, DX, and skill rolls made to negotiate obstacles or stop a fall.

## Common Sense

see p. B43

Common Sense usually represents practical wisdom, but there are other possibilities. Digital Minds with extensive databases of past experiences, or the ability to think many steps ahead, might enjoy the same benefits. More dramatically, this trait could represent divine guidance – after all, advice given to the player by the GM comes from a Higher Power from the *character's* point of view.



### Alternatives

Those who are good at avoiding *incorrect* decisions as opposed to *stupid* ones have Intuition (p. 56). "Correct" isn't automatically the same thing as "smart"!

### New Special Enhancement

*Conscious:* Not only does the GM warn you when you're about to do something stupid . . . you can ask him to suggest what would be *smart* in your current situation. He'll roll secretly against your IQ; the better the roll, the better the advice. +50%.

## Powering Up

Common Sense could be psionic: the ability to draw upon the collective wisdom of others fits Telepathy, while the capacity to see enough of the future to know the outcome of one's actions suits ESP. It might represent divinely imparted wisdom instead, making it appropriate for a divine power. Those with moral powers may receive similar guidance from their "moral compass." Talent adds to IQ rolls to use this ability.

## Constriction Attack

see p. B43

In addition to being the classic python ability, this trait is suitable for any being with a "rubber body," including stretching supers, blob-like aliens, and fantasy monsters that envelop their prey.

### Alternatives

Constriction Attack isn't necessary to grapple and crush (see *Choke or Strangle*, p. B370); enough ST or Lifting ST (p. 58) makes the -5 to crush the body without this trait irrelevant. Only Constriction Attack lets you choke a foe "hands free," however.

### New Special Enhancement

*Engulfing:* You totally engulf your victim. If he doesn't break free between when you grapple him and when you start to crush him, he's *pinned*; see *Pin* (p. B370). This pin is completely "hands free." Victims with abilities such as Innate Attack and Spines can hit you automatically while engulfed, however. If so, you get no active defense. +60%.

## Powering Up

This is a logical ability for a body-alteration power in a supers game, in which case it's likely to accompany Elastic Skin, Flexibility, Morph, and/or Stretching. Talent adds to ST rolls to crush victims.

## Damage Resistance

see p. B46

Damage Resistance can represent *many* defenses that bear little resemblance to one another in the game world, including:



## Partially Limited Abilities

You needn't apply the same modifiers to every level of a "leveled" advantage like Damage Resistance or Innate Attack. Applying a limitation to only part of the advantage lets you create an ability that's more potent in situations where the limitation doesn't interfere. Other modifiers can still apply to the entire ability.

*Example:* Many characters have DR with a bonus against certain threats. To get this, buy general DR at full cost and bonus DR with Limited; e.g., "DR 5 (10 vs. Fire)" is DR 5 [25] + DR 5 (Limited, Fire, -40%) [15]. As a force field, this would be DR 5 (Force Field, +20%) [30] + DR 5 (Force Field, +20%; Limited, Fire, -40%) [20].

*Active Control:* Those with powers – especially elemental ones – can frequently use their gifts to divert or negate incoming energies. Such DR is typically Limited. An entire power source is "Very Common" (-20%), while a specific focus is "Common" (-40%). Many such defenses intercept attacks at a distance from the body, justifying Force Field (+20%). Supers often add Absorption (+80% or +100%) or Reflection (+100%), too. In the case of Absorption, use Extended Duration (+20%/level) to slow the rate at which absorbed points trickle away.

*Damage Tolerance:* Some creatures are huge, have redundant organs (or lack organs), or have a reinforced structure that lets them absorb a lot of punishment. To represent this, use Ablative (-80%). This effectively turns DR into Hit Points that don't result in shock, stunning, knockdown, etc. when lost, but that don't increase the damage needed to cause crippling or death.

*Force Field:* A close-fitting sheath of energy or matter projected around the body is a common supernatural and superscience defense, and calls for Force Field (+20%). Add Can't Wear Armor (-40%) if this repels *anything* that gets close to the body, and Temporary Disadvantage, No Fine Manipulators (-30%) if it prevents picking things up. A field that only screens against frontal attacks, like a shield, has Directional (-20%). Add Affects Others (+50%) and Area Effect (+50%/level) for a field that covers an area.

*Natural Armor:* Many natural creatures have a hardened, padded, or

thickened outer layer that reduces the impact of attacks. Bone or chitin calls for unmodified DR, a thick fat layer requires Flexible (-20%), and leathery skin has Tough Skin (-40%). If this results in a pointy, irregularly shaped, or bulky body that makes clothing impossible, add Can't Wear Armor (-40%).

It's possible to have more than one of these general classes of DR, but remember the "Layered" Defenses rule (p. B47): the order in which different kinds of DR apply must be fixed at character creation. See *Partially Limited Abilities* (box) for a related option.

### Alternatives

Injury Tolerance (p. 52) works better for those who "soak up" damage and suffer less injury from it. Unliving, Homogenous, and Diffuse in particular can be more effective, point for point, than DR; see *Injury to Unliving, Homogenous, and Diffuse Targets* (p. B380). Damage Reduction is often a better deal, too – especially against massive attacks.

Psycho killers, hulking supers, etc. should consider Supernatural Durability (p. B89) and Unkillable (p. B95) as alternatives or adjuncts to DR.

### Powering Up

Damage Resistance is suitable for nearly *any* power that can affect the physical world – although it might require several modifiers to make sense. As part of a power, it often has the Force Field special modifier. Talent adds to Power Block attempts (see p. 168).

## Danger Sense

see p. B47

This is most often a supernatural sensitivity that originates from ESP, finely honed chi, the gods, etc. However, it could represent extremely sensitive *mundane* senses, or even an enhanced capacity to analyze data and predict risky outcomes (appropriate for Digital Minds).

### Alternatives

Those who can truly predict the future should take Precognition (p. 68), which *includes* this trait.

### Powering Up

Danger Sense is ideally suited to ESP, but fits any supernatural power – chi, divine, magical, spirit, etc. – that provides situational awareness or information. It also suits time-travel powers, since those who can perceive the future well enough to travel there can often sense "ripples" from imminent danger. Talent adds to the Perception roll.

## Dark Vision

see p. B47

The exclusion of light, radar, and sonar leaves few realistic explanations for this trait. It almost *has* to be a kind of "sixth sense," attributable to ESP, chi sensitivity, cosmic awareness, etc.

### Alternatives

Infravision (p. B60) and Night Vision (p. B71) are cheaper, while Hyperspectral Vision (p. 51) has the same price but different benefits and drawbacks. Other ways to function in total darkness include Scanning Sense (p. 72) and Vibration Sense (p. 86).

### New Special Enhancement

*Hypersensory:* Your brain builds up a "picture" of your surroundings from the input of your senses of hearing, smell, and touch (temperature differences, vibrations, and even electric fields), and from tiny flashes of light due to chemical reactions, static discharges, and cosmic ray impacts. You're not aware of these things individually, but collectively, they let you see in the dark as if it were daylight, and even spot *invisible* foes. Each sense you lose – hearing, smell, touch, or vision – gives -2 to Vision rolls (this penalty can't exceed the

current darkness penalty). You're only truly blind if you lose all four. You're still limited to the standard human arc of vision unless you have Peripheral Vision or 360° Vision. +40%.

### Powering Up

Like any vision ability, Dark Vision fits Light and Darkness powers. It's also a good match for chi powers (as an alternative to Blind Fighting skill, p. B180) and ESP. In all cases, Talent adds to Vision rolls.

### Detect

see p. B48

Detect is *extremely* common in fiction, where it typically takes one of three forms:

*Extended Senses:* Detect can emulate almost any kind of believable remote sensing. Senses like Detect (Magnetic Fields) and Detect (Radio) suit realistic robots and vehicles as well as supers. Signal Detection (+0%) is common for such abilities.

*Para-Senses:* Detect might instead sense ordinary things that would realistically defy discovery without physically searching the area or taking a sample; e.g., Detect (Cats), Detect (Disease), Detect (Gold), or Detect (Poison). Such abilities might be superscience or a form of supernatural divination.

*Supernatural Awareness:* Detect could be a supernatural sensitivity to otherworldly forces; e.g., Detect (Magic). It might even sense *moral* concepts. What this means is up to the GM – a zombie or serial killer might trigger Detect (Evil) in some worlds but not others. Moral *powers* always set it off, however.

How Detect presents information to the user is a special effect. Someone with Detect (Magic) might experience magic as a glow visible through intervening obstacles, a scent, an odd foreboding, or anything else he likes.

### Alternatives

Detect doesn't provide the capacity to comprehend transmissions or see by the "light" they provide, even if it can locate them and analyze their composition. Such capabilities are separate advantages. For instance, Detect (Radio) and Detect (Infrared)

can locate radio signals and heat sources, respectively – but you need Radio (p. B91) to *understand* radio signals and Infravision (p. B60) to *see by* infrared radiation.

### New Special Enhancement

*Analyzing:* Your sense has an extremely high resolution, like a superscience scanner. Basic analysis is automatic if your Sense roll succeeds. Only make a separate IQ roll if you opt to do a detailed analysis. Success reveals details such as the form and purity of the item sensed, its precise subclass, etc. This is incompatible with Vague. +100%.

### Powering Up

Any power might have Detect for its own focus or an opposed one. For the purpose of Detect, treat a single focus or power as "Rare," a single power source as "Occasional," a group of related sources (e.g., all supernatural powers) as "Common," and all powers as "Very Common." Talent affects Sense rolls to use this ability *and* IQ rolls for analysis.

### Discriminatory Senses

see p. B49

Discriminatory Hearing, Smell, and Taste are appropriate for predators that navigate their environment and track prey using a sense other than vision – and for beings with

ultra-tech senses and computerized minds capable of precise detection and analysis.

### Alternatives

If a high Sense roll is what matters, Acute Senses (p. B35) are more cost-effective. Discriminatory Senses are priced as much for the ability to distinguish things non-visually as for their bonus to Sense rolls.

Equivalent traits for vision and touch are Hyperspectral Vision (p. 51) and Sensitive Touch (p. 73), respectively.

### New Special Enhancement

*Profiling:* You possess an extensive mental database of sensory "signatures" that you can *quickly* compare to new sensory impressions. This doubles the bonus to analyze and recognize targets (but *not* to sense or track them) to +8. As a side benefit, all attempts to memorize new signatures succeed automatically – there's no need for an IQ roll. +50%.

### Powering Up

Discriminatory Senses suit animal-related powers and certain elemental powers (e.g., Sound/Vibration power; for Discriminatory Hearing). They might even be appropriate for ESP in some settings. Talent adds to the IQ roll to memorize sensory impressions *and* the Sense roll to use the affected sense.

*Discriminatory Hearing, Smell, and Taste are appropriate for predators that navigate their environment and track prey using a sense other than vision – and for beings with ultra-tech senses and computerized minds capable of precise detection and analysis.*



## Duplication

see p. B50

This is typically a super ability, with two important exceptions. First, with the Digital limitation, Duplication can represent a Digital Mind capable of controlling multiple computers. Second, exotic alien life forms – notably cinematic blobs and amoeboids – can sometimes divide and recombine at will (and should probably have the Shared Resources limitation).

### New Special Enhancement

*Construct:* Your Dupes are material projections under your mental control. When you dispel them, they vanish, leaving you with your *current* – not *average* – FP and HP. You also enjoy all the benefits of No Sympathetic Injury (don't buy it separately). Finally, the death of a Dupe isn't permanent: by taking a Concentrate maneuver and spending 10 FP, you can generate a replacement. But there's only one "true you," and if you die, all your Dupes die with you! This is incompatible with Digital and Shared Resources. +60%.

### New Special Limitation

*Sequential:* You and your Dupes are chained together in a specific order. Number them from 1 (the original you) on up. When a Dupe dies, all higher-numbered Dupes vanish, too. This lets you create a character who can summon copies of himself from one possible future, with "later" copies dependent on the survival of "earlier"

ones. Add Construct (above) if you can replace dead Dupes with copies from other possible futures. -40%.

### Powering Up

With the Construct enhancement, Duplication is appropriate for any magical or spirit power that allows the user to summon or create a doppelganger. With Sequential, it's suitable for time-travel powers. Talent affects all skill rolls made by one Dupe to interact directly with another (Empathy rolls, First Aid rolls, etc.).

## Elastic Skin

see p. B51

As the name implies, Elastic Skin might involve actually altering one's skin. On the other hand, it could just be a skin-deep illusion. Decide which when buying the ability. Each has its pros and cons – there's no difference in point cost.

### Alternatives

Individuals who can only change their appearance to camouflage themselves should take Chameleon (p. 43). Those who can transform their *entire* body have Morph (p. 74).

### Powering Up

Elastic Skin suits illusion powers and body-alteration powers (often alongside Constriction Attack, Flexibility, Stretching, etc.). With the Glamour limitation (p. 111), it's also reasonable for Telepathy. Talent adds to Disguise rolls made in conjunction with this ability.

## Empathy Advantages

Awareness of the emotions and general motivations of other beings is central to several important fictional archetypes. Telepaths and "empaths" usually have Empathy (p. B51); mediums and shamans traditionally possess Spirit Empathy (p. B88); and elves, druids, and rangers in fantasy often enjoy Animal Empathy (p. B40) or Plant Empathy (p. B75).

### Alternatives

*Communication* with animals, plants, and spirits calls for Speak With Animals (p. 77), Speak With Plants (p. 77), and Medium (p. 59), respectively. Animal, Plant, and Spirit Empathy don't include this function. *Seeing* spirits calls for a suitable form of See Invisible (p. 72). To read thoughts – not emotions – buy Mind Probe or Mind Reading (p. 61).

### New Special Enhancement

*Remote:* Your ability isn't limited to direct, personal meetings. You can "read" any subject you can *see* or *hear* – even over electronic media (or by supernatural means, for Spirit Empathy). +50%.

### New Special Limitation

*Specialized:* The Specialized limitations for Speak With Animals (see p. B87) and Speak With Plants (see p. 77) are equally valid on Animal Empathy and Plant Empathy, respectively. Spirit Empathy already includes this limitation.



## Powering Up

Powers that focus on animals, plants, or spirits might include the appropriate variety of empathy – and *any* of these traits would suit Telepathy. These advantages are also suitable for powers that let the user read body language (e.g., chi powers) or vital signs (e.g., healing powers). Talent benefits the IQ roll to use any of these abilities.

## Enhanced Move

see p. B52

Animals built for speed, super-speedsters, robots, and vehicles are likely to have Enhanced Move in their primary mode of locomotion. Some common explanations:

*Physiological:* Adaptations such as fins, wings, or a streamlined body often imply such traits as Amphibious, Flight (Small Wings or Winged), and/or No Legs (Aerial or Aquatic), in addition to Enhanced Move. The fastest *land* creatures aren't bipeds, and tend to have Extra Legs – or possibly Extra Arms or Strikers. Creatures that can only use Enhanced Move for a short time before they tire should add Costs Fatigue (-5%/level).

*Technological:* Wheels, tracks, jets, rockets, propellers, etc. are likely for robots and vehicles. Such options often suggest additional traits – No Legs (Wheeled) for wheels, Burning Attack for a rocket that doubles as a weapon, and so on. Many of them make the user *obvious* while in use, which is a Nuisance Effect (-5%).

*Superhuman:* Those with powers often have more unusual justifications. These can be invisible (an ordinary-looking man who runs very fast, speedy psychokinetic levitation, etc.) or glaringly obvious (e.g., creating and gliding along a strip of ice). Costs Fatigue and Nuisance Effect are both appropriate.

### Alternatives

Enhanced Move is good for long-distance travel and quickly covering a short distance in a straight line – but if the goal is *tactical* mobility, extra Basic Move is a better choice. See *Basic Move* (p. B17) and *Move in Other Environments* (p. B18).

## New Special Limitations

Environmental (p. 110) is allowed, but only if it limits Enhanced Move to a *subset* of its usual environment. For instance, Enhanced Move (Air) couldn't take Environmental, Air (-5%) – but it could have Environmental, Trees or tall buildings (-20%) in order to benefit Move with Brachiator (p. B41) but not Flight.

*All-Out:* Moving fast requires your undivided attention! Using your ability is like making an All-Out Attack . . . but without the attack. You have no active defenses and can't Attack, Concentrate, Ready, etc. Explain what you're doing: flapping your wings, balancing on two wheels, diverting all your power to project a flame jet or ice path, or whatever else fits. This is worth less than the general All-Out modifier (p. 110), because it doesn't limit you to half your Move in a forward direction. -20%.

## Powering Up

Powers that offer Flight or Amphibious usually incorporate Enhanced Move (Air) or (Water). The most common explanation for Enhanced Move (Ground) is a chi- or psi-based body-control power. Suitable elemental powers can justify almost *any* form of Enhanced Move. Talent adds to control rolls, and is cumulative with the Handling Bonus enhancement.

## Enhanced Tracking

see p. B53

Beings with eyestalks or extra eyes might be able to follow more than one target at a time – as might those with “inner sight” (espers, martial-arts masters, etc.) and robots with advanced sensor arrays.

### Alternatives

Enhanced Tracking has no effect on arc of vision – it just makes it possible to track multiple targets within that arc. Peripheral Vision (p. B74) and 360° Vision (p. 39) *do* improve arc of vision, and often accompany Enhanced Tracking.

### New Special Enhancement

*Multiple Lock-Ons:* You can track multiple targets even if you have only one weapon, and gain the benefit of

your Aim or Evaluate maneuver if you attack *any* of them. Use this to represent high-tech sensors and the situational awareness of cinematic warriors. +20%.

## Powering Up

Like any vision ability, Enhanced Tracking is suitable for Light power. It also fits a wide variety of supernatural powers – notably ESP and chi powers. Talent adds to any Sense roll required to keep track of targets.

## Extra Attack

see p. B53

The top candidates for this advantage are monsters that can attack simultaneously with multiple body parts (e.g., claws *and* teeth), super-human warriors with cinematic levels of combat expertise, and machines with advanced tactical computers. However, the GM might make one or two levels available to *anyone* in a cinematic martial-arts game.

### Alternatives

Use Ambidexterity (p. B39) for someone who can use both hands with equal dexterity – Extra Attack is for those who can use both hands at the same time, which isn't the same thing. To *aim* at multiple targets, take Enhanced Tracking (above). Speedy heroes who get multiple *maneuvers* per turn should buy Altered Time Rate (p. 41).

### New Special Enhancement

*Multi-Strike:* You can strike more than once with the *same* weapon or body part. This means you can launch more attacks than you have limbs, natural weapons, and attack abilities. You *can* use your best attack multiple times. +20%.

### New Special Limitation

*Single Skill:* Your Extra Attacks apply only to a particular combat skill. For instance, Extra Attack 2 (Single Skill, Karate) lets you attack three times – but at least two of the attacks must be with the Karate skill. To attack more than once using a *weapon* skill, you need either one weapon per attack or the Multi-Strike enhancement. -20%.

## Powering Up

Extra Attack is a classic part of chi powers, granting multiple attacks to martial-arts masters; both Multi-Strike and Single Skill are appropriate. Shapeshifting powers might also include this ability, allowing the effective use of extra body parts in combat. Talent *doesn't* affect rolls to hit.

## Flight

see p. B56

Flight is exceedingly common in myth and fiction, attributed to gods, robots, supers, wizards, and a wide range of monsters . . . to name only a few examples. Flying heroes typically hew to one of these archetypes:

*Airship:* Those who hang in the air like dirigibles (“aerostats”) have the Lighter Than Air (-10%) limitation. This is especially suitable for science-fiction “gasbag” aliens.

*Bird:* Creatures that flap wings to stay airborne – including bats, birds, insects, and many fantastic beasts (dragons, gryphons, etc.) – have the Winged (-25%) limitation. Cannot Hover (-15%), while common, isn't required; many insects and tiny birds can hover.

*Glider:* Hang-glider-like “flight” is Controlled Gliding (-45%) – which is only slightly less versatile than the combination of Cannot Hover and Winged. Movement like that of a flying squirrel or flying snake (*Chrysopelea*) calls for Gliding (-50%).

*Helicopter:* Rotary-wing flyers have Winged (-25%) but *not* Cannot Hover. Whirling blades are noisy and dangerous; add Nuisance Effect (-5%) as well. Enhanced Move is likely.

*Hovercraft:* Give those who *must* fly close to the ground Low Ceiling (-10%, -20%, or -25%). Add Small Wings (-10%) if – like a vehicle – they have skirts, stabilizers, or similar assemblies.

*Levitor:* Most telekinetics, wizards, etc. use unmodified Flight. Those who fly using antigravity have Planetary (-5%). Space Flight (+50%) is common, but incompatible with Planetary. Supers who wish to match aircraft speeds will need Enhanced Move.

*Plane:* Fixed-wing flyers require both Cannot Hover (-15%) and Winged (-25%), and generally have noisy propellers or jets that qualify for Nuisance Effect (-5%). Enhanced Move is common.

*Rocket:* Realistic rockets have Newtonian Space Flight (+25%), while space-opera models have Space Flight (+50%). Add Space Flight Only (-75%) if the rocket can *only* travel through space. Rockets are noisy and dangerous enough to rate Nuisance Effect (-5%). Enhanced Move is essential.

*Vertol:* A vertol flies by directing thrust both straight down to counteract gravity and behind it to move laterally. Its numerous control surfaces qualify as Small Wings (-10%), Most vertols are *extremely* loud – a Nuisance Effect (-5%). Enhanced Move is likely.

## Alternatives

Many traits work like limited Flight: Catfall (p. 43), for heroes who can only glide downward; Super Jump (p. 79), for those who can defy gravity for short hops; and Walk on Air (p. 87), for individuals who can climb or walk skyward. For interstellar “flight,” Warp (p. 88) with the Hyperjump limitation is usually a better model.

## New Special Limitations

*Planetary:* Your Flight works by “pushing off” against a planet's gravitational or magnetic field. It's useless in the absence of a planet. This is incompatible with *all* types of Space Flight. -5%.

*Requires Surface:* You fly by “pushing off” of surfaces. You can stay

airborne for at most five seconds. After that, you must push off again by moving close enough to a rigid surface (wall, bamboo cane, etc.) – or *any* surface, even water, in a cinematic game – to touch it with part of your body. This doesn't require a maneuver. Otherwise, you start to fall! -20%.

## Powering Up

Divine, magical, psionic, and spirit powers generally let the user fly like a levitor, while elemental powers tend to work more like a rocket, vertol, or hovercraft. People with animal-control or shapeshifting powers might sprout wings and fly like a bird or a glider. Talent adds to control rolls, and to rolls against the Aerobatics and Flight skills.

## Growth

see p. B58

Growth nearly always occurs in the context of super-powers or “being a god.” Few other mythic or fictional explanations exist for Growth, and there's *no* realistic rationale for it. Supers and gods can generally enlarge their equipment as they grow, which calls for the Can Carry Objects enhancement (p. 108).

The GM should permit those with Growth to buy Enhanced Move (Ground) to reflect their vast stride. A reasonable limit is levels of Enhanced Move equal to *half* the level of Growth. If this Enhanced Move appears gradually as the character grows, it requires the Size limitation, just like additional ST.

## Alternatives

Growth is for entities that *change* size. Permanently huge beings don't have Growth (Always On) – they just have a large Size Modifier. High SM is a zero-cost feature for aliens, monsters, gods, and anything else the GM feels should have it. The drawbacks of being an easy target and paying extra for giant-sized equipment offset the discount on the price of ST and HP (the Size limitation; see p. B15).

## Powering Up

Growth suits any power that changes the fundamental nature of matter or moves mass between universes. It also fits the cosmic powers of deities – and sometimes the divine

*Flight is exceedingly common in myth and fiction, attributed to gods, robots, supers, wizards, and a wide range of monsters . . .*

powers they grant their servants. Finally, it meshes nicely with the theme of *plant*-related powers. Talent *doesn't* affect die rolls, but those with multiple levels of Growth and Talent may adjust their SM by up to  $\pm(\text{Talent}+1)$  per second instead of just  $\pm 1$ .

## Healing

see p. B59

Use Healing for the gifts of those who can repair injuries and cure diseases instantly, without any special medical knowledge. Holy healers should note that the Faith Healing enhancement is simply a special case of the Xenohealing enhancement: "Those my god deems worthy." Faith Healing *isn't* the same as the Divine modifier on p. 26 – Healing can have either modifier on its own, or both.

### Alternatives

Those who can only heal *themselves* have Regeneration (p. 70) or Regrowth (p. 71). An Affliction (p. 39) with the Advantage enhancement can grant these traits to others, however, and serve the same purpose as Healing.

Cyborgs and robots with built-in medical equipment for the First Aid, Physician, or Surgery skill should simply buy Accessory perks (p. B100). A first-aid kit, physician's tools, and surgical instruments are three separate perks.

### New Special Enhancements

Healing normally involves laying on hands. For a "healing ray," add Ranged (+40%). Two other enhancements are common:

**Affects Self:** You can also heal *yourself*, provided you're conscious. Shock penalties apply to any Healing roll made on the turn after you're wounded. +50%.

**Cure Affliction:** You can neutralize ongoing Afflictions – including the Affliction-like effects of the Side Effect and Symptoms enhancements. This requires an IQ roll at -1 per *full* +50% the target effect is worth as an enhancement to Affliction. FP cost is equal to twice the penalty, minimum 1 FP. For instance, blindness is a +50% Disadvantage enhancement, so to cure blindness caused by Affliction, Side

Effect, or Symptoms would require a roll at -1 and cost 2 FP. +60%.

### New Special Limitations

**Affliction Only:** You can *only* neutralize Afflictions, as described for Cure Affliction; you can't heal injury or cure disease. -40%.



**Capped:** You can spend only a limited number of FP per use. This limits the severity of the diseases you can cure, requires multiple uses to heal serious injuries (taking extra time and incurring the usual -3 per previous successful healing), and may prevent you from repairing crippled limbs. This is worth -25% for a cap of 2 FP, -20% for 4 FP, -15% for 6 FP, -10% for 8 FP, and -5% for 10 FP. More than 10 FP isn't an appreciable limitation.

**Empathic:** When you heal others, you take on the injuries, diseases, and Afflictions you remove *instead* of paying FP. These affect you even if you have specific immunities to them. They get better at the usual "natural" rate unless cured via medicine or a special ability (e.g., you might "transfer" *your* wounds to someone else with Leech). Empathic is incompatible with Capped. -50%.

## Powering Up

Healing is the core ability of the Healing power, which is usually chi- or psi-based, and frequently an ability of "good" divine, moral, and spirit powers. Talent adds to all IQ rolls made to use the advantage.

## Hearing Advantages

Extended auditory capabilities such as Parabolic Hearing (p. B72), Subsonic Hearing (p. B89), and Ultrahearing (p. B94) are appropriate for predators that locate or track prey using sound – or for supers whose abilities emulate those of such creatures. These traits are especially common among fictional heroes with Bad Sight or Blindness.

### Alternatives

Individuals who can "see" using sound should take Sonar (see *Scanning Sense*, p. 72), or Dark Vision (p. 46) with the Hypersensory enhancement. A heightened ability to *feel* vibrations rather than hear them is Sensitive Touch (p. 73) or Vibration Sense (p. 86).

## Powering Up

Hearing-related abilities are a good fit for the elemental Sound/Vibration power, ESP, and even Psychokinesis, if it includes a feedback mechanism that lets the psychokinetic sense vibrations in the air. Talent adds to Hearing rolls when using these special senses.

## Hyperspectral Vision

see p. B60

Hyperspectral imaging is poised to become the dominant passive sensor technology in the late-TL8 world, making this advantage appropriate for quasi-realistic cyborgs, robots, and vehicles. It works equally well as a "scientific" explanation for seemingly paranormal visual abilities, including the sight of keen-eyed fantasy races such as Elves.

### Alternatives

Beings that can *only* see light below or above the visible spectrum have Infravision (p. B60) or Ultravision (p. B94), respectively. Heroes who just want to see in the dark should compare Night Vision (p. B71) and Dark Vision (p. 46).



## New Special Enhancement

*Extended (Special):* You can perceive and see by *non*-electromagnetic radiation. This is mainly useful in science-fiction settings that feature weird radiation . . . or in worlds where magic, psi, and the like emit rays of eldritch power. +30% per added class of radiation.

## Powering Up

Hyperspectral Vision suits Light power and possibly Darkness power (especially if it works by *absorbing* light rather than blocking it). Like any extended sense, it could even be an aspect of ESP. Talent adds to Vision rolls when using this ability.

## Injury Tolerance

see p. B60

Injury Tolerance is meant for those with fundamentally nonhuman physiologies. Three forms are of particular interest when creating superscience constructs and supers:

*Diffuse:* Appropriate for beings made of a loose collection of tiny particles (bees, dust motes, nanites, etc.), liquid, gas, plasma, or energy. Examples include sapient swarms, living flames and tornadoes, liquid-metal robots (“nanomorphs”), and superscience “holograms” that can interact with the material world. In some settings, spirits, magical illusions, and related entities that are *tangible* but not *solid* also have this trait.

*Homogenous:* Use this trait for creatures made out of largely undifferentiated solid matter – living or otherwise. Common examples are dancing swords, golems, unpowered vehicles, walking plants, and anything else made of solid ice, metal, plastic, stone, wood, etc. Very dense supers often have this advantage, despite appearing superficially human.

*Unliving:* Anything that has differentiated “vital” areas but isn’t made of living tissue is Unliving. Powered vehicles and robots, and most other complex machines, qualify – as do vampires, zombies, and similar walking corpses. A total cyborg with few living parts *might* qualify, at the GM’s option.

The GM may invent new forms. Some examples of special importance:

## Independent Body Parts

If you have this form of Injury Tolerance (p. 53), your limbs and extremities are separate entities. When struck there, don’t apply injury to your HP. Instead, apply it to that body part’s HP score: your HP/3 for an extremity or HP/2 for a limb (round up).

Attacks injure body parts normally with one exception: a *cutting* attack that would cripple a limb or extremity costs you the use of that part (see p. B421) but inflicts no injury on you or it. Instead, it severs the body part, which falls to the ground and fights as your ally! An extremity separates from its limb, while a limb separates from your torso.

Body parts have your HT. Size Modifier is your own, adjusted by the part’s hit location modifier. Other abilities are as follows:

*Arms:* An arm has your DX, a Move of your ST/4, and a Dodge of DX/2 + 3. It uses your ST for striking or strangling, ST/2 for grappling or dragging things. If it has a hand, it can punch or grapple (but only the feet or legs of a standing foe), or wield a one-handed weapon at -2 damage. If it lacks a hand, it can club for punching damage.

*Leg:* A leg with a foot has DX equal to your DX-2. Move is your Basic Move-3, while Dodge is your DX/2 + 3. It can leap up and kick foes for full damage. Treat a leg without a foot as an arm without a hand, but at -2 DX.

*Hand:* A severed hand has your DX, Move equal to DX/2, and a Dodge of DX/2 + 3. Its only effective attack is to crawl up someone’s body (treat this as a grapple) and strangle – see p. B370. The hand has your *full* ST for this purpose only.

*Foot:* A foot has DX equal to your DX-2, Move 1, and Dodge 4. Its only useful combat ability is to trip those who try to pass it. A fighter who tries to run past the foot must evade (see p. B368), and *falls down* if the foot wins.

Round all fractions *up*. Where combat skills would matter, apply your relative skill level to the body part’s DX.

A severed body part suffers injury normally from every attack but the one that severed it. At 0 or fewer HP, it’s crippled and can’t act. Make the usual HT roll to learn whether this is permanent (see p. B422).

You may reattach body parts by holding them in place for a minute. You can reattach crippled body parts if the injury is temporary or lasting, but they remain crippled. Permanently crippled body parts are destroyed.

One final perk: should you die, the severed part lives on, and continues to attack your enemies!

## Special Modifiers

*Detachable Head:* Your *head* uses these rules, too. A cutting attack to the neck that inflicts full HP or more decapitates you without injury. Your head has your DX and HT, HP/2, and Move and Dodge 0. It can bite at full ST in close combat. If your head is your seat of consciousness, your body fights as its ally. If it isn’t (for instance, if you have No Brain), it fights as an ally of your body. +15%.

*Instant Reattachment:* You only have to hold body parts in place for a *second* to reattach them. +50%.

*No Reattachment:* Your severed body parts are animated, but you can’t reattach them. You can’t combine this with Instant Reattachment. -60%.

*Reattachment Only:* Your body parts are inert when severed. Severing them causes you no injury, and you can reattach them, but they can’t fight for you. You can’t combine this with No Reattachment. -50%.

**Damage Reduction:** You divide the injury you suffer by 2, 3, or 4 after subtracting DR from damage and applying wounding modifiers. Unmodified, this trait reduces all injury – but except in high-powered supers games, the GM should consider *requiring* the Limited modifier; see *Limited Defenses* (p. B46). It would be fair to restrict heroes to “Common,” “Occasional,” or even “Rare” classes, or to damage types directly related to their powers. *50 points for a divisor of 2, 75 points for 3, 100 points for 4.*

**Independent Body Parts:** See *Independent Body Parts* (p. 52) for this complex form of Injury Tolerance, intended for undead and fantasy monsters. *35 points.*

**Unbreakable Bones:** Your bones are nearly indestructible, or you have alternative structural support that’s difficult to damage (e.g., internal force fields). Damage to limbs and extremities still causes injury, subject to the usual maximums, but the injury needed to cripple these body parts is *twice* normal; that is, the amount usually required to dismember. This represents damage to the covering, not the “skeleton.” Crippling is at worst lasting; you never suffer permanent crippling or dismemberment (see pp. B421-422). The GM may rule that injury that destroys your body (-10×HP) breaks your skeleton, but since you’re dead, this is a special effect. If this protection extends to your vitals and brain, add No Vitals and No Brain: your vitals and brain are in their usual locations, but your indestructible skeleton encloses them and prevents severe injury effects. *10 points.*

## Alternatives

The line between Diffuse and such traits as Insubstantiality (p. 55) and Shadow Form (p. 73) is fine indeed. The deciding factor is whether the character can affect the material world. If he can, take Diffuse.

The essence of Homogenous, Unliving, and Damage Reduction is extreme toughness. Alternatives include Supernatural Durability (p. B89) and Unkillable (p. B95) – or just lots of Damage Resistance (p. 45) or Hit Points. Damage Resistance is superior for those who expect never to face high-damage attacks.

## New Special Enhancements

**Infiltration:** For Diffuse only. Your body is a fluid that can flow through the tiniest of holes. In addition to the usual benefits of Diffuse, you can ooze through porous barriers and narrow cracks. You can’t shapeshift, stretch abnormally, or sprout new body parts – just seep under doors, through screens, etc. *+40%.*

**Swarm:** For Diffuse only. You’re a coordinated swarm of tiny creatures. You can scatter by taking a Concentrate maneuver. Your outer perimeter travels at your best applicable Move; maximum radius is 1/2 mile (buy Area Effect to change this). While scattered, only area-effect, cone, and explosion attacks can injure you, and only in proportion to the area they blanket; e.g., an attack that covers 5% of your area does 5% normal damage. You can focus your senses on any point within your area; changing viewpoints requires a Ready maneuver. Otherwise, treat this state as Insubstantiality (p. 55). To resume

your normal form, you must contract to your usual size (at your Move score) and then take a Concentrate maneuver. Swarm *includes* Infiltration. *+80%* if you can’t affect the material world; *+160%* if you can.

## Powering Up

Elemental powers often grant Damage Reduction (limited to their element), or give access to elemental meta-traits (see p. B262) that include Homogenous or Diffuse. Someone with matter-control or spirit powers that let him become a semi-solid specter could also justify Diffuse.

With the addition of Infiltration, Diffuse suits shapeshifting powers. The GM might allow shapeshifters with particularly outré powers to buy other forms of Injury Tolerance – No Head, No Neck, etc. – with Switchable (p. 109).

Talent rarely affects Injury Tolerance, but the GM *might* permit those with Unliving, Homogenous, or Diffuse to add Talent to HT rolls for structural integrity; e.g., to avoid disintegration or resist Afflictions that cause Insubstantiality. Those with Independent Body Parts or Unbreakable Bones may add Talent to HT rolls for crippling.

## Innate Attack

see p. B61

If an ability causes injury and isn’t a natural melee weapon (like claws), it’s an Innate Attack. Given the variety of attacks possessed by powered heroes in comics, movies, and so on, this covers a *lot* of ground. The first step when designing any Innate Attack is to choose its damage type:

**Burning:** Use this for electricity, flame, heat, and radiation. Examples include fireballs, lasers, lightning bolts, microwaves, and particle beams. Enhance the attack with Explosion (+50%/level) for a fireball, Radiation (+100%) for a particle beam, or Surge (+20%) for lightning. Exotic attacks might require combinations of damage modifiers: Radiation and Surge for *charged* particle beams, Explosion and Surge for *ball* lightning, Surge and No Wounding (-50%) for an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) that only harms electrical systems, etc.



**Corrosion:** Realistic examples are strong acids and bases. Powerful oxidizers also qualify, and tend to be Incendiary (+10%). Magical, super-powered, and superscience disintegration effects fall into this category, too.

**Crushing:** This is most appropriate for attacks that hurl large, blunt chunks of matter, like balls of stone or ice (but *not* bullets – those are piercing). Superscience force beams qualify as well. Explosives are crushing attacks with both Explosion (+50%/level) and Fragmentation (+15%/die); timed explosives, such as grenades, add Delay (variable).

**Cutting:** Cutting attacks nearly always involve blades or shards, which might be made of bone, glass, ice, metal, or any number of other things. *Tiny* shards that damage mainly as a result of their sharpness have No Blunt Trauma (-20%) and No Knockback (-10%). Cutting attacks are often carriers for venomous Follow-Up attacks.

**Fatigue:** Tranquilizers are the obvious real-world example, and have Cyclic, Onset, and Resistible (all highly variable). At higher TLs, sonic and electrical stunners become possibilities. Supernatural options include sleep spells and psionic mind blasts. Fatigue is the only damage type that can have Hazard enhancements (see p. B104). It can't *harm* inanimate objects, but with Hazard, the GM may let it *affect* them – Freezing could cool off a cheeseburger, Suffocation might deprive an engine of air, and so on.

**Impaling:** The notes for cutting damage apply here as well, but No Knockback isn't allowed – impaling attacks don't cause knockback in the first place.

**Piercing:** The most common example is a bullet or bullet-sized projectile. See below for detailed notes on projectiles; see *Guns as Innate Attacks* (box) to simulate firearms.

**Toxic:** Realistic poisons and diseases have Cyclic, Onset, and Resistible (all variable) – but supernatural death touches, evil eyes, etc. also qualify as toxic, and often lack these modifiers. A direct, physical attack that delivers a rad dosage *instead* of injury has Radiation (+25%).

Next, define how the attack delivers its damage:

**Beam:** Supers and energy weapons frequently project damaging rays. Most are burning, and don't absolutely *require* modifiers – but lasers have Armor Divisor (2) (+50%) and blasters have Armor Divisor (5) (+150%). Disintegration beams cause corrosion damage, often with Armor Divisor (10) (+200%) or Cosmic (+300%). Force beams are crushing, typically with Double Knockback (+20%); most other crushing beams have No Knockback (-10%). Stun beams inflict fatigue damage. Only “death rays” (supernatural or superscience) are likely to deliver toxic damage. Roll against Innate Attack (Beam) to hit with any kind of beam.

**Curse or Mental Blast:** Damaging supernatural effects that bypass DR might do *any* kind of damage. Use burning for pyrokinetic attacks; fatigue for nonlethal attacks, with Freezing (+20%) for cryokinesis, Missed Sleep (+50%) for a sleep spell,

and so on; or toxic for a death spell or telekinetic attack. Add Malediction 1 (+100%) for spells or Malediction 2 (+150%) for psionic abilities. See *Affliction* (p. 39) for additional notes. Since there's no physical impact, add No Knockback (-10%) if damage is crushing or cutting. Malediction uses a Will roll, not a standard attack roll.

**Field:** Most constant, injurious effects that surround the user – sheath of flame, radiation zone, aura of withering, etc. – are burning or toxic, with Aura (+80%), Always On (-40%), and Melee Attack (-30%). Those who attack by emitting an expanding ring of fire, ice, poison, etc. from their body have Area Effect (+50%/level) and Emanation (-20%) instead, with damage type depending on the substance or energy involved. Neither requires a roll to hit – but to use an Aura *actively* calls for an unarmed melee attack.

## Guns as Innate Attacks

To simulate a firearm, start with dice of Piercing Attack equal to its damage. Adjust Acc using Accurate (+5%/level) or Inaccurate (-5%/level); Range using Increased Range (+10%/level) or Reduced Range (-10%/level); RoF using Rapid Fire (variable); Shots using Limited Use (variable), usually with Fast Reload; and Rcl using Extra Recoil (-10%/level). If using *Optional Rule: Malfunction* (p. B279), add Unreliable (variable) to give the attack a Malf. Realistic guns almost *never* have the Variable enhancement. For worked examples, see *Built-In Firearms* (p. 136).

### Ammunition

Innate Attack can also simulate different ammunition: add Armor Divisor (2) (+50%) and make the attack *small* piercing for armor-piercing ammo; add Armor Divisor (0.5) (-30%) and change the attack to *large* piercing for hollow-point; add Armor Divisor (0.5) and Incendiary (+10%) for tracer. Specialized ammunition might be non-piercing; e.g., flechettes are impaling.

### Other Details

Considerations such as caliber and cartridge length are “special effects” (see *Special Effects*, p. 113). They can matter in play – e.g., when forced to reload from captured ammunition – but don't alter *point cost*. The same is true of Shots too generous to qualify for Limited Use: the designer should still give a number. He might not run out in 10-second firefight . . . but he could run out on a four-day mission. The GM may require a Shots statistic close to that for a comparable weapon in the game world. This isn't a limitation; it's no different from the GM ruling that someone who tosses fireballs all day gets tired (see *Abilities and Exertion*, p. 159).





**Gas:** Lethal gases inflict toxic damage; nonlethal ones, fatigue damage. Fictional breath weapons have Cone (variable), but supers and wizards who can create gas *clouds* should take Area Effect (+50%/level) instead. Add *one* of Respiratory Agent (+50%), Blood Agent (+100%), or Contact Agent (+150%) to any gas attack. Drifting (+20%) and Persistent (+40%) are useful for lingering gases – and the GM might even allow these with Cone. Use Innate Attack (Breath) to hit with a Cone. Area Effects that depend on a beam, gaze, or projectile use the appropriate Innate Attack specialty to hit.

**Liquid:** Liquids have Cone (variable) or Jet (+0%); fantasy breath weapons with Cone should have Reduced Range,  $\times 1/5$  (-20%), too. Acids inflict corrosion damage, while flaming liquids cause burning damage; either might be Cyclic (variable), if it sticks to the target. Water jets are crushing – often with Double Knockback (+20%) and No Wounding (-50%). Poisons inflict either fatigue or toxic damage, and have *one* of Blood Agent (-40% for Jet, +100% for Cone), Contact Agent (-30% for Jet, +150% for Cone), or Respiratory Agent

(+50%). Roll against Innate Attack (Beam) or (Breath) to hit with liquids that issue from the hand or mouth, respectively.

**Projectile:** Projectiles don't *require* modifiers, but are among the few attacks that are routinely Guided (+50%), Homing (variable), or lobbed Overhead (+30%). They can deliver almost any kind of damage: burning for fireballs, crushing for stones, impaling for ice spears, and so on. *Storms* of fire, stones, ice, etc. are common magical and super attacks, and have Area Effect (+50%/level) – with Persistent (+40%) and possibly Wall (+30% or +60%) if they stay in place for some time, and often Bombardment (variable). To emulate firearms, see *Guns as Innate Attacks* (p. 54). Use Innate Attack (Projectile) to hit.

**Touch:** Most natural body weaponry is just Claws, Strikers, or Teeth – but a melee attack that operates independently of the user's ST is an Innate Attack with the Melee Attack limitation (variable). Use this option for an angel who can summon a sword of flame (burning), a robot with a built-in force sword (cutting), or a kung fu

master who attacks with a deadly touch (toxic). Add Contact Agent (-30%) to attacks that must strike bare skin, Cosmic (+300%) to supernatural attacks that *completely* circumvent DR, like the Deathtouch spell (p. B245). Make an unarmed melee attack to hit.

**Venom:** Poison on Claws, Teeth, etc. should cause fatigue or toxic damage unless it's *very* unusual. Such attacks always have Follow-Up (+0%). Make a melee attack to hit with the carrier attack.

Finally, if the attack has a *chance* of causing a baneful effect in addition to injury if it penetrates DR, add Side Effect (variable). This is common for beams that emulate ultra-tech stunners, paralysis guns, and so on. If the attack *automatically* causes weakness or incapacity after inflicting enough injury, enhance it with Symptoms (variable) instead. Fatigue or toxic attacks that represent venom or poison gas generally have Symptoms.

## Alternatives

Affliction (p. 39) is a far better starting point for a *completely* nonlethal attack . . . and the Coma and Heart Attack enhancements make Affliction a superior “all-or-nothing” lethal attack, too. To punch, kick, or strangle opponents at a distance, buy Telekinesis (p. 82).

## Powering Up

Any power that isn't completely nonviolent might have an Innate Attack. Match both damage type and means of delivery to the power's focus and source; see above for *many* examples. In all cases, Talent gives a bonus to hit.

## Insubstantiality

see p. B62

Beings largely unaffected by the physical world appear in myth and fiction at least as often as those that can fly. Paradoxically, most such entities can “anchor” themselves to material objects as needed, allowing them to stand on floors, ride in vehicles, and so on. This is a standard feature of Insubstantiality. What the insubstantial form looks like, and the things that can impede it, vary with the origin of the trait:

*Dimensional:* The traveler transports himself into a dimension parallel to the physical world. He looks slightly transparent, as if he weren't all there. Any place in the ordinary world that lacks an equivalent location in the other plane is *completely* off limits. Individuals with dimension-traveling foes often build strongholds in such locales!

*Divine:* This represents the ability to assume a "god form" that can roam the mortal world at will. The cleric looks normal except for the addition of something symbolic of his patron; e.g., a wreath of flame, for the Fire God. He can't infiltrate places of no or low sanctity, however; see *Special Rules for Divine Powers* (p. 175).

*Elemental:* The user turns into electricity or light, or vibrates at a weird frequency. He becomes a man-shaped glow, visible shimmering, etc., as befits his element. He can't penetrate barriers that are proof against his element; e.g., a grounded metal cage would exclude an electrical "ghost." Superscience force fields often block such Insubstantiality.

*Magical, Psionic, or Spirit:* The user enters the ethereal, astral, or spirit realm (these might be the same or quite distinct, depending on the setting). His appearance is misty and ghostly, and possibly luminous or shadowy. Shamans with spirit powers often look like beasts. Spells, psi abilities, and sorcerous rituals that obstruct spirits also block this ability.

### Alternatives

Both Clairsentience (Projection, +140%) and Insubstantiality (Affect Substantial, +100%; Projection, -50%) cost 120 points. They're comparable, but there are important differences. Notably, Clairsentience gives an *invisible* form with a 10-yard range limit from the body, while Insubstantiality gives a visible form with *no* range limit.

To represent partial solidity, use Injury Tolerance (Diffuse) (p. 52) or Shadow Form (p. 73). To be able to pass through just one substance, take Permeation (p. 66).

Insubstantiality *doesn't* include invisibility. For that, take Invisibility (below), too – possibly with Substantial Only. Insubstantiality *does* include total silence, though, save

## *Jumper (Time) and (World) mainly suit powers concerned with time- or world-travel, such as Teleportation and (with Projection) Astral Projection.*

when you choose to speak. You're undetectable to hearing, and need only make Stealth rolls if there's a chance you'll be seen.

### New Special Limitations

*No Vertical Move:* You can't disregard gravity. You must move across a horizontal surface, or along a slope that wouldn't require Climbing rolls. You still weigh nothing, so you don't leave footprints and can walk on surfaces that wouldn't support a solid body, such as the surface of a body of water. -10%.

*Noisy:* You *aren't* silent. You make noises equivalent to footfalls when moving and breathing at all times, and are no harder to hear than an ordinary human. -5%.

*Projection:* Your body doesn't become insubstantial. Instead, it falls unconscious and you step out of it in insubstantial form. Like someone using unmodified Insubstantiality, you're *visible* and *present*, making you subject to anything that affects insubstantial entities . . . while your body remains in the physical world, vulnerable to material threats; see *Projection* (p. 44). You can't use spells, psi abilities, etc. in this form unless you also take Affect Substantial. -50%.

### Powering Up

This ability suits almost any kind of supernatural or elemental power, as noted above. With the Projection limitation, it's especially suitable for Astral Projection. Talent adds to any roll required to "push through" a resistible barrier or use Insubstantiality for a Power Dodge (see p. 167).

### Intuition

see p. B63

As the ability to compare the current situation to past experiences and make an informed guess, Intuition is ideal for Digital Minds and

super-geniuses. Supernatural guidance (e.g., ESP or divine wisdom) is an equally valid interpretation.

At the GM's option, if a skill would normally give useful information in the situation at hand – e.g., Navigation when deciding which way to steer, or Tactics in a military standoff – the user can substitute his level with that skill for IQ when rolling for this ability.

### Alternatives

Those who can discover facts *without* guesswork should take Blessed (p. 43) or Oracle (p. 65) instead.

### New Special Enhancement

*Inspired:* Your gift is so finely honed that any success while using it reveals the *best* choice out of those confronting you. The worst possible result on a failure, even a critical failure, is that you don't know; the GM will never suggest a *bad* choice. +100%.

### Powering Up

Intuition is a traditional ability of shamans, and might stem from spirit powers. It's also appropriate for ESP or any similar information-gathering power, and for divine and moral powers – especially with Inspired. Finally, it could represent the ability to draw upon the collective wisdom of others, making it part of Telepathy. Talent adds to all IQ or skill rolls to use this ability.

### Invisibility

see p. B63

Tales of invisible men – but ironically not *The Invisible Man*, which inspired many of them – usually assume that Invisibility has Switchable (+10%) and Can Carry Objects (at least +10%). Remember to choose the kind of vision affected. If the GM wishes to allow "total"



invisibility, he may rule that +100% worth of Extended interferes with *any* sense that Invisibility could reasonably affect. Common variants include:

**Deception:** A ninja or telepath who mentally compels others to believe they can't see him has Invisibility to electromagnetic vision with Can Carry Objects, Switchable, and Glamour (p. 111). Deceivers aware of unusual senses might interfere with those, too; add Extended (+20%/type).

**Ghost:** Ghosts that are invisible to mortals have Invisibility to electromagnetic vision with Usually On (+5%) and Substantial Only (-10%). Traditionally, ghosts can be seen in mirrors and photographs; they have Visible Reflection (-10%), and *can't* take Affects Machines.

**Stealth Technology:** A vehicle or robot that's invisible to infrared and radar – but not the naked eye – has Invisibility to electromagnetic vision with Machines Only (-50%). The best optical camouflage has Affects Machines (+50%) *instead* of Machines Only, but still suffers from Fringe (-10%). Stealthy submarines have unmodified Invisibility to sonar; the best add Extended, Magnetic Detection (+20%). Switchable is uncommon, as stealth tends to be a permanent structural feature.

**Superscience Cloaking:** Space-opera “cloaking devices” give Invisibility to electromagnetic vision with Affects Machines (+50%), Extended, Scanners (+20%), and Switchable (+10%).

### Alternatives

Represent partial invisibility using Chameleon (p. 43). Those who create darkness or smoke in order to hide from sight should take Obscure (p. 64).

### New Special Limitation

**Fringe:** Your ability leaves a faint outline or shimmering. It works normally when you're standing still, but if you move, others can spot you with a Vision-6 roll and target you in combat at only -6 to hit. -10%.

### Powering Up

Invisibility is a key ability for Light and Darkness powers. Electrokinetics could allow a psi to jam signals and become invisible to machines – he

might even bend light and become *truly* invisible (a trick called “photokinesis”). The addition of Glamour makes Invisibility suitable for chi powers and Telepathy, too. Talent adds a further bonus to Stealth skill rolls to avoid being seen.

## Jumper

see p. B64

Use Jumper (Time) for supers and superscience vehicles that move through time by traveling faster than light, weird-science “time machines,” and so on. Jumper (World) is *interdimensional* travel for the purpose of visiting alternate timelines. The GM may add other Jumper advantages. For instance:



**Jumper (Spirit):** You can enter and leave the “spirit worlds” *in body*. In these realms, you're a spirit. You can interact normally with the spirits there and use any ability that's “standard” for spirits in that world.

Likewise, anything that affects spirits affects you. To make the transition, use the standard rules for Jumper. Each attempt costs 1 FP. Success on the IQ roll means you shift between realms. Failure means you stay in your current world; you're at -5 to use this ability again in the next 10 minutes. Critical failure results are up to the GM . . . you might attract evil spirits, end up adrift between worlds, or go to the *wrong* world (e.g., Hell). The special modifiers for Jumper (World) are available to you, although not all of them are meaningful in every setting. *100 points.*

### Alternatives

Travelers who “jump” through *space* need Warp (p. 88). Seers who receive glimpses of the past, future, or spirit world have Psychometry (p. 69), Precognition (p. 68), or Medium (p. 59), respectively. Neither requires Jumper.

Those who assume or send forth a “spirit form” often have Clairvoyance (p. 44) or Insubstantiality (p. 55). Only use Jumper (Spirit), or Jumper (Time) or (World) with the Projection modifier, for those who truly visit another realm or time.

### New Special Enhancements

**Interplanar:** For Jumper (World) or (Spirit). You can enter higher planes of existence – perhaps even the realms of the gods. +100% if you can reach these worlds as well as parallel worlds (world-jumpers) or spirit worlds (spirit-jumpers); +0% if you can *only* reach higher planes.

**Reliable:** Your ability is unusually stable. Each level of this enhancement adds +1 to both the IQ roll to use Jumper and the automatic failure threshold (e.g., Reliable 2 gives +2 to IQ and mean a roll of 16 or more always fails). +5% per +1, to a maximum of +10.

### New Special Limitations

**Limited Access:** For Jumper (World) or (Spirit). You can only jump between two *particular* worlds – your home world and one specific parallel, the material world and Hell, etc. The size of this limitation depends on how many worlds exist in the setting. If there's only one, it's meaningless: -0%. If there are many, it might be worth -20% or more, at the GM's discretion.



*Projection:* For Jumper (Time) or (World). You travel in mind, not in body. Your body remains at your departure point, unconscious and vulnerable, while your consciousness appears at your destination as a visible but intangible projection. This form is subject to anything that affects insubstantial beings. See *Projection* (p. 44) for other rules. If you have Insubstantiality, you can “reverse” it in order to become solid; if you have Possession (Spiritual, -20%), you can possess a resident of the target world. -50% if you can’t affect your destination at all *without* Insubstantiality or Possession; -0% if you can use spells, mental abilities, and Maledictions to affect your destination while projecting. Sending a *physical* body to your destination as usual, but also leaving behind an unconscious body as described here, is worth -25%.

*Special Movement:* You need to move to use your ability. Limitation value depends on how stringent the requirements are. If you merely have to walk a few steps and be free of anything that restricts movement (like manacles), that’s -10%. If you need to enter orbit and accelerate past the speed of light with expensive advantages like Flight (Space Flight, +50%) with Enhanced Move 27 (Space), that’s -40%.

*Special Portal:* You need a particular sort of “gateway” to use your advantage; e.g., a natural cave opening, or a sacred stone circle on a moonlit night. Limitation value depends on the rarity of the required portal. “Any reflective surface” is -20%, as is a relatively common geographic feature. If a summoning ritual that specifically names you creates a “channel” that lets you jump into the presence of your summoner – but nowhere else – that’s -60%. One specific spot at a certain time of the year is -80%.

### Powering Up

Jumper (Time) and (World) mainly suit powers concerned with time- or world-travel, such as Teleportation and (with Projection) Astral Projection. Just about *any* power that grants faster-than-light levels of Enhanced Move (Space) could justify Jumper (Time) with the Special Movement limitation, though.

## Heavy Lifting

Mecha and supers often lift extreme weights. Vehicles are especially popular! The following table gives the total ST – basic ST plus Lifting ST – needed to lift a few items of interest. If using Super-Effort, remember to add the *enhanced* ST bonus to basic ST.

Weight (tons)	Total ST	Example
1	36	Small car
2	50	Large car
5	79	Ship’s anchor
10	112	Private jet
25	177	Fighter jet (loaded)
50	250	Main battle tank (loaded)
100	354	Space shuttle
500	791	Heavy passenger jet
1,000	1,118	Small freighter
5,000	2,500	Frigate
10,000	3,536	Light cruiser
50,000	7,906	Battleship

These weights assume a two-handed, overhead lift. For other items, total ST required equals the square root of (1,250 × weight in tons).

Jumper (Spirit) is appropriate for spirit powers – as are other forms of Jumper, with Projection. With the Interplanar enhancement, it also suits divine powers.

Talent adds to the IQ roll required to activate any Jumper advantage.

### Lifting ST

see p. B65

Lifting ST is realistic for beasts of burden (e.g., horses and mules) and slow-but-powerful machinery – cargo-handling exoskeletons, tugboats, etc. Comic-book supers are often capable of *extreme* lifts; see the Super-Effort enhancement (below) for a way to handle this.

### Alternatives

Lifting ST only augments basic ST for lifting, pushing, etc. – and for grappling and choking in combat. To increase damage with melee weapons, take Striking ST (p. 78). Those who want all of these benefits *and* more HP should just improve their ST.

### New Special Enhancement

This *optional* enhancement is intended for demigods and supers. With it, Lifting ST becomes more efficient than usual after eight levels . . .

and gets better from there. Thus, it’s only of value to heroes with a significant investment in Lifting ST. If the GM sets a limit when using this modifier, it should be at Lifting ST +8 or higher.

*Super-Effort:* You can make truly heroic lifts! Your Lifting ST works as usual except when you use extra effort. Then ignore the ordinary extra effort rules. Instead, find your Lifting ST level in the *Size* column of the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550), read across to the *Linear Measurement* column, and use that number as your ST bonus for the lift. For instance, Lifting ST +20 gives +5,000 ST. This costs 1 FP per lift. Once you’ve made the lift, use *Abilities and Exertion* (p. 159) for ongoing FP costs. Walking around with or pulling the weight counts as “intensive use” (1 FP/minute); just holding it up is “long-term use” (1 FP/hour). You can’t take Reduced Fatigue Cost to eliminate these costs unless you also add Cosmic (+50%). Super-Effort never benefits chokes or grapples. +400%.

### Powering Up

Lifting ST could belong to a biological body-control power or a matter-control power that affects mass or

density. Divine and chi powers might use Lifting ST – perhaps with Costs Fatigue or Super-Effort – for the ability to perform “heroic feats.”

Talent modifies Will and HT rolls for extra effort and to avoid self-inflicted injury while lifting.

## Luck

see p. B66

For the fictional protagonist, Luck is usually a “meta-advantage” – a deliberate effort by the storyteller to give him the benefit of the doubt at every turn of the plot. It’s rarely an *active* ability known to him and acknowledged by his companions. Still, heroes who are conscious of their luck do exist in fiction, especially in the comics.

## Alternatives

Use Daredevil (p. B47) for those whose “luck” depends on risk-taking, Serendipity (p. 73) for heroes whose luck takes the form of coincidence rather than good odds, and Super Luck (p. 80) for masters of probability manipulation.

## New Special Enhancement

*Wishing:* You can consciously manipulate probability. You may

request two rerolls for *any* die roll made in your presence – not just your rolls – and choose the one you prefer. It isn’t enough for you, the *player* to see the dice roll; your *character* must witness the action you wish to influence. Normal usage limits still apply. The Active limitation is common but not required. +100%.

## Powering Up

Luck is a traditional gift from otherworldly guardians, making it suitable for divine and spirit powers. With Active or Wishing, it might instead be part of a probability-control power; this could have almost any source, but is commonly associated with psi in fiction. Talent gives a bonus to any die roll influence by Luck – but only if that use of Luck is declared in advance.

## Mana Damper and Mana Enhancer

see pp. B67-68

Neither “mana level” nor the ability to alter it is a traditional concept – but in game-mechanical terms, a high level of Mana Damper is superior to Magic Resistance for magic-resistant fantasy denizens, while Mana Enhancer can explain lone wizards and dragons in prevalently

nonmagical settings. Of course, Mana Damper is only *worthwhile* if magic exists, and Mana Enhancer is chiefly of use to those who cast spells.

Those with potent magical gifts might be able to adjust the mana level either way. The GM should require those who want Mana Damper *and* Mana Enhancer to take the Switchable special enhancement (+100%) on both traits – and Variable (+5%), if either trait can alter the ambient mana by more than one level. This is expensive because it’s powerful: if the user has Magery, he can elevate the mana level when casting spells . . . and then lower it to neutralize enemy magic.

## Alternatives

Compare Mana Damper to Neutralize (p. 97) and Static (p. 98) against magical powers. A high level of Magic Resistance (p. B67) is cheaper than either, but also less capable.

## New Special Enhancement

*Discriminatory:* You and any allies in your area of effect enjoy the *best* mana level your ability can provide – highest if casting spells, lowest if resisting them – while enemies in the area suffer the *worst* level you can generate. This modifier *includes* Switchable, and replaces the Selective Area enhancement for Mana Damper and Mana Enhancer. +150%.

## Powering Up

These advantages rarely suit powers other than magical ones. Exceptions might be the divine power granted by a god of magic, or a specialized psionic power that manipulates mana fields. Talent applies mainly to Power Block attempts (see p. 168).

## Medium

see p. B68

Medium is the ability to sense the presence of and speak with nearby unbound spirits (ghosts, “wild” elementals, etc.) – *not* spirits of the living or spirits bound to objects. It also works on “spirits of place,” but only within the spirit-inhabited area. At the GM’s option, variant forms might instead let the user speak with residents of the dream world, parallel universes, or cyberspace. Each form is a separate Medium advantage.



## Alternatives

To grasp the motivations of spirits and improve your odds of persuading them, take Spirit Empathy (p. B88). Use Detect (Spirits) [10] to sense the presence of spirits that are bound, possessing someone, or too distant to speak with. To *see* spirits more than a yard away – even those with whom you aren't communicating – buy a suitable form of See Invisible (p. 72). None of these traits lets you *speak* with spirits.

If you can *force* spirits to become visible or solid against their will, buy an Affliction (p. 39) that cancels Invisibility or Insubstantiality via Negated Advantage. If this only affects spirits, or certain kinds of spirits, add an Accessibility limitation.

If spirits simply possess you in order to speak with *others*, that's Channeling (p. 43).

## New Special Enhancements

*Manifestation:* Your presence makes it easier for spirits to become visible, if they wish. As long as they're within a yard of you, those with the Spirit meta-trait (p. B263) needn't pay the 1 FP per second demanded by the Usually On limitation on their Invisibility. +100%.

*Universal:* You can communicate with *any* spirit you can sense with Medium, even those with whom you don't share a language. +50%.

*Visual:* You can *see* spirits while communicating with them, even if they would normally be invisible. +50%.

## New Special Limitations

In many settings, Medium requires a ritual or séance to use. If so, add Preparation Required (p. B114). Another common limitation:

*Specialized:* Your ability only works with one specific class of spirits. Possibilities include angels, demons, elementals, faerie creatures, and ghosts. -50%.

## Powering Up

Medium is appropriate for any supernatural power, but especially spirit powers and ESP. Talent adds to all IQ or skill rolls made to perceive or understand spirits.

## Metabolism Control

see p. B68

The ability to control involuntary bodily functions is a classic shtick of kung fu masters and yogi, not to mention supers and aliens modeled after them. It needn't have mystical overtones, though – genetic engineering or implants might give this advantage to a modified human or cyborg.

At the GM's option, Metabolism Control lets the user feign afflictions: disease, drug reactions, heart attack, etc. To discover the ruse, witnesses must win a Quick Contest of Diagnosis vs. the user's HT + Metabolism Control.

## Alternatives

Consider Injury Tolerance (No Blood) (p. B61), Doesn't Breathe (p. B49), or Doesn't Eat or Drink

(p. B50) for those who don't bleed, breathe, or eat *at all*. If all that matters is a HT bonus, Resistant (p. 71) is a better deal.

## New Special Enhancement

*Mastery:* You can make precise adjustments to your metabolism and body chemistry instantly, helping you cope with even extreme or unexpected stresses. As long as you're conscious, add your level of Metabolism Control to *any* HT roll. +40%.

## Powering Up

This ability best suits biological, chi, and psi powers – especially Body Control and Healing. Talent adds to HT in the Quick Contest to feign death and for any similar feat the GM allows.

## Microscopic Vision

see p. B68

Microscopic Vision is most common among robots and crimefighting supers. It lets those who have it do fine work or gather microscopic evidence without any equipment penalty for being without a magnifying lens.

Supers sometimes add Ranged (+40%), which makes it possible to distinguish minute detail on distant objects. This ability works at full magnification out to 1/2D range (10 yards) and at 1/3 that out to Max range (100 yards). Make *two* Vision rolls: one to spot the object, one to see minute details.

Use a combination of Blindness (p. B124) and Microscopic Vision for someone who can see tiny details at point-blank range, but *not* distant objects or the normal-sized world.

## Powering Up

Like any vision advantage, Microscopic Vision suits Light power and possibly ESP. Supers with size-control powers might have this ability alongside Shrinking. Talent adds to all Vision rolls for this ability.

## Mimicry

see p. B68

This trait is typical of parrots, dopelgangers, robot assassins, and other beings that are physiologically or technologically adapted to emulate sounds and voices. It's up to the GM whether

*I see dead people . . . walking around like regular people. They don't see each other. They only see what they want to see. They don't know they're dead.*

– Cole Sear,  
*The Sixth Sense*



it can emulate the “voiceprints” that high-tech security systems use to verify identity.

### Alternatives

Mimicry can *imitate* but not *communicate* with animals – use Speak With Animals (p. 77) for that. Mimicry can't produce inaudibly low- or high-frequency sounds unless the user also has Subsonic Speech (p. B89) or Ultrasonic Speech (p. B94).

Ordinary human mimics have Mimicry *skill* (p. B210). The GM may permit those who have that skill to use the higher of it or IQ when rolling to use this advantage.

### New Special Enhancement

*Voice Library:* You never forget any sound or voice you've successfully mimicked. It's the *player's* job to maintain this list. To recall a sample, take a Concentrate maneuver and make an IQ roll. +50%.

### Powering Up

Mimicry fits elemental Sound/Vibration power and most body-alteration powers. It's also a likely ability for powers pertaining to animals or illusions. Talent adds to IQ rolls to duplicate sounds or imitate voices.

## Mind Control

see p. B68

Folklore attributes the ability to control minds to a great many supernatural entities, including demons, nymphs, vampires, and deities. This is likely a diplomatic scrim over the realities of insanity or criminality . . . but the tales could be true in a fantasy or horror setting. Most innate gifts use unmodified Mind Control. Add Telepathic (-10%) if the influence is psionic. A few alternatives:

*Cinematic Hypnotism:* The controller must lock eyes with his victim and hypnotize him in order to give commands. This calls for Vision-Based (-20%). Suggestion (-40%) is common.

*Drugs:* The attacker uses a drug to make his victim suggestible. This requires a bite, kiss, or more intimate contact. Some time after exposure, the subject gets a HT-based resistance roll. Add Based on HT (+20%), Blood

*I can kill you with my brain.*

– River Tam, *Firefly*

Agent (-40%), Independent (+70%), and Onset (1 minute or 1 hour) (-10% or -20%). If *anyone* can command the subject, add the Puppet limitation (-40%).

*Pheromones:* The user exudes an invisible chemical cloud that inspires attraction in those exposed to it. Victims must be within two yards and breathe the gas – this ability doesn't work by touch or sight. The controller can only *command* one subject per second, at the usual -1 per subject after the first. Add Area Effect 1 (+50%), Emanation (-20%), and Scent-Based (-20%). Accessibility (Only on opposite sex) (-20%) and Emotion Control (-50%) are likely but not required.

*Vibrations:* The controller emits vibrations that influence emotions. Add Emotion Control (-50%), with Based on HT (+20%) for inaudible vibrations or Hearing-Based (-20%) for audible sounds (common for fantasy bards and mythic sirens).

### Alternatives

Extreme levels of Charisma (p. B41) can often achieve similar effects. The ability to turn others into Allies over the long term is Dominance (p. B50), while that of entering the subject's mind and operating his body directly is Possession (p. 67).

### New Special Enhancement

*Independent:* Your Mind Control doesn't require ongoing attention. If it works, you're free to do other things. You must still concentrate to initiate control, but you can't claim the +2 or +4 for lengthy concentration. If the victim fails to resist, control persists for one minute per point by which he lost the Quick Contest; you can't maintain it indefinitely by concentrating. These drawbacks are minor next to the benefits. First, only an attempt to force the subject to act against his principles can break control; you're “out of the loop” already,

so incapacitating you changes *nothing*. Second, since your attention isn't divided, each contact is separate from all others; there's no -1 per slave, and critical failure with one victim doesn't free the rest. +70%.

### New Special Limitations

*Emotion Control:* You can't control the subject's *actions*, just his feelings. For some guidelines on what's possible, see the Sway Emotions skill (p. B192). Emotion Control is mutually exclusive with Conditioning Only and Suggestion. -50%.

*Suggestion:* You can't command the subject to take specific actions – you can only suggest a *general* course of action. Effects are as for Suggest skill (p. B191). Suggestion is mutually exclusive with Conditioning Only and Emotion Control. -40%.

### Powering Up

Mind Control is appropriate for *many* supernatural powers, especially Telepathy. In addition, hypnotism is common for chi powers, pheromones fit biological and chemical powers, and vibrations suit Sound/Vibration power. With Cybernetic Only (p. B70), Mind Control even allows control over computers (“cyberpsi”) – the definitive Machine Telepathy ability. Talent adds to IQ rolls to use the ability in all cases.

## Mind Probe and Mind Reading

see p. B69

These closely related advantages feature prominently in fantasy, horror, and science fiction – typically as psionic or magical gifts. Mind Reading is the basic “receive” ability common to telepaths, regardless of origin. Mind Probe is a deep scan or mind-meld; in many ways, it's a higher level of Mind Reading, and the GM might elect to make Mind Reading a prerequisite.

Both traits are open to interpretation as interrogation under truth drugs; see the notes under *Mind Control* (above) for modifiers and details. If the subject must vocalize his reply, add Accessibility, Must hear subject, -20%.

### Alternatives

Use Empathy (see *Empathy Advantages*, p. 48) to “read” emotions instead of thoughts. To send thoughts, take Telesend (see *Telecommunication*, p. 81).

Mind Control can also reveal a subject’s thoughts: just command him to tell you everything he knows. Of course, this is significantly less *subtle*.

### New Special Enhancements

*Invasive:* Mind Probe only. Your probe works like a mental invasion, not an interrogation. If you win the Quick Contest, you’re inside your subject’s mental defenses and free to pilage his memories. You’re still limited to one question per second, but each answer requires an *uncontested* roll against IQ, Interrogation, Psychology – or Dreaming, if the subject is sleeping. +75%.

*Memory Bank:* Mind Probe only. You can store a detailed “snapshot” of the subject’s mind. This requires the usual Quick Contest, but takes an *hour*. A later IQ roll lets you recall information the subject knew when last probed (just as if you were probing him) or his personality (eliminating penalties to impersonate him with Acting). You can delete a snapshot at any time. +100% if you can store a number of snapshots equal to IQ; +150% for unlimited capacity.

*Multiple Contacts:* Mind Reading only. You can maintain channels to several minds at once. Roll at a cumulative -1 per contact after the first. You can switch between established contacts without rolling, but you must focus on one contact at a time to read minds. In combat, choose whose mind you’re reading each turn. +50%.

### Powering Up

Mind Probe and Mind Reading are classic psionic abilities associated with Telepathy (or Machine Telepathy, with the Cybernetic Only limitation), but *any* supernatural power might offer them. Talent adds to IQ and skill rolls made to use either.

## Mind Shield

see p. B70

Mental shields are “in genre” for psis, shamans, wizards, martial artists, and others with training at gathering inner strength to ward off psychic incursions. In worlds where mental powers are commonplace, *anyone* might be able to build up a Mind Shield (GM’s decision).

In settings with many different supernatural powers and abilities, the GM should let Mind Shield add to IQ, Will, and Perception for the purpose of resisting *any* paranormal influence – including advantages with the Glamour limitation (p. 11). For less sweeping protection, add Limited (below).

With the Cybernetic limitation (-50%), Mind Shield represents “hardened” computer security for Digital Minds. Cybernetic is a specific example of Limited; don’t take both.

### Alternatives

Magic Resistance (p. B67) and certain varieties of Resistant (p. 71) protect against many of the same things that Mind Shield does. Static (p. 98) is a superior defense, but prevents the user from having other psychic abilities.

People who have studied “mental self-defense” might have the skills Mental Strength (p. B209) and Mind Block (p. B210) instead of Mind Shield.

### New Special Limitation

*Limited:* Your Mind Shield only works against certain mental attacks. An entire power source (e.g., divine, magical, psionic, or spirit) is -50%; a specific focus, power, or college of

magic (e.g., Telepathy or Mind Control spells) is -75%.

### Powering Up

Mind Shield is a traditional part of Telepathy, extremely appropriate for chi and spirit powers, and often available for divine, magical, and moral powers, too. *Active* use of a mental shield to block a mental attack shows up frequently in fiction. The GM should consider allowing Power Block (see p. 168) for Mind Shield even if he doesn’t permit it for other abilities. Talent adds to all such attempts.

## Modular Abilities

see p. B71

Many fictional characters can do almost anything . . . but not everything at once. This is what Modular Abilities exist to simulate. Each type suits a particular class of hero:

*Chip Slots:* Use this for cyborgs with removable hardware. This usually means “skill chips,” but with the Physical enhancement, sockets for standardized equipment modules – “Gadget Slots” – are an option. Add Limited if these sockets can only accept a specific type of equipment.

*Computer Brain:* This is for AIs and cyborgs with implanted computers, who download programs instead of plugging them in. The Physical enhancement rarely makes sense, but the Virtual limitation is common and *definitely* allowed for those who can only use their abilities online or in “cyberspace.”

*Cosmic Power:* Ideal for gods and supers! The Physical enhancement is common. Use Limited to confine gods to a “sphere of influence” or restrict

### Modular Abilities in Play

Reconfiguring Modular Abilities can slow down the game. To prevent this, the GM should encourage players to work out and list favorite abilities *before* play begins. To speed things up further, the GM may rule that some tasks require a minimum number of points in Modular Abilities, stipulate that the user be able to add mental, physical, or social abilities, but stop short of naming specific traits; e.g., “This task requires 40 points in physical abilities.” Anyone whose Modular Abilities are up to the challenge can perform such a task – although this might still require a success roll.



supers to an element. If they shape *existing* matter or energy, and are powerless without it, add Environmental (p. 110) instead.

**Super-Memorization:** This suits wizards and cinematic geniuses. Physical is rarely appropriate, as few physical advantages are “memorized.” Limited frequently restricts use to spells, languages, or specific classes of skills.

The GM may invent other forms. Set the per-slot cost to reflect the scope of available traits: 4 points for a short list, 5 points for a lengthy catalog, 6 points for *nearly* anything, and 7 points for anything. Cost per point in a slot should be 2 points if rearranging points is costly, slow, *and* subject to external interference; 3 points if just two of those; 4 points if only one of those; and 5 points if none of those. For example:

**Divine Inspiration:** Your abilities are minor wishes granted by a Higher Power. You can request nearly any ability at any time (add Physical or Social to have more options). However, your deity – as played by the GM – occasionally overrules you.

Reallocating points requires at least a second of prayer per character point. *Cost per slot: 6 points base + 4 points per point of abilities.*

### Alternatives

Heroes who can manipulate a particular element precisely enough to generate a wide variety of effects that *don't* emulate other advantages have Control (p. 90) and/or Create (p. 92). Those who can *become* anything have Morph (p. 74). And those who simply *do* things without acquiring abilities have Wild Talent (p. 89).

Modular Abilities are expensive – even with limitations – because they're so flexible. Those with a small number of related, mutually exclusive abilities should see *Alternative Abilities* (p. 11) for a more affordable option.

### New Special Enhancement

**Social:** You can add social advantages. Work out *how* you do this with the GM. If you somehow alter records, the GM may limit available traits to Alternate Identity, Clerical Investment, Independent Income, Legal Enforcement Powers, Legal Immunity, Rank, Security Clearance, Tenure, and Zeroed. +0% for social

advantages only; +50% for any mental or social ability. To add *any* ability, combine Social, +50% with Physical, +100%; other combinations are forbidden.

### New Special Limitations

Many fictional users of Modular Abilities require supreme concentration and effort to rearrange their abilities. Represent this using Costs Fatigue, Requires (Attribute) Roll (p. 112), and Takes Extra Time.

It is acceptable to fill Modular Abilities slots with advantages that have limitations. These limitations can only duplicate those on Modular Abilities if they represent a different set of drawbacks. For instance, if your Modular Abilities have Costs Fatigue, you can add an Innate Attack with Costs Fatigue, because a FP cost for rearranging points isn't the same limitation as a FP cost for attacking. If your Modular Abilities have Environmental, though, none of the advantages they grant can claim this limitation.

One special limitation is particularly important for Modular Abilities:

**Limited:** You can only acquire a specific subset of traits. Most such restrictions fall into one of two broad categories.

Your Modular Abilities might be *focus-limited*, meaning you can only add traits that you could logically simulate by shaping or controlling a particular focus. For instance, Limited, Fire would allow Burning Attacks, DR that blocks physical projectiles (by vaporizing them), Temperature Control, etc. – but not Fangs or Parabolic Hearing. Limitation value depends on the degree of restriction:

A highly versatile focus that amounts to a special effect; e.g., green force fields or motion: -5%.

Any ordinary variety of matter or energy; e.g., electricity, fire, light, sound, or water: -10%.

Anything more specialized; e.g., spider webs: -15%.

Most focus-limited Modular Abilities have Physical, +50% (“physical advantages only”). The GM can make exceptions, but these should be rare – few forms of matter or energy can be shaped into mental advantages or skills.



Those with Environmental (p. 110) can't claim Limited for the same conditions; this is built into the value of Environmental. For example, if Green Thumb's Cosmic Power only allows him to control vegetation – a -40% Environmental limitation – he can't also claim -15% for Limited. The fact that he manipulates plants automatically limits him to advantages that plant control can emulate.

Modular Abilities can also be *trait-limited*, meaning you can only add a specific subset of traits related by function rather than focus:

Advantages Only or Skills Only (includes techniques): -10%.

A broad class of advantages (e.g., Attacks Only or Body Parts Only) or skills (e.g., Spells Only or Technological Skills Only), or only being able to add points to abilities you already have: -20%.

A medium-sized class of *related* abilities (e.g., Combat Skills Only or Social Skills Only), a subset of a broad class (e.g., Senses Only or Fire Spells Only), or all forms of a flexible, powerful advantage (e.g., Afflictions Only or Innate Attacks Only): -30%.

A subset of a medium-sized class (e.g., Unarmed Combat Techniques Only or Vision Advantages Only), or one specific form of a flexible, powerful advantage that's easy to customize with modifiers (e.g., Toxic Attacks Only, which can simulate most diseases and poisons): -40%.

One specific trait that allows specialization but not modification (e.g., Languages Only, which *doesn't* let you break ciphers, read encoded data, or grasp concepts simply by learning the words for them), or one flexible advantage subject to restrictive modifiers (e.g., Only Afflictions with Based on Will and Malediction 1, or Only Allies with Minion and Summonable): -50%.

Mental Only, Physical Only, and Social Only aren't allowed. Modular Abilities are *always* limited to mental traits without Physical or Social. Take Physical, +50% if restricted to physical advantages, or Social, +0% if restricted to social ones. The presence or absence of Physical and Social does affect the permissible forms of Limited, however. For instance, those with Physical can't limit themselves to

## *Penalties for Obscure also apply to any form of Telecommunication that uses the same type of signal as the blocked senses.*

a subclass of mental traits, while those *without* Physical can't restrict themselves to a group of physical traits.

Focus- and trait-limited aren't mutually exclusive. For instance, super-gadgeteers often combine the two. They're focus-limited to super-science gadgets (-5%); the focus they manipulate is "available spare parts." They're also trait-limited: "Advantages With Gadget Limitations Only" (-20%). This requires Physical, +50%, and often comes with a high level of Preparation Required to reflect time in the workshop.

### **Powering Up**

Modular Abilities suit capable users of *any* power. Add Limited (or Environmental) and Physical as needed to restrict them to the types of abilities normally allowed for the power. Apply the power modifier to the Modular Abilities themselves but *not* the traits they're rearranged into (doing both is double-counting). Talent adds to all rolls to use any of the advantages granted by Modular Abilities.

### **Obscure**

**see p. B72**

Obscure is a flexible advantage that can represent *many* fictional abilities – some of which are unobvious by design. When customizing Obscure, the first step is to specify what senses it affects, and how:

*Clairsentience:* Obscure usually blocks *one* sense, whether the observer examines the affected area in person or remotely. A supernatural or superscience "anti-power" might specifically prevent *all* remote sensing without affecting *any* mundane senses. Obscure (Clairsentience) often has Extended for Detect, Divination, or Para-Radar (+20% each) and Limited, Psi (-20%).

*Detect:* An effect that actively jams a specialized sensor should have Obscure against the equivalent Detect. For instance, Obscure (Detect Magnetic Fields) would work against magnetic anomaly detectors. Other forms of Obscure might affect supernatural versions of Detect – imagine a demon with Obscure (Detect Evil)!

*Divination:* Obscure (Divination) is legitimate, and affects all attempts to gather *facts* from within the area through such means as Information spells and Psychometry. Use Obscure (Clairsentience) to disrupt remote viewing.

*Hearing:* This might represent a magical stealth spell, white noise, or ultra-tech sound cancellation. Regular hearing, Subsonic Hearing, Ultrasonic Hearing, Sonar, and Vibration Sense are all "related" for the purpose of the Extended enhancement. Obscure (Subsonic Hearing) and (Ultrahearing) suffice to evade geophones and ultrasonic motion detectors, respectively. Discriminatory Hearing, Parabolic Hearing, and so on *aren't* unique senses; they merely make hearing more useful. Those who have such traits have no special ability to ignore Obscure.

*Scanning Sense:* Treat Radar and Imaging Radar as the *same* sense for the purpose of Obscure. Other Scanning Senses require separate versions of Obscure. These varieties of Obscure nearly always represent jamming of some kind. For the purpose of the Extended enhancement, Ladar is related to all kinds of vision, while Sonar is related to Vibration Sense and all types of hearing. In most settings, Para-Radar is related to Clairsentience and Detect.

*Vision:* This could be darkness, blinding light, fog, smoke, or a magical blurring spell. Regular vision, Infravision, Ultravision, and Ladar are all "related" for the purpose of the

Extended enhancement. Obscure (Infravision) also interferes with heat-seeking missiles and infrared motion detectors. Microscopic and Telescopic Vision, Peripheral Vision, etc. *aren't* unique senses; they just make vision more useful. Those with such advantages have no special ability to ignore Obscure.

Penalties for Obscure also apply to any form of Telecommunication (p. 81) that uses the same type of signal as the blocked senses, if the sender or receiver is inside the area of effect. Infrared Communication works like Infravision, Laser Communication works like Ladar, Radio works like Radar, and so on. It's up to the GM whether Telesend works like Para-Radar.

By default, Obscure is a detectable jamming field (e.g., darkness, electronic noise, or white noise) or cloud (anti-laser aerosol, radar-defeating chaff, smoke, etc.) around the user. Without special modifiers, it impedes signals crossing it in either direction. There are two common exceptions to these assumptions:

**Stealth Field:** A *subtle* effect that prevents detection of the user and the field itself is standard for magic and psionics, and common for super-science cloaking. This requires Stealthy (+100%). Supernatural versions rarely inconvenience the user, and also have Defensive (+50%). Ultra-tech devices generally block the user's sensors, too.

**Weapon:** Many supers and vehicles shoot beams or projectiles that cause these effects at a distance; e.g., flares for Obscure (Infravision) or smoke bombs for Obscure (Vision). Give such abilities Ranged (+50%). *Don't* add Stealthy to anything that's supposed to work as a decoy or distraction.

### Alternatives

Obscure creates an effect within which *anyone* could hide. A hero who makes only *himself* less detectable has Cameleon (p. 43), Invisibility (p. 56), or Silence (p. 76).

An Affliction (p. 39) with an enhancement such as Disadvantage (Deafness) or Negated Advantage (Infravision) can knock out someone else's senses. Combined with Area

Effect, Emanation, and Sense-Based, this simulates a deafening noise, blinding flash, etc. better than Obscure.

Those who can block senses with *images* – physical or mental – should take Illusion (p. 94).

### New Special Limitation

**Limited:** You can only block a sense that occurs as part of a power. An entire power source (e.g., magical or psionic) is -20%; a specific power (e.g., ESP or Telepathy) is -40%.

### Powering Up

Obscure suits nearly *any* power that isn't completely internal. Most elemental powers can create clouds or fields of their element to block senses (e.g., Heat/Fire power might produce "hot smoke" to impede vision and Infravision), supernatural powers frequently include the capability to hide from related powers (e.g., Obscure (Clairsentience), for Antipsi power), and so on. Talent benefits Power Block attempts (see p. 168) and adds to rolls to hit with Ranged abilities.

### Oracle

see p. B72

Reading omens – be they hidden wisdom from the gods, signs from the spirit world, or "natural" phenomena in a magical world – is a practice traditionally associated with mysticism. An interesting variant sometimes appears in science fiction, however:

**Oracle (Digital):** You can analyze "live" data – the Internet, news feeds, etc. – and spot items of hidden *mundane* significance. Roll against Research skill for discovery and Intelligence Analysis skill for interpretation. To use this ability, you *must* have access to prodigious quantities of unprocessed data. This trait is especially appropriate for AIs and other Digital Minds. *15 points.*

### Alternatives

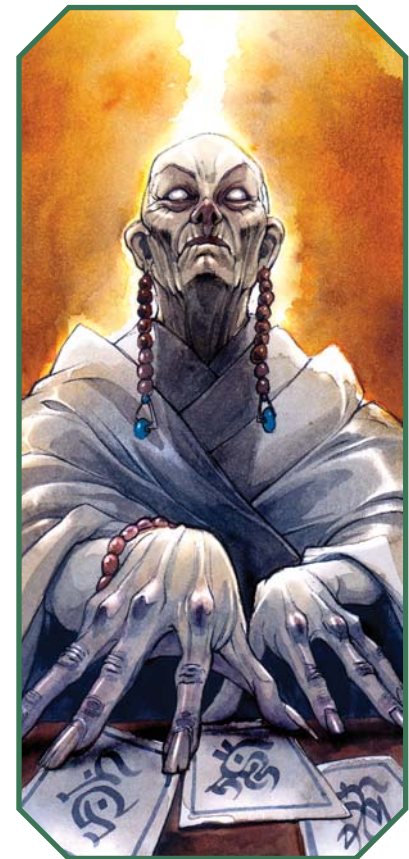
Oracle provides answers to *unknown* questions . . . not all of which are about things to come. Use Blessed (p. 43) to get direct answers to specific questions, Precognition (p. 68) to see the future. To spot hidden *conspiratorial* activity, take Illuminated (p. B60).

### New Special Enhancement

**Inspired:** You're *extremely* gifted. Any successful interpretation roll provides you with specific information, and a critical success brings you an unambiguous vision of the truth. +100%.

### Powering Up

Oracle is ideal for divine, moral, and spirit powers that involve otherworldly guidance. It also suits some interpretations of ESP. Talent influences both the Sense roll to spot omens and the IQ roll to gain insight from them.



### Patrons

see p. B72

A Patron with the Highly Accessible enhancement might represent the supernatural ability to call upon a deity or powerful spirit for aid. If so, Special Abilities and Minimal Intervention might also be appropriate. Limitations such as Accessibility, Costs Fatigue, and Preparation Required are reasonable, too, if contacting the Patron involves a spell-like ritual.



## Alternatives

The favor of a higher power might manifest indirectly as Luck (p. 59), Serendipity (p. 73), or Super Luck (p. 80). To represent otherworldly *knowledge*, use Blessed (p. 43) or Oracle (p. 65).

## Powering Up

Only divine and spirit powers are likely to have Patrons as abilities. Talent doesn't add to appearance rolls, but *does* add to Influence and reaction rolls made to sway the Patron. This can be extremely useful for Patrons bought with Minimal Intervention.

## Penetrating Vision

see p. B74

No *realistic* sense would enable the user to receive light from behind a solid barrier, allowing him to see colors and use his other visual capabilities. This violates the laws of physics. Nevertheless, espers, supers, and superscience sensors from comics and space-opera tales often possess exactly this capability.

Penetrating Vision can look through multiple objects with a *total* thickness no greater than its penetrating power. Distance has its usual effects, but the *spacing* of the barriers

is irrelevant. For instance, Penetrating Vision 1 can look through six 1" walls as easily one 6" wall, and these can be any distance apart – but a large total distance would still give a Vision penalty.

## Alternatives

To see *inside* things as opposed to *through* them, take Clairvoyance (p. 44). For realistic X-ray or T-ray vision, use Scanning Sense (p. 72) – not Clairvoyance or Penetrating Vision.

## Powering Up

Penetrating Vision is reasonable for ESP, and for elemental powers that deal with *cinematic* radiation. An elemental power that focuses on one particular kind of matter might offer Penetrating Vision with the Specific modifier for that substance. Talent gives no Vision bonus, but adds to comprehension rolls (against IQ or skills) to figure out the relative placement of multiple items and barriers.

## Perks

see p. B100

Perks are a good way to handle truly *trivial* abilities. For instance, just as a robot with a built-in flashlight

would buy Accessory, a super could spend a point for the ability to illuminate his immediate vicinity. Piling limitations onto full-fledged advantages is overkill in such situations – imagine trying to build that illumination ability from Control (Light) or Illusion. The GM should forbid perks or uses of perks that *do* duplicate full-blown advantages, of course.

## Powering Up

Any power might (and perhaps *should*) include perks, but because perks can't have enhancements or limitations, they don't receive the power modifier. This means that there's no discount for the fact that anything that disables the power knocks out the perk. On the other hand, powered heroes can justify perks unavailable to others, and get the benefit of Talent on any die rolls required.

## Permeation

see p. B75

Permeation accounts for the traditional ability of otherwise-tangible nature spirits to pass through mountains, trees, and so on with ease. Supers with elemental powers often possess similar capabilities – as do fiendish fantasy monsters that step out of dungeon walls to eat adventurers!

Permeation is normally associated with a particular class of materials. If the GM wishes, though, he can permit a further class – "Everything" – that lets the user walk through *any* solid substance. This costs 80 points.

## Alternatives

Those who have Injury Tolerance (Diffuse) (p. 52) modified with Infiltration can seep through porous obstacles. Users of Insubstantiality (p. 55) are intangible, and can pass through *anything*. To burrow through barriers physically, take Tunneling (p. 85).

## New Special Enhancements

*Extended:* You can pass through multiple, similar materials. Buy the most expensive one at full price. Each additional, *related* substance is +20%. For instance, someone with Permeation (Stone) could add Extended, Earth and Metal for +40%.





*Meld 1:* You can become one with the things you permeate, like a dryad merging with her tree. This works only on *discrete* objects – a tree (not a forest), a mountain (not a planet), etc. Once melded, you can use your senses from or step out of the object at any point along its interior or exterior surfaces, and can breathe if any part of it is touching air. Take a Ready maneuver to shift viewpoints or exit the object. If the object takes damage, it affects you proportionally; e.g., 10 HP of injury to a 100 HP tree results in a 1 HP wound for a 10 HP man. Being part of something larger than you also blunts Afflictions: add the difference between its SM and yours to your resistance roll. If *you* have attacks that affect those touching or standing near you, like Emanations, they're "spread thin" if you merge with a large object: scale down damage in proportion to HP (to 1/10 normal, in the above example), and add the difference between the object's SM and your own to rolls to resist your Afflictions. You can't *control* the items you meld with; get Possession for that. +150%.

*Meld 2:* As Meld 1, but works even on distributed objects. With Permeation (Earth), you could meld with the ground at your feet to cross the entire planet in the blink of an eye; with Permeation (Wood), you could meld with a forest to traverse it instantly or spy on events within. +300%.

### New Special Limitation

*Finite Thickness:* You can only pass through a barrier of limited thickness. If you try to move through anything thicker, you penetrate as far as your limit and then run into a solid obstacle. Value depends on thickness: -50% for a thin membrane (like a curtain), -30% for an inch, -15% for a foot, and -5% for the distance you can sprint in a second.

### Powering Up

Permeation is a typical feature of elemental and nature-spirit powers. It also suits divine powers bestowed by deities associated with the substances it affects. Talent adds to all DX or skill rolls made for movement while using this ability.

## Possession

see p. B75

Possession can represent *any* ability to "take over" people or objects. A few notes to supplement those in the **Basic Set**:

*Magical Possession:* Some unpleasant horror and fantasy monsters use magic to take over unwary victims . . . who inevitably turn on their companions. This calls for the Magical special limitation (-10%), which is *identical* to the Magical power modifier (p. 27). Some of these creatures jump from body to body, but most stay in their own body and "use" their victims remotely via Telecontrol (+50% or +100%).

*Parasitic Possession:* Body-snatching aliens are a staple of science fiction. All such beings have the Parasitic limitation (-60%); more "realistic" ones also have Specialized. Some terrifying creatures have Assimilation (+10%), too – possibly with Full Memory Access (+10%). With access to the skills of *all* previous victims, they're formidable foes. It's equally creepy when the host exhibits the invader's mannerisms but none of his *own*. For that, use No Memory Access (-10%) instead.

*Psionic Possession:* Telepaths capable of Possession require the Telepathic power modifier (-10%). Most fictional psis don't move from body to body, but manipulate victims remotely via Telecontrol (+50% or +100%). A few do swap bodies using Mind Swap (+10%). An adept telepath who can do both needs Mind Swap, Telecontrol, and Selectivity (+10%).

*Spiritual Possession:* Demons, loas, and other spirits in folklore can possess mortals. This calls for Spiritual (-20%). Spiritual *isn't* the same as the Spirit power modifier (p. 28) – it's about *being* a spirit, not *controlling* spirits – and it's rare for both to apply. Few spirits have any power modifier on their Possession. Weak spirits that can "ride" only a few specific subjects have Puppet Only (-30%). Powerful ones that can create new Puppets have Chronic (+20%) instead. The GM may let those without the Spirit meta-trait take Spiritual if they have Insubstantiality or a trait modified with Projection, and are subject to

countermeasures equivalent to exorcism. The GM may also let those with Spiritual possess inanimate objects (e.g., statues), which resist with HT – although this is only useful if the possessor has Telekinesis with Animation to animate his new vessel.

*Technological Possession:* There's no unique type of superscience Possession. Digital (-40%) works for Digital Minds that can possess computers; Chronic (+20%) is extremely common in this case, and represents rewriting the target's software. Those who can "teleoperate" others through surgical implants should take Telecontrol (+50%), Mindlink Required (-40%), and No Memory Access (-10%), and must have Mindlink (p. B70) with the Telecommunication limitation.

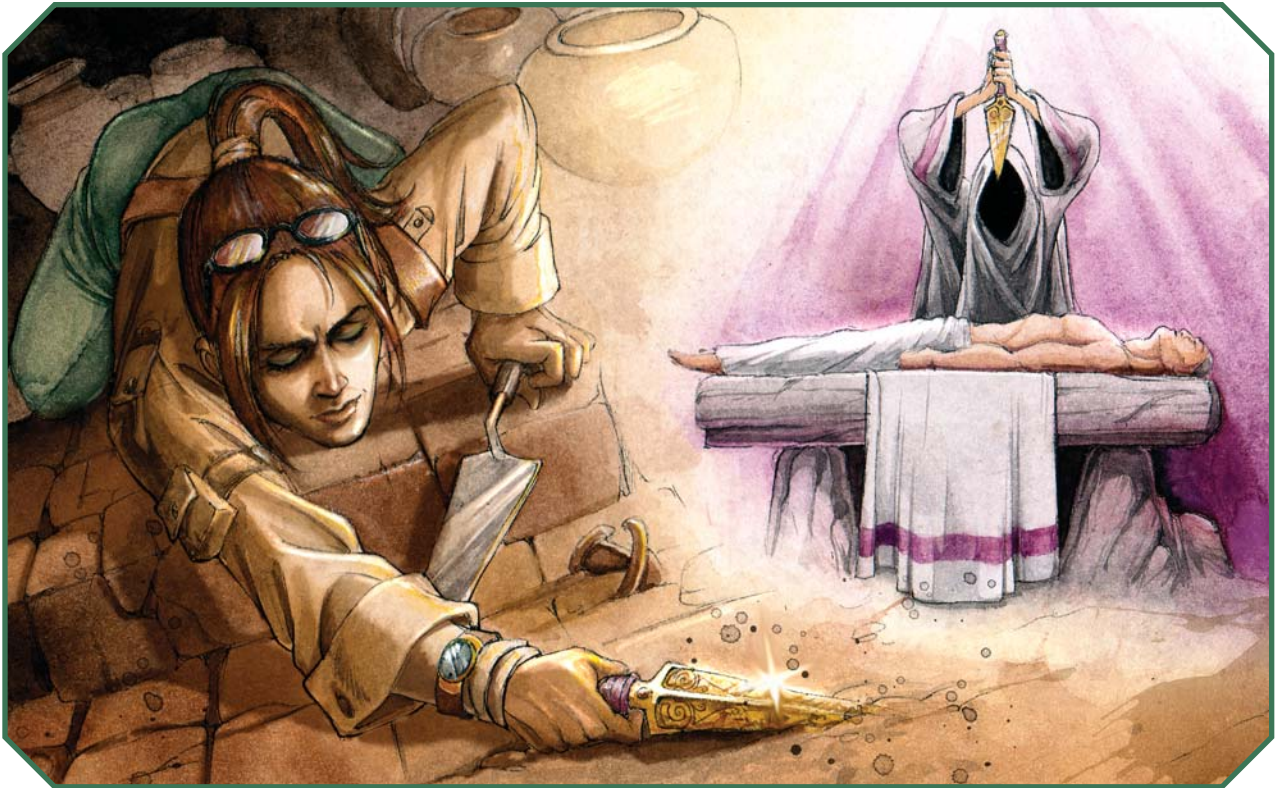
### Alternatives

The ability to command the subject *without* taking over his body is Mind Control (p. 61) – or Dominance (p. B50), if it results in permanent Allies.

### New Special Enhancements

*Full Memory Access:* You can freely access the memories of a sentient host at any time. To recall a specific fact from the subject's memories requires a straight IQ roll, at no penalty for the time since takeover. Furthermore, if you also have Assimilation, you can learn the victim's IQ-, Will-, and Perception-based skills. +10%.

*Telecontrol 2:* As Telecontrol, but your body remains conscious and able to act. You can only exercise *fine* control over one body at a time, though. State whether you're prioritizing your body or your victim's (in combat, do this at the start of each turn). All actions taken by the lower-priority body – including attack, defense, and Sense rolls – are at -4. This is incompatible with Parasitic and Spiritual, which assume that you and your victim are merged in a single body. If you have Compartmentalized Mind (p. B43), you don't *need* this modifier; as some compartments can possess victims while others control your body. Without Telesend (p. B91), though, the "home" and "away" compartments won't be in communication. +100%.



### New Special Limitation

*Specialized:* You can only possess *certain* hosts. The default is “anything alive.” All Carbon-Based Life is -10%; All Earthly Life is -20%; Animals Only is -25%; All Mammals, All Reptiles, etc., is -30%; and Dogs Only, Humans Only, Martians Only, etc., is -40%.

### Powering Up

Possession is appropriate for magical and psionic powers, obviously. Nature powers, especially animal-control powers, might also include it – nearly always with *Specialized*. Talent affects all IQ rolls to use Possession, including rolls to recall the host’s skills.

### Precognition

see p. B77

Prophets, soothsayers, fortunetellers, and others who can see the future appear in the folklore of every culture, but there’s little consensus on how their abilities work. The GM should answer the following questions before letting PCs take Precognition:

1. *How often do premonitions occur?* Precognition could work constantly but subtly, shepherding a hero

through life. On the other hand, it might only work during encounters with people, places, or things of great importance, such as individuals with a Destiny (p. B48), in which case the GM must determine whether pictures and second-hand accounts are enough to trigger visions.

2. *How far ahead can Precognition see?* Premonitions might foreshadow momentous events weeks, months, or years away, if it serves the purposes of drama. Grittier tales portray Precognition as more quantified and less forgiving. If the GM prefers, he can roll whenever the user has an encounter that might trigger a vision . . . but at a penalty found by consulting *Long-Distance Modifiers* (p. B241) and reading “miles” as “weeks.”

3. *Is the future mutable?* It’s more fun for most players if the future seen by divinatory gifts is one *possible* future, subject to change at the heroes’ hands. Still, the GM should not make the future so mutable that this ability is a waste of points. Precognition should always reveal *some* grain of inevitable truth, particularly when a Destiny is involved.

No matter what the answers are, the visions the GM describes should be somewhat vague. Except on a

critical success, Precognition never supplies “hard facts” like stock quotes and winning lottery numbers.

Finally, note that Precognition assumes that the GM does *some* advanced planning – if only notes on scrap paper. It’s neither useful nor appropriate for a *completely* ad-lib game where even the GM doesn’t know what’s going to happen next!

### Alternatives

Those granted answers to specific questions by a Higher Power are Blessed (p. 43), while the gift of seeing random signs – not always about the future – is Oracle (p. 65). To experience visions from the *past*, take Psychometry (p. 69).

Remember that this trait *includes* Danger Sense (p. 46). There’s no need to buy both.

### New Special Enhancement

*Directed:* When you *deliberately* use your ability, you may opt to focus on a specific event involving the subject of your attempt (yourself or someone else). Name the event – e.g., “The battle with the Dark Lord” – before you roll. On a success, you discover the most likely outcome. Failure means you learn nothing, and critical failure “blacks out” the event in all future



premonitions. Passive use is unchanged. Directed is mutually exclusive with One Event. +100%.

### New Special Limitations

*Active Only:* You can *only* use your gift deliberately – you never receive spontaneous visions. Your ability doesn't include Danger Sense. This is mutually exclusive with Can't See Own Death. -60%.

*Passive Only:* You can *never* use your gift deliberately. This is mutually exclusive with Active Only and Directed. -20%.

### Powering Up

Precognition is traditionally an ESP or magical ability. It could also belong to a divine or spirit power, if a supernatural entity mediates the premonitions. *Any* power that includes Jumper (Time) might incorporate Precognition as a “navigational aid.”

What kinds of events trigger Precognition, and how it manifests, depend on its source. In particular, gods and spirits tend to have agendas, and may impart knowledge in disturbing ways – such as voices in the head – that make the recipient look like a madman.

Talent influences all IQ rolls to use this ability, actively or passively.

### Protected Sense

**see p. B78**

Remember that this trait protects against sensory overload and Sense-Based attacks, not physical damage. For instance, Protected Vision helps against bright light, but not a splinter in the eye.

The GM may permit a variant ability in campaigns that feature powers:

*Protected Power:* Your power is protected against direct attacks. It gets +5 to resist Neutralize (p. 97) attempts, and you roll at +5 when you use it “burn through” Static (p. 98) with the Resistible limitation. This doesn't provide Protected Sense for the power's sensory abilities; it only protects the power itself. 5 *points/power*.

### Alternatives

For protection against chemicals in the eyes, inhaled gas, etc., take Doesn't Breathe (p. B49), Resistant (p. 71),

Sealed (p. B82), and similar physical defenses. To *armor* the eyes, use Nictitating Membrane (p. B71).

### Powering Up

Protected Senses are often part of elemental powers – Protected Vision for Darkness or Light power; Protected Hearing for Sound/Vibration power; and so on. Biological and chi-based body-control powers sometimes grant this advantage by letting the user adapt his body. *Any* power might include Protected Power.

Talent adds to Power Block attempts (see p. 168).

### Psi Static

**see p. B78**

This is just a special case of the more generic Static advantage; see p. 98.

### Psychometry

**see p. B78**

Psychometry, known also as “object reading” and “retrocognition,” is the trademark ability of the psychic detective. It's like Precognition that looks in the opposite direction in time – and as with Precognition, the GM should decide ahead of time what triggers it, and about how often.

### Alternatives

Psychometry lets the user “read” objects and places to learn their history. Those who can draw upon knowledge from the past to answer questions about their current situation have Racial Memory (p. 70). Visions about the *future* of an object require Precognition (p. 68).

### New Special Enhancements

*Directed:* You can focus on specific events in the past. State what you're searching for *before* you roll. Success means you glean information pertinent to the event of interest instead of receiving a general flood of emotions. Failure means you learn nothing. On a critical failure, you're permanently blinded to that piece of history. +50%.

*Immersive:* A successful use of your ability gives you an actual “replay” of emotionally charged events, similar to the vision that those without this enhancement experience on a critical

success. If scanning a place, you see and hear things as if you were standing at that location during the events of interest. If reading an object, you witness events from the *object's* point of view. This enhancement can short-circuit mystery adventures – handle with care! +100%.

*Sensitive:* You can read uneventful history as well as emotionally charged events. For instance, you might learn who made a dagger, how often it was sharpened, and where it was stored when it *wasn't* stabbing people. +30%.

### New Special Limitations

*Active Only:* You can *only* use your ability deliberately. You never receive spontaneous visions, no matter how strong the “vibes.” -20%.

*Hypersensory:* You reconstruct past events from minute pieces of evidence spotted by your mundane senses. You're not consciously aware of these clues, but taken together, they give you a general idea of *what happened here*. This gift relies on your senses, and you roll at -3 if you can't use one of smell, touch, or vision. If you can't use two of these senses, roll at -6. If all three are blocked – or if the GM rules that there are no clues to be found – your ability *doesn't work*. Hypersensory includes Mundane (don't take both), and is mutually exclusive with Immersive and Sensitive. -50%.

*Mundane:* Your ability detects temporal “echoes” of the past – not the emotional charge on objects or locations. You can *only* read uneventful history, as described for Sensitive (don't take both). -30%.

*Passive Only:* You possess only the capacity to notice strong impressions on an IQ-4 roll. You can never use your gift deliberately. This is mutually exclusive with Directed, Sensitive, and all three of the special limitations above. -60%.

### Powering Up

Psychometry is usually associated with ESP – but with Hypersensory, *any* power that grants keen senses could allow it. A power that offers Jumper (Time) might include it as a “time-scanning” ability, with Active Only, Directed, Mundane, and likely Immersive. Talent influences all IQ rolls to use this ability, actively or passively.



## Racial Memory

see p. B78

The idea that some people have access to the collective wisdom of their ancestors appears in religious beliefs and older scientific treatises (e.g., the writings of Carl Jung). Depending on the setting, the ancient memories tapped by Racial Memory could be those of a bloodline, clan, or entire race. Alternatives include the user's *own* dim memories (if he's extremely long-lived) or his recollections of past lives (if reincarnation is fact). The broader the memories' scope, the less specific they are. *None* of this affects point cost.

### Alternatives

Precognition (p. 68) is a fair alternative to Racial Memory (Passive); feelings of *déjà vu* could as easily originate from the future as from one's ancestors. Psychometry (p. 69) is a better alternative to Racial Memory (Active), as both provide information from the past – the main difference being vague psychic impressions vs. detailed facts. To share the memories of *living* members of a race, use Mindshare (p. 148).

### New Special Enhancement

*Immersive:* Successful use of your ability gives you a “replay” of ancestral memories, similar to what those without this enhancement experience on a critical success. On Racial Memory (Passive), this removes the need for interpretation when you receive a vision. With Racial Memory (Active), you can replay your ancestors' lives at will! +50%.

### Powering Up

Racial Memory is ideal for spirit powers that let the user speak with dead ancestors. The ability to read their minds across time would be part of Telepathy, while sensitivity to persistent psychic echoes from the past is more like ESP. Talent adds to IQ rolls to use this ability.

## Radiation Tolerance

see p. B79

Aliens, robots, supers, and vehicles in high-tech settings are often radiation-resistant. This might represent armor (likely in conjunction with

Damage Resistance), a force field (see *Force Field*, p. 108), or a basic physiology that isn't sensitive to radiation.

### Alternatives

To reduce the macroscopic physical damage from radiation beams (e.g., particle-beam weapons), take Damage Resistance (p. 45) – possibly with Limited.

### New Special Enhancement

*Extended:* Your divisor also affects your dose of a particular variety of *weird* radiation. It might divide character points worth of mutations, or multiply exposure time required before you see effects. Details are up to the GM. +30% per type of radiation.

### Powering Up

Radiation Tolerance is an obvious choice for an elemental Radiation power, but many powers that include DR could justify *some* level of this trait. Body-control powers – biological, chi-based, or otherwise – might grant this advantage by letting the user repair cellular damage. Talent adds to HT rolls to resist radiation effects, and to Power Block attempts (see p. 168).

## Rapier Wit

see p. B79

As written, Rapier Wit is the larger-than-life gift of knowing precisely how to mortify and provoke enemies. The ability to stun foes with a few words or the sound of the voice doesn't *have* to be silly, though – it could work by delivering a supernatural or vibratory shock to the victim's psyche or body.

### Alternatives

A sonic or mental blast that deafens or injures is an Affliction (p. 39) or Innate Attack (p. 53). Those who simply yell loudly have the Penetrating Voice perk (p. B101).

### New Special Enhancement

*Words of Power:* You faze opponents with the supernatural might inherent in your words or voice. Perhaps you know magic words from the dawn of creation – or speak with the voice of the gods! Language is no barrier, and you *can* affect those who have the Unfazeable advantage. To use your ability, roll a Quick Contest of Will with your opponent, ignoring

modifiers for Clueless and No Sense of Humor. Standard penalties apply if trying to affect a group. +100%.

### Powering Up

Rapier Wit might represent the ability to project one's will using Telepathy or chi powers (in which case Mind Shield aids rolls to resist). In a cinematic supers game, it could be part of Sound/Vibration power. Those with divine powers might also enjoy this gift. With Words of Power and Cosmic (+300%), it suits the cosmic powers of the gods, and would instantly stun *any* mortal!

Talent adds to Public Speaking skill or Will rolls to use this ability.

## Regeneration

see p. B80

This could be a natural or bioengineered advantage, or a supernatural healing ability. Note that Regeneration affects the “healing” rate of Damage Resistance with Ablative or Semi-Ablative, the speed of Regrowth, and the recovery time required by Unkillable 2 and 3.

### Alternatives

Despite its name, Regeneration *isn't* the ability to regrow lost body parts – that's Regrowth (below). To heal *others*, take Healing (p. 51). Alternatively, buy Affliction (p. 39) and use the Advantage enhancement to give Regeneration to others.

### New Special Enhancement

*Fatigue Recovery:* Only for Fast or better Regeneration. You regain lost FP at the same rate as you recover HP. +100%.

### New Special Limitations

*Fatigue Only:* Your ability only aids FP recovery, as described for Fatigue Recovery. It has no effect on injury, and doesn't include Rapid Healing. -0%.

*Limited:* Your Regeneration accelerates an advantage, usually *without* restoring HP. It doesn't include Rapid Healing. “DR Only” speeds the recovery of DR lost as a result of corrosion, the Ablative limitation, etc. “Regrowth Only” repairs limbs, not HP. Find the normal recovery time in days and divide by 3 if Slow; read “days” as “hours,” “minutes,” or “seconds” if

Regular, Fast, or Very Fast; or use the Very Fast time divided by 10 if Extreme. “Unkillable Only” *does* heal HP, but only after you die – and it stops working at positive HP (Unkillable 2) or full HP (Unkillable 3). -40%.

### Powering Up

Regeneration is usually part of a biological, chi, or psi power that enables rapid self-repair – or a “good” divine, moral, or spirit power. The capacity to accelerate time just for healing could justify this ability as part of a time-travel power. Talent adds to all HT rolls to recover lost HP (should that matter).

### Regrowth

see p. B80

Regrowth might represent natural healing capabilities similar to those of starfish and worms (or aliens and monsters based on these creatures), or be the result of superscience or paranormal powers. The modifiers below offer several options from myth and fiction.

Regrowth *can* replace a severed head, if the possessor could survive such a wound (due to Extra Head, Injury Tolerance, etc.). This takes 2d+2 months.

### Alternatives

To heal HP, take Regeneration (p. 70). Those who can replace missing body parts *quickly* need both advantages. The ability to repair *others'* limbs is Healing (p. 51). It's possible to use Affliction (p. 39) with the Advantage enhancement to give someone else Regrowth – but this is too slow to be useful unless the subject also gains (or already has) Regeneration.

### New Special Enhancements

**Doubling:** When you lose a body part, you can sprout *two* replacements, like the Hydra of myth! You must have enough unspent points to buy the relevant advantage (Extra Arm, Extra Head, etc.), and you must pay these points as soon as you lose the body part. Otherwise, you can only grow a single replacement. Regrowth

occurs at the usual speed. +25% if this works with only one type of body part (arms, legs, heads, etc.); +50% if it works with *any* missing part.

**Reattachment:** You can reattach *any* severed but intact body part by holding it in place for a minute. Regeneration reduces this to 30 seconds if Slow, three seconds if Regular, or one second if Fast or better (but Very Fast and Extreme typically remove the need for this enhancement). +50%.

### New Special Limitations

**Bane:** You can't regrow a body part if it's lost to injury from a particular source *or* if the stump is exposed to a specific substance (e.g., fire) – your choice. Limitation value depends on the rarity of the attack: -10% if “Rare,” -30% if “Occasional,” or -50% if “Common” or “Very Common.”

**Reattachment Only:** You can *only* reattach body parts, as described for Reattachment, making your ability useless if the part is mangled, vaporized, eaten, etc. -50%.

### Powering Up

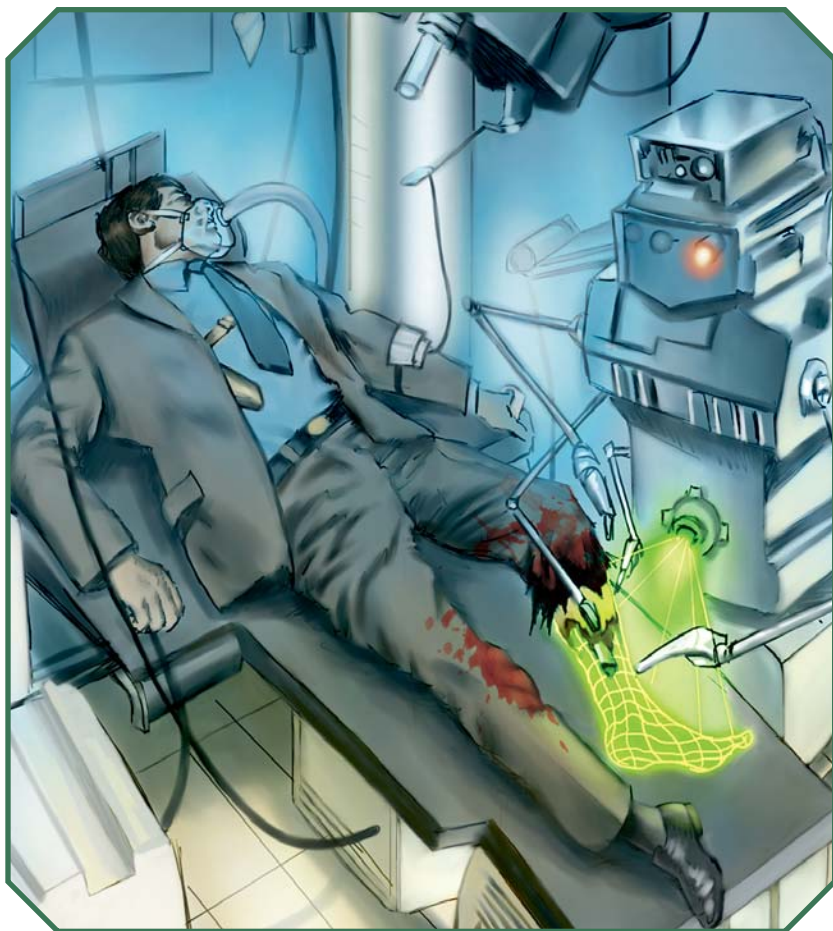
Regrowth is appropriate for biological body-alteration powers, Healing power, and any divine, moral, or spirit power associated with healing. A shapeshifting power that includes such abilities as Morph might let the user rearrange his mass to replace missing parts. Talent adds to all HT rolls to avoid or recover from crippling injuries.

### Resistant

see p. B80

Bioengineered, nonhuman, and superhuman heroes often have specific resistances and immunities to hazards or powers that cause afflictions. The GM is the final judge of what levels of Resistant are possible – and to what items – in his game world.

For the purpose of Resistant, an entire power source (biological, psionic, etc.) is “Very Common,” while one particular focus, power, or college of magic is “Common.” If a source or focus includes a mixture of HT- and Will-resisted effects, Resistant benefits *both* sorts of rolls and Immunity works against either kind of threat.



## Alternatives

Remember that Resistant and Immunity only help against threats that offer resistance rolls. To stop physical damage, use Damage Resistance (p. 45). For instance, Immunity to Magic foils all resisted spells . . . but only DR can stop a Fireball spell.

## Powering Up

Any power might allow Resistant or full Immunity against the source or focus of an opposing power. It might provide similar protection against its *own* source or focus – but the GM should forbid this if the power requires the user to be “open” to its energies in order to direct them. This is often the case for magic.

Talent adds to Power Block attempts (see p. 168).

## Scanning Sense

see p. B81

Realistic robots and vehicles often have Scanning Senses: Radar or Imaging Radar for use in flight, Sonar to navigate underwater, etc. Supers sometimes have similar abilities, not all of them realistic. Para-Radar in particular can represent a variety of supernatural and superscience senses.

The GM may invent new Scanning Senses. Most should cost 20 to 25 points. Here are two more from the real world:

*Active IR:* Your Scanning Sense uses an infrared (IR) beam. Base range is 200 yards. It can distinguish fine relief as well as the human eye; if someone using ordinary vision could identify details without a die roll, then so can you. Only IR detectors and those with Infravision (p. B60) can detect Active IR. You can switch off your beam in order to avoid detection, in which case this ability functions as

Infravision (but when turned on, it *can* spot targets that don't emit heat). Active IR doesn't work underwater. 20 points.

*T-Ray Vision:* Your Scanning Sense uses sub-millimeter-wave radar, bordering on the infrared. Base range is 200 yards. Like Imaging Radar, T-Ray Vision can spot small objects and determine their shape, and eliminates penalties to spot objects behind light cover. However, T-Ray Vision is more precise. It gets +4 to locate concealed weapons, and while it still requires a Sense roll to distinguish fine relief, this roll is also at +4. Only rare, special-purpose sensors can detect T-Ray Vision. T-Ray Vision doesn't work underwater. 25 points.

## Alternatives

The primary role of a Scanning Sense is to let the user function in the dark. Compare Dark Vision (p. 46), Hyperspectral Vision (p. 51), Infravision (p. B60), and Night Vision (p. B71), none of which emit detectable radiation. Another alternative is Vibration Sense (p. 86).

Those who can see through walls using ordinary vision, as opposed to with T-rays, X-rays, etc., should take Penetrating Vision (p. 66). *Remote* viewers have Clairsentience (p. 44).

## New Special Enhancements

*Bio-Scan:* Para-Radar only. You receive vital signs and biochemical information from anything you scan – both the target itself and anything living on its surface. This lets you use skills like Biology and Diagnosis from a safe distance. With Penetrating, you can also examine living beings *inside* inanimate objects (e.g., the passengers of a car). +50%.

*No Intercept:* Your Scanning Sense is *completely* undetectable. This highly unrealistic enhancement mainly suits psis and supers. +50%.

*Scanner:* Para-Radar only. You receive detailed information about the composition, energy output, radiation emissions, etc. of anything you scan. This allows detailed analysis from a distance with scientific skills such as Chemistry and Physics. With Penetrating, you can spot specific systems within a complex machine and analyze them using Engineer skill. Sci-fi sensors typically have both enhancements – and often Bio-Scan, too. +50%.

## Powering Up

Scanning Senses are perfect for elemental powers: Radar, Imaging Radar, and T-Ray Vision fit Electricity power; Ladar and Active IR suit Light power; and Sonar is logical for Sound/Vibration power. Electrokinesis (usually psionic) could justify any Scanning Sense except Sonar . . . which Psychokinesis could explain. Other supernatural powers are only likely to offer Para-Radar, which is appropriate for ESP and chi, divine, and cosmic powers that grant heightened awareness.

Talent adds to all Sense rolls to use any Scanning Sense.

## See Invisible

see p. B83

This is a separate advantage for each kind of invisibility. The buyer must choose *either* one of the descriptive categories under *Invisibility* (p. 56) *or* a particular power source.

If he chooses a descriptive category, he can see anyone using Invisibility with the listed modifiers and special effects, regardless of source. See Invisible (Deception) makes him immune to invisibility through mental influence, be it chi-based or psionic; See Invisible (Ghosts) lets him see specters, whether their invisibility stems from magical powers, spirit powers, or something else; and so on.

If he selects a source, all that matters is the power modifier on Invisibility. For instance, See Invisible (Psionic) can see through electrokinetic light-bending *and* telepathic mind-bending, while See Invisible (Spirit) works on anyone using spirit powers to become invisible . . . but not those using *magical* invisibility, even if they happen to be spirits.

*Para-Radar in particular can represent a variety of supernatural and superscience senses.*



## Alternatives

Against invisibility that affects electromagnetic vision, senses that detect *something else* – e.g., Sonar (p. B81) or Vibration Sense (p. 86) – can stand in for See Invisible. Dark Vision (p. 46) with the Hypersensory enhancement can see through *most* invisibility, but not psychic deceptions.

To fight invisible foes without seeing them, learn the Blind Fighting skill (p. B180).

## New Special Enhancement

**True Sight:** Your vision can penetrate *all* deceptions related to the type of invisibility you can foil, including camouflage, disguises, and illusions. For instance, True Sight would allow See Invisible (Magical) to defeat magical illusions and the Blur spell (p. B250) as easily as magical invisibility. +50%.

## Powering Up

See Invisible is a logical part of any elemental power that offers sensory capabilities – especially Light power. It also suits supernatural powers that focus on knowledge, notably divine powers; these often add True Sight. It's a classic ability of martial artists with chi powers, too. As part of a cosmic power, See Invisible defeats *all* power-based invisibility, including cosmic invisibility.

Talent adds to the initial Vision roll to spot an invisible target.

## Sensitive Touch

**see p. B83**

Sensitive Touch is found in nature – a prime example being the mole's nose – and might be available to humans through biotech implants. It's also a classic shtick of blind heroes, especially detectives, martial artists, and supers.

## Alternatives

The ability to *hear* low-frequency vibrations at long distances is Subsonic Hearing (p. B89). Those who can navigate using vibrations felt by their skin, whiskers, or antennae have Vibration Sense (p. 86).

## New Special Enhancements

**Stethoscopic:** You can pick up *sounds* from the other side of a barrier, or from within an object, by feeling

the vibrations they set up. Make a Touch roll to “hear” conversations through walls. Deafness is no obstacle, but soundproofing gives its usual penalties. +50%.

**Ultra-Fine:** Your sense of touch lets you “read” print by feeling the outline of the ink. This works even in the dark or if blinded. You also can read computer screens by feeling tiny differences in heat or electric field strength; this requires a Touch roll at -5. +30%.



## Powering Up

Sensitive Touch suits Sound/Vibration power best. It's also sometimes found among those with chi powers; the GM might let martial artists with such powers use the +4 bonus to Touch rolls to cancel darkness penalties in close combat. Talent adds to Touch rolls.

## Serendipity

**see p. B83**

Most heroes benefit from the occasional *deus ex machina*. Serendipity is for the hero who's *routinely* favored by coincidence. It normally works at “plot level,” but certain fictional characters can use their ability actively – in particular, those whose wishes tend to come true.

## Alternatives

Use Luck (p. 59) and Super Luck (p. 80) for quantifiable probability-control abilities. Those who get what they wish for through divine favor might instead have a deity as a Patron (p. 65) – likely with Highly Accessible and Special Abilities.

## New Special Enhancement

**Wishing:** You can *consciously* wish for fortuitous coincidences. These must be within the realm of what's plausible in the current situation. For instance, if you were in prison, you could wish for the jailer to drop his key . . . but you couldn't wish to be teleported home. The GM is free to forbid anything that would unbalance the game. Normal usage limits apply. +100% if you can grant wishes for yourself *and* others; +0% if you can aid others but *not* yourself.

## Powering Up

Serendipity works well as part of a divine or spirit power that represents the blessing of supernatural guardians. It might instead belong to a probability-control power (likely psionic) – or even a cosmic power, if the *wielder* is a deity.

Talent gives a bonus to the *first* die roll made in conjunction with a coincidence caused by this ability. For instance, in the example under Wishing, it might give a bonus to Filch skill to palm the key in plain sight.

## Shadow Form

**see p. B83**

Shadow Form is ideal for such fantasy and horror denizens as semi-tangible undead. With the 3-D Movement enhancement (and perhaps Light Insensitive), it can represent illusionary beings, while Finite Thickness lets it model ultra-thin creatures. All of these possibilities suit supers equally well.

## Alternatives

Injury Tolerance (Diffuse) (p. 52) with the Infiltration enhancement is pricier, but lets the user pass through cracks without incurring the weaknesses of Shadow Form. A hero who can become a true shadow, immune to physical harm, should take Insubstantiality (p. 55).

## New Special Enhancements

*3-D Movement:* You can turn 90° to a surface and stand up in three-dimensional space – like a two-dimensional “cutout” – in order to bridge gaps or turn around. You can walk at your normal ground Move. All of the other drawbacks of Shadow Form remain. +20%.

*Light Insensitive:* You’re not made of actual shadow. Your body might even look like a projected photograph of a normal human. The only *game* effect is that you don’t suffer 50% extra damage from light. +20%.

## New Special Limitation

*Finite Thickness:* You don’t *quite* become two-dimensional. You’re about as thick as a sheet of paper, and can’t fit through microscopic cracks. Being physical, you take *full* damage from physical attacks – and because you’re so thin, the wounding multiplier for cutting attacks is x2 instead of x1.5. You aren’t a shadow, though; light-based attacks get no bonus damage (don’t buy Light Insensitive separately). You still can’t physically attack, and you can only drag objects around on your surface if you buy the Can Carry Objects enhancement. -50%.

## Powering Up

As the supernatural ability to assume an unusual kind of spirit form, Shadow Form is suitable for divine, magical, and spirit powers. Shadows are associated with evil in many settings, making this ability appropriate for unsavory moral powers, too. Finally, it fits the theme of Darkness power, whatever its source. Talent applies to all DX and skill rolls made to squeeze through openings or negotiate tricky surfaces.

## Shapeshifting

see p. B83

Shapeshifting features prominently in folklore and fiction. Details vary *greatly* from tale to tale. These notes barely touch on the possible complexity – a detailed treatment could fill its own book.

When designing Alternate Forms, apply enhancements and limitations to the basic 15-point cost per form but *not* to the form-specific cost (that is,

90% the difference in template costs). A similar rule applies to Morph: modifiers affect the 100-point cost of the basic ability but *not* additional points set aside for more powerful forms. The sole exception in either case is Affects Others (p. 107), which affects both components of the cost.

Some important archetypes:

*Doppelgangers:* Alien blobs, liquid-metal robots, and horrific monsters that “replace” their prey can assume the form of almost *any* living being they sample, within the limits of their mass. This is Morph with Mass Conservation (-20%) and Needs Sample (from -5% for a robot that needs a single cell to -50% for a monster that devours its victims) – often with many points of extra capacity. Some robots and aliens can shift into *unliving* forms. A robot restricted to unliving forms is about as limited as a

*Mythic Morphs:* Gods and wizards in many tales can instantly take the form of any earthly creature. This powerful capability is Morph, with a *lot* of extra capacity to cover strong, capable forms – like tigers and sharks – while retaining IQ. No Memorization Required (+50%) and Reduced Time 4 (+80%) agree with most tales. The Unlimited enhancement (+50%) is common but not universal.

*Transforming Machines:* Robots or vehicles that can become *other* robots or vehicles are a comic-book standby. This is a standard Alternate Form that switches one machine template for another. Add Active Change (+20%) for transformers that can keep moving while changing. There’s no need for Absorptive Change if all passengers and cargo are within the machine’s Payload (p. B74).

*The werewolf is neither man nor wolf, but a Satanic creature with the worst qualities of both.*

– Dr. Yogami,  
*Werewolf of London*

living being that can only take living forms; there’s no extra cost. To assume living *and* unliving forms, add Unlimited (+50%).

*Elemental Supers:* The ability to become flame, stone, water, and so on often shows up in the comics. Buy this as Alternate Form with the appropriate elemental meta-trait (p. B262) as the target “racial template.” The GM may even permit players to create custom meta-traits for new elements. Most elemental supers have Absorptive Change at the “No encumbrance” level (+5%) for their costume, plus Active Change (+20%) or Reduced Time 4 (+80%).

*Were-Creatures:* Werewolves and similar beings use Alternate Form to assume an animal template. Weres who can control their beast form might choose to retain IQ and do away with bestial mental traits – but this *significantly* elevates template cost. Those who change involuntarily during the full moon have Uncontrollable Trigger (a dangerous ability that triggers under occasional circumstances, for -15%) and Unconscious Only (-20%), and often Minimum Duration, One Night (-10%). Reciprocal Rest (+30%) is common . . . the were-form appears rested and ready to rampage!

## Alternatives

Shapechangers who can alter size but not form have Growth (p. 50) or Shrinking (p. 75). Those who can change their appearance to resemble members of their own race have Elastic Skin (p. 48). For partial changes, see *Switchable Body Parts* (p. 81). Modular Abilities (p. 62) can cover all of these things, and is an interesting alternative to Morph.

To turn *others* into monsters, use Affliction with Advantage, Alternate Form.

## New Special Enhancements

*Absorptive Change:* Only for Alternate Form. You “absorb” worn and carried items into your Alternate Form. These reappear when you change back. Without this modifier, you must leave your equipment behind when you change, and worn items too small for your Alternate Form risk destruction. Cost depends on encumbrance level: +5% for None, +10% for Light, +15% for Medium, +20% for Heavy, or +25% for Extra-Heavy. The GM decides what’s left behind if your encumbrance exceeds your capacity. Apply this modifier separately to each form that can absorb equipment.

*Active Change:* Your transformation takes the usual amount of time, but you needn’t concentrate during this time – you can move and act. You have the abilities of the form you’re changing *from* until the transition is complete. (GMs who enjoy extra detail can average the forms’ statistics, or even use a weighted average to reflect how far along the change has come.) +20%.

*Improvised Forms:* Only for Morph. You can improvise new racial templates as you change, mixing and matching the natural *physical* traits you desire. Possibilities range from modifying your native form with a useful body part to creating a completely new template. Improvised templates can’t cost more than what you can afford with your Morph ability, but can include physical disadvantages to reduce costs. All traits added must exist in your game world, unless you also have Cosmic (+50%). You can’t change your composition (e.g., add elemental meta-traits or Insubstantiality) without Unlimited (+50%). +100%.

*No Memorization Required:* Only for Morph. Any shape you take instantly becomes part of your repertoire, unless you don’t *want* to memorize it for some reason. +50%.

*Non-Reciprocal Damage:* Only for Alternate Form. Injury you suffer in one form *doesn’t* affect any of your other forms – although wounds only heal while you’re in the form that sustained them, unless you also take Reciprocal Rest. +50%.

*Once On, Stays On:* This is identical to the general modifier of the same name (see p. 109), but with a special rule for Alternate Form: it counts as a +50% modifier on the basic 15 points *and* raises the form-specific cost from 90% to 100% of the difference in template costs.

*Reciprocal Rest:* Only for Alternate Form. Your dormant forms can rest while they’re out of sight. Time spent dormant counts toward FP recovery and the sleep needs of *that form*. In conjunction with Non-Reciprocal Damage, these forms can even recover HP and recuperate from crippling injuries. This doesn’t preclude dormant forms being aware of and remembering the active form’s actions. +30%.

## New Special Limitations

*Cannot Memorize Forms:* Only for Morph. You can’t memorize the forms you copy. To assume a form, you must always be able to see or touch the original. -50%.

*Flawed:* Only for Morph. Every form you take is cosmetically imperfect in some way, which *completely* precludes impersonation. You still gain the abilities of your new form. Flawed is mutually incompatible with Cosmetic. -10%.

*Needs Sample:* Only for Morph. You must physically sample anything you wish to take the form of. If your target is living, this sample must be *fresh* – you can’t sample a rotting corpse. -5% if you need only touch the target; -15% if you require a drop of blood, strand of hair, etc.; -50% if you must eat the whole target.

*Projected Form:* Only for Alternate Form. Your Alternate Form is a separate entity – perhaps a physical manifestation of your soul. When you use your ability, your native form falls into a trance and your Alternate Form appears nearby (within 10 yards). This

is a real, physical form with no special restrictions on its actions. To dismiss it and awaken, it must be within 10 yards of your native form. If *either* form is wounded or killed, so is the other form; see *Projection* (p. 44) for details. -50%

*Unliving Forms Only:* Only for Morph. You can turn into objects but not creatures. You enjoy most of the capabilities of the Unlimited enhancement, but you can’t assume the template of anything *alive*. -0%.

## Powering Up

Alternate Form suits many supernatural powers – especially spirit powers, which might call for the Projected Form limitation if they let a shaman become a totem animal. Morph works better for exotic body-alteration powers.

When deciding on what external influence can force the shapeshifter to resume his native form against his will, consider the power’s source. Exorcism, prayer, or sacred artifacts might work on divine or spirit powers; the Dispel Magic spell is reasonable for magical powers; and weird-science drugs and radiation are traditional for biological powers and super-powers.

For Morph, Talent gives a bonus to *any* IQ or skill roll the GM requires for disguise or impersonation. For Alternate Form, it adds to rolls to resist external influences that could force the user out of his current form or into one of his other forms.

## Shrinking

**see p. B85**

Shrinking, like Growth (p. 50), is more often a goal unto itself than an explanation for another capability. It’s a completely unrealistic ability, best reserved for those with truly fantastic powers – supers, gods, etc.

Supers with Shrinking often enjoy Full Damage (+100%), Full DR (+30%), Full HP (+30%), *and* Full Move (+30%). They sometimes have Can Carry Objects, too, in order to shrink their costumes; the +10% level suffices for most outfits. This greatly inflates cost, but the ability to move and fight as if full-sized while being difficult to hit and see is *extremely* powerful (see *Optional Rule: Small Size and Combat*, p. 76).



## Alternatives

Shrinking is strictly for those who *change size*. Permanently tiny creatures *don't* have Shrinking (Always On). A negative Size Modifier is a zero-cost feature for a race small enough to require it (GM's decision). The benefits of being a difficult target are offset by the inconvenience of day-to-day life around adult humans. Just ask any 4-year-old . . . or an ant!

The Affects Others special enhancement for Shrinking is completely identical to the general Affects Others enhancement on p. 107. It only affects willing subjects who remain in physical contact with the user. An attack that shrinks *unwilling* targets is an Affliction (p. 39) enhanced with Advantage, Shrinking.

## Powering Up

Shrinking is appropriate for matter-control powers, cinematic biological powers, and the cosmic powers of

deities. Talent *doesn't* affect die rolls, but those with multiple levels of Shrinking and Talent may adjust their SM by up to  $\pm(\text{Talent}+1)$  per second instead of just  $\pm 1$ .

## Silence

see p. B85

When Silence occurs in fiction, it's typically the result of a physiological adaptation, like a cat's padded feet. However, stealthy supers and robots sometimes have an active capacity to dampen sound or "project" silence.

## Alternatives

To create a *zone* of silence, use Obscure (Hearing) (p. 64). Area Effect isn't suitable for the Silence advantage.

## New Special Enhancement

*Dynamic:* Your ability actively cancels out the sounds you make when

you move, or helps them blend in with ambient noise. You enjoy your *full* Stealth bonus (+2 per level) when moving. +40%.

## Powering Up

Silence most often belongs to an elemental or psionic Sound/Vibration power. It suits body-control powers, too – especially the chi-based powers attributed to legendary ninja. It would also be logical for an animal-control or shapeshifting power that lets the user borrow the features of stealthy predators. Talent adds a further bonus to Stealth skill rolls to avoid being heard.

## Snatcher

see p. B86

One of the miracles most often attributed to gods and spirits is conjuring items out of thin air. Snatcher offers an interesting explanation for this trick: the conjured objects are stolen from another reality. The new Creation and Recall modifiers support alternative interpretations.

## Alternatives

To *visit* other realities, take Jumper (p. 57). To conjure bulk matter instead of specific objects, use Create (p. 92). To *stow* items in another dimension, buy Payload (p. B74) and add Cosmic (+50%) – which means that stored objects, while still subject to weight limits, can be of any size and are normally undetectable.

## New Special Enhancements

*Creation:* You don't take items *from* anywhere – you create them on the spot. You can get anything you've seen personally, and items sufficiently close to these things that you can visualize them. There are never any penalties for item type. You still can't get "impossible" items, you can only have one created item at a time unless you also take Permanent, and normal weight and size limits apply. +100%.

*Large Items:* You're not bound by the restriction that the items you snatch must fit in one hand. They can be *any* size, as long as they're within your weight limit. Large items too heavy to lift always appear at arm's reach. +50%.

*More Weight:* Your weight limit is higher than 5 lbs.

## Optional Rule: Small Size and Combat

Truly diminutive combatants – for instance, those with high levels of Shrinking – should realistically enjoy certain *benefits*, despite their size.

A tiny fighter is hard to see. Enemies attack him at a penalty equal to his SM. At SM -10 or smaller, when *he* attacks, his target must make a Vision roll. Modifiers include the attacker's SM and the +10 to spot something in plain sight (see *Vision*, p. B358); e.g., SM -14 requires a Vision-4 roll. Failure means the defender doesn't see the attack coming and gets no defense, as if his attacker were invisible.

The natural weapons, Innate Attacks, and so on of a minuscule warrior scale in proportion to his body – as do weapons reduced by Shrinking. Being narrow, they can more easily target openings in armor. If using *Targeting Chinks in Armor* (p. B400), reduce the penalty to hit by SM, to a minimum of 0. Those with SM -10 or smaller can target gaps in armor at no penalty. Of course, if you're 1.8" tall, attacking anything but a foot is impossible without Flight or cunning tactics . . .

By making a successful grapple, a fighter with SM -13 or smaller can crawl inside unsealed armor, where he can ignore its DR. If he can reach a nostril, ear, or other orifice, a successful grapple lets him get inside his foe's body, where he can also ignore *natural* DR. No defense is possible against attacks from either vantage.

At SM -19 and below, it's possible to get into the bloodstream if injected or able to reach an open wound. Use the rules above, except that all attacks are effectively to the vitals ( $\times 3$  wounding modifier). To enter the body through its pores requires SM -44 or smaller.

All of this assumes an SM 0 opponent. In battles between tiny combatants, the *difference* in SM is what matters. For instance, if an SM -15 super is fighting an SM -10 foe, he applies these rules as if he had SM -5 and his enemy had SM 0.

<b>Limit</b>	<b>Cost Modifier</b>
7 lbs.	+5%
10 lbs.	+10%
15 lbs.	+15%
20 lbs.	+20%
30 lbs.	+25%
50 lbs.	+30%

Each further +30% multiplies weight by 10 (e.g., a ton is +80%). If your weight limit exceeds your one-handed lift (2xBL), you *must* also take the Large Items enhancement.

### New Special Limitation

**Recall:** You call *existing* objects to you across space or dimensions. These must be personal possessions. You could summon your sidearm – or even your battlesuit, with More Weight – but not *someone else's* belongings, let alone items you've merely heard of. This still requires 10 seconds, 2 FP, and an IQ roll, but no penalties apply. Recalled items remain indefinitely, as if you had physically retrieved them. As usual, you can send the items back at any time. Recall is incompatible with Creation, Permanent, and Unpredictable. -25%.

### Powering Up

Snatcher is an ideal fit for the cosmic powers of gods and spirits – the most powerful of which have Creation, More Weight, and Permanent. Supers capable of creating “force constructs” have a similar ability, but usually lack Permanent and have a Nuisance Effect (-5%) to reflect the fact that the objects are obviously “fake” and made of force. Finally, Snatcher suits any power capable of dimension travel or matter control. Talent adds to IQ rolls to use the ability.

## Speak With Animals

**see p. B87**

Otherwise-ordinary heroes (often children) who can speak with animals make regular appearances in fantasy, fairy tales, and folklore. The usual justification is that the speaker knows the “secret language of the beasts,” but this advantage could as easily originate from supernatural forces, perhaps even the gods.

### Alternatives

A true “universal translator” has Mind Reading (p. 61) enhanced with

Universal, and doesn't need Speak With Animals. Neither advantage grants the ability to understand the *motivations* of animals, though – that's Animal Empathy (p. B40).

Speak With Animals translates the speech of sapient beings to beast speech and vice versa. It doesn't let the user emulate animal sounds (that's Mimicry, p. 61) or converse in unusual environments or in frequencies inaudible to humans (see *Speech Advantages*, p. 78).

### New Special Enhancements

**Sapience:** The animals you converse with temporarily function as if they had your IQ. They are still limited to their natural perceptions, but can frame these in terms you can grasp. For instance, if an ant sensed 10 sets of footfalls and the scent of humans when the sun was low, it might say, “Ten men came past here before sundown.” +40%.

**Universal:** You can speak with any nonsapient creature, however alien, supernatural, or weird. Universal is mutually exclusive with Specialized. +20%.

### Powering Up

Speak With Animals is logical for Telepathy, all kinds of animal- and nature-control powers, and divine powers granted by nature deities. With the Sapience enhancement, it also suits spirit powers that let the user communicate with nature spirits rather than animals themselves. Talent adds to IQ and Hearing rolls to understand beast speech or make oneself understood when using this ability.

## Speak With Plants

**see p. B87**

Gods can generally speak with almost anything – including plants. Otherwise, the ability to converse with plants (which typically lack the means to truly *speak*) is rarely seen except as an obscure gift attributed to the occasional fantasy-game druid or elf.

### Alternatives

Plant Empathy (p. B75) is a much better fit for shamans and similar mystics who can “commune with nature” to learn the current mood of trees, fields, etc.

## New Special Enhancement

**Sapience:** The plants you converse with function as if they had your IQ, as described for the enhancement of the same name under *Speak With Animals* (above). +40%.

### New Special Limitation

**Specialized:** You can only communicate with *certain* plants. “All terrestrial plants” (including all trees, bushes, and herbs) and “All aquatic plants” (including algae, kelp, and seaweed) are -40%; a large subset of either (e.g., “Trees” or “Herbs”), -50%; a smaller subset (e.g., “Evergreens” or “Medicinal Herbs”), -60%.

### Powering Up

Speak With Plants mainly suits plant- and nature-control powers, and divine powers bestowed by nature deities. Spirit powers that let the user converse with nature spirits rather than plants themselves might grant it, too – likely with the Sapience enhancement. Talent adds to all IQ and Hearing rolls to communicate with plants, in either direction, when using this ability.

## Special Rapport

**see p. B88**

In worlds that feature psychic gifts, a supernatural bond might exist between parent and child, siblings (*especially* twins), or lovers – or between strangers who had such a relationship in a past life. Clones, supers with shared origins, and so on sometimes have similar links, but with rubber-science explanations like “quantum-entangled brainwaves.”

### Alternatives

Enhanced mental *communication* with a specific person or group of people (such as a hive mind) requires Mindlink (p. B70). Use Puppet (p. B78) for those who can *possess* a particular subject with ease. Individuals who can evaluate the general emotional state of just about anyone have Empathy (p. B51).

### New Special Enhancements

**One-Way:** Your link lets you sense the status of your partner without him having this advantage and being able to sense *your* condition. +20%.

*Transferable:* You have a link that you can actively “attach” to *anyone*. Your subject must be present. Attachment requires a minute and an IQ roll. Success means you and your subject have a Special Rapport until you reassign your link. To have multiple links, buy more than one Special Rapport with Transferable. Transferable often accompanies One-Way. +100% to affect only your own race; +150% to affect any living being or all Digital Minds; +250% to affect any sapient being, living or machine. Add -50% if the subject must be willing or helpless for the initial attachment.

### Powering Up

Special Rapport is consistent with powers that encompass mental communication – notably Telepathy. With Transferable, it also suits chi powers, spirit powers, Healing power, and any other power that lets the user establish mystic links with others. It even works for Machine Telepathy, with Transferable, Digital Minds. Talent adds to any roll made to diagnose or analyze the mental, physical, or spiritual state of the other person.

### Speech Advantages

Creatures that communicate via ground vibrations use Subsonic Speech (p. B89), while underwater dwellers often have Ultrasonic Speech (p. B94). Remember that Subsonic Speech includes Subsonic Hearing and Ultrasonic Speech includes Ultrahearing. Speak Underwater (p. B87) is fundamentally unrealistic, but widespread among aquatic supers and fantasy races (e.g., “Sea Elves”).

### Alternatives

Being able to speak in the frequency range used by a particular beast doesn’t confer any special ability to mimic or communicate with it; those abilities are Mimicry (p. 161) and Speak With Animals (p. 77), respectively. For other forms of communication inaudible to normal humans, see *Telecommunication* (p. 81).

### Powering Up

Any of these traits would be reasonable for an elemental Sound/Vibration power – or Psychokinesis, if it lets the user create and modulate vibrations.

Speak Underwater also suits water-related super-powers, divine powers bestowed by sea gods, and spirit powers that influence naiads, undines, etc. Talent adds to all IQ and Hearing rolls to understand speech or be understood when using speech-related abilities.

### Stretching

see p. B88

Stretching 1 or 2 is reasonable for octopuses and similar invertebrates that can extend their limbs farther than humans can, proportional to body length. Higher levels aren’t realistic for natural creatures. No such restriction applies to supers, bizarre entities that exist partly in another dimension, etc. Extreme Stretching needn’t be cinematic, though. Realistic robots and vehicles often have telescoping components, or a “head” or sensor cluster on a retractable stalk or periscope.

### Alternatives

Those who can stretch their *skin* to change appearance have Elastic Skin (p. 48). The ability to enlarge one’s entire body, not just parts of it, is Growth (p. 50).

Individuals capable of extreme flexing and bending have Double-Jointed (p. B56). Those who have both that advantage *and* Stretching can squeeze through narrow openings by reducing effective SM in one or two dimensions by their Stretching level.

### New Special Enhancement

*Force Extension:* You can project visible, semisolid force fields that act as extensions of your limbs. Treat this like unmodified Stretching, except that the extensions of your limbs past their physical reach aren’t subject to injury. You must still move your limbs as if reaching, kicking, stepping, etc., and you still need a free hand to pick something up or wield a weapon.

You’re limited to your natural ST and DX, and can’t take actions that are impossible with a real limb (e.g., reaching through a wall). This *isn’t* Telekinesis (p. 82), but suits any power that includes it. +50%.

### New Special Limitation

*Limited:* You can only stretch certain body parts. “Arms Only” and “Legs Only” are -20%, “Single Limb” is -40%, and “Neck Only” is -50%. The GM may allow other limitations, but “Arms and Legs Only” isn’t a meaningful limitation.

### Powering Up

Stretching is appropriate for the same classes of powers that allow Growth: matter-control powers, cinematic biological powers, and cosmic powers. Talent *doesn’t* affect die rolls, but those with multiple levels of Stretching and Talent may adjust body-part SM by up to  $\pm(\text{Talent}+1)$  per second instead of just  $\pm 1$ .

### Striking ST

see p. B88

Striking ST suits creatures that have evolved to hunt and fight, as well as battlesuits and robots designed with melee combat in mind. It’s also an important ability for supers and monsters, which can often hit *much* harder than their size and musculature suggest.

### Alternatives

Striking ST only augments basic ST for the purpose of thrust and swing damage, and for throwing. To increase lifting and carrying capacity, buy Lifting ST (p. 58). To gain all of these benefits *and* additional HP, just raise ST.

There are other ways to get a powerful melee attack. An Innate Attack (p. 53) with the Melee Attack limitation (p. B112) can do any amount of

*Striking ST only augments basic ST for the purpose of thrust and swing damage, and for throwing.*



damage, of any type, but needs an enhancement (p. 103) to be cumulative with ST-based damage. Natural weapons such as Claws (p. B42), Strikers (p. B88), and Teeth (p. B91) are another option, and *always* benefit from ST.

Martial artists who can temporarily boost ST in combat should look at the Power Blow (p. B215) and Push (p. B216) skills.

### New Special Limitation

**One Attack Only:** Your Striking ST only affects one specific natural attack: your bite, a particular Striker, etc. This limitation is intended for a relatively weak creature with an unusually high-ST attack; e.g., a giant rat that can gnaw through armor and bone. -60%.



### Powering Up

Striking ST suits chi-based and biological body-control powers. When it represents an active ability to summon a burst of strength, limitations such as Costs Fatigue and Takes Extra Time are likely. Talent adds to any HT roll required to avoid self-inflicted injury when striking.

## Super Climbing

see p. B89

Many creatures – realistic and fantastic – climb as fast as they walk. Brachiators often move *faster* while climbing. Explanations include strong hands and arms (which might explain Arm ST or Striking ST), built-in climbing spikes (which could double as Claws), and superhuman powers of adhesion or gravity control.

The meaning of “+1 Move when climbing” is clear for Clinging, with its climbing speed of half Basic Move. For conventional climbing, though, the table under *Climbing* (p. B349) doesn’t give Move in yards/second. Assume that each level of Super Climbing raises climbing speed by the base value on the table. For instance, Super Climbing 4 gives +12 rungs/second to climb up a ladder in combat, +80 ft/min to climb up a rope out of combat, and so on. Realistically, gravity limits rappelling speed (“rope-down w/equipment”), which shouldn’t benefit from this advantage.

### Alternatives

Super Climbing enables speedy *conventional* climbing. To climb like a spider or gecko, take Clinging (p. 45). A robot or vehicle with a built-in line and grapnel, or similar gear useful with the Climbing skill, has an Accessory perk (p. B100).

### New Special Limitations

Take Specific (p. 112) if your Move bonus only applies when climbing certain kinds of surfaces. Common materials, such as metal, rock, or wood, are -40%; ferrous metals are -50%; and uncommon materials, such as adobe, ice, or rubber, are -60%.

**Requires Low Gravity:** Your ability doesn’t function in gravity fields over a certain, maximum strength. -5% per 0.1G under 1G (-5% for 0.9G, -10% for 0.8G, and so on – down to -50% for 0G).

### Powering Up

When Super Climbing involves force control, it’s appropriate for Psychokinesis and elemental powers such as Gravity and Magnetism. If it works by granting incredible balance or a strong grip, it’s suitable for body-control powers – especially the chi powers of cinematic ninja.

Shapeshifting and animal-control powers might even let the user take on ape-like features in order to climb well. Talent adds to all DX, ST, and Climbing rolls made to climb.

## Super Jump

see p. B89

Physiology – specialized limb structure, high strength-to-mass ratio, etc. – can justify Super Jump for real-world creatures such as frogs and grasshoppers. It *isn’t* realistic for giant animals and monsters modeled on these beasts . . . but that doesn’t stop them from showing up in fantasy. This ability is also popular with mecha, robots, and supers. Some simply have hydraulic jacks or unnaturally powerful legs, but two other possibilities are common:

**Jets:** Jets of energy or matter powerful enough to provide Super Jump are sufficiently noisy and dangerous to rate Nuisance Effect (-5%). A rocket with a fixed burn has Full Power Only (-10%) – and one of Horizontal Only (-25%), Projectile (-20%), or Vertical Only (-25%), if it can’t be steered.

**Levitation:** Telekinetics and gravity-controlling supers not gifted enough to fly can still make amazing leaps. Most have either Lighter Than Air (-10%) or Maneuverable (+50%), and those that use antigravity should take Planetary (-5%), too.

### Alternatives

Anyone considering Super Jump should read *Jumping* (p. B352). A few extra points of Basic Move can give a *modest* boost in jumping distance – and improved groundspeed in the bargain. Enhanced Move (Ground) (p. 45) is an even better deal for those who like to make their mighty leaps at a full run.

The ability to get airborne and stay there is Flight (p. 50). This is also the best value for individuals whose desired level of Super Jump – after modifiers – costs more than Flight with comparable modifiers. Those looking only for the ability to reduce damage from a fall should consider Catfall (p. 43).

Martial artists familiar with secret acrobatic techniques are more likely to have the Flying Leap skill (p. B196).

## New Special Enhancements

**Bouncing:** You can rebound like a rubber ball. Your Super Jump works normally, but you also get a roll against the best of DX, Acrobatics, or Jumping when you experience a fall or collision – deliberate or otherwise. Roll at -5 per multiple of your jumping Move, or fraction thereof, by which your velocity exceeds your jumping Move. Success means you take *no* damage and rebound with 90% of your impact velocity. If this doesn't exceed your jumping Move, you can choose to stop instead; otherwise, you *must* bounce. Failure means you take normal damage and stop ("Splat!"). +50%.

**Maneuverable:** You can make midair course corrections. Calculate distance and "hang time" as usual, but while airborne, treat your jumping Move as *air* Move, exactly as if you had Flight. For instance, if you can jump 100 yards at 20 yards per second, you can "fly" at Move 20 for five seconds before landing. Maneuverable is mutually exclusive with *all* of the special limitations below except Planetary. +50%.

## New Special Limitations

**Full Power Only:** You must always jump your *maximum* distance when you use Super Jump. The only way to make shorter hops is to jump without using this advantage. -10%.

**Horizontal Only:** You can only increase your horizontal (broad jump) distance. Your ability doesn't benefit high jumps, and has no special effect on falling damage. -25%.

**Lighter Than Air:** You jump by becoming lighter than air. For each second you're airborne, your landing zone drifts a yard in the direction the wind is blowing per 5 mph of wind speed. For instance, if you're in the air for three seconds in a 20 mph wind from the west, you'll land 12 yards east of your intended target. -10%.

**Planetary:** You jump by "pushing off" against a planet's gravitational or magnetic field. Your ability is useless in the absence of a planet. -5%.

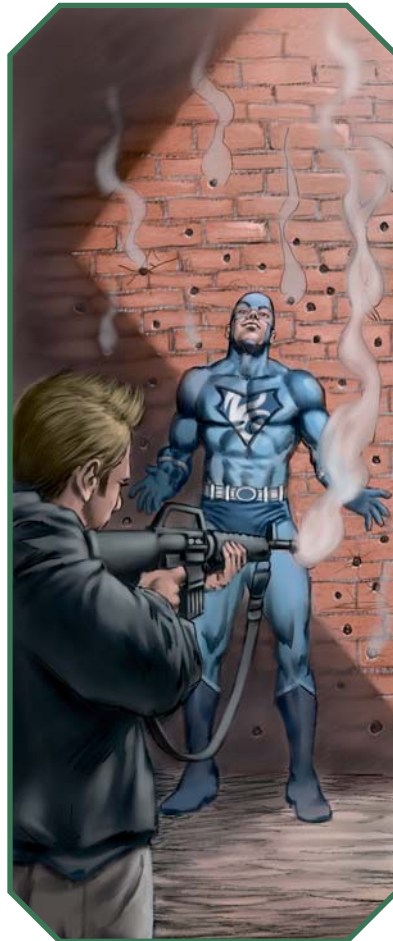
**Projectile:** You can only launch yourself directly at your objective. You're an unguided missile, spinning out of control! You can do *nothing* while airborne, and have *no* active defenses. Make a DX or Jumping roll

on landing. Failure means you collide with your target or the ground – unless you *intended* to do so, in which case you miss and crash into something nearby. In either case, you suffer full normal collision damage. -20%.

**Vertical Only:** You can only increase your vertical (high jump) distance and reduce falling damage. Your ability doesn't benefit broad jumps. This is mutually exclusive with Horizontal Only. -25%.

## Powering Up

Any power that explains Flight as levitation – elemental (e.g., Gravity or Magnetism) or supernatural (most often Psychokinesis) – could justify Super Jump as a lower level of the same ability. Air, Fire, and other elemental powers might generate "jump jets." Body-control powers are a third option, be they chi-based ("body lightening") or biological (an adrenaline burst). Talent adds to DX and Jumping rolls to take off and land, and to rolls to hit with jumping slams or kicks while using this ability.



## Super Luck

see p. B89

Super Luck is difficult to explain as anything other than a limited degree of control over reality. This capability is traditional for gods and powerful spirits. Among mortals, only the most gifted psis, supers, and wizards are likely to possess it.

The GM probably shouldn't allow this trait outside of cinematic action games, as it's thoroughly unrealistic *and* tends to short-circuit mystery and suspense. On the other hand, if the PCs are demigods, the GM might permit higher levels: Super Luck 2 [200] works every 30 minutes, Super Luck 3 [300] works every 15 minutes, and so on, with each level halving the time between uses.

## Alternatives

Most lucky heroes should just use Luck (p. 59) – or Serendipity (p. 73), if their luck doesn't lend itself to interpretation as "good odds." Those who can consciously load the dice in their favor but not *guarantee* success have Visualization (p. 87).

## New Special Enhancements

**Alter Reality:** Your Super Luck works retroactively. You can wait until *after* you roll and then specify a different result, altering the past. You must declare this immediately. Once you or anyone else has made another roll, the flow of time becomes too complex for you to unravel. Alter Reality always produces visible effects; e.g., time rewinds and replays differently, or a glowing hand reaches down from the heavens and changes things. +75%.

**Wishing:** You can specify the result of *any* die roll made in your presence. You must personally witness the action you wish to influence. Normal usage limits apply. +100% if you can affect your rolls *and* those of others; +0% if you can aid others but *not* yourself.

## Powering Up

Super Luck is a perfect fit for cosmic and divine powers. Other options are a magical power, a psionic probability-control power, or even a spirit power, if the user commands spirits that have Super Luck with Wishing. The GM should consider restricting Alter Reality and Wishing (and higher



levels of Super Luck, if allowed) to cosmic powers – although Alter Reality *might* fit less-than-cosmic time-control powers.

Talent gives a bonus to die rolls manipulated by this ability. Since the user can *dictate* outcomes, the practical effect is to alter margin of success or failure, or extend the range of possible results (e.g., for damage rolls).



## Switchable Body Parts

Many physical advantages represent body parts, including Claws, Extra Arms, Extra Legs, Extra Mouth, Nictitating Membrane, Spines, Striker, and Teeth. These are “always on” by default, whether they’re due to racial makeup, genetic engineering, implants, or super-mutation. The GM may permit shapeshifters and those with retractable implants to add Switchable (+10%), however.

Not every option is immediately obvious. Some changes are subtle, such as being able to darken the eyes to gain Protected Vision. Others involve body parts implied by a special modifier; e.g., Doesn’t Breathe (Gills, -50%) and Flight (Winged, -25%). A few even represent the *absence* of a body part, like switchable Payload as the ability to create a new body cavity. Be creative!

### Alternatives

For those who can transform into almost anything, Morph (see *Shapeshifting*, p. 74) is more economical – and flexible – than many individual body parts with Switchable. The same is true of Modular Abilities (p. 62) with Physical and Limited, Body Parts Only.

### Powering Up

Switchable body parts suit divine powers bestowed by beastly or monstrous deities, especially if transformation into a *full* likeness of the god is

sacrilegious; e.g., the Tiger God might grant switchable Claws and Teeth, but not permit Alternate Form (Tiger). Body-alteration and animal-related powers frequently include similar abilities.

Talent benefits HT rolls to avoid or recover from crippling of the body parts, and DX rolls tied to extending or retracting them (e.g., to reach something or escape from bonds). It *doesn’t* affect attack rolls for added limbs, Strikers, etc.

## Telecommunication

see p. B91

Cyborgs, robots, and vehicles with communicators – and supers who can project modulated energy – might have any form of Telecommunication. Telesend is intended mostly for individuals with supernatural powers, however. Note that there’s no “unseen subject” penalty to use Telesend on one’s own Compartmentalized Mind (p. B43) or to contact *oneself* across time (see *Time-Spanning*, p. 109).

New forms of Telecommunication invented by the GM should cost from 5 to 25 points. Far-fetched capabilities similar to Telesend might cost more. Some examples:

**Directional Sound:** You communicate using a laser-thin sound beam. Base range is 100 yards in a direct line of sight. Jamming and eavesdropping require specialized equipment – and even then, the short range and line-of-sight requirement give -5 to attempts. Obscurants (e.g., fog and smoke) and electrical “noise” have *no* effect. You can only communicate with those who have this advantage or a directional-sound communicator. *5 points.*

**Gravity-Ripple Comm:** You communicate using gravity waves. Base range is 1,000 miles. Your signal is omnidirectional, and as with Radio, eavesdroppers must roll against Electronics Operation (Communications) to listen in. Jamming is *impossible* – although intense gravity sources (neutron stars, pulsars, black holes, etc.) can disrupt your signal. Gravity waves reach underwater and penetrate solid objects at no penalty. You can only communicate with people who have this advantage or a gravity-ripple communicator. *20 points.*

**Neutrino Comm:** You communicate using a modulated beam of neutrinos (or similar particles). Base range is 1,000 miles in a straight line. The beam is *impossible* to jam or intercept, and functions in *any* environment – it can reach underwater or penetrate solid objects at no penalty, and isn’t blocked by the horizon. You can only communicate with people who have this advantage or a neutrino communicator. *25 points.*

**Sonar Comm:** You communicate using modulated sonar. Base range is three miles underwater. The signal is omnidirectional, and anyone with this advantage or equivalent equipment can hear you. The only way to *jam* this ability continuously is with powerful, specialized equipment – although explosions can cause transient interference. In air, Sonar Comm has a range of 50 yards multiplied by air pressure in atm. It doesn’t work at all in vacuum. At the GM’s option, Sonar Comm is equivalent to Ultrasonic Speech. *10 points.*

Not every special modifier in the **Basic Set** suits all of these traits. Broadcast and Short Wave are inappropriate for all four. Video is only realistic for Gravity-Ripple Comm and Neutrino Comm. Racial, Telepathic, and Universal *might* apply to any of them, if the GM permits. Receive Only, Send Only, and Vague are always acceptable.

### Alternatives

For alternative *verbal* communication, consider Speak Underwater (p. B87), Subsonic Speech (p. B89), and Ultrasonic Speech (p. B94). Those who can sense but not understand the signals used by Telecommunication have Detect (p. 47). Note that Telesend allows one to *transmit* thoughts, but unless the subject has Telesend himself, the only way to *receive* his thoughts is with Mind Reading (p. 61).

### New Special Enhancements

**Burst:** Not available for Directional Sound or Sonar Comm. You transmit a high-speed “blip” that conveys information much faster than you could speak or draw. +30% for 10× normal speed, +60% for 100×, +90% for 1,000×, and so on. Each factor of 10 gives -1 to attempts to intercept the transmission.



**FTL:** Your signal travels faster than the speed of light, letting you communicate with little or no “light lag.” The GM decides what kinds of Telecommunication can have this modifier and what it represents in each case: a beam of FTL energy for Radio or Gravity-Ripple Comm, a stream of FTL particles for Neutrino Comm, etc. A “hyperspace tunnel” that carries ordinary signals might suit any kind of Telecommunication. Recommended signal speed is 0.1 parsec/day, to a maximum range in *parsecs* equal to 1/5,000 ordinary range in *miles*, but the GM can adjust this to suit the setting. Only individuals with the same ability or equivalent technology can receive the FTL signal. +120%.

**Secure:** Your signal employs security measures that make it difficult to interpret if intercepted. Eavesdroppers must *win* a Quick Contest of IQ (if using Telecommunication) or Electronics Operation (if using technology) against your IQ to understand the content of the transmission. If they lose, they get garbage. +20%.

**Sensie:** You can transmit your sensory impressions in real time. This is possible for any form of Telecommunication save Directional Sound or Sonar Comm – but with anything other than Telesend, the recipient needs a specially equipped receiver to get the “full experience.” +80%.

## Powering Up

Telecommunication that uses realistic energy or particles is appropriate for elemental Electricity, Gravity, Light, Radiation, and Sound/Vibration powers. Electromagnetic and acoustic forms of Telecommunication are also reasonable for psionic Electrokinesis and Psychokinesis, respectively. Telesend mainly suits paranormal powers – Telepathy in particular. Talent adds to all IQ rolls to establish contact, to intercept or comprehend a signal, or to *prevent* interception or jamming.

## Telekinesis

see p. B92

The essence of Telekinesis (TK) is moving distant objects with no more effort than a stare or a gesture – a gift seemingly possessed by every other

god, psi, spirit, and wizard. TK isn’t always supernatural, though; space-opera “tractor beams” and super-powered magnetism are also common explanations. The many faces of TK include:

**Animated Objects:** A spirit that uses Possession to occupy an object (like a statue) can use TK with Animation (-30%) to make it move around. If the spirit can *only* use its TK in conjunction with Possession, add an Accessibility limitation (-10%). A sorcerer who makes tables gallop and mannequins dance has Animation, too – with Independent (+70%), if the items keep doing what they’re doing without his attention. Together, Animation and Independent can animate one object per second. Total HP can’t exceed TK level, but homogenous objects count as having *half* their HP.



**Attraction/Repulsion Field:** Some force fields push everything nearby away from the user, or draw objects to him. Simulate this using Area Effect (+50%/level), Emanation (-20%), and *one* of Attraction (-60%), Repulsion (-60%), or Attraction/Repulsion (-30%). If the field is magnetic, add Magnetic (-50%), too. Being unable to turn this off is genuinely limiting – Always On is worth -20%.

**Poltergeist Effect:** Certain people are the nexus of random acts of telekinetic violence when under stress. Parapsychologists refer to this phenomenon as “recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis” (RSPK) or “the poltergeist effect.” Represent this with Area Effect (+50%/level), Emanation (-20%), Unconscious Only (-20%), and Uncontrollable (-30%). In general, combinations of Area Effect and Uncontrollable *always* cause chaos over a wide area.

**Psychokinesis:** Classic psionic psychokinesis is TK with the Psychokinesis power modifier (-10%).

**Super-Magnetism:** Some supers direct magnetic forces with laser-like precision. This *isn’t* realistic – all it has in common with real-world

magnetism is that it can only affect ferrous metals, which calls for Magnetic (-50%). Increased Range (+10%/level) is common but not required.

**Tractor Beam:** Superscience devices that project force beams capable of pushing or pulling distant objects are found on starships, robots, and mecha. These “tractor beams” typically have high levels of Increased Range (+10%/level) and either Attraction (-60%) or Attraction/Repulsion (-30%), and are often Visible (-20%).

Telekinesis *can* have Area Effect, obviously. In combat, it must affect groups of foes in exactly the same way. Roll separately for each target, at a penalty equal to the number of targets, less one; see *Area Effect* (p. 100). Out of combat, it can aid any long task resolved using a single die roll (e.g., an Engineer roll to assemble a machine). The GM may let heroes use the rules under *Time Spent* (p. B346) to hasten such tasks.

For *all* collective uses, calculate Basic Lift from TK level and compare the weight of *everything* affected to find encumbrance level. Objects in the area travel at a Move equal to TK level, reduced by encumbrance as usual.

## Alternatives

Flight (p. 50) with Enhanced Move (Air) (p. 49) costs fewer points than TK for levitation at a given top speed – although it doesn’t permit instant acceleration to full speed like TK does. Similarly, Innate Attack (p. 53) is less expensive than buying enough TK to inflict comparable damage with a telekinetic “punch.” It’s also more appropriate for force beams.

To get a force field that can lock onto and prevent damage from attacks that come in too fast for TK, buy Damage Resistance (p. 45) with Force Field. For a short-range force field that works a lot like Telekinesis, compare Stretching (p. 78) with Force Extension.

Some supers explain extraordinary strength as “zero-range telekinesis.” Represent this by buying ST and selling back the associated Hit Points. At 10 points per level for ST and -2 points per missing HP, this comes to 8 points per +1 ST. The GM may wish to allow modifiers on this ST; see *Attributes as Abilities* (p. 13) for guidelines.

## New Special Enhancement

*Super-Effort:* The GM may allow the Super-Effort enhancement from *Lifting ST* (p. 58) on TK, too. This affects extra-effort *lifts* – not speed, damage, skill, or anything else. The only differences from the Lifting ST rules are that TK with Super-Effort works at a range and that its bonus adds to levels of TK that lack this modifier, not to personal ST (e.g., TK 20 gives ST 5,000, or adds 5,000 to unmodified TK, if any).

## New Special Limitations

Specific (p. 112) is common for TK that originates from elemental powers. Some other limitations of importance:

*Animation:* Your TK works by enabling inanimate objects to flex. The minimum level required to animate something equals its HP if unliving, *half* its HP if homogenous (see *Object Hit Points Table*, p. B558). An animated object can grab, lift, strike, and throw with ST equal to the TK level needed to animate it. It has your DX. It can walk and jump if it isn't fixed in place; Move equals your TK level minus the level needed to animate it. You can use skills through animated items – but note that objects other than statues and mannequins usually have No Fine Manipulators. Objects return to their rest state once you give up control. Adding Independent (p. 108) lets you animate multiple objects, but you must split your TK level among them. Your TK can't reach *inside* things at all. -30% if the object can't fly; -20% if it can, provided it has wings, rotors, etc. (like a toy dragon or model helicopter).

*Attraction/Repulsion:* Your TK can only move things directly toward or away from you. Take a Ready maneuver to move an unresisting object, or an Attack maneuver to affect an active opponent. Your TK can't strike blows, manipulate objects, or hold an enemy in place or prevent him from attacking. Attraction simply causes objects to move until they're in contact with you, whereupon they're held there with your telekinetic ST until you turn off your ability. Repulsion shoves objects away from you until they reach the maximum range of your ability. In either case, objects can only move or be moved in the opposite

direction if the mover wins a Quick Contest of his ST or TK level against your TK level. This limitation is incompatible with Animation. -60% for Attraction or Repulsion; -30% for Attraction/Repulsion (it takes a Ready maneuver to switch between the two).

*Lift Only:* Levels of TK with this limitation don't add to telekinetic Move. -20%.

*Move Only:* Levels of TK with this limitation don't add to telekinetic ST. -40%.

## Powering Up

Telekinesis is the definitive element of Psychokinesis power, which is traditionally psionic. However, magical and spirit powers are equally likely to include TK, most gods can move objects with their cosmic powers (and enable their servitors to do the same via divine powers), and supers with elemental powers often use gravity, magnetism, or wind to produce similar effects. Talent adds to all DX and IQ rolls to use TK, and to TK level in Contests of ST (but not in general).

## Temperature Control

see p. B92

Fictional Temperature Control takes two main forms:

*Active:* Psis, supers, and ultra-tech machines cause temperature changes using force of will or weird beams. Freeze rays and cryokinesis call for Cold (-50%), while heat rays and pyrokinesis require Heat (-50%). For dramatic effects like freezing or boiling water instantly, add Reduced Time (+20%/level); each level doubles the rate of cooling or heating.

*Passive:* Spirits, monsters, and elemental creatures of heat and cold sometimes alter the temperature in their immediate vicinity (a two-yard radius) at all times. To simulate this, add Always On (-10%), Emanation (-20%), and either Cold (-50%) or Heat (-50%). The ambient temperature changes by 2° per level per second the entity remains in the area, to the usual maximum of 20° per level.

## Alternatives

Temperature Control doesn't directly affect the temperature of people or things – only that of an *area*. The extremes of ambient temperature are

dangerous, but the effects are too gradual to affect combat (see *Cold*, p. B430, and *Heat*, p. B434). To use heat or cold as a weapon, take Innate Attack (p. 53). Heat is a Burning Attack, while cold is a Fatigue Attack with the Freezing enhancement (see *Hazard*, p. B104).

## Powering Up

Temperature Control is appropriate for Psychokinesis power, elemental Cold/Ice and Heat/Fire powers, and divine and spirit powers associated with ice goddesses, fire elementals, etc. In some settings, it even suits *moral* powers: cold represents life-stealing Evil, while heat can go either way . . . the flames of Hell are Evil, but the sun and life-giving warmth are Good. Weather-control powers often include this ability, usually with high levels of Area Effect.

Talent adds to degrees per second of temperature change after all modifiers, but has no effect on the *maximum* change. It also adds to Power Block attempts (see p. 168).

## Terrain Adaptation

see p. B93

Terrain Adaptation can represent a host of exotic abilities, but the most common forms – e.g., clawed toes, crampons, or skates for ice, and snowshoes or skis for snow – are downright prosaic. Such features might result from evolution (for a creature) or design (for a machine).

## Alternatives

Terrain Adaptation only aids movement across more-or-less level, solid ground. Take Clinging (p. 45) to travel vertically. Use Walk on Liquid (p. 88) to traverse anything less solid than sand or snow. If Terrain Adaptation results from hard projections that dig into the terrain, buy Claws (p. B42) or Striker (p. B88) separately.

## New Special Enhancement

*Active:* You adapt quickly to *any* terrain. Instead of specifying a particular terrain type, buy the 5-point version of Terrain Adaptation and add this enhancement. This ability might be the result of “smart wheels,” shapeshifting, or superhuman balance. +300%.

## Powering Up

Terrain Adaptation is typical of elemental powers – especially Cold/Ice and Earth – and powers associated with nature, natural spirits, and nature deities. Individuals with certain chi powers can cross *anything*, even thin paper, by using the Active version of this trait. Those with shapeshifting powers might physically alter their extremities to gain this ability. Talent adds to DX rolls to negotiate terrain, giving a bonus where others would have a penalty.

## Terror

see p. B93

Certain monsters – dragons, specters, Things Man Was Not Meant To Know – are just plain *scary*. This might be due to a disturbing visage, a terrifying wail, or sheer size and unnaturalness. Occasionally the reason is less obvious . . . perhaps a telepathic influence (see the modifiers below).

A few entities provoke strong reactions other than fear. Gods and angels induce awe, while weird extradimensional creatures cause mind-boggling confusion. At the GM's option, Awe and Confusion are separate advantages. Use the rules for Terror, but Fright Checks become "Awe Checks" or "Confusion Checks." All the rules for Fright Checks apply to these rolls, including modifiers for advantages and disadvantages (see p. B360). The *only* difference is that failures go to the *Awe and Confusion Check Table* (p. 85).

## Alternatives

An *attack* that causes the victim to halt in his tracks is an Affliction (p. 39), often with an enhancement such as Daze, Ecstasy, or Hallucinating. To exercise more subtle control over a victim's emotions, use Mind Control (p. 61) – possibly with the Emotion Control enhancement.

## New Special Enhancements

Godlike beings often have the "irresistible attack" level of Cosmic (p. B103). Victims get no benefit from advantages such as Fearlessness and Unfazeable (unless those traits are Cosmic), and suffer their tormentor's choice of Awe, Confusion, or Terror if they fail their Fright Check.

*Active:* Your Terror doesn't affect everyone nearby – it's a direct mental attack on one victim. Your target must be within 10 yards (modified by Increased or Reduced Range), and able to see or hear you. You must take a Concentrate maneuver to affect him. Roll a Quick Contest of Will with your subject. He's at -1 for each -1 to Fright Checks you bought. If you *win*, roll 3d for the result, as usual, but add your margin of victory instead of his margin of failure. +0%.

*Presence:* Your physical presence within 10 yards is enough to cause Fright Checks, even if your victims can neither see you nor hear you. You could be locked in a coffin and still terrify those who stray too close. Each level of Area Effect doubles your radius, but the GM should consider forbidding *huge* areas. +25%.

## Powering Up

Terror suits many supernatural powers, including sinister divine and moral powers that flow from terrifying sources, spirit powers that command horrific ghosts, and chi and psi powers that let the user project his will to unnerve his enemies. Explained as finely tuned electric fields or vibrations, it also fits a few elemental powers. It needn't be subtle, either – a shapeshifting power could grant Terror by letting the user assume a scary face.

When using Terror to bolster Intimidation skill, Talent adds to skill rolls, on top of the +1 to +4 for supernatural powers. Talent also gives a Will bonus when attacking with the Active enhancement.

## True Faith

see p. B94

Traditionally, those with profound religious faith enjoy protection from harm at the hands of their deity's moral enemies. Fantasy games associate this with the invested cleric, brandishing his holy symbol and intoning solemn prayer. In folklore, though, the blessed individual is often a devout layperson.

The GM should list *what* True Faith repels in each case. A classic "good" deity might empower its servants to keep demons and undead at bay. An evil priest is more likely to use his True

Faith to send away angels and terrorize cute puppies!

It's up to the GM whether a deity shields only the genuinely faithful or anyone acting as its proxy. The latter is common in high fantasy and cinematic horror, and might merit its own trait:

*True Faith (Chosen):* You enjoy all the benefits of True Faith, but your power is due to the fact that your god has chosen to act through you – possibly without your consent. Barring egregious transgressions, your advantage functions regardless of your *actual* faith. This comes at a cost, however: *non-supernatural* servitors of rival deities can sense your special status and react to you at -3 . . . and your True Faith can't repel these foes. 15 points.

## Alternatives

To repel *any* enemy, take Terror (above). Bolts of holy power and similar attacks that only affect foes of a particular god are Innate Attacks (p. 53) with suitable Accessibility limitations (see p. B110).

To cast out evil spirits possessing a person or place, use the Exorcism skill (p. B193).

## New Special Enhancement

*Turning:* You can aggressively "turn" the entities your True Faith repels. Take a Concentrate maneuver and roll a Quick Contest of Will with any such being that can see you. Roll just once for hordes of *identical* monsters with the same Will. Any creature you win or tie against can't move any closer to you than yards equal to your margin of victory (minimum one yard). If it's inside that radius, it must flee as described for unmodified True Faith. This effect endures for as long as you concentrate and for 1d seconds after you stop. +65%.

## Powering Up

True Faith is exclusively the realm of divine, moral, and spirit powers. Its built-in code of conduct *doesn't* preclude claiming a discount for the Divine, Moral, or Spirit power modifier, even when this imposes its own code. The restrictions a *servitor* must live under are often different from those of simple faith, and always far more stringent. Talent adds to Will



## Awe and Confusion Check Table

When you fail an Awe or Confusion Check, roll 3d, add your margin of failure on the Check, and consult the table below. Many entries give different outcomes for Awe and Confusion – read carefully. If new quirks or disadvantages result, the GM chooses these traits, which should suit the circumstances of the Check.

- 4, 5** – Stunned for one second, then recover automatically.
- 6, 7** – Stunned for one second. Every second after that, roll vs. Will to snap out of it.
- 8, 9** – Stunned for 1d seconds. Every second after that, roll vs. Will to snap out of it.
- 10, 11** – Stunned for 2d seconds. Every second after that, roll vs. Will to snap out of it.
- 12, 13** – **Awe** causes (25 - Will) seconds of ecstasy. **Confusion** causes (25 - IQ) seconds of daze. See *Incapacitating Conditions* (p. B428). After that time, roll vs. Will each second to recover.
- 14, 15** – Acquire a new mental quirk. **Awe** inspires quirks that reflect admiration. **Confusion** leads to quirks that suggest bafflement or perplexity.
- 16** – Stunned for 1d seconds, as per **8**, and acquire a new quirk, as per **14**.
- 17, 18** – **Awe** causes 1d minutes of ecstasy. **Confusion** causes 1d minutes of hallucinating. See *Incapacitating Conditions* (p. B428). After that time, roll vs. Will each minute to recover.
- 19** – As **17**, but effects last 2d minutes.
- 20** – As **17**, but effects last 4d minutes.
- 21** – **Awe** causes you to worship at the feet of the one who awed you – you must obey his *every* command as if you had Slave Mentality! **Confusion** causes you to hallucinate (the GM specifies the details, which should fit the situation); you can try to act, but you're out of touch with reality and at -5 on all success rolls. Either lasts 3d minutes; then roll vs. Will once per minute to snap out of it.
- 22, 23** – Acquire a -10-point mental disadvantage. **Awe** might impel you to adopt one of your new idol's self-imposed mental disadvantages (see p. B121) out of solidarity, turn you into his servant (Reprogrammable), or make you feel inferior (Low Self-Image). **Confusion** "blows your mind," most likely resulting in one of Confused (12), Delusion (Major), Indecisive (12), or Short Attention Span (12).
- 24, 25** – As **22**, except that if you *already* have a -5 to -10-point disadvantage that could result from Awe or Confusion, it worsens to a -15-point trait!
- 26, 27** – Experience 1d minutes of ecstasy or hallucinating, as per **17**, and acquire a new -10-point disadvantage, as per **22**.
- 28, 29** – Experience 2d minutes of ecstasy or hallucinating, as per **19**, and acquire a new -10-point disadvantage, as per **22**.
- 30, 31** – Experience 4d minutes of ecstasy or hallucinating, as per **20**, and acquire a new -10-point disadvantage, as per **22**.
- 32, 33** – **Awe** overcomes you. You immediately collapse in a helpless, ecstatic fit that lasts 1d minutes and costs 1d FP. After that time, roll vs. Will each minute to recover. Any critical failure costs you 1 Will *permanently*. **Confusion** drives you completely mad. You might do *anything!* The GM rolls 3d – the higher the roll, the more dangerous the action. For instance, you might believe you can fly and leap to your doom. Should you survive your first reaction, roll vs. Will to recover. If you fail, the GM rolls for another insane action, and so on.
- 34, 35** – As **22**, but the disadvantage is worth -15 points. **Awe** usually results in Fanaticism – either for the one who awed you or his cause. **Confusion** tends to cause Confused (9), Delusion (Severe), Indecisive (9), On the Edge (12), or Short Attention Span (9).
- 36** – As **22**, but the disadvantage is worth -20 points.
- 37** – As **22**, but the disadvantage is worth -30 points. To make up -30 points, the GM may have to select more than one trait.
- 38** – Experience 1d minutes of ecstasy or hallucinating, as per **17**, and acquire a new -15-point disadvantage, as per **34**.
- 39** – Experience 2d minutes of ecstasy or hallucinating, as per **19**, and acquire a new -20-point disadvantage, as per **36**.
- 40+** – As **39**, but **Awe** costs you 1 point of Will and **Confusion** robs you of 1 point of IQ. These losses are *permanent!*

rolls to resist distraction when taking the Concentrate maneuver to use this ability, and to use the Turning special enhancement.

### Tunneling

see p. B94

Tunneling is too speedy to be realistic for natural creatures. It suits

monsters that can hew or chew through solid rock (acid-spewing worms, giant moles, etc.), weird-science burrowing machines with whirling augers, and massive real-world mining equipment. At the GM's option, diggers who travel at less than Move 1 can buy Tunneling (Slow) for 5 points and pay 1 point per two yards per *minute* of progress.

### Alternatives

Natural burrowers may take "Can tunnel without a shovel" as a perk (see p. B100). This is effectively Accessory (Shovel). It allows the full rates under *Digging* (p. B350).

To pass through solid matter without digging, use Permeation (p. 66). Add the Tunnel enhancement to leave a passage behind.

Tunneling never counts as an attack, regardless of how it works. Buy Claws (p. B42), Striker (p. B88), or Teeth (p. B91) separately if it involves a digging tool that doubles as a weapon. Use Innate Attack (p. 53) for acid jets, beams, and explosives that can blast foes as easily as the earth – possibly with a Link (+10%) to Tunneling.

### New Special Enhancement

*Hands-Free:* You dig with a special body part, disintegrator ray, etc. that leaves all of your hands available to hold things as you tunnel. +20%.

### Powering Up

Tunneling best suits elemental powers – particularly Earth power – but might belong to any power that includes an attack or natural weapon that could function as a digging tool. Talent adds to all DX or skill rolls required for tunneling movement, and to the IQ, Engineer, or Prospecting roll to dig a stable tunnel.

## Universal Digestion

see p. B95

Voracious monsters, post-holocaust mutants, and various forms of *Homo superior* bioengineered for survival are all good candidates for this trait. When supers possess it, it usually has the new Matter Eater enhancement.

### Alternatives

Use Reduced Consumption (p. B80) for those who can survive on less food rather than weird food. To resist poison, add Resistant (p. 71). Individuals who don't require *any* food have Doesn't Eat or Drink (p. B50) and don't need Universal Digestion – but they can still buy it to dispose of evidence.

Universal Digestion doesn't let the user gnaw through *tough* materials. That's Teeth (p. B91), plus Striking ST (p. 78) with the One Attack Only limitation. Tunneling (p. 85) is another option.

### New Special Enhancement

*Matter Eater:* You can eat *anything* (organic or inorganic), even if it's corrosive, toxic, or radioactive. Your body instantly disintegrates it or converts it to something harmless – you could

even “digest” a live grenade to prevent it from detonating! Only your digestive system is safe from harm, though. Without protective advantages, it can be tricky to get nasty stuff like nerve agents and plutonium to your mouth without touching it with your hands, breathing it, or being irradiated. You *can't* eat antimatter. +300%.

### Powering Up

Basic Universal Digestion really only suits biological body-control powers, unless the GM permits such exotica as the divine power of the All-Devouring Worm God. With Matter Eater, it fits matter-control super-powers and even cosmic powers. Talent adds to all HT rolls to avoid ill effects from ingested material due to causes *other* than toxicity; e.g., to avoid a split gut from a huge quantity of matter.



## Vampiric Bite

see p. B96

This is just a special case of the more generic Leech advantage; see p. 96. The GM should use Vampiric Bite as written only if it's the *sole* form of Leech in the setting. If several forms exist, replace Vampiric Bite with Leech (Heals FP, +60%; Blood Agent, -40%) plus Sharp Teeth (p. B91).

## Vibration Sense

see p. B96

Vibration Sense is *probably* realistic for animals equipped with antennae, whiskers, or fur growing on highly sensitive skin. Biologists aren't

sure how precise this sense is, but it does exist. The aquatic version of this trait is appropriate for the hydrophones (or “passive sonar”) carried by naval vessels.

This ability frequently shows up on monsters and supers, too. It's typically a targeting aid for fighting in the dark. The Universal enhancement is common in this context, and *definitely* cinematic.

### Alternatives

This sense lets one *fight* in the dark, but to *see* in the dark takes Dark Vision (p. 46), Hyperspectral Vision (p. 51), Infravision (p. B60), or Night Vision (p. B71). Likewise, Vibration Sense can *locate* invisible foes, but to *view* the target requires See Invisible (p. 72).

Those with a highly developed sense of touch have Sensitive Touch (p. 73) instead of or as well as Vibration Sense. *Active* sonar calls for the Sonar advantage (see *Scanning Sense*, p. 72). Sightless heroes often have all three traits.

### New Special Enhancements

*Sense of Perception:* Your ability doesn't depend on air or water currents tickling hairs or your skin. You detect vibrations by virtue of a “sixth sense” (e.g., psychokinetic feedback). This works even when you're in a sealed suit or a vacuum, and isn't subject to interference by environmental noise. This gives all the benefits of Universal; there's no need to take both enhancements. +100%.

*Targeting:* By taking an Aim maneuver, you can “lock onto” anything you've already detected and determine its precise range and speed, exactly as if you had a technological rangefinder. This gives you +3 to hit that target with an *aimed* ranged attack. +20%.

### Powering Up

Vibration Sense is an obvious candidate for an elemental Sound/Vibration power, but it's just as likely to be part of a chi power – an alternative to the Blind Fighting skill (p. B180). Those with Psychokinesis sometimes have this ability, too, typically with the Sense of Perception enhancement. Talent adds to Sense rolls made to use this advantage.

## Vision Advantages

All of the vision-related traits not discussed elsewhere in this chapter exist in the real world. Certain snakes possess Infravision (p. B60), many nocturnal predators have Night Vision (p. B71), beasts with widely set eyes enjoy Peripheral Vision (p. B74), eagles and other raptors benefit from Telescopic Vision (p. B92), and some birds and insects employ Ultravision (p. B94). Robots and vehicles often gain identical capabilities from sensors.

Supers and monsters can have any combination of these traits; no particular mix is forbidden. Individuals with the Blindness disadvantage *can't* have vision advantages, however. (Those who can see only infrared or ultraviolet light don't have Blindness – they have the 0-point version of Infravision or Ultravision.)

### Alternatives

Be sure to consider 360° Vision (p. 39), Dark Vision (p. 46), Hyperspectral Vision (p. 51), Microscopic Vision (p. 60), Penetrating Vision (p. 66), and See Invisible (p. 72). In addition, Scanning Sense (p. 72) and Vibration Sense (p. 86) are *similar* to – but not the same as – vision.

The ability to see radiation in a frequency range doesn't imply the capacity to *comprehend* signals in that band; get Telecommunication (p. 81) for that. For instance, a hero with Infravision could detect Infrared Communication in use, but only eavesdrop if he had that advantage himself.

### Powering Up

Vision-related abilities suit elemental Light powers and psionic Electrokinesis. A body-control or shapeshifting power of *any* source might let the user acquire these gifts by actively adapting his eyes. Talent adds to all Vision rolls when using any of these senses.

## Visualization

see p. B96

In mystical traditions that involve directing chi, commanding spirits, or casting spells, the practitioner must form a clear mental picture of the desired outcome to succeed. A

Digital Mind might do something similar, planning its actions several steps in advance, with access to a vast library of “worked examples.” Either mental process could explain Visualization.

Visualization is also a key ability of gods whose thoughts *shape* reality. The modifiers below are especially suitable for such beings. The GM might even permit Reduced Time 7 (+140%) to make this ability instantaneous. If so, it works in combat – but it only affects one die roll per turn, and the chaos of battle cuts the bonus to 1/3 usual.

### Alternatives

Luck (p. 59) and Super Luck (p. 80) can represent a similar capacity to influence the outcome of tasks through sheer willpower. Higher Purpose (p. B59) also grants improved odds of success through focused thinking – although the bonus is both more spontaneous (for instance, it can apply in combat) and more modest (a fixed +1).

### New Special Enhancements

**Blessing:** You can improve the odds of success of any task undertaken by a sapient being just by “thinking good thoughts” for a minute beforehand. You must be able to see or touch the beneficiary. When he rolls for his task, *he* gains the Visualization bonus. You can only have one bonus pending at a time – for yourself or someone else – but you can cancel this to assist another task. +100% if you can affect your rolls *and* those of others; +0% if you can aid others but *not* yourself.

**Cursing:** You can project “negative energy” to reduce others' odds of success. You must be able to see or touch your victim for a full minute while you visualize him failing at his task. Without special abilities of his own, he *won't* know that you're cursing him. When he carries out his task, he suffers a penalty equal in size to your usual bonus. You can only have one curse active at a time, but you can cancel it to curse another task. Your advantage doesn't affect *you* at all, and you can't combine Cursing with Blessing. If you can also produce beneficial effects, buy Visualization a second time without Cursing, and possibly with Blessing. +100%.

### Powering Up

Visualization is a classic ability of divine and spirit powers (the user prays to the gods or spirits for help), as well as chi and psi powers. It also suits probability-control powers, regardless of source. With Blessing or Cursing, Visualization is appropriate for moral powers, too – and even for the cosmic powers of the gods. Talent adds to the IQ roll to visualize, which improves the likely bonus. It doesn't add *directly* to the bonus, however.

## Walk on Air

see p. B97

In tales of the fantastic, both modern and traditional, the ability to walk on air isn't as common as true flight. However, it's a fair way to represent the capabilities of those who haven't quite mastered powers that will *eventually* let them fly. The GM should consider treating Walk on Air as a “placeholder” that the PCs can improve to Flight with earned points.

### Alternatives

The obvious comparison is with Flight (p. 50), which is far more capable (and twice as expensive). Those capable of limited aerial movement should compare Super Jump (p. 79).

### New Special Limitations

**Take Specific** (p. 112) if you can only walk on a particular type of gas. “Ordinary air” isn't allowed, but dust, smoke, and water vapor (clouds, steam, etc.) are all legal. This is worth -40% for most substances, but especially uncommon or obscure gases – like pure hydrogen – might be -60%, at the GM's discretion.

**Lighter Than Air:** Your ability works by making you lighter than air or gaseous. Wind moves you a yard per second in the direction it's blowing per 5 mph of wind speed. -10%.

**Maximum Height:** You can't walk very high off the ground. A 30-foot limit is -10%; a 10-foot limit is -20%; and a 5-foot limit is -25%.

**Planetary:** You push off against a planet's gravity field or walk along its magnetic field lines. Your ability is useless in the absence of a planet. -5%.

**Vertical Only:** You can only climb straight up, as if using a ladder made of air. You can't move laterally at all. -25%.



## Powering Up

Walk on Air suits almost any power that includes Flight. Elemental powers are especially likely, particularly Air, Earth (with Specific, Dust), Heat/Fire (with Specific, Smoke), Magnetism (with Planetary), and Water (with Specific, Vapor). Psychokinesis is another good fit – as is a spirit power that lets the user summon sylphs to bear him through the air. Cosmic and divine powers might let gods and their servants walk high above their flocks. Talent adds to all DX rolls for movement and to avoid or halt a fall.

## Walk on Liquid

see p. B97

Walk on Liquid is famous as a Biblical miracle, but doesn't *have* to be supernatural. Insects of family *Gerridae* stay afloat due to the interaction between surface tension and water-repelling hairs, and “walk” on water by generating tiny vortices that act like the oars of a rowboat. Diminutive supers, faerie, and miniature robots might enjoy similar capabilities.

Those who can only walk on a particular type of liquid have Specific (p. 112). Water, being extremely common, is only -10%. More unusual liquids are -40% to -60%, at the GM's discretion.

In cinematic games, the GM should consider allowing water-walkers to move at the speed of surface currents and waves if they can make a DX or Sports (Surfing) roll to hang on.

### Alternatives

Walk on Liquid only works on liquid water; take Terrain Adaptation (p. 83) to move easily across ice and snow. Individuals who can move rapidly *through* liquid have either Amphibious (p. 42) or No Legs (Aquatic) (p. B145), often with Enhanced Move (Water) (p. 49).

### New Special Enhancement

*Submerged:* You can walk while *under* liquid, too. Use the rules for Walk on Air, but a “fall” just means you're swimming instead of walking. +20%.

## Powering Up

The most obvious options are elemental Water power and divine and

spirit powers associated with entities that govern water. Individuals with highly developed chi powers might be able to run across liquids, too – a feat attributed to ninja in legend. The most cinematic shapeshifting powers might even let a man-sized super “walk” on water like an insect. Talent adds to DX and skill rolls for movement.



## Warp

see p. B97

Be it a supernatural miracle or a miracle of superscience, the capacity to travel at the speed of thought is a virtual necessity for any god, wizard, or ultra-tech space alien that wishes to be taken seriously. Examples from fiction include:

*Gate:* Mystics and ritualists with Warp traditionally open swirling vortices or glowing portals that *anyone* can step through. A teleporter who can do this requires Tunnel (+40% or +100%) – plus Extra Carrying Capacity, Extra-Heavy (+50%), if he and his companions can bring along anything they can lift. Those who draw magical circles should add Preparation Required, 1 minute (-20%), while those who activate exist-

ing artifacts need Special Portal (from -20% for mirrors to -80% for a tiny number of sites of ancient power).

*Matter Transmission (MT):* Cyborgs, robots, and vehicles can have superscience MT devices built in. Most have orbital range and *require* the user to set coordinates, giving Range Limit (-5%) and Blind Only (-50%). Some transmitters let the user bring along anything he can carry (Extra Carrying Capacity, Extra-Heavy, +50%); others, especially implants, send only his body (Naked, -30%). High-quality technology grants No Strain (+25%), Reliable (+5% per +1), or both. Experimental prototypes, on the other hand, tend to have Drift (-15%).

*Psionic Teleportation:* Psionic teleporters can typically specify range and direction, and track psychic residues left by other teleporters. These capabilities call for Blind (+50%) and Tracking (+20%). Weak psis often have Range Limit; for a range of less than 10 yards, take Reduced Range and Range Limit, -50%. Stronger psis enjoy Extra Carrying Capacity and Reliable. Astral travelers need Projection (-0%), and use Astral Projection – not Psionic Teleportation – as their power modifier (either is -10%).

*Stardrive:* Some vehicles and supers vanish from one location and appear at another by moving through a realm where faster-than-light (FTL) travel is possible. This calls for Hyperjump (-25% or -50%). Most FTL drives either demand precise coordinates (Blind Only, -50%) or require a “stargate” (Special Portal, -40%). However, the predictability of stardrives tends to offset these limitations, giving No Strain (+25%), Reliable +5 to +10 (+25% to +50%), and/or Tracking (+20%).

*Super-Teleportation:* Supers and gods with Warp generally use it as if it were second nature. Most have Blink (+25%), No Strain (+25%), Reliable, and no limitations other than a power modifier – although “combat teleports” are sometimes short-ranged, with Range Limit, 10 yards (-50%). Adept supers often have a lot of Extra Carrying Capacity. They *can* grapple enemies and teleport with them, but this requires an Attack followed by a Ready to activate Warp, and the victim may try to break free in between.

Always spell out what goes on during the extra preparation time to reduce penalties: elaborate rituals, psychic visualization, precise computation of target coordinates, etc. Also note whether FP spent to offset penalties correspond to an expenditure of mana or chi, physical or psychic strain, or energy used to boost transmitter power. Such details convert Warp from a generic advantage to an interesting ability.

If the GM feels that a given modifier makes Warp too effective – or too cheap – he’s welcome to change its cost or forbid it altogether. This is true for any trait, but Warp merits closer policing because of its tendency to short-circuit plots.

### Alternatives

Warp with Hyperjump isn’t the only way to handle FTL travel; Flight (p. 50) with extreme levels of Enhanced Move (p. 49) is equally valid. To travel to other times or dimensions, take Jumper (p. 57). To teleport items *to* you, buy either Snatcher (p. 76) or an Affliction (p. 39) with Advantage, Warp.

### New Special Enhancements

**Blink:** Your ability works reflexively in times of stress. Once per turn, you can dodge an attack by making an IQ roll *without* the -10 for lack of preparation. Roll randomly for direction. You appear in the first *safe* open space in that direction. If there’s no place like that within 10 yards, you go nowhere and your dodge fails. Blink is triggered by fear and adrenaline; thus, it generally only works in combat, although the GM may let you roll in other dangerous situations. Blink is incompatible with Hyperjump. +25%.

**No Strain:** You ability isn’t vulnerable to strain and burnout. You still go nowhere on a failure – and *somewhere else* on a critical failure – but you can always make an immediate repeated attempt at no extra penalty, and your Warp advantage never “burns out.” +25%.

**Tracking:** You can “follow” another teleporter. Apply all the usual modifiers to your roll, plus -1 per yard of distance between you and his departure point. The *time* since he teleported also affects your roll. Use the modifiers for preparation time but

reverse the sign, giving from +10 if he just left to -10 if he left eight hours ago. Add a further -1 per doubling of time after that. If your quarry departed from the same point more than once, you can only follow his most recent trip. Success means you appear at his arrival point . . . even if he went somewhere bad due to a critical failure or Drift. Failure by 1 means you follow but suffer the effects of Drift. Greater failure works as usual for Warp. +20%.

**Tunnel:** Using your ability always creates a portal of about your size, which lingers for 3d seconds. *Anyone* may step through it. +40% if it forms after *you* teleport; +100% if it forms beforehand, and you must be free to move to use it but don’t *have* to go through at all (the GM may allow this version for Jumper and Permeation, too).

### New Special Limitations

**Anchored:** You can only teleport to a specific site or item (e.g., a magical beacon). You can’t go *anywhere* else. This is incompatible with all special modifiers except Extra Carrying Capacity, Naked, No Strain, and Reliable. -50% if you teleport to a single site, but can switch this by physically visiting a new site for a minute; -60% if you teleport to a specific item that you can physically move from location to location, but that enemies could steal or place in danger; -80% for a single, fixed site.

**Blind Only:** You *must* teleport to a set of coordinates exactly as if using the Blind enhancement, even if you can see or visualize your destination. Thus, you’re always at -5, and each +1 costs 2 FP. Blind Only is mutually exclusive with Blind. -50%.

**Drift:** You never arrive right on target. You appear at a random location somewhere in a circle with a radius equal to 1% of the distance you teleported (minimum one yard); e.g., if you teleported 10 miles, you’d materialize somewhere in a 0.1-mile circle around your target. The better your IQ roll, the closer you’ll be to your target, but it’s up to the GM exactly where you appear. On a critical failure, you’re likely to appear high in the air or underground. -15%.

**Projection:** You teleport your mind as a “ghost” while your body stays

behind. See the Projection limitation under *Jumper* (p. 58) for details. Projection is incompatible with Extra Carrying Capacity, Naked, and Tunnel.

**Special Portal:** You need a particular sort of gateway to use your advantage. The value depends on the rarity of the required portal (GM’s decision). “Any reflective surface” is -20%; man-made “stargates” in every important star system are -40%; and a handful of ancient stone circles that only work a few nights of the year are -80%.

### Powering Up

Warp best suits supernatural powers, particularly cosmic, magical, and psionic ones. Time- and space-warping powers of almost any source are also likely to include it.

Talent benefits the IQ roll to activate Warp, and is cumulative with the bonus from the Reliable enhancement. It also adds to Body Sense (p. B181) rolls to reorient oneself after teleporting.

### Wild Talent

**see p. B99**

In its most basic form, Wild Talent represents *inspiration*. This is often attributable to a god, a spirit (guardian angel, genius, or muse), or personal enlightenment (“harmony with the Tao”). Below are two other possibilities.

**Hidden Gifts:** Wild Talent could be a spontaneous manifestation of unrealized natural aptitude – or skills from a past life. Under stress, these gifts emerge in what’s usually a learning experience. Take Retention (+25%), Emergencies Only (-30%), and Focused (-20%) in the area of aptitude. A “natural spell-caster” with Magery needs Focused, Magical, while someone who uses Reawakened (p. B80) to recall past lives has Focused, Past Lives.

**Telepresence:** Someone with Digital Mind or the Machine meta-trait might be able to ask a “remote operator” with useful skills to take control of his body for the duration of a task. He remains aware of what his body is doing, but he has *no* access to his operator’s knowledge. Add External (-20%), and use Focused (-20%) to limit skills to those known by the remote operator(s).



## Alternatives

Wild Talent enables inspired *deeds*. Intuition (p. 56) better represents inspired *choices*, while Blessed (p. 43), Oracle (p. 65), and Precognition (p. 68) are all more appropriate for inspired *knowledge*. For a completely different take on inspiration, consider Illuminated (p. B60).

Those contemplating Wild Talent should also look at Modular Abilities (p. 62). It, too, can grant access to a wide range of skills initially unknown to the user. It's less spontaneous, but much more flexible.

## New Special Enhancement

**Wild Ability:** Only for those with powers. In addition to unknown skills, you can use *abilities* you don't have. Any such ability must be part of one of your powers, and can't have modifiers other than those required by the power it belongs to (for instance, its power modifier). You get one "use" of the ability – which means exactly what it does for Limited Use (p. B112). If the ability comes in dice or levels, you produce effects equal to one level or 30 points worth, whichever is *better*. +50%.

## New Special Limitation

**External:** Some remote party communicates the necessary skills to you. Specify whether they use radio, telepathy, or something else (for ideas, see *Telecommunication*, p. B91). Enemies might be able to jam the signal, compromise the person at the other end, etc. -20%.

## Powering Up

Wild Talent is traditional for chi powers and appropriate for divine and spirit powers. It might even suit Telepathy power, if given External (and possibly Focused, but only if the

source is one specific person – "people in general" is too broad to qualify). Gods are likely to have *many* levels of Wild Talent as part of a cosmic power. Talent gives a bonus to the die roll to use any skill or ability granted by Wild Talent.

## NEW ADVANTAGES

The **Basic Set** includes *hundreds* of advantages. With the general modifiers on pp. B101-117 and pp. 99-112 – and each advantage's special modifiers – it's almost trivial to create vast numbers of abilities. Still, there are a few fictional and traditional abilities that these options can't emulate. Below are some new advantages to cover this ground.

All of these traits are customizable by design, to make it easier to create interesting abilities . . . but some players may be tempted to abuse this flexibility. The GM should examine each advantage and impose whatever restrictions he deems necessary for *his* campaign. In particular, it's probably wise to allow them only as part of a power.

## Control

You can shape and move a particular category of matter, energy, or force (your "element"). The higher your level of Control, the larger the quantity you can affect. Cost per level depends on how significant your element is likely to be *on an adventure*:

**Common:** An extremely broad or prevalent category such as Earth (including asphalt, brick, ceramic, concrete, and rock, but not purified

metals), Fire, Gravity, Light, Metal, Plastic (any manufactured structural material that's neither Earth nor Metal, including oil-based plastics and rubber), Sound, Water (including steam and ice), or Wood (dead plant matter, but not fossils, oil, etc.). 20 *points/level*.

**Occasional:** A broad subcategory of a Common element, such as Ceramics (including glass), Ferrous Metals (iron, nickel, and cobalt – and note that steel is made of iron), Ice, Steam (all hot or cold water vapor), or Stone (brick, concrete, and rock). Most forms of energy are Common, but the GM *might* allow Infrared, Ultrasonics, and so on at this rarity level. 15 *points/level*.

**Rare:** Any relatively specific substance not already given as Common or Occasional, such as Brick, Iron, Paper, or Rubber. 10 *points/level*.

The GM should price other elements by comparison, and may allow "Very Common" categories (e.g., "All electromagnetic radiation") for 25 or 30 *points/level*. Control isn't available for machinery or living beings; to create animal-, plant-, and machine-control abilities, modify advantages such as Mind Control and Possession. Control over complex *processes* (e.g., chemical reactions) requires an entire power – not just a single Control ability.

## Limits of Control

The most important limit on Control is that you can only use it if your element is present. Control does *nothing* without your element, and doesn't let you call your element into existence (for that, buy Create).

For solids and liquids, you can affect up to 10 × (level squared) lbs. of matter in the form of a single object or amorphous mass. For example, Control 3 (Iron) would let you affect a 90-lb. iron ingot or even 90 lbs. of iron filings in a heap . . . but against a foe with a 3-lb. sword, 4-lb. helmet, and 18-lb. breastplate, all iron, you could only affect *one* target, even though the total weight is much less than your limit.

For gases, energy, and forces – and diffuse, airborne solids, like dust clouds – you can affect a circular area with a radius equal to your level in yards. Should height matter, the area





is four yards tall. The target item must be *continuous*. For instance, Control 10 (Fire) would let you control a blaze 10 yards in radius, but not “all candle flames within 10 yards.”

Finally, Control over matter *doesn't work* on complex, manufactured artifacts unless they're made almost entirely of your element. Control (Metal) could affect a sword or a revolver, but not a ray gun with only a few metallic parts.

## *Control does **nothing** without your element, and doesn't let you call your element into existence.*

### **Establishing Control**

To control solids or liquids, you must touch the target object or material. This takes a second and requires a successful unarmed melee attack. If someone is wearing or carrying the target item, he may defend against your touch. If your touch succeeds, make an immediate IQ roll to establish control.

To control gases, energy, or forces, you must reach into or stand within the desired area of effect. To establish control, take a Concentrate maneuver and make an IQ roll.

If your target is *already* under someone else's direct control, roll a Quick Contest. You roll against IQ; they roll against IQ if using Control or Telekinesis, their skill level if using a spell, and so on. You must *win* to establish control. Likewise, others can overpower your Control by winning a Quick Contest against your IQ.

### **Effects of Control**

After establishing control, you can reshape the target. Forming a simple shape (blob, column, sphere, etc.) requires a Concentrate maneuver but no die roll. If the result is meant to be beautiful or functional, though, the GM may deem the effort a long task (see p. B346) and require skill rolls against Armoury, Artist, Machinist, and so on. You *can* work without tools, but you must know what you're doing.

You can also cause the target to elongate or flow at a Move equal to your Control level. This requires constant concentration. The target needn't remain in contact with you, but Control *isn't* Telekinesis. You can make a solid or liquid ooze, roll, or seep along the ground or a surface, and even reshape it in ways that defy gravity, but only gas or energy can actually fly through the air – and you can't “shape” a *force* at all.

For energy, each level of Control gives the *effect* of one two-dimensional reflector or insulator with length and width in yards no larger than your Control level. For instance, Control 3 (Light) would let you route light around obstacles as if you had three mirrors up to 3 yards × 3 yards in size, or block light completely as if you had three 3 yard × 3 yard screens.

For a force, each level of Control lets you adjust the force's strength by ±10% within your radius; e.g., Control 10 (Gravity) could make everything weightless (-100%) or double all weights (+100%), with effects as described in *Different Gravity* (p. B350). This only affects the gross force on entire objects. To disintegrate things by reducing internal binding forces, buy an Innate Attack.

Control includes the ability to make minor, “cosmetic” changes. For instance, Control (Light) can give a colored cast to everything in the area, and Control (Metal) can clean corrosion off metal and make it gleam. You can produce such effects incidentally when reshaping or moving your element.

When you stop concentrating, you immediately give up control. Stable forms become permanent, while unstable ones collapse instantly.

### **Control in Combat**

Defensively, Control over matter lets you move or shape your element to obstruct attacks. This requires a

Concentrate maneuver. Such barriers give whatever cover the material *normally* provides. For instance, Control (Metal) might let you shape a steel table into armor with the DR of steel by making an Armoury roll, while Control (Earth) could stir up a sand cloud, with the usual effects on vision and lasers.

Control over energy or force is too slow to stop damage, but a Concentrate maneuver lets you eliminate -1 per level in combat penalties or add +1 per level to resistance rolls – your choice – for you and any allies in your area of effect, as long as you can explain the effects in terms of your element. For instance, with Control 5 (Light), you could focus available light onto all foes in your area, allowing your side to ignore up to -5 in darkness penalties . . . or throw up a barrier that gives everyone behind it +5 HT to resist blinding flashes.

Offensively, Control is more limited. By concentrating, you can move an *existing* hazard – gas, fire, radiation, etc., as befits your element – onto a foe, but this is only as harmful as the underlying substance. Nonhazardous liquids or solids merely impede his movement, like any object of that weight. In all cases, your foe can dodge.

*Getting Tricky:* If a foe is standing in an area where you control matter, energy, or a force – or if you can move matter or energy onto him – you may inflict combat penalties on him. This requires flexibility on the GM's part: Control 3 (Sound) might give -3 to Hearing rolls (e.g., to detect a ninja sneaking up), Control 10 (Earth) might cause a mini-earthquake good for -10 to attack rolls, and Control (Gravity) would simply produce the usual penalties that go along with reduced or elevated gravity. Tricks like this require a Concentrate maneuver and an IQ or Tactics roll.

### **Special Enhancements**

Persistent (+40%) lets the effects of Control endure for 10 seconds after you stop concentrating. Ranged (+40%) allows you to use Control at a distance. You can't add the Area Effect enhancement, though; to affect more of your element, buy a higher level of Control. Additional enhancements include:

**Collective:** You aren't limited to a single object or continuous area. Your ability affects *all* instances of your element in a circle with a radius equal to your level in yards. You still can't affect more than  $10 \times (\text{level squared})$  lbs. of a solid or liquid. For instance, Control 2 (Metal) with Collective lets you affect up to 40 lbs. of any one metal in a two-yard circle; in the example under *Limits of Control*, you could affect the sword, helmet, and breastplate. Collective is unnecessary for forces, which already work this way – a fair trade for the fact that you can't reshape them. +100%.

**Natural Phenomena:** Your element is a large-scale aspect of nature. On an earthlike world, Oceans and Weather are Common; subcategories such as Currents, Precipitation, Waves, and Winds are Occasional; and phenomena like Hail and Snow are Rare. The GM sets rarity elsewhere. This ability isn't Create; it only works if the necessary air, water, etc. are present. Area of effect is  $0.1 \times \text{level miles}$  in radius. If your roll succeeds, every three *full* levels of Control let you produce effects that give -1 or +1 to rolls your element could hinder or help, relative to the prevailing conditions. You can apply this modifier to Influence rolls (to impress others), Survival rolls, Strategy rolls, and anything else the GM allows. Be sure to describe the effects you're producing. The GM may overrule you if the rules or common sense suggest that these conditions are outside the range of modifiers you can produce. For instance, Control 10 (Oceans) could roughen or calm seas in a 1-mile radius, for  $\pm 3$  to die rolls. In rough water that gives -4 to Boating rolls, you could specify any modifier between -1 (a little foam) and -7 (huge breakers). +100%.

### Special Limitation

**Cosmetic:** You can *only* make superficial changes, such as tinting the color of light or putting a shine on metal. You can't truly move or reshape your element. -80%.

### Alternatives

Binding (p. 42), Obscure (p. 64), and Temperature Control (p. 83) can produce similar effects without allowing open-ended control. To do damage with an element, use Innate Attack (p. 53) – adding Malediction (p. B106)

if the attack affects the element within the victim's body. Those who can hurl objects around rather than cause them to creep or flow have Telekinesis (p. 82). Apply Environmental (p. 110) to these abilities if they depend on pre-existent materials or conditions. To *summon* the element, get Create (below).

Any of the above traits could have a Link (p. B106) with Control. Individuals who can control an element precisely enough to produce several of these effects should consider Modular Abilities (p. 62).

### Powering Up

Control is an obvious match for elemental powers. It's also standard for divine and spirit powers associated with gods and spirits that govern elements, and the cosmic powers of these entities. Adding the Natural Phenomena enhancement makes Control suitable for nature-control powers, too. Talent adds to all IQ and skill rolls to establish or use Control.

### Create

#### Variable

You can create an "element" – a specific category of matter or energy – out of nothing. To do so, take a Concentrate maneuver and roll vs. IQ. Success means your element appears. A solid or liquid coalesces in hand or within arm's reach, while gas or energy appears in the area surrounding you or in an area you're touching (your choice in both cases). Failure means nothing happens. Critical failure means your element appears, but

in a way that's inconvenient or dangerous – the GM should be creative!

Creating something out of nothing is *hard*. Each attempt, successful or not, requires 2 FP. There's also a character point cost for permanent creation (see below).

Your level of Create determines how much of your element you can conjure. Point cost per level is a function of the *breadth* of your ability, not the rarity of your element:

**Large Category:** Solid, Liquid, and Gas let you create any matter that's *naturally* in that state in your present environment. Organic and Inorganic let you create any material of the appropriate category, in the state it normally takes in your environment. Important options for energy are Electromagnetic Waves (all EM radiation) and Physical Waves (all sound and vibration). *40 points/level.*

**Medium Category:** A broad subset of a single Large category, *or* the area of overlap between two Large categories, *or* a specific class of manufactured substances. Acid, Biochemicals, Drugs, Earth, and Metal qualify. Options for energy include Electricity, Sound, Long-Wave EM (radio, microwaves, and far IR), Light (IR, visible, and UV), and Short-Wave EM (far UV, X-rays, and gamma rays). A dramatically important category that includes aspects of matter *and* energy is Radiation (alpha and beta particles, gamma rays, etc.). *20 points/level.*

**Small Category:** A narrow subset of a Large category, *or* a broad subset of a Medium category, *or* one fairly specific material that comes in many

### Godlike Control

The GM may allow Control over ubiquitous, abstract elements such as Space and Time. This should cost *at least* 30 points/level. Detailed rules are beyond the scope of this book, but the GM who wishes to "wing it" can apply  $\pm 1$  per level to any task he feels the Control could influence (see *Control in Combat*, p. 91), and then determine the game-world effects by interpreting this as a modifier normally associated with the element. For instance, Control (Space) 6 might give a range modifier from -6 to +6, which corresponds to a distance distortion between  $\times 10$  and  $\times 0.1$  on the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550); Control (Time) 5 might give from -5 to +5 to time-dependent tasks, which the *Time Spent* (p. B346) rules suggest would be a time distortion between  $\times 0.5$  and  $\times 30$ .

varieties. Useful examples include Ferrous Metals (iron, nickel, and cobalt), Fire (any incandescent gas), Fossil Fuels (coal, natural gas, oil, etc.), and Wood – and, for energy, things like Gamma Rays, Infrared, Ultrasonics, and Visible Light. *10 points/level.*

*Specific Item:* A single chemical element or compound, such as Iron, Salt, or Water, or a commonly occurring mixture, such as Air or Brine. You *can* choose nasty materials such as Plutonium, TNT, and VX Gas, but you won't necessarily be able to create a useful amount. *5 points/level.*

### Limits on Quantity

There are strict limits on the amount of matter or energy you can create:

- *Solids and liquids* can weigh up to  $10 \times (\text{level squared})$  lbs. – 10 lbs. at level 1, 40 lbs. at level 2, 90 lbs. at level 3, and so on.

- *Gases* can fill an area up to one yard in radius per level.

- *Energy* appears in a quantity sufficient to do  $1,000 \times (\text{level squared})$  kJ of useful work, released too gradually to inflict damage. The GM should limit power output to 15 kW or so. To store this energy, you need a battery or equivalent technology.

Created matter (but not energy) is *unstable*. It vanishes in 10 seconds unless you use character points to “stabilize” it. Each point spent stabilizes a quantity worth 10% of the campaign's average starting wealth. (This is just the tradeoff used for *Trading Points for Money*, p. B26.) The GM determines the cash value per pound of matter – a ton of gold costs more to stabilize than a ton of sand.

Points spent to stabilize matter come from your “Creation Pool,” a number of points set aside for the purpose. You can't apply *any* modifiers to these points. Points used to stabilize matter are unavailable until reclaimed – which causes the matter to vanish. If the matter is crafted into an object, the item is unmade when the matter vanishes. If the matter is mixed with other materials (e.g., alloyed), you must separate it to reclaim your points; this can be a tedious process. If it's destroyed or transformed (e.g., eaten), you can't reclaim your points – they're *gone*. You

can increase your Creation Pool with unspent points at any time.

If economics are unimportant to the campaign, the GM is free to waive point costs for permanent matter. Alternatively, he can require those with Create to start with Wealth or Independent Income – or a Vow never to use Create to produce wealth.

If your ability lets you create a *dangerous* element, you can opt to create a minuscule amount in combat without worrying about long-term stability. It just produces its effects and vanishes, like matter or energy projected by an Innate Attack. The following effects are possible, provided your element includes suitable materials:

- *Corrosive* solids and liquids appear in quantity and concentration sufficient to inflict 1d corrosion damage per level, *once*, on a single subject. You must immerse a victim in the substance or throw it at him to do damage.

- *Poisonous* solids and liquids appear in a dosage sufficient to inflict 1d toxic damage per level on one subject. Method of delivery, delay, resistance rolls, cycles, and so on are as usual for the poison (see *Poison Examples*, p. B439). Damage is *total* damage, over all cycles.

- *Noxious gases* fill a circular area with a radius in yards equal to your level, to a height of four yards, for 10 seconds. They affect everyone exposed. Use the rules for noxious solids and liquids (poisonous or corrosive, as appropriate), but total damage is 1 *point* per level. Convert 4 points or more of damage to dice (see p. B269).

- *Fire and hazardous energy* (electricity, microwaves, intense sound, etc.) fill an area identical to that for a noxious gas, and inflict 1 point of damage of a suitable type per level *each second* on anyone who stays in the area for at least a second. Convert 4+ points of damage to dice. DR protects normally. Energy dissipates after 10 seconds, but fires it sets burn for as long as they have fuel, devices it overloads remain broken, and so on – these effects don't vanish with the energy.

- *Radioactive* materials work as poisonous ones. *Radiation fields* use the rules for hazardous energy. All “damage” is in rads.

- *Explosives* appear in quantity sufficient to cause a blast that inflicts 1 point of crushing damage per level, and vanish if not detonated within 10 seconds.

If the element would cause an effect other than damage – blindness for bright light, deafness for loud sound, etc. – treat it like an Affliction instead. The HT roll to resist is at -1 per level of Create for a single subject, -1 per three *full* levels for an area.

Energy or matter created as an attack is *by definition* of a quantity and potency that produces the above effects and then vanishes. Such rapid dispersal is totally unrealistic for substances lethal in microscopic doses . . . but no less realistic than the ability to conjure your element in the first place.



### Other Restrictions

Create lets you conjure *anything* in your category. This may give access to several of the options above; e.g., Create (Electricity) could charge a battery or fill an area with lightning, while Create (Organic) could produce corrosives, poisons, or explosives. You must specify exactly what you're creating, and for what purpose, before you roll the dice. If you don't, the GM decides what happens . . .

If it isn't clear which limit applies – or if more than one limit could apply – the GM selects the one that best suits your intentions and the demands of drama.

Create produces bulk matter, not specific shapes, much less machines. To create pre-shaped matter, buy both Create and Control (p. 90), and connect them with a Link. Such a combination *can* create machines; this is a long task (see p. B346) that requires skill rolls, as explained for Control.



The GM can bend these rules as needed – but be warned that ignoring *Limits on Quantity* can unbalance a campaign.

### Special Enhancements

To conjure “essential” elements like those created by the Essential Fire and Essential Water spells in **GURPS Magic**, add Cosmic, +50%. Ranged (+40%) lets Create work at a distance, but never *inside* a foe. The GM might even permit attack enhancements for elements useful in combat. Area Effect and Extended Duration are off limits, however. To blanket a wider area, buy more levels of Create. To keep matter around indefinitely, use your Creation Pool. Additional enhancements include:

*Destruction:* You can destroy your element, subject to the same restrictions on type and quantity described for creation under *Limits on Quantity*. To destroy something, you must touch it (or stand amidst it, for gas or energy), take a Concentrate maneuver, and pay 2 FP. Then make an IQ roll. Success means the target is *gone*. You don't have to spend character points to do this. Destruction only affects inanimate objects. +100% if you can also create your element; +0% if you can only destroy it.

*Transmutation:* You can convert existing matter or energy into another form. The quantities involved depend on your level. Work out the limits as usual for the initial and final items, and use the *smaller* of the two. If the product is worth more than what you started with, it's unstable and will revert to its original form after 10 seconds unless you stabilize it with your Creation Pool – in which case point cost depends on the *difference* in value. This might be why alchemists can't transmute large amounts of lead into gold! Transmutation costs 1 FP per use. Otherwise, it works like unmodified Create. +50% per transmutation, which can be within your category or between your category and another of the same size, in one direction. For instance, Create (Metal) could have Metal to Metal, Metal to Earth, or Earth to Metal for +50% apiece; any two for +100%; or all three for +150%. Add -100% if you can only transmute, not create; if so, you can't also take Destruction.

### Alternatives

Those who just want an elemental attack are better off with Innate Attack (p. 53). To conjure complex objects (e.g., machines), take Snatcher (p. 76) with the Creation enhancement; to create images, use Illusion (below). If you can create your element with enough precision to replicate all of these abilities and more, consider Modular Abilities (p. 62) instead.

Several magic spells work a lot like Create, including Create Air, Create Earth, Create Fire, and Create Water (see pp. B242-253). **GURPS Magic** offers many other options.

### Powering Up

Create is a standard part of elemental powers. There are many possible matches. For instance, Create (Gas) and Create (Air) both suit Air power . . . and with Destruction at the +0% level, either might suit a Vacuum power, too.

Divine and spirit powers associated with entities that govern elements are also likely to offer Create. Gods themselves frequently have access to *many* forms of Create as part of their cosmic powers. Powerful wizards might even obtain Create through magical powers.

Talent adds to all IQ rolls to use Create.

### Illusion

#### 25 points

You can create lifelike illusions. By default, these are constructs of light and sound that appear in a two-yard radius around you. You can always specify a smaller area; e.g., to create an illusionary gun in your hand. Illusions lack mass and substance, and can't affect material objects in *any* way besides hiding or illuminating them.

To activate your ability, take a Concentrate maneuver. This requires no special die roll. You can create animated, three-dimensional images of anything you can visualize – in any spectrum you can see – synchronized with sounds in the frequency range audible to you. These persist for as long as you concentrate.

Illusions serve mainly to deceive and distract. Roll a Quick Contest of IQ against the Perception of anyone in

a position to notice your illusion. To save time, the GM can roll just once for hordes of foes with the same Per. If you win, the illusion seems real *to that individual*. The GM decides how he reacts. He might attack an illusionary monster; try to sit on an illusionary chair; and so on. Otherwise, he spots a flaw and realizes that the illusion isn't real (although he might not know it's an *illusion*).

Illusion sometimes requires a skill roll instead of an IQ roll. In particular, to make an illusion disturbing enough to cause a Fright Check, you must win a Quick Contest of Artist (Illusion) skill against the higher of IQ or Perception for each victim. To trick someone into believing in an illusion of someone he knows, roll the *lower* of your Acting or Artist (Illusion) skill against the *higher* of your target's IQ or Perception.

Roll a new Quick Contest when someone you've already fooled suddenly changes how he's interacting with the illusion; e.g., he attacks a monster or falls through a chair that isn't there. If he wins or ties, you don't simulate a believable response to his action (such as the monster dodging or the chair slipping) and he catches on.

*Modifiers:* Your victim gets +4 if someone who knows about the illusion warns him, or if you critically fail in a Quick Contest against someone else. He gets +10 if you create the illusion unobtrusively and in plain sight, or if he examines the illusion with a sense you can't deceive – most often touch. At the GM's option, inappropriate illusions (e.g., a pack of rabid wolves in a submarine) give a further +1 to +10, while believable ones (e.g., you pull out an illusionary gun) give from -1 to -5. If the final modifier is a net bonus, *halve* it if the victim is aware of superhuman powers but not the details of *your* powers . . . for all he knows, you *can* summon rabid wolves!

You can easily create babbling crowds and menacing hordes, but it's harder to animate a convincing semblance of an illusionary person for direct, personal interaction (dueling, conversation, etc.). Multiple fake people are progressively more robotic and unresponsive; anyone rolling a Quick Contest to spot the illusion is at +4 per construct after the first.

Believable or not, illusions obstruct vision as effectively as the real thing. They don't block weapons, though. Foes aware of your location can simply shoot through your "cover" . . . and nothing prevents *unbelieving* opponents from walking through your illusions to reach you.

### Special Enhancements

Add Area Effect (+50%/level) to increase radius and Ranged (+40%) to project illusions at a distance. Many illusionists also have Telekinesis (p. 82), and add a Link (p. B106) to give the impression that their illusions can interact with the material world – a convincing combination good for +4 in the Quick Contest. Additional options include:

*Extended:* You can fool other senses. Extending the visual or auditory range beyond your own costs +1% per point the affected hearing and vision advantages are worth; e.g., +10% to deceive Infravision. Totally new senses (Radar, taste/smell, touch, Vibration Sense, etc.) cost +20% apiece. Extended, Touch creates the *sensation* of substance, but the illusion still can't affect the material world; for that, link Illusion to Telekinesis.

*Independence:* You don't need to concentrate to maintain your illusions. Once you've created them, you can hand off control to your subconscious. Independent illusions can respond in simple ways, but can't *change* unless you concentrate. For instance, an illusionary pistol would make a menacing "click" as you cocked it, and illusionary wolves would shy from a torch or snarl if someone came close, but to turn the gun into a sword or the wolves into tigers would require concentration. In particular, illusionary people can't converse unless you actually concentrate. +40%.

*Initiative:* This improved form of Independence provides all the benefits of that enhancement (don't take both) and gives illusionary people the semblance of free will. They can converse and move freely within your area of effect as if they had your DX, IQ, and skills. This requires *no* concentration. Treat these phantasms as insubstantial NPCs who are completely loyal to you, except that they don't have thoughts and can't carry out tasks for

you – they simply react to their environment. +100%.

*Mental:* Instead of creating images that everyone can see, you project illusions into the mind of a specific target. You can affect anyone you can *touch* or *see*; the Ranged enhancement is unnecessary. Take a Concentrate maneuver and roll a Quick Contest: your IQ vs. the victim's Will. You're at -1 per person already affected. If you win, you seize control of his perceptions and can feed him artificial sensory impressions, including subtle edits (e.g., making a \$5 bill look like a \$100 bill), total fabrications (e.g., he's standing on Mars without a spacesuit), and complete sensory deprivation (unless you have Auditory Only or Visual Only). These illusions never cause physical harm. Area of effect is irrelevant – it's all in his head. You don't control your victim's *thoughts*, however. If he decides that what he's experiencing makes no sense, he can order his body to act on the last set of impressions he felt were reliable. If he can't see the real world, he acts at -10 – but he can still act. +100%.



*Stigmata:* Only available in conjunction with Mental. Your illusions are so realistic that they cause the subject to experience harmful stress or shock. To use Stigmata, you must first successfully inflict mental illusions upon your victim. Then roll a Quick Contest of IQ vs. his Will once per

second. If you win, you inflict *actual injury* equal to your margin of victory. Specify whatever damaging effect you like – shot, eaten by tigers, fried at ground zero of a nuclear blast, etc. Suitable wounds appear on your victim's body. Those nearby can see the wounds but not their cause; as far as they can tell, the victim is experiencing a stroke, heart attack, or similar distress. Should your victim fall unconscious for any reason (including the injury caused by this ability), you can no longer harm him. +100%.

### Special Limitation

*Auditory Only:* You can create sounds but not images. This is incompatible with Extended and Stigmata. -70%.

*Static:* Your illusions are unanimated "stills." You can't create any effect that changes or responds to the environment. Those who perceive the illusion get +4 to realize it's fake if it depicts something that's usually stationary, as the reflections and shadows aren't right. If the illusion is of something that normally moves, the bonus is +10. Static illusions are mostly useful for concealment. Static is incompatible with Auditory Only, Independent, Initiative, and Stigmata. -30%.

*Visual Only:* You can create images but not sounds. This is incompatible with Auditory Only and Stigmata. -30%.

### Alternatives

To conjure *material* creations, take Create (p. 92) for bulk matter, Snatcher (p. 76) for complex artifacts, and Allies (p. 41) with the Summonable enhancement for creatures. If the goal is simply to generate concealment, Obscure (p. 64) is cheaper.

### Powering Up

Illusion enhanced with Mental is a common Telepathy ability in fiction. Elemental Light power, psionic Electrokinetics, and other energy-related powers tend to generate purely *physical* illusions. The magical powers of fantasy illusionists can often create either kind of illusion. Even divine and spirit powers might include Illusion, for "sacred visions" or impressing worshippers. Talent adds to all rolls for any form of Illusion.



## Leech

### 25 points for level 1 + 4 points/additional level

Giant leeches, striges, vampires, and many other traditional and B-movie monsters suck the life from their victims. “Psychic vampires” and evil spirits usually dispense with the traditional bite. Creepy supers sometimes even have *ranged* life-stealing abilities.

To use Leech, you must maintain *ongoing* contact with your victim; a brief touch isn’t enough. In combat, you must grapple or pin him – which is trivial if he’s unconscious or otherwise helpless. Out of combat, options include a long handshake, hug, or more intimate embrace.

While you maintain contact, each level of Leech lets you drain 1 HP per second from your victim. You heal 1 HP per *full* 3 HP you steal. You can’t raise your HP above normal, but you can continue the drain without healing yourself. The drain ends instantly if you release your victim, or if he breaks free or dies. If he survives, the stolen HP heal like any other injury.

Leech 1 costs 25 points; successive levels cost 4 points apiece. For example, to drain 10 HP per second requires Leech 10, which costs  $25 + 9 \times 4 = 61$  points. At the GM’s option, points of drain convert to dice as described under *Modifying Dice + Adds* (p. B269); e.g., 4 HP become 1d, 7 HP become 2d, and 10 HP become 2d+3.

Leech only affects living beings. It can’t steal HP from machines or inanimate objects. However, the GM may allow a variant ability – Leech (Mechanical) – that *only* affects machines. The point cost is identical. With Steal HT, this could represent the ability of “gremlins” to cause machines to fail and break down. Steal FP is off limits.

### Special Enhancements

To work at a distance, Leech *requires* Malediction 1 or 2 (+100% or +150%) on top of Ranged (+40%). Roll the Quick Contest of Will for Malediction every second (once per turn, in combat). Each victory lets you drain 1 HP per level. You can only affect one victim at a time. A few special enhancements are common:

*Accelerated Healing:* You heal 1 HP per HP stolen. Your attack doesn’t harm your *victim* any faster than usual, but it heals *you* more quickly. +25%.

*Hazard:* You can combine Steal FP with one of the modifiers under *Hazard* (p. B104) to steal dreams (Missed Sleep), warmth (Freezing), and so on. Treat the stolen FP as if they were lost to that hazard. Any FP or HP you gain can heal *your* losses to the same hazard.

*Heals FP:* Every 3 HP you drain restores 1 HP or 1 FP. You can’t raise FP above normal. +60% if you can choose whether to heal HP or FP; +30% if you only heal FP when healed to full HP.

*Steal (Other Score):* You steal ST, DX, IQ, HT, or FP *instead* of HP. ST theft reduces BL and damage. IQ drain lowers Will and Per. ST and HT losses *don’t* lower HP and FP, though. Attribute losses affect skills based on those scores. Drain occurs at the rate of 1 point per level of Leech. It ceases if the victim’s score reaches 0. Regardless of what you steal, you heal 1 HP (1 FP, with Heals FP or Only Heals FP) per 3 points drained. Your victim regains lost scores at the rate he recovers FP. Cost depends on what you drain: -25% for FP (or +50%, if you drain HP when your victim has 0 FP), +100% for ST or HT, or +300% for DX or IQ. If you can steal more than one of these, buy Leech several times with different enhancements. To use these simultaneously, add Link.

*Steal Youth:* You permanently age your victim instead of stealing HP. Each second of draining ages him by months equal to your level. See *Age and Aging* (p. B444) for long-term effects, and note that Unaging subjects are immune. You don’t heal, but may grow a month younger per *two* months stolen, if desired. This is incompatible with other special modifiers. +300% if victims regain their youth when you die; +450% if truly permanent.

### Special Limitations

Leeches who must touch their victim’s *skin* have the Contact Agent limitation (-30%). The traditional vampire has Blood Agent (-40%), and must bite his victim; Sharp Teeth (p. B91) are indispensable. These options and the Ranged option discussed above

are mutually exclusive. An additional limitation is specific to Leech:

*Only Heals FP:* You *can’t* heal HP. You can only use the HP you drain to restore missing FP, as described for Heals FP. This is incompatible with Heals FP. -20%.



### Alternatives

If the goal is just to reduce the victim’s HP, FP, or attributes, consider Innate Attack (p. 53) with Malediction, or Affliction (p. 39) with Attribute Penalty. If healing is what’s important, take Regeneration (p. 70), or Healing (p. 51) with Affects Self.

If draining others’ HP increases your *powers*, buy Leech plus a set of abilities with Trigger, Leeched HP. Victims are “Common” and using Leech is illegal in most worlds, so this is a -30% limitation. Alternatively, buy an Energy Reserve (p. 119) with Special Recharge, fill it up using Leech, and use it with the powerboosting stunts in Chapter 4. To gain powers by stealing them from others, take Neutralize (p. 97) with Power Theft.

### Powering Up

Leech fits *many* supernatural powers. It’s the definitive ability of so-called “psychic vampires,” who might have their own Vampirism power. It’s also suitable for sinister divine and moral powers, and for spirit powers that command “astral vampires.” With appropriate limitations, it could instead belong to a macabre biological power that lets the user derive



sustenance from blood . . . like the classic vampire of Gothic horror. Talent adds to all rolls to affect the target – including attack rolls to touch victims and Will rolls to use Leech with Malediction.

## Neutralize

**50 points**

The Neutralize advantage on p. B71 is Neutralize (Psi), and just one possible version of the more generic trait below.

This attack lets you neutralize *all* of your victim's powers of a given source. Specify this source when you buy the advantage. Possibilities include magic, psi, spirit, and anything else the GM deems susceptible to neutralization. If "super-powers" are a distinct phenomenon with a single source, the GM might allow Neutralize against those, too. To affect powers from more than one source, buy Neutralize multiple times.

To use Neutralize, you must touch the subject. This requires an Attack maneuver in melee combat. On a hit, roll a Quick Contest of Will. Your victim gets a bonus equal to his *best* Talent with any of the powers affected. For instance, a psi with ESP Talent 4 and Telepathy Talent 2 would resist Neutralize (Psi) at +4.

If you win, you neutralize your victim's powers for minutes equal to your margin of victory. Should enhancements or super-tech (such as "neutralization manacles") generate an effect that continuously neutralizes the target, this is the *residual* duration after shutting off the ability or removing the item. If you lose or tie, there's no effect – but critical failure on your Will roll cripples this ability for 1d hours.

Once you've neutralized a given subject, you can't affect him again until his powers recover. Multiple attackers *can* use Neutralize on the same target. Use only the longest duration; their abilities don't "add" in any way.

Neutralize only deprives the subject of the abilities of the negated powers. It doesn't affect Talent, powers that don't originate from the affected source, or advantages that don't belong to powers (but see *Neutralize and Static vs. Non-Powers*, box).

## Neutralize and Static vs. Non-Powers

In some worlds, those *without* powers can harness certain power sources. This usually requires special skills. For example, cinematic martial-arts skills (e.g., Blind Fighting and Power Blow) and chi powers both depend on the user's inner strength, magic spells draw upon energies identical to those tapped by magical powers, and priests channel holy might to perform miracles whether they cast spells or wield divine powers.

For consistency's sake, Neutralize and Static should affect these capabilities. For instance, Neutralize (Magic) should temporarily cancel out a wizard's ability to cast spells, while Static (Magic) should work a lot like a "no mana" area. The user doesn't *forget* his special skills – they just don't work.

The GM decides which skills (and advantages) rely on a given source in his game world. The only hard-and-fast rule is that Neutralize and Static shouldn't interfere with "wild" advantages that aren't associated with *any* power source.

These guidelines also apply to *artifacts* tied to power sources. Examples include items that carry powers bought with gadget limitations (see p. B116), objects imbued with permanent capabilities by enchantment spells (see *Magic Items*, p. B480) and similar special skills, and superscience devices related to powers (e.g., "psi-tech"). For instance, Neutralize (Magic) would temporarily render a magic sword mundane, while Static (Psi) would block artificial telepathic beacons and natural telepaths equally.

### Special Enhancements

Enhancements that often appear in fiction include Based on HT (suitable for drugs that block biological or psi powers), Extended Duration, and Ranged. Specific options for Neutralize are:

**Cosmic:** You can neutralize *any* power, regardless of source. You can only affect one source at a time, but you can attack the same victim repeatedly to affect multiple sources. You still can't drain Talents, or advantages without power modifiers. Cosmic *doesn't* automatically overcome resistance. It provides incredible scope, but your target always gets a chance to resist. +300%.

**Power Theft:** You temporarily acquire the powers you neutralize – including all their enhancements and limitations – for the duration. You can't use Neutralize again until the "borrowed" powers wear off or you "return" them (a free action on your turn). +200%, or +300% if you don't gain the stolen powers but may use

their *point value* to boost your own powers temporarily.

**Precise:** You can neutralize specific powers of the affected source, or even individual abilities. For instance, you could use Neutralize (Psi) to drain Telepathy only, or just telepathic Mind Probe, or everything *but* Mind Probe. To exclude or target a capability, you must know that your victim has it, and you must declare your intentions before you attack. +20%.

### Special Limitations

**Derange:** You only neutralize your victim's *control* over his abilities. All affected abilities gain the Uncontrollable limitation (p. B116) for the duration. Your attack counts as "stressful," and immediately causes the abilities to act in unpredictable ways. -20%.

**One Ability:** You can only neutralize one specific ability within one particular power; for instance, *just* Mind Probe within the Telepathy power or *just* Innate Attack within the Heat/Fire power. This is incompatible with Precise. -80%.

*One Power:* You can only neutralize one specific power that stems from a source that has multiple powers associated with it. The most common example is a single psi power (such as ESP or Telepathy). -50%.

### Alternatives

Use Leech (p. 96) to steal attributes instead of powers. Take Affliction (p. 39) with Negated Advantage to remove specific advantages regardless of their origin. To disrupt a power's effects on *you*, get Static (p. 98).

### Powering Up

Neutralize suits anti-powers of all kinds, regardless of source (see *Anti-Powers*, p. 20). Any power might be able to neutralize "opposed" powers (see *Opposed Powers*, p. 21). In general, a power shouldn't be able to neutralize itself – but the GM is free to make exceptions. Talent adds to Will in the Quick Contest to neutralize powers, but *not* to the roll to hit the target.

## Static

### 30 points

You radiate energies that *completely* prevent all powers of one particular source from affecting you. This extends to anything you're carrying or wearing. Buy Static separately for each source you can negate. Possibilities include magic, psi, "generic super-powers," and anything else the GM deems susceptible to "jamming."

Static only interferes with attempts to affect you or your personal equipment *directly*. For instance, if you had Static (Psi), a psychokinetic couldn't snatch your gun away or levitate you . . . but he could take control of a nearby sword and hit you with it, or drop a ton of rocks on your head.

Static affects friendly and hostile abilities equally. For example, Static (Magic) prevents you from using magic items or receiving beneficial spells, while Static (Psi) blocks the psionic Healing power.

You can never possess the abilities or Talent of any power you can negate.

### Special Enhancements

*Area Effect:* Your Static extends into an area centered on you. The first level of Area Effect gives you a radius

*If you had Static (Psi), a psychokinetic couldn't snatch your gun away or levitate you . . . but he could take control of a nearby sword and hit you with it, or drop a ton of rocks on your head.*

of a yard. Each level after that doubles this radius. +50%/level.

*Discriminatory:* Your Static only interferes with *hostile* powers. Friendly abilities and artifacts function totally unimpeded on you and within your area of effect (although you still can't possess powers you can negate). The definitions of "friendly" and "hostile" are up to you, and can fluctuate from second to second. If you have Area Effect, Discriminatory replaces Selective Area. +150%.

*Switchable:* You can switch your Static off to allow friendly abilities to affect you or operate within your area of effect. Turning Static off or on requires a Ready maneuver. It's up to you whether it switches on or off when you're knocked out, or simply remains in its current state; set this when you buy the ability. If you have Discriminatory, you don't *need* Switchable. +100%.

### Special Limitation

*Resistible:* Your ability isn't absolute. Enemies can "burn" through your Static and affect those protected

by it by winning a Quick Contest of Will with you. If the attacking ability *already* requires a Quick Contest of some kind, the attacker rolls only once, but the target gets +5 to resist. -50%.

### Alternatives

Be sure to weigh the pros and cons of Static against those of other specialized defenses such as Mana Damper (p. 59), Mind Shield (p. 62), Obscure (p. 64), and Resistant (p. 71). Take Neutralize (p. 97) to interfere directly with a foe's powers rather than their effects.

### Powering Up

Static is appropriate primarily for dedicated anti-powers (see *Anti-Powers*, p. 20). There's no "preferred" source, although Static is most *traditional* for psionic powers and super-powers. No power can have Static with respect to itself, however. Talent applies mainly to Power Block attempts (see p. 168), but also adds to Will rolls made for the Resistible special limitation.



# MODIFIERS

The next step in ability building is to adjust the underlying advantage(s) to work in a way that fits your mental picture of the ability. Many advantages offer user-defined choices, or multiple forms or levels – and sometimes that’s enough. Just as often, though, the only way to get things exactly right is to add *modifiers*. Modifiers fall into three categories:

1. *Special modifiers*. These are modifiers that appear in advantage descriptions. They adjust the details of how a *particular* advantage works, and might effectively convert it into new advantage. Choosing special modifiers is part of advantage selection. For hints and tips, see the relevant advantage entry and the notes in the previous section.

2. *Power modifiers*. These modifiers make an advantage part of a power, and only exist in campaigns with powers. See *Evaluating Power Modifiers* (p. 20).

3. *General modifiers*. The enhancements and limitations given on pp. B101-117 are of broad applicability. Choosing the right ones can be tricky; see the next few sections for advice.

Remember that modifiers, regardless of type, *can’t* reduce cost by more than 80%. Treat a net modifier of -80% or worse as -80%.

## SELECTING MODIFIERS

Below are notes on ways to use the modifiers in the *Basic Set* to emulate effects from myth, novels, cinema, and comics. The most radical and unorthodox reinterpretations are *optional*; their use in any campaign is up to the GM.

### Accessibility

see p. B110

If an ability only works in a situation that applies an easily calculated percentage of the time (e.g., “Only on a Sunday” is 14% of the time), find the limitation on this table:

“Only on supers” is worth -50% in settings where supers make up *much* less than 1% of the general population, as in most comics. In worlds where a significant percentage of people have powers, use the table. This limitation *doesn’t* apply to Neutralize, Static, or any other advantage that only affects those who have powers in the first place.

A common limitation on mental-influence abilities is “Only on those who share a language with me.” This is worth -10%, and valid only on abilities that *already* require the user to talk, such as those with Hearing-Based.

Abilities that let the user defy gravity – Clinging, Walk on Air, Walk on Liquid, etc. – often have “Only while moving.” If the user stops moving, he falls. This is worth -10% if he must take at least a step per second, -20% if he must travel at half Move, or -30% if he must use his full Move. It’s incompatible with All-Out (p. 110).

Some supernatural abilities require ritual or worship by others to work. To evaluate “Only with assistants,” *halve* the basic point value that Maintenance (p. B143) gives for that number of people and write it as a percentage; e.g., 11-20 people is -25%.

A limitation that prevents an attack from working on targets it couldn’t affect anyhow is *meaningless*, and worth no discount. For instance, “Not on machines” isn’t valid for a Fatigue Attack (machines lack FP), and “Only on psis” isn’t allowed on Neutralize (Psi).

Finally, limitations such as “Only when using ability X” are forbidden if the limited ability has a Link to X.

Percentage of Time the Ability Works	Limitation Value
1-6%	-40%
7-18%	-35%
19-31%	-30%
32-43%	-25%
44-56%	-20%
57-68%	-15%
69-81%	-10%
82-93%	-5%
94-100%	-0%

### Accurate

see p. B102

Any ability with the Ranged enhancement (p. B107) can have Accurate. See *Reliable* (p. 109) for an enhancement that affects die rolls other than those for ranged attacks.

### Affects Insubstantial

see p. B102

Affects Insubstantial is common on the abilities of divine, magical, psi, and spirit powers. Advantages modified with it affect those using Clairsentience, Jumper, or Warp with the Projection modifier – not just targets using true Insubstantiality. The GM may permit the following variant:

*Affects Insubstantial (Selective)*: You can choose to affect *just* insubstantial targets, *just* substantial targets, or all targets. (If you can *only* affect insubstantial targets, take the Insubstantial Only limitation; see p. 111.) +30%.

### Affects Substantial

see p. B102

Those who possess Clairsentience, Jumper, or Warp with the Projection modifier, Shadow Form, or any similar ability that renders them *effectively* insubstantial can use this modifier to let advantages that wouldn’t normally affect the physical world do so. As with Affects Insubstantial, a variant exists in some worlds:

*Affects Substantial (Selective)*: You can choose to affect *just* substantial targets, *just* insubstantial targets, or all targets. +50%.

### Always On

see p. B110

For Insubstantiality and Obscure, Always On is worth -50%. The GM may permit this level of Always On for other abilities. To qualify, the ability must be at least as crippling as Insubstantiality (user can’t interact with the physical world) or Obscure (user is deprived of a sense and can’t use stealth). A weaker version of Always On makes sense for many abilities:



*Usually On:* Any advantage that can be Always On can instead be Usually On. The ability is on *almost* all the time – but the user can switch it off briefly by expending 1 FP per *second*. If Always On is no worse than -20%, Usually On is worth *half* as much; if it's a larger limitation, add a +10% enhancement to find the value of Usually On.

## Area Effect

**see p. B102**

For advantages that *already* affect an area, the area of effect sometimes depends on the advantage level. If so, the only way to increase the area is to buy a higher level of the trait – Area Effect is off limits.

Area Effect makes it possible to affect groups of people with *non-attack* advantages that normally affect just one target; e.g., Healing, Mind Control, and Telekinesis. Several special rules apply to such abilities:

- If the advantage has a FP cost, multiply this by the radius in yards. Paying this cost lets the user affect everyone in the area – he doesn't pay FP separately for each subject. For instance, on a single subject, Healing costs 1 FP per 2 HP healed; on everyone in an eight-yard radius, it costs 8 FP per 2 HP healed (which the GM may interpret as 4 FP per HP).

- If the advantage affects the target via a Quick Contest, the user must roll a *separate* Contest with each potential victim in the area.

- If the advantage specifies a penalty to affect each victim after the first, the user has a penalty equal to the *total* number of potential victims, less one, on his roll for *each* subject. For example, to use Mind Control (Area Effect) on four people at once, roll to affect each of them at -3.

- If the advantage has user-defined effects, these must be the same for *all* subjects. In the Mind Control example above, the controller could tell all four victims, "Attack those men by the door!" He could *not* order, "John, save the girl. Paul, grab the treasure chest. George and Ringo, attack the men by the door!" If the ability is ongoing, it takes a second (or the usual amount of time for the advantage, if longer) to specify different effects for a

particular subject, during which time the others continue to experience the last effect specified.

## Armor Divisor

**see pp. B102, B110**

The GM may allow this modifier – as an enhancement or a limitation – on attacks affected by specialized defenses other than DR. Adjust the defense's level just as you would DR. For example, an Affliction with Vision-Based (which bypasses DR) could add Armor Divisor (5) to reduce the effects of Protected Vision from +5 to +1.

When using this option with the Armor Divisor *limitation*, treat targets that lack the specialized defense as if they had the lowest level of the defense. For instance, a radiation beam with little penetrating power might be a Toxic Attack with Radiation and Armor Divisor (0.5). Targets with Radiation Tolerance would get *double* its divisor; those without Radiation Tolerance would gain the benefits of Radiation Tolerance 2 (the lowest level).

## Aura

**see p. B102**

Creatures that bleed acid, flame, and so on when wounded have a Burning Attack or Corrosive Attack that combines Aura (+80%) with Always On (-20%), Blood Agent (-40%), and Melee Attack (-30%), for a net -10%. Always On is worth -20% because it's inconvenient to fry your possessions whenever you're cut. Blood Agent works "in reverse" here; see *Blood Agent* (below) for details.

## Based on (Different Attribute)

**see p. B102**

Some sinister entities (e.g., demons) can "aim" Afflictions, Mind Control, and so on at their victim's weaknesses. If the GM permits, an attack can have several instances of this enhancement, letting the user choose how his attack is resisted. Each attribute – *including* the one that normally resists the attack – costs +20%. For instance, to target IQ, HT, or Will costs +60%. The attacker must

choose the target attribute before he attacks.

The GM may permit this modifier on advantages that require the user to roll against his *own* DX, IQ, HT, Will, or Per, shifting the roll to another of these scores. This still costs +20%. He can take this enhancement twice to change his roll *and* his target's roll, where logical.

## Blood Agent

**see pp. B102, B110**

When an attack that *normally* ignores DR (like Leech) depends on a natural weapon – such as Claws or Teeth – penetrating the victim's DR, apply the Blood Agent limitation. Don't use Follow-Up; that's intended for attacks that *can't* normally ignore DR.

Blood Agent is also a legitimate limitation for attacks that require the *attacker* to bleed on his victim. When Blood Agent works "in reverse" like this, the attacker must suffer at least 1 HP of injury from a cutting, impaling, or piercing attack, and then ensure that his blood reaches his target. This is automatic with Aura but otherwise requires the usual attack roll. The GM may rule that such attacks simply don't work underwater or in other environments where blood would be diluted or washed away. The target's DR works normally. This variant is worth -40%.

## Bombardment

**see p. B111**

Bombardment is a legitimate limitation for Area Effect and Cone attacks that conjure something that attacks everyone in the area instead of truly "bombarding" it. The classic example is a swarm of biting pests. In this case, the "effective skill" of the attack is the skill of whatever the attack summons. Such attacks often have Blockable (p. 110).

## Cone

**see p. B103**

The notes under *Area Effect* (above) also apply to Cone. The only difference is that the user multiplies the FP cost of non-attack advantages by the maximum width of the cone instead of a radius in yards.

When combining Cone with Malediction – which has no Max statistic – assume that the cone spreads by one yard per yard of range. It attains its maximum width at a range equal to that width (e.g., at five yards, for a five-yard-wide cone), and has *no effect* on more distant targets. Work out the range modifier separately for each target within the cone, following the usual rules for Malediction.

## Contact Agent

see pp. B103, B111

Attackers who must touch victims with *their* bare skin should take Touch-Based, not Contact Agent; see *Sense-Based* (p. 105).



## Cosmic

see p. B103

The following new options are *powerful*, and not suitable for every campaign:

*No die roll required.* Only for abilities that require a success roll. Your advantage works if you have any chance of success. Apply all the usual modifiers to your base skill. If your effective skill is 3 or more, you succeed – don't bother to roll. The only way you can fail is if your effective skill falls below 3. You *can* add this enhancement to attacks, but not to abilities with effects based entirely on margin of success. This excludes such resisted abilities as Mind Control and Maledictions. +100%.

*No active defense allowed.* Only for attacks that the target can dodge, block, or parry. Your target gets no active defense against your attack, no matter how fast or skilled he is. If your

attack roll succeeds, you *hit*. The victim's DR and other purely passive protection works normally, and this enhancement doesn't prevent *resistance* rolls. +300%.

Cosmic options are cumulative. For instance, an Innate Attack that requires no roll to hit (+100%), allows no active defense (+300%), and ignores DR (+300%) is +700%. An Attack maneuver lets you immediately apply your damage roll to your target's HP!

No version of Cosmic bypasses the resistance roll against Affliction, Mind Control, Maledictions, and similar abilities. Despite its name, "irresistible attack" simply negates protection such as DR and Mind Shield – it doesn't deny the target his chance to resist.

On a carrier attack, *all* forms of Cosmic raise the cost of Follow-Up on the follow-up attack.

*Cosmic as a Power Modifier:* At the +50% level, Cosmic is often a power modifier (see p. 26). On abilities with this modifier, reduce the *total* cost of all Cosmic options by +50%. In effect, the first +50% of Cosmic is built in. When using *Powers, Great and Small* (p. 32), each tier has an enhancement cost, and pays a premium equal to that cost for a lingering attack, or five times that cost for an irresistible attack. "No die roll" and "no active defense" are at full cost, less the value of the tier enhancement.

*Cosmic vs. Cosmic:* When Cosmic abilities conflict, handle it as if *neither* side had Cosmic. For instance, DR with Cosmic subtracts from "irresistible" attacks with Cosmic. The not-quite-cosmic powers of *Powers, Great and Small* only count as Cosmic against lower tiers – and only top-tier powers count as Cosmic against wild abilities. Powers on the *same* tier interact as if neither were Cosmic.

## Costs Fatigue

see p. B111

Those adding Costs Fatigue to an Innate Attack that has the Variable enhancement may, if the GM permits, specify that the FP cost is proportional to the dice of damage used. To find the size of the limitation:

1. Set the FP cost to use the ability at *full* effect.

2. Divide this maximum FP cost by the attack's maximum dice of damage to find the FP cost per die.

3. Multiply cost per die by "average" damage dice –  $(1 + \text{maximum dice})/2$  – to find average FP cost.

4. Drop all fractions.

The result is the number of levels of Cost Fatigue to take.

*Example:* Laser Lad has Burning Attack 10d with Variable and Costs Fatigue. His FP cost at full effect is 20. His attack requires  $20/10 = 2$  FP per die. "Average" damage dice are  $(1 + 10)/2 = 5.5d$ , so average FP cost is  $2 \times 5.5 = 11$  FP. He takes Costs Fatigue 11, for -55%. When he attacks, he pays 2 FP for 1d, 4 FP for 2d, and so on, to a maximum of 20 FP for 10d.

Use the same method to add a variable FP cost to non-attack abilities that come in levels; just substitute levels of effect for dice. Abilities other than attacks *don't* need the Variable enhancement to use this option (see *Variable*, p. 107).

In campaigns with powers, the GM may require Costs Fatigue on all but completely passive abilities, forcing the heroes to think strategically rather than hurl their powers at every problem. This is especially appropriate if powers are supposed to be mysterious. It can also help balance powers against spells and cinematic martial arts skills.

## Cyclic

see p. B103

If the attack is contagious, those who come into contact with victims must roll against HT, per *Contagion* (p. B443). "Mildly contagious" (+20%) means the required contact is holding or being held by an infected victim for a *full* cycle, or contact with bodily fluids. "Highly contagious" (+50%) means the effects spread at the slightest touch.

## Damage Modifiers

see pp. B104, B111

*Double Knockback:* To make this meaningful for low-damage attacks, double the basic damage of the attack, for knockback purposes *only*, instead of doubling yards of knockback.

*Fragmentation:* The GM may permit options other than regular and hot fragments. *Large Piercing Fragments*, like the ball bearings hurled by modern antipersonnel mines, cost +15% per die. *Impaling Fragments*, like the flechettes scattered by some artillery shells, cost +20% per die. In all cases, use the usual fragmentation rules; damage type is all that changes.

*Incendiary:* Optionally, to represent superscience and magical attacks with fire-starting potential out of proportion to damage, add Incendiary to a Burning Attack. This moves the effective flammability class of anything damaged by the attack up a step; see *Making Things Burn* (p. B433).

*Missing Damage Effect:* If the GM agrees and the special effects support it, an attack may lack one of the normal “side effects” of its damage type. The absence of an effect that damages the target’s HP, FP, or DR is worth -20% (like No Blunt Trauma); e.g., No DR Reduction, for a Corrosion Attack. Most other limitations are worth -10% (like No Knockback); e.g., No Incendiary Effect, for a Burning Attack.

*No Wounding:* The GM may allow this on Burning and Corrosion Attacks. For a Burning Attack, roll damage normally but use it only to determine whether the attack sets a fire; see *Making Things Burn* (p. B433). In the case of a Corrosion Attack, the damage only serves to reduce the target’s DR.

*Radiation:* In settings that feature weird, mutation-inducing radiation, attacks with this modifier can bathe the target in these energies *instead* of causing regular radiation damage. Effects are up to the GM.

*Surge:* Electronics that take over 1/3 HP from an attack with this enhancement 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 (see *Repairs*, p. B484).

## Delay

see p. B105

Supernatural attacks often use a variant of Triggered Delay that goes off if the victim performs some forbidden act: attacks someone, speaks, etc.

## Optional Rule: Multiplicative Modifiers

Normally, enhancements and limitations are *additive*: add them together and apply the total modifier to advantage cost. For instance, +20% in enhancements and -50% in limitations come to -30%, so ability cost is 70% of advantage cost.

Optionally, the GM may treat enhancements and limitations as *multiplicative*. Total the enhancements and apply them first. Then total the limitations (reducing any total over -80% to -80%) and apply them to the result. In the above example, +20% in enhancements would increase ability cost to 120% of advantage cost, and then -50% in limitations would reduce this to 60%.

The GM decides which model to use. The results *aren’t* the same (although they’re close for small modifiers), so using both isn’t recommended. The additive model is a good “default,” but the multiplicative model can be fairer in campaigns where huge enhancements (like Cosmic, +300%) occur routinely.

This is worth the usual +50% if the triggering condition is fixed, +100% if the attacker can specify the details of the curse when he attacks. The traditional way to neutralize such attacks is with an exorcism, Remove Curse spell, or similar measure.

## Emanation

see p. B112

The GM may allow Emanation in conjunction with Explosion (p. B104) instead of Area Effect. Use this combination to simulate antipersonnel grenades mounted on the hull of an armored vehicle . . . or the attack of an entity that flares like a phoenix without destroying itself.

## Emergencies Only

see p. B112

An “emergency” is any event that causes severe mental, emotional, or physical stress. Most situations involving self-control rolls for disadvantages, Fright Checks, or HT rolls for major wounds qualify. The GM should also let a hero with a Code of Honor, Sense of Duty, or Vow that compels him to protect others use his ability to aid an innocent person who’s in *immediate* danger (being mugged, falling to his death, suffering a heart attack, etc.).

## Extended Duration

see p. B105

Duration occasionally depends on advantage level. If so, the only way to increase it is to buy a higher level of the advantage; Extended Duration isn’t allowed.

The +300% level of Permanent can be unbalancing on Afflictions with the Advantage enhancement. If the GM permits this combination, the best way to keep things fair is to require the recipient to buy the granted advantage with unspent points if he wishes to keep it. Otherwise, the benefits vanish after the usual duration.

## Extra Recoil

see p. B112

This limitation is incompatible with Very Rapid Fire; see *Rapid Fire* (p. 105).

## Follow-Up

see p. B105

Follow-Up is only valid on attacks that can’t normally ignore DR. If an attack that *normally* ignores DR (e.g., Leech) only works if a natural weapon – Claws, Teeth, etc. – pierces DR, use the Blood Agent limitation (-40%) instead.



## Guided or Homing

**see p. B105**

Cinematic missiles don't crash on a miss . . . they turn around and make another pass. Add +10% to the enhancement per pass after the first; e.g., a Guided attack that gets three chances to hit is +70%. If the initial attack misses, reroll it a second later, using the same effective skill as on the first attempt. Roll again once per second until the attack hits or runs out of extra passes – or, if Guided, the attacker stops guiding it.

For attacks with Rapid Fire and either Guided or Homing, make the attack roll as usual, but the roll is for the entire *pack* of missiles. Success means one missile hits, plus additional missiles equal to the margin of success, to a maximum of the attack's RoF.

## Increased Range

**see p. B106**

Increased Range isn't allowed on advantages whose range depends on advantage level. To increase the range of such traits, buy more levels of the advantage. When adding this enhancement to a trait that normally doesn't work at a distance, Ranged (p. B107) is a prerequisite.

## Jet

**see p. B106**

Jets have limited range but enjoy many benefits reserved for melee attacks. They can use All-Out Attack (Double), Deceptive Attack, Feint, and Rapid Strike, and get +4 to hit with All-Out Attack (Determined). A jet is *narrow* – no thicker than a pole weapon – and must engage targets one at a time. For a “jet” that can sweep an area, take Cone. Jet is for force blades, flame jets, plasma swords, and so on that are longer than Melee Attack (p. B112) allows.

## Limited Use

**see p. B112**

For the purpose of this limitation, treat any advantage that produces an instantaneous effect – e.g., Healing, Jumper, Rapier Wit, Snatcher, Terror, Visualization, or Warp – like an attack.

Each “use” lets you roll *once* per 24 hours to use the advantage. For information-gathering abilities such as Blessed, Mind Probe, and Psychometry, each question answered counts as one “use.”

Limited Use isn't allowed on social advantages, advantages that must *always* be “on” to make sense (like Destiny, Digital Mind, and Unaging), or advantages with built-in usage limits (notably Extra Life, Gizmos, Luck, Oracle, Serendipity, and Wild Talent).

## Link

**see p. B106**

Link is a key building block of custom abilities – without it, a tangler grenade that strikes its target for damage (Crushing Attack) and releases webbing that restrains and blinds the victim (Binding and Affliction) would be impossible. Label each Link on the character sheet in a way that distinguishes it from other Links and makes all connections clear. No trait can have multiple Links, but a single Link can connect any number of advantages. The GM wish to use these *optional* rules:

*Asymmetric Links:* A set of linked advantages can mix the +10% and +20% versions of Link. The advantages with the +20% level work both as part of the Link and on their own. Those with +10% level are only available when using *all* of the linked advantages at once.

*Discretionary Links:* When a set of advantages has Link at the +20% level, the user can specify that he's using one, some, or all of them, in any combination. For instance, if his Affliction, Binding, and Innate Attack had a +20% Link, he could use just one of the three attacks, *or* any of three combinations of two, *or* all three at once.

## Low or No Signature

**see p. B106**

These enhancements make *any* ability less noticeable – they aren't just for attacks. If the GM desires extra detail, he can charge +5% per -2 to rolls to notice the ability, and treat -10 (+25%) as “undetectable.” These penalties apply to Sense rolls to spot most abilities, or

to supernatural attempts to trace those that are magical, psionic, etc. If the ability is obvious *and* traceable, buy the enhancement twice to foil both forms of detection.

## Malediction

**see p. B106**

A Malediction affects substantial and insubstantial targets equally, whether the user is substantial or insubstantial. This makes Malediction especially suitable for divine, magical, psi, and spirit abilities. In some settings, it might *only* be available for abilities with supernatural power modifiers.

## Melee Attack

**see p. B112**

Melee Attack results in an effect like energy claws or a flaming sword. This extends from the wielder's body, letting him attack and parry. “Touch only” abilities that call for a light touch with the hand have Reach C and can't parry (-35%). Those that must touch bare skin *also* have Contact Agent (-30%), while attacks that circumvent DR should add Malediction 1 (+100%) if resistance is possible, Cosmic (+300%) if not.

Melee Attack turns an attack advantage into a *powered* melee weapon, not a *ST-based* one; damage isn't cumulative with thrust or swing damage. It lets the user wield his attack in one hand. The GM may permit modifiers that relax these restrictions, possibly turning Melee Attack into a net *enhancement*:

*Melee Attack (Destructive Parry):* Your attack damages weapons it parries or that parry it. Roll damage normally and apply it to your foe's weapon on a successful parry by either of you. Price Melee Attack as usual, and then add a +10% enhancement.

*Melee Attack (Dual):* Your ability generates *two* melee weapons – usually one in each hand – permitting a Dual-Weapon Attack (see p. B417). Price Melee Attack as usual, and then add a +10% enhancement.

*Melee Attack (ST-Based):* Only for Crushing, Cutting, and Impaling Attacks. You can add your dice of

*A hero can have a Pact with the GM, if the GM agrees. The GM should only allow this if both the Pact and the modified ability support a genre convention, like “kung fu movie realism.”*

thrust or swing damage to the damage of your Innate Attack. Work out Melee Attack as usual, and then add a +100% enhancement. (This modifier is more cost-effective than Striking ST; the GM may wish to reserve it for cinematic genres.)

## Mobile

**see p. B107**

This enhancement is legal for *any* ability with an enduring area effect, even if it lacks one or both of Area Effect and Persistent; e.g., Obscure with the Ranged enhancement.

## Nuisance Effect

**see p. B112**

Harsher-than-usual consequences under the optional rules in Chapter 4 can be Nuisance Effects. Examples include being unable to affect a given subject for 24 hours after a failure when using *Repeated Attempts* (p. 159), or having to check for crippling after *any* failure when using *Crippled Abilities* (p. 156). Each such drawback is worth -5%.

An ability that prevents the use of certain skills while active can claim -5% if the GM feels the skills it disrupts would be especially useful with that ability. For instance, a rocket-powered robot that can't use Stealth while flying could claim -5% on Flight.

Those whose abilities *severely* inconvenience them may use this variant:

*Backlash:* You suffer noxious effects when you use your ability. Choose these from among Attribute Penalty, Incapacitation, Irritant, and Stunning, as defined for Affliction

(p. B35). If you succumb for a minute (a *second*, for Stunning), and can roll against HT once per minute (second) after that to recover, apply a limitation equal in size to the equivalent enhancements. If you get a HT roll to resist, and the effects last for minutes (seconds) equal to your margin of failure, halve this. For instance, Nauseated is worth +30% on Affliction, so nausea is worth -30% if automatic or -15% if resistible.

## Onset

**see p. B113**

The Exposure Time variant is legal – and appropriate – for advantages that work like Maledictions (e.g., Mind Control). It represents a compulsion that *slowly* creeps over the victim as he views or speaks with his influencer. This is worthless in combat but subtle enough to escape notice in social situations. Limitation value is unchanged.

## Overhead

**see p. B107**

The target of an Overhead attack defends at -2 the first time he's attacked; after that, assume he's on the lookout (see *Attack from Above*, p. B402). Defenses against attacks that swoop *around* the target and strike from behind are also at -2 (see “*Runaround*” Attacks, p. B391). The GM may allow a special variant:

*Surprise Attack:* Your attack *originates* behind the target. Victims with 360° Vision or Peripheral Vision defend normally, while those with Danger Sense may defend at -2 on a successful Perception roll. Otherwise,

no active defense is possible. This is most suitable for attacks that teleport or emerge from extradimensional portals behind the target. +150%.

## Pact

**see p. B113**

A hero can have a Pact with the GM, if the GM agrees. The GM should only allow this if both the Pact and the modified ability support a genre convention, like “kung fu movie realism.” For instance, the player of a super-heroic karate master might make a deal with the GM: if he fights his foes hand-to-hand, bullets mostly won't hurt him. He takes a -10-point Vow (“Never use a gun.”) and buys DR with Limited, Bullets, -60% and Pact, -10%. If he uses a gun, he gives up his DR for the rest of the fight.

The GM may also give limitations for disadvantages other than self-imposed mental disadvantages:

*Required Disadvantage:* You have a disadvantage such as Increased Consumption or Sleepy. If you fail to meet its requirements, you lose your ability in addition to the usual effects of missing meals, sleep, etc. Alternatively, you must indulge an Addiction to keep your ability. In either case, if you lose your ability, the only way to restore it is to satisfy the needs of your disadvantage *and* recover fully from any ill effects it caused you during the period where you didn't: FP or HP loss, attribute penalties, afflictions, etc. Price this limitation exactly as you would Pact.

Abilities with power modifiers that include Pact or Required Disadvantage can't take a separate limitation for these; see *Required Disadvantages* (p. 21).

## Persistent

**see p. B107**

An advantage doesn't need Area Effect as a prerequisite for Persistent if it affects an area *innately*. Any Persistent ability can be “on” in several different areas simultaneously as the result of successive attacks, unless the underlying trait forbids this. Multiple uses in the same area never “stack,” however.

## Ranged

see p. B107

Abilities that are normally “touch only” or “zero range” – Control, Create, Healing, Illusion, Leech, Mana Damper, Mana Enhancer, Neutralize, Possession, Static, etc. – often work at a distance in fiction. The GM may also permit Ranged on information-gathering abilities (such as Mind Probe, Precognition, and Psychometry), allowing them to “read” distant subjects. Ranged *doesn't* prevent an advantage from working the usual way (in an area around the user or by touch, as appropriate) when the wielder wishes. For other rules on using Ranged with specific advantages, see the advantage text and the notes in this chapter. Where Ranged appears as a special enhancement, as it does for Obscure, use that version of Ranged and *not* the general one.

When creating abilities based on advantages that normally have no range, Ranged is a prerequisite for all modifiers that affect ranged-attack statistics (Range, Acc, RoF, Shots, and Rcl).

## Rapid Fire

see p. B108

Rapid Fire assumes the attack delivers its RoF over the course of a full second, but some TL8+ projectile weapons fire their full RoF in a tiny fraction of a second. They shoot so rapidly that recoil isn't felt until *after* the entire burst is in the air. The resulting stream of projectiles is a lot like a beam. The following option simulates this:

*Very Rapid Fire:* You fire your full RoF almost instantly. Follow the rules under *Rapid Fire* (p. B373), except that you get *two* extra hits per point by which you make your attack roll. When using rapid fire against close stationary targets (see p. B408), *any* success means you hit with all shots. You can't attack multiple targets or an area with spraying fire or suppression fire, however – you can only ever attack *one* target. This costs +10% over and above the cost of Rapid Fire, and is incompatible with Extra Recoil.

## Reduced Fatigue Cost

see p. B108

In situations where the rules multiply the FP cost to use an ability, this enhancement subtracts 1 FP per level from the cost *after* multiplying. For example, when using Healing with Area Effect and Reduced Fatigue Cost, multiply FP cost by radius and *then* reduce it.

## Reduced Range

see p. B115

When adding this limitation to a trait that normally doesn't work at a distance, Ranged (p. B107) is a prerequisite.

## Resistible

see p. B115

A supernatural disease or magical poison (like an alchemical elixir) might allow a Will-based resistance roll. An ultra-tech threat might be engineered to require a ST, DX, or IQ roll. Represent either by adding Resistible and specifying an attribute besides HT; e.g., “Resistible, Will-3, -15%.” *Don't* use Based on (Different Attribute). The GM is the final judge of what combinations are allowed.

## Selective Area

see p. B108

Abilities without Area Effect or Cone can have “Selective Effect” for +20% if they have the potential to affect an area or multiple targets *actively*. The GM should work out the details, using the following examples for inspiration:

● *Attacks with Rapid Fire.* An attack with Selective Effect *and* Rapid Fire can hose down an area that contains both friend and foe without risking a “friendly fire” incident. The GM might even permit Selective Effect on attacks with RoF 1. This would prevent shots that miss or overpenetrate from hitting allies in the line of fire. Either option is suitable for the “smart bullets” seen in pulp sci-fi.

● *Elastic Skin, Invisibility, and Shapeshifting with the Glamour limitation.* This keeps the user from being misidentified or overlooked by his allies . . . and lets him make his

enemies look like madmen (“What *man?* You're talking to a dog!”).

● *Illusion.* Another way to make people look crazy!

● *Telecommunication.* This lets the user choose who can receive – or make sense of – a broadcast (e.g., by Radio, or Telesend with the Broadcast enhancement). This combination is useful for simulating secure tactical communicators.

● *Terror.* This is appropriate for dragons, deities, and other powerful entities that can demoralize their foes without frightening off their allies.

Neither regular Selective Area nor Selective Effect is compatible with Always On (which is only a limitation if you *can't* choose who is affected), or with advantages that offer the Discriminatory special enhancement.

## Selectivity

see p. B108

Abilities with Selectivity can have mutually incompatible enhancements, if the GM permits. For instance, a spirit might buy Visualization with Selectivity plus both Blessing and Cursing in order to curse *or* bless, while a super might take a Burning Attack with Cone, Jet, and Selectivity so he can “dial down” his broad cone to a precise jet in close quarters. The user pays full price for all of his enhancements, but he must choose just *one* of them when he uses his ability; incompatible enhancements can't be active at the same time.

## Sense-Based

see pp. B109, B115

It's permissible to “reverse” Sense-Based to create an ability that works through the *user's* senses. To affect his target, he must see it with his unaided eyes (Vision-Based), hear it with his own ears (Hearing-Based), touch it with his bare hand (Touch-Based), and so on. If he can't – or if he's deprived of his sense (e.g., by a blindfold for Vision-Based or heavy gloves for Touch-Based), or using a technological or paranormal intermediary – his ability doesn't work. This variation is only allowed as a *limitation* on an advantage that's normally unaffected by DR, and gives its usual discount.



*Example:* A robot that analyzes minerals by detecting minute quantities of airborne dust has Detect (Minerals; Smell-Based, -20%), and can't use its ability in a vacuum or from within a sealed suit.

## Side Effect

see p. B109

An Innate Attack with Side Effect can have Based on (Different Attribute) to shift the resistance roll from HT to another attribute. Use this score instead of HT in the duration formulas, too. This is especially suitable for a supernatural attack that produces a curse-like effect that's tied to wound severity but more logically resisted by Will than HT.



## Takes Extra Time

see p. B115

Takes Extra Time means the ability is constantly available but demands a long “ready time” immediately prior to use, making it unavailable in “quick response” situations. It isn't the same as Preparation Required, which allows the wielder to prepare in advance, giving him a single use with which to respond *instantly*. To keep the two balanced, the GM may restrict

heroes to two levels of Takes Extra Time, which is equal in value to the lowest level of Preparation Required.

When Takes Extra Time results in more than one second of Ready to use an ability, it is possible to interrupt the user, just as if he were concentrating (see p. B366).

## Takes Recharge

see p. B115

This limitation is suitable for energy attacks that fire from an “accumulator” charged by a power plant or the user's body. If the attack has Rapid Fire, it gets shots equal to its RoF before it needs to recharge. Once all shots are fired, the attack is unavailable until one *full* recharge period passes; then shots equal to RoF are available again. Shots *don't* trickle back gradually during the recharge period.

## Temporary Disadvantage

see p. B115

Those who wield evil powers, psi abilities that drive them mad, and so on often suffer a mental breakdown the instant they activate their gifts. To simulate this, select a mental disadvantage that requires a self-control roll (e.g., Berserk or Pyromania), specify a self-control number of “N/A,” and price Temporary Disadvantage as if the disadvantage were worth 2.5 times its listed cost (drop fractions). Using the ability *always* causes the effects specified for a failed self-control roll.

*Example:* El Tigre immediately goes berserk when he uses Alternate Form (Tiger). Berserk is worth -10 points, so it's worth -25 points if irresistible. El Tigre has a -25% limitation, and *must* savagely attack anyone nearby when he uses his ability!

An “always on” advantage *can* have Temporary Disadvantage. Instead of affecting the entire character, the disadvantage has the potential to shut down the advantage. See *Cybernetics* (p. B46) and *Cyberpunk Abilities* (p. 116) for more information. In this case, “temporary” means the disadvantage is irrelevant after it causes the advantage to fail.

## Trigger

see p. B115

*Injury* is an entirely valid Trigger. Since a desperate hero can nearly always find a way to wound himself, this Trigger is Very Common . . . and since injury is by definition dangerous, the limitation is worth -15%. This *isn't* the same as Blood Agent (p. 100) “in reverse.” The user needn't bleed on his victim or suffer a particular form of injury; even 1 HP of blunt trauma will do.

## Uncontrollable

see p. B116

Situations that involve self-control rolls for disadvantages, Fright Checks, or HT rolls for major wounds qualify as “stressful”; see *Emergencies Only* (p. 102). Disadvantages that don't allow self-control rolls can also trigger this limitation. For instance, a hero with Pacifism might lose control if forced to commit violence.

Anyone who takes Uncontrollable must specify the “intelligence” that commandeers his ability: his subconscious or *something else*. His subconscious uses *his* scores for all rolls, and its first priority is always to deal with the cause of the stress. For example, if a super were to lose control of her Death Ray due to a major wound, her ability would go after whoever caused the injury first – even a foe she must capture unharmed, or a friend with bad aim – and use her Innate Attack skill to hit.

If the ability originates from a demon, implanted AI, or other intelligence the user can't fully control, it has its own scores and agenda (determined by the GM, exactly as for an Enemy). It acts purposefully and perhaps subtly; it could let the user remain “in control” but pervert his intent. For instance, Mind Control might work as desired but send victims *additional* suggestions, unknown to the user.

The GM may allow the following variant:

*Uncontrollable Trigger:* Your ability manifests uncontrollably in the presence of an *item*, not stress. Use the rarities given for *Weakness* (p. B161). This isn't a meaningful limitation if the item is “Rare.” It's worth -5% if

“Occasional,” -10% if “Common,” or -15% if “Very Common.” *Triple* this for destructive abilities. Unconscious Only is a frequent addition.

## Underwater

see p. B109

The GM may permit aquatic heroes to add Underwater to abilities other than attacks – e.g., Scanning Sense and Telecommunication – that don’t normally work (or work *well*) underwater. Like attacks, they function at 1/10 range underwater. This is unrealistic for radio waves, but comic-book supers often ignore such details.

## Unreliable

see p. B116

The GM may allow natural attacks to have a “Malf.” statistic similar to that used for gadgets and built-in firearms. This is especially suitable for abilities that originate from experimental drugs or surgery –

or *cinematic* genetic engineering or mutation. On an attack roll equal or greater than Malf., roll 3d:

**3-4** – The ability fails to go off and is crippled. See *Duration of Crippling Injuries* (p. B422) to determine recovery time. In some worlds, a Bioengineering, Physician, or Surgery roll can hasten recovery.

**5-8** – The ability fails to go off and is temporarily unavailable. After three seconds, make a HT roll. Success means the ability comes back online. Otherwise, wait three more seconds and roll again. Critical failure on any of these HT rolls means the ability is crippled as in **3**.

**9-11** – The attack fires a single shot and then fails as described for **5**.

**12-14** – As **5**.

**15-18** – As **3**, but the attack also strains the user. He suffers 1d-3 (minimum 1) each of fatigue and injury. DR doesn’t protect.

## Untrainable

see p. B116

Abilities with Untrainable gain *no* benefit from Talent. This is in addition to the limitation’s other effects. Abilities that require a roll to use can take this special version:

*Hard to Use:* You have a penalty on all rolls to use your ability, and Talent doesn’t help. Each level of Hard to Use gives -3. This is incompatible with Reliable (p. 109) and forbidden on ranged attacks (but see *Inaccurate*, p. B112). -5% per -3, to a limit of -12.

## Variable

see p. B109

Variable is strictly for *attacks*, which otherwise work at full power at all times. Non-attack abilities don’t need it – their range, area, level of effect, and so on are variable automatically.

## NEW ENHANCEMENTS

The GM may invent enhancements as needed – see the variants suggested above for inspiration. Below are some entirely new enhancements for use in games that feature many superhuman abilities.

### Affects Others

Variable

You can extend your advantage’s benefits to others. If you can affect a limited number of willing subjects by touching them, Affects Others costs +50% per person. This isn’t an *attack* – it has no effect on unwilling recipients. You must take a separate Ready maneuver to make contact with each companion, who must be within reach. This bestows the *effects* of the advantage, not the ability to use it. You turn it “off” and “on,” set its level, and so on, and your decisions apply equally to you and all subjects.

Your ability only affects others while they’re touching you. They can end its effects at any time by breaking contact with you. To affect those who are merely nearby, add Area Effect – in which case a Ready maneuver lets you affect any number of people up to your limit, if they’re in your area.

## Gadget Limitations and Powers

In fiction – especially comics – some heroes possess powers partly or wholly by virtue of special items: chi-invested weapons, holy artifacts, magic wands, etc. To create such gadgets, buy a set of abilities and apply both a power modifier *and* any suitable gadget limitations from pp. B116-117.

The power source of many gadgets is “superscience,” not magic, psi, etc. The GM can either treat the abilities such items bestow as wild advantages or allow a special Superscience power modifier. Details depend on the setting, but a typical modifier is comparable to Super (p. 29) and worth -10%. If the GM wishes to let heroes take a modifier like this on *innate* powers (to represent techno-evolution, nanotech, etc.), a better model is Biological (p. 26), also -10%.

Talent normally resides in the owner and represents his ability to use the item. For instance, a Helm of Telepathy is more effective for someone with Telepathy Talent. In some tales, though, the *abilities* are native to the user while the *item* improves his control – that is, it grants Talent. To do this, apply gadget limitations to Talent (an exception to the prohibition against modifying Talent). This Talent might even add to the user’s own Talent, letting him exceed normal limits.

If a power has required disadvantages (p. 21), the user of an item that grants that power’s abilities or Talent *must* have these disadvantages. For example, a holy relic doesn’t work for just anyone – only for those of suitable faith. Should the item be lost, the disadvantages *don’t* go away. The GM may wish to award a suitable replacement item if the player roleplays his disadvantages well, though.

The above version of Affects Others is for movement abilities (e.g., Flight and Permeation) and physical transformations (e.g., Growth and Shrinking). It's a good way to keep the PCs together on adventures that would leave behind those who can't fly, shrink, etc. The GM may allow Affects Others on other traits when it serves this purpose.

If you apply Force Field to one of the defenses listed for that enhancement (below), you may add Affects Others for a flat +50%, provided you *also* take at least one level of Area Effect. Together, these three modifiers let you extend your advantage's protection to everyone inside your area. This force field works against *attacks* and *hazards* crossing it from the outside. Threats inside the force field bypass its protection.

If based on Damage Resistance, the force field impedes *movement*, too. Foes who wish to cross it must force their way in. Those who try this as a free action (allowed once per turn) roll thrust damage. Those who use Attack, Move and Attack, or All-Out Attack to blast their way in roll their attack's usual damage. If damage exceeds DR, they make an opening large enough to step through. This closes at the end of their turn, and doesn't weaken the force field.

The GM shouldn't allow either form of Affects Others on advantages that let the user *do* something, such as Healing, Innate Attack, and Mind Control. To grant forbidden traits or affect unwilling subjects, buy Affliction with a suitable Advantage enhancement.

## Can Carry Objects

### Variable

A physical transformation normally affects your body but not your belongings. With this enhancement, your advantage also transforms objects you're *carrying* or *wearing*. It ceases to affect these things when you put them down. Can Carry Objects is already defined for Insubstantiality, Invisibility, Permeation, Shadow Form, and Shrinking, but it's also useful for Chameleon, Elastic Skin, Growth, Morph, and anything else the GM allows.

Cost depends on how much you can carry: No encumbrance is +10%; Light, +20%; Medium, +50%; and Heavy, +100%.

To affect *people* you're touching, add Affects Others (above). To extend *defensive* effects to your possessions, take Force Field (below).

## Erosive

### +10%

Erosive must accompany one of Blood Agent, Contact Agent, or Respiratory Agent, and either Area Effect or Cone. Your attack is a gas that eats away at the seals on gas masks, environment suits, etc. Whenever the wearer of such gear is exposed to the gas, roll against his equipment's HT. Assume HT 12 unless otherwise specified. Any failure means enough gas seeps in to affect him *and* reduce the HT of his equipment by 1 (this loss is cumulative). Restoring a point of lost HT is a major repair (see *Repairs*, p. B484).

## Force Field

### +20%

This enhancement converts a defensive trait into a field projected a short distance from your body. The field engulfs and protects your entire body – including your eyes – and everything you're *carrying* or *wearing* (up to Extra-Heavy encumbrance), even if the unmodified trait wouldn't. Always apply its effects *before* those of armor, environment suits, etc. See *Extending Defenses* (p. 173) for other benefits.

Force Field is suitable for Damage Resistance (but never with Tough Skin), Improved G-Tolerance, Magic Resistance, Pressure Support, Protected Sense, Radiation Tolerance, Resistant, Sealed, Slippery, Temperature Tolerance, and Vacuum Support. The GM may permit it on other advantages. If you have multiple traits with Force Field, note whether you have *one* force field or several (and their order).

Force Field often occurs in combination with Affects Others and Area Effect (see *Affects Others*, p. 107, for rules), and alongside the Active Defense limitation (p. 112).

## Game Time

### +0%

Some traits – including Luck, Serendipity, and Wild Talent – rely on *real* time. This modifier lets such an advantage use *game* time instead. If it usually works at least once per real hour, you get uses per game day equal to its maximum possible uses per real hour; e.g., Ridiculous Luck, which works every 10 real minutes, gets six uses per game day. If it's rated in uses per session, you get that many uses per game week; e.g., Serendipity 3 gives three uses per game week. The GM may adjust these ratios.

## Independent

### +40% or +70%

This enhancement is for advantages that require concentration to control. Your ability demands *no* attention after the initial Concentrate or Ready maneuver to activate it. If it requires a die roll, it lasts for minutes equal to your margin of success (your margin of victory, for a resisted ability) or its usual duration – whichever is *less*. During this time, it's completely self-sufficient. Its effects endure even if you're incapacitated or killed.

Independent doesn't allow multiple instances of the advantage's effects unless this is standard for the trait. If this *is* standard, *all* instances are "hands free" and you're exempt from penalties for simultaneous uses.

The only down side is that you don't control your ability after activation. Its effects last for the *entire* duration specified above – you can't end them early or maintain them. You must specify all particulars required by the ability when you activate it, and can't change these later on.

Independent is worth +40% for most advantages, +70% for those with penalties for simultaneous uses.

## Long-Range

### +50%/level

Your ranged ability uses a better class of range penalties than usual. From worst to best, these classes are -1/yard like a Regular spell (p. B239), the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550), *Long-Distance Modifiers* (p. B241), and *no* penalties at all. Each



level of Long-Range makes the penalties one step more favorable. The ability's 1/2D and Max range don't change; use Increased Range or Reduced Range for that. Long-Range affects the cost of Follow-Up.

## Once On, Stays On

**+50%**

Only for physical transformations that end if you're knocked out or killed – mainly Elastic Skin, Shadow Form, and Shapeshifting. You revert to your "normal" form only if you consciously choose to do so. Sleep, unconsciousness, and death don't force you to change back. Severed body parts may remain transformed after you change back, if you wish; specify this when you buy your ability.

## Reflexive

**+40%**

Reflexive is for defenses that take a second to activate, senses that require a second of concentration (e.g., Detect), and anything the GM feels serves a purpose similar to either. It lets your ability switch *itself* on – under attack if a defense, in the presence of something "interesting" if a sense – without a Ready or Concentrate maneuver. If this normally requires a success roll, activation requires a roll at -4; otherwise, it's automatic. If you're asleep, successful activation also wakes you up.

Reflexive counts as a level of Reduced Time when you use your ability consciously. It's incompatible with Active Defense, Always On, and Usually On.

## Reliable

**+5% per +1 bonus**

Your ability usually works as intended. Perhaps you have extensive experience or natural aptitude with it, or maybe it's just easy to use. Whatever the reason, you get a bonus on all rolls to use it. This works exactly like Talent, and can't affect anything that Talent wouldn't affect. It's cumulative with Talent, where applicable.

Reliable is handy for advantages that routinely suffer large penalties (e.g., the -8 to use Precognition actively). It *isn't* available for ranged attacks

– use Accurate (p. B102) for those. Reliable costs +5% per +1 bonus, to a maximum of +10.

## Ricochet

**+10%**

When using *Ricochets* (p. 166), your attack doesn't lose damage on each bounce.



## Selective Effect

see *Selective Area*, p. 105

## Surprise Attack

see *Overhead*, p. 104

## Switchable

**+10%**

This enhancement only exists for physiological features (e.g., Claws), defenses, and other traits that are normally "always on." It lets you switch your advantage off and on with a Ready maneuver. Specify whether it switches on or off – or remains in its current state, whatever that is – when you're knocked out.

You can't add Switchable to an advantage that lists special modifiers that enable you to turn it off and on, regardless of whether *your* ability has those modifiers. If an advantage notes Switchable as a special enhancement with a different value, use that value instead. Switchable isn't permitted on

meta-traits, either. To get a switchable meta-trait, buy an Alternate Form.

A weaker version of Switchable is logical for some advantages:

*Usually On:* Only for advantages that are "always on" by default. Your ability is usually on, but you can switch it off by expending 1 FP per *second*. For advantages that are normally *off* by default, this is a limitation; see *Always On* (p. 99). +5%.

## Time-Spanning

**Variable**

Your ability works across time. Rolls to use it this way have a penalty for the time gap between you and your target; use *Long-Distance Modifiers* (p. B241) and substitute "days" for "miles." Find the distance in *space* as if you were at the same point in time. This is worth +50% if you can reach just the past or just the future, or +100% for both; add -50% if your ability doesn't work in the *present*.

The GM decides which advantages can use this enhancement. It's meant for sensory and communications abilities (e.g., Clairsentience and Telesend), but might suit other mental abilities – like Possession – if the user also has an ability that lets him sense his target across time. If the GM allows this on an *attack*, Cosmic (+50%) is a prerequisite.

## Usually On

see *Switchable*, above

## Very Rapid Fire

see *Rapid Fire*, p. 105

## World-Spanning

**+50% or +100%**

Your ability can reach parallel worlds. Find the distance in *space* as if you and your subject were on the same world. The GM may also permit a Plane-Spanning variant for abilities that work across dimensions other than parallel worlds. Either is worth +50% if you can *only* contact other worlds or planes, or +100% if your ability also works in your current realm. See *Time-Spanning* (above) for guidelines on allowed advantages.

## NEW LIMITATIONS

Below are some new limitations of general applicability. The GM might also allow “wild” advantages to have some of the limitations normally reserved for powers, where logical; see *Evaluating Power Modifiers* (p. 20). When creating limitations, remember that a modifier that doesn't restrict the user isn't a limitation – it's a special effect (see *Special Effects*, p. 113).

### Active Defense

see *Requires (Attribute) Roll*, p. 112

### All-Out

**-25%**

Your ability requires an All-Out Attack maneuver; you can't use it with any other maneuver (e.g., Move or Change Posture). You have no active defense while using it. If it would let you move more than a step, you're limited to half your Move in a forward direction. You may attack *if* the advantage is one that lets you do so, but All-Out isn't just for attack abilities – you can add it to any advantage that requires a maneuver to use (typically Concentrate or Ready), replacing the standard maneuver with All-Out Attack. Explain what you're doing that limits you: deep concentration, spinning in place, etc.

### Aspected

**-20%**

Your ability works only when pursuing a specific class of *related* tasks or activities (e.g., athletics, combat, investigation, or social interaction), or in a specific area of daily life (e.g., job, personal health, or romance). The GM has the final say, and can make the categories as broad or as narrow as he wishes.

Aspected is meant for Intuition, Serendipity, and advantages that directly alter your odds of success at tasks (Luck, Super Luck, Visualization, etc.). The GM may allow it on other traits. Certain “aspects” aren't *useful* even on normally permitted abilities, though; for

instance, Visualization is so slow that Aspected, Combat would make it worthless.

### Backlash

see *Nuisance Effect*, p. 104

### Blockable

**-5% or -10%**

Ranged attack abilities (Affliction, Binding, Innate Attack, advantages with the Ranged enhancement, etc.) normally work like firearms when it comes to the target's legal active defenses: the victim can only dodge. Abilities that affect an area – including anything with Area Effect, Cone, or Explosion – only allow an attempt to dive for cover, whether or not they're ranged. If either kind of attack produces an effect that the target could try to block with a shield, it has a -5% limitation – or -10%, if he could also attempt to parry.

Use this limitation to simulate slow-moving projectiles (like nets or Missile spells), summoned swarms of biting creatures, and so on. To block an attack with Blockable *and* Overhead – like a rain of stones – the defender must hold his shield over his head.

### Costs Hit Points

**Variable**

This limitation works exactly like Costs Fatigue (p. B111), except that it depletes HP instead of FP, and is worth twice as much: -10% per HP per use, doubled to -20% if the cost is per *second*. It can also convert FP costs built into advantages to HP costs, at -5% per FP converted – or -10% per FP, if the cost is per second.

### Environmental

**Variable**

Only advantages that affect others can have this limitation. Your ability manipulates an *existing* item or condition, which must touch or surround the target. Unlike Accessibility, this doesn't affect activation – you can trigger your ability anywhere, barring a failed roll or another limitation. However, your ability is only *effective* if the subject is

in a particular environment . . . and the GM can alter its effects if the environment you're attempting to manipulate is at all unusual.

*Example:* A Binding that commands plants to entangle the victim would do nothing in an area without vegetation. It would be little more than a nuisance if the only plant nearby were a small potted fern . . . and totally unpredictable in an alien jungle!

The GM should base the value on the environment's rarity:

*Very Common:* Environment is present all the time, outside of one or two unusual situations that would be difficult for an enemy to arrange; e.g., in a gravity field, in the presence of air, or on a planet. -5%.

*Common:* Environment is present most of the time, but a resourceful foe could arrange for it to be absent; e.g., in contact with dust or in the presence of microbes. -10%.

*Occasional:* Environment is often absent, or easily avoided by enemies (although a crafty user might be able to “rig” an important encounter to work around this); e.g., in a city, in the wilderness, outdoors, or touching the ground. -20%.

*Rare:* Environment is usually absent *and* difficult for the user to arrange; e.g., in a storm, in dense vegetation, in the desert, or underground. -40%.

*Very Rare:* Environment is so unlikely that the ability is useless most of the time; e.g., in lava, in quicksand, or in vacuum. -80%.

The GM should forbid proposed Environmental limitations that duplicate one of the ability's built-in restrictions; e.g., “in the water” isn't valid for Control (Water). In games with powers, an ability that gets -10% for a mundane countermeasure or insulator as part of its power modifier *already* has this limitation – don't apply it a second time.

### Fickle

**-20%**

Your ability is or seems sentient, and sometimes reacts poorly. Make an *unmodified* reaction roll whenever you wish to use it. For an attack, make this

roll before each use. For other abilities, the advantage works until you need to make a success roll for it . . . then make a reaction roll. For instance, Flight requires a reaction roll when you try a DX roll to “push the envelope,” or an Aerobatics or Flight skill roll, while Dark Vision calls for a reaction roll anytime you attempt a Vision roll in the dark. Even “passive” abilities sometimes require die rolls; see *Extra Effort* (p. 160), *Defending with Powers* (p. 167), and *Stunts* (p. 170).

On a reaction of Neutral or better (10+), the ability works as expected and you can attempt your attack roll, DX roll, Sense roll, etc., as applicable. A Very Good reaction (16-18) gives +1 to the ensuing roll; an Excellent reaction (19+) gives +2.

On a reaction of Poor or worse (9 or less), the ability fails. If it wasn't already active, it refuses to activate. If it *was* active, it shuts down. This doesn't normally endanger you directly; for instance, Flight sets you down gently and Insubstantiality leaves you in open space. Of course, the sudden loss of DR in battle, Dark Vision in an unlit room full of traps, and so forth can endanger you *indirectly*.

On a reaction of Very Bad or worse (3 or less), the ability *does* endanger you, or turns on you in some unpleasant way. Flight drops you like a stone, Insubstantiality leaves you stranded inside a wall, your attack blasts you, and so forth. The GM should be creative!

You can try to invoke a failed ability every second if you wish, but the reaction roll is at a cumulative -1 per repeated attempt as your ability (or the forces behind it) become increasingly annoyed by your requests. To eliminate this penalty, you must go for a full hour without using your ability.

Fickle is often part of a power modifier; see *Fickle Forces* (p. 24). In this case, the outcome of the reaction roll and the hour needed to lift penalties for repeated attempts apply to the entire *power*. The abilities of such powers can't take this limitation – they already have it.

The GM may permit a weaker limitation:

*Requires Reaction Roll:* Your ability works as described above, but normal

reaction modifiers *do* apply to the reaction roll, and you can substitute an Influence roll. -5%.

## Glamour

### Variable

Only available for Chameleon, Elastic Skin, Invisibility, Shapeshifting (with the Cosmetic limitation), Silence, and similar traits that alter how others perceive *you*. Your ability controls others' perceptions through a persistent hypnotic suggestion, mental illusion, or psychic compulsion. It doesn't affect machines. Living victims get a Will roll to resist your influence and sense you normally – and individuals with Mind Shield may add their level to this roll. A resistance roll against Will-5 is worth -5%. Each +1 to the roll is a worth another -5% (e.g., Will+4 is -50%).



## Hard to Use

see *Untrainable*, p. 107

## Insubstantial Only

-30%

Your ability *only* affects intangible targets: beings with the Spirit meta-trait, individuals using Insubstantiality, and those using Clairvoyance, Jumper, or Warp with the Projection special modifier. This modifier is especially useful for attacks intended to exorcise spirits.

## Magnetic

see *Specific*, p. 112

## Maximum Duration

### Variable

Only available for switchable, beneficial abilities that you could

normally leave “on” *indefinitely* (e.g., Insubstantiality). Your ability can only operate for a limited length of time. After that, it shuts down without warning and you can't reactivate it for five minutes. Limitation value depends on the time limit:

Less than 30 seconds	-75%
Up to 1 minute	-65%
Up to 10 minutes	-50%
Up to 30 minutes	-25%
Up to 1 hour	-10%
Up to 12 hours (or one night)	-5%
Greater than 12 hours	-0%

## Minimum Duration

### Variable

Only available for switchable abilities that would – in the GM's opinion – *seriously* inconvenience you if you couldn't deactivate them at will. Your ability must stay “on” for a certain period of time once activated; you can't shut it off before this time is up. Minimum Duration can never exceed Maximum Duration (if any). Limitation value is as follows:

Less than 1 hour	-0%
Up to 8 hours	-5%
Up to 12 hours (or one night)	-10%
Up to 24 hours	-15%
Up to 1 week	-20%
Up to 1 month	-25%
Greater than one month	-30%

On an advantage that allows Always On, this limitation is worth at most -5% less than Always On; e.g., if Always On is -20%, Minimum Duration can't go beyond -15%.

## Minimum Range

-5% or -10%

You can't use your ranged ability on a target *inside* a certain range. Use this for weapons that have a minimum fusing distance or that fire in a high arc, and for sensors with a “blind spot” within which they can't resolve targets. The GM should restrict this modifier to ranged abilities that are *normally* useful at relatively close range. This is worth -10% for a minimum range of 5% maximum range, -5% for a minimum range of 1% maximum range (always at least a yard).



**Missing Damage Effect**  
see *Damage Modifiers*, p. 101

**Required Disadvantage**  
see *Pact*, p. 104

**Requires (Attribute) Roll**  
-5 or -10%

This limitation works like Unreliable (p. B116), except that instead of rolling against a fixed activation number to trigger your advantage, you roll against DX, IQ, HT, Will, or Per (choose one when you buy the ability). Things that temporarily modify your score *do* affect this roll. For a defensive ability, roll each time the defense would mitigate an attack or a hazard – or once per minute, for constant exposure. -10% for a DX, IQ, or HT roll; -5% for a Will or Per roll.

A special version of this limitation exists for the defensive traits listed under *Force Field* (p. 108):

*Active Defense:* Your ability only protects you against threats you're aware of – and only if you make a roll to interpose it in time. This roll is at DX/2 + 3, +1 for Combat Reflexes. If you try to use the same ability more than once in a turn, apply a cumulative -4 per attempt after the first. You roll at -4 if stunned, and can't roll at all in situations where you wouldn't get an active defense (attack from behind, unconscious, etc.). -40%.

**Requires Concentrate or Ready**

-15% or -10%

Your ability requires a series of Concentrate or Ready maneuvers to maintain. Taking any other maneuver (such as Attack or Move) causes it to switch off. Thus, you can only move one step per second while using it, and can't attack, aim, etc. Requires Ready is worth -10%. Requires Concentrate is worth -15%, and means your ability shuts down if you lose your concentration. You can't combine these with each other or All-Out (p. 110).

Normally, only switchable advantages that would otherwise stay on without an active effort can have these limitations. A passive ability *without*

definite activation conditions (e.g., Empathy) can also take them; if so, it requires the maneuver in question to use.

**Requires Reaction Roll**  
see *Fickle*, p. 110

**Short-Range**  
-10%/level

Your ranged ability is subject to more severe range penalties than usual. Use the rules for Long-Range (p. 108), except that each level makes the penalties a step *less* favorable. You *can* combine Short-Range with Reduced Range, but the total limitation value can't exceed -30%. Short-Range affects the cost of Follow-Up. It's incompatible with Guided, Homing, Long-Range, and Melee Attack.



**Specific**  
Variable

Specific restricts an ability that lets you interact with a material to a subset of what it normally affects. Advantages that *already* require a particular choice of materials can't be Specific. This limitation is generally worth -40% for common materials, -60% for uncommon ones, and -80% for absurd ones – but the GM sets the precise value, which might be as little as -10% for very common materials. Abilities that affect ferrous metals – iron (including steel), nickel, and cobalt – have a -50% limitation, called “Magnetic” and not “Specific, Ferrous Metals” to save space. See the examples under *Clinging* (p. B43), *Penetrating Vision* (p. B74), *Super Climbing* (p. 79), *Walk on Air* (p. 87), and *Walk on Liquid* (p. 88) for other suggestions.

**Terminal Condition**  
Variable

Only allowed on abilities that affect others for at least a minute. Your enemies can end your ability's ongoing effects with a simple act: kissing the subject, speaking three words, etc. If this condition isn't met, the effects have their usual duration.

This is worth -5% if the condition is arcane enough to require research; -10% if a skill roll (against Religious Ritual, Ritual Magic, Thaumatology, etc.) can discover it; or -20% if common knowledge. These values become -0% (a special effect), -5%, and -10% if the condition is difficult to arrange even if known, like a kiss *from a princess* or words *spoken by an elf*.

Abilities that *can't* end until a certain condition is met just have Extended Duration, Permanent (+150%). This enhancement already requires such a condition – you can't take Terminal Condition separately.

**Uncontrollable Trigger**  
see *Uncontrollable*, p. 106

**Usually On**  
see *Always On*, p. 99

**Visible**  
-10% or -20%

Your ability has a manifestation that makes it plainly obvious to everyone nearby. The effects and value depend on the underlying advantage:

- A communication, influence, information, or sensory ability that would otherwise have no visible effect – such as Clairsentience or Mind Reading – generates an attention-grabbing effect (shimmering ray, floating eye, etc.) that gives away the fact that you're affecting or observing the subject. This makes subtlety impossible (if it doesn't, you don't have a limitation). -10%.

- An ability that lets you physically attack *might* qualify if it's normally invisible and largely unavoidable; e.g., Telekinesis. In addition to the effects above, your target gets an unpenalized defense roll to avoid the attack. -20%.

# SPECIAL EFFECTS

Advantages and modifiers are so precisely defined that an ability built from them is liable to seem boring if it's merely the sum of its parts. To make things interesting, try to specify a few ways in which your creation deviates from its generic components. The comics are full of supers with Flight and Burning Attack . . . but one hero might leave a fiery trail and toss fireballs, while another hovers in a green globe of force and zaps his foes with a laser beam. Little details like this are called *special effects*.

Special effects are trivial features with *no* effect on point cost. They describe how the ability works in the game world, what it looks like, and how it differs from other abilities built from the same elements. Any benefits they provide should be minor – with little influence on overall utility – and balanced by modest drawbacks. If the GM feels that a proposed special effect is effectively an enhancement, he's within his rights to price it as such or forbid it altogether.

## “FUNCTIONAL” SPECIAL EFFECTS

A vital role of special effects is to provide a game-world (as opposed to *game-mechanical*) explanation for how the ability *works*. A Burning Attack might be a laser beam . . . or a

fireball. Flight (Winged) might involve two wings, like those of a bird or a plane . . . or four wings, like those of a dragonfly . . . or rotors. Elastic Skin might be an illusion . . . or a physical metamorphosis. Such choices sometimes matter in play, but since they're largely “color” – with no real effect on overall capability – they don't affect point cost.

The GM should *require* players who buy exotic and supernatural advantages to specify such “functional” special effects for their abilities – especially those with many modifiers. The entries for most such advantages in the **Basic Set** offer a few suggestions; the notes under *Advantages* (pp. 39-98) and *Modifiers* (pp. 99-112) add many more.

### Variant Traits

Functional special effects needn't be subtle. A radical redesign of an advantage is still a special effect if it uses roughly the same game mechanics as the original *and* is no more potent in play than the “stock” version. Examples include Jumper (Spirit) (p. 57), Oracle (Digital) (p. 65), Protected Power (p. 69), and True Faith (Chosen) (p. 84); versions of Medium that communicate with a dream world or parallel universe instead of the spirit realm (p. 59); and the special Awe and Confusion variants of Terror (p. 84).

Modifiers, too, can vary as a special effect. This usually involves extending the list of advantages to which they apply (e.g., allowing Unreliable to give natural attacks a Malf. number; see p. 107) or expanding their definitions (e.g., the Selective Effect variant of Selective Area, p. 105). The GM might also exchange one score for another (like basing Resistible on an attribute other than HT; see p. 105). He might even “reverse” the way the modifier works (see *Blood Agent*, p. 100, and *Sense-Based*, p. 105), if he's willing to define the effects.

The GM is the final judge of which variant traits are allowed.

## COSMETIC EFFECTS

Unless a specific advantage description states otherwise, any attack without the Low or No Signature enhancement (p. 103) has obvious effects. Most other advantages lack obvious effects except when given the Visible limitation (p. 112). For obvious abilities, an important special effect is *what observers perceive*. Consider the following questions:

- What color is the effect? If it emits light, how bright is it, and is it steady or lambent? If it looks solid, smoky, or shadowy, is it transparent, translucent, or opaque? Or does it seem to *suck in* light?
- Does the ability make noise? If so, how loud? Is it low- or high-pitched? Is it a sharp report, like a gun? A mechanical hum? A weird screech or warble, like a sci-fi ray gun?
- Does the ability generate a distinctive odor?
- Can others *feel* the ability as vibrations, a breeze, a temperature change, or an electric field that causes hair to stand on end?
- Is the ability obvious to senses beyond the normal human ones? Does it emit infrared or ultraviolet light? Ultrasonics? Electromagnetic noise? *Psionic* noise?
- Does it have *weird* effects, like causing glowing magical symbols to appear, or a rumbling voice from the heavens?

## Beam, Breath, and Bolt

Two particularly important functional special effects for ranged attacks are the *body part* that projects the attack and the attack's physical *form*. These factors determine the specialty of Innate Attack skill (p. B201) used to aim the attack.

Continuous beams and jets can stream from the hands, mouth, or eyes, and use Innate Attack (Beam), (Breath), or (Gaze), respectively. Solid projectiles and discrete bolts – like fireballs – use Innate Attack (Projectile). For abilities that don't fit neatly into these categories, the GM may arbitrarily assign an existing specialty or invent a new one.

Those with Burning Attacks should also decide whether their ability is a tight-beam burning attack. Such attacks have both benefits and drawbacks (see *Tight-Beam Burning Attacks*, p. B399), but there's no effect on point cost – the distinction is a special effect.

These effects can be as simple or elaborate as the user wishes. For instance, a death ray might resemble a beam-weapon attack . . . or consist of a stream of wailing, ghostly skulls that swirl around the target, chilling him and making his hair stand on end.

The GM should ruthlessly forbid any cosmetic effect that's a useful ability in its own right; e.g., jamming all radios within a mile, shattering glass, or blinding onlookers. *Minor* benefits are acceptable if they have balancing drawbacks. For instance, a super with a flame jet has a useful light source – but his enemies can target him by its light, and he wouldn't want to use it in the city library!

## MINOR BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS

If the GM permits, the player can specify one or two trivial benefits for his ability in return for accepting some equally minor drawbacks. Special effects of this kind *must* be related to the ability's primary effect – and to its source and its focus, if the ability is part of a power.

### Additions

Special effects often take the form of a modest additional capability balanced by a new restriction. A simple but effective way to balance such effects is to word the advantageous aspects as perks (see *Perks*, p. B100) and the disadvantageous ones as quirks (see *Quirks*, p. B162), and to require an equal number of both.

The most common perks for this purpose are Accessory (for instance, a flame attack might work as a cigarette

*The GM should ruthlessly forbid any cosmetic effect that's a useful ability in its own right.*

lighter, a laser beam as a flashlight, and an air attack as a leaf blower) and Shtick (e.g., Damage Resistance with Force Field might repel dirt and keep you clean at all times). Other effects are possible. For instance, a particularly impressive ability might be good for +1 to Intimidation attempts when used.

Quirks should follow the guidelines for physical quirks, giving the user a small penalty to one or two die rolls when he activates his ability – or giving *opponents* a modest bonus (for instance, to spot him).

*Example:* Revok can run his Mind Control “passively,” persuading others he's mostly harmless; he enjoys the benefits of the Honest Face perk most of the time. When he uses his ability actively, though, others perceive him as sinister; he attracts attention as if he had the Distinctive Features quirk.

### Omissions

The GM might instead let the player eliminate one built-in restriction on his advantage in return for accepting the loss of one of its normal benefits. This should always be an even trade; that is, the two omitted elements should be roughly comparable in importance. If not, the GM can omit additional elements to balance things, or simply forbid the special effect.

*Example:* Blessed (p. 43) offers the option of dropping the requirement to serve a deity (a built-in restriction) in return for losing the reaction bonus from the faithful (a standard benefit). This converts Blessed from a “holy” ability to a generic supernatural one. In game terms, this is just a special effect.

### Special Effects On the Fly

It's impossible to predict every logical special effect for an ability, especially one with many modifiers. If the player proposes a reasonable special effect in the course of an adventure, the GM should generally go along with it for the sake of drama . . . and if the GM feels that the ability would be slightly limited in a particular situation, the player should accept the GM's judgment and let the game go on.

Trust is crucial here. It's simply more *fun* if everyone is willing to live with rulings like “Of course Snowball's ice bolts can chill drinks!” and “Sorry, Snowball, but the bad guys found you by following the puddles!” The alternative – requiring Snowball to link a low level of Temperature Control to his Innate Attack, add Nuisance Effect (Leaves puddles), and so on – results in needlessly complex abilities.

## FINISHING UP

After choosing the advantages and modifiers that make up your ability – and noting a few interesting special effects – it's time to clean it up and put it on your character sheet. The following checklist can help you avoid errors and omissions:

1. Drop any modifier that's explicitly incompatible with the advantage.

Ignore special modifiers (they're *designed* for the advantage), but note that many *general* modifiers are off-limits for specific advantages. In particular, attack modifiers are normally off-limits for advantages other than attacks.

2. Delete any limitation that duplicates one of the advantage's built-in restrictions. Such limitations don't

limit the user . . . so they aren't real limitations, and are forbidden even if there's no explicit note saying so.

3. Verify that all the modifiers are compatible with *each other*. Often, only one of two incompatible modifiers notes a conflict, so be sure to read each description. If there's an incompatibility, remove one of the problem modifiers. An alternative solution in



the case of conflicting enhancements is to add Selectivity (p. 105).

4. If the ability is part of a power, remember its power modifier – and any modifiers that the power requires on this particular advantage.

5. Once *all* of the modifiers check out, add them together to find the ability's overall modifier. If this is a net limitation that exceeds -80%, reduce it to -80%.

6. Apply the net modifier to the advantage's point cost to find the ability's point cost. Round all fractional point costs *up*; for instance, 10.01 and 10.99 both round to 11.

7. Name the ability (see *Naming Your Ability*, below).

8. Write the ability on your character sheet as explained in *Writing it Up* (box).

## NAMING YOUR ABILITY

An interesting ability needs a descriptive, original, *cool* name. Anime heroes and cinematic martial artists shout out impressive names for their abilities (“Four-Way Demon Yin-Yang Fire!”). Wizards prefer names that hint at secret knowledge or the monikers of forgotten magi (“Al-Azrad’s Burning Death”). Priests honor gods (“Wrath of Agni”). Even the most serious psis and supers coin

### Writing It Up

You can write down abilities however you like, but the following steps outline a *clear* format that includes all the information needed to use the ability in play:

- Start with the advantage name, exactly as it appears in *Powers* or the *Basic Set*. *Exception:* For Innate Attack, replace the word “Innate” with the damage type; e.g., if the Innate Attack inflicts burning damage, write “Burning Attack.”
- After this, write the advantage’s level or dice of effect: Affliction 3, Burning Attack 10d, Damage Resistance 30, Striking ST +10, and so on.
- If the advantage has a particular specialty or form, note this in parentheses after advantage level; e.g., Control 5 (Water) or Regeneration (Fast). For resisted abilities, like Affliction, note the resistance roll instead; e.g., Affliction 3 (HT-2).
- In the same parenthesis, list the ability’s modifiers in alphabetical order, separating names, levels, and values with commas. Separate the modifiers from each other – and from the ability’s specialty or resistance roll – using semicolons.
- At the very end, write the ability’s point cost in brackets.

*Example:* Affliction 3 (HT-2; Area Effect, 64 yards, +300%; Emanation, -20%; Hearing-Based, +150%; Heart Attack, +300%; Limited Use, 1/day, -40%; Selective Area, +20%) [243].

names like “Pyrokinesis,” “Firebolt,” and “Plasma Blast.” Never settle for an advantage name like “Burning Attack” – that’s boring!

There *is* a practical benefit to naming your ability. If your ability is complex, with many modifiers and perhaps even multiple traits joined with

Link or Follow-Up, you can just list its name and point cost on your character sheet to save space. Write out all the gory details elsewhere. A name can replace a paragraph or even a *page* of modifiers, special effects, and notes, making your character sheet much tidier.

## SPECIAL CASES

It isn’t always easy to hit upon the combination of advantages, modifiers, and special effects that does *exactly* what you want. It’s often difficult to decide what the starting advantage should be – or which modifiers make it work as desired. Below is advice to help solve some of the more common problems.

### MULTIPLE-CHOICE PROBLEMS

The wealth of traits available in *GURPS* sometimes makes it possible to represent a capability in more than one way . . . and the point costs might not even be close. The GM decides

which choice is “right” for *his* campaign. When in doubt, use the “A-B-C Rule”:

- *Accurate.* When a character concept or fictional precedent provides an explanation for the ability, select the advantages and modifiers whose built-in mechanics and special effects most closely fit that explanation. *Example:* A “universal translator” might have Mind Reading plus Telesend with the Universal enhancement (p. B91) . . . or Modular Abilities with Limited, Languages Only (p. 64). The former is superior for a telepath who “assimilates” the languages of conversation partners. The latter is better for a robot translator that runs language programs – which usually *are* discrete modules.

- *Basic.* If none of the redundant options is obviously a better fit – which is often true for highly adaptable “generic” advantages – pick the *simplest* option. *Example:* A super who can become a living flame could buy Injury Tolerance (Diffuse) with the Switchable enhancement, and then take all the other traits that constitute the Body of Fire meta-trait (p. B262) with “Accessibility, Only when diffuse.” However, Alternate Form (Body of Fire) would be less convoluted – and easier to record on the character sheet.

- *Cheap.* If two options are equally suitable and simple, choose the one that costs fewer points. The GM should be wary of “creative accounting,” though – the cheaper choice

ought to be less useful. **GURPS** tries to enforce this, but like any game, it likely has loopholes. If a player finds one of these, the GM should put special restrictions on the bargain-priced ability, or just forbid it. *Example:* Affliction 1 (HT; Advantage, Warp, +1,000%) [110] costs less than Warp (Extra Carrying Capacity, +50%) [150]. Both can teleport others – but the former is resisted and doesn't let the *user* teleport, while the latter lets the user teleport with anyone he's carrying, regardless of HT or DR.

## EMULATING FICTIONAL ABILITIES

Each advantage in the **Basic Set** was designed with iconic fictional examples in mind. For instance, Mind Control establishes an invisible mental connection, depends on the user's mental capacity (IQ), and must overcome the target's willpower (Will). It's a good match for the abilities of hypnotists and telepaths. But Mind Control *could* result from an injected drug that's resisted by HT, or be a form of machine control that requires the user to "jack in." There are countless valid interpretations . . . and each requires its own set of modifiers.

The first step when simulating a fictional ability is to choose a few likely advantages and consult their entries under *Existing Advantages* (pp. 39-90) for advice on adapting them. See "Alternatives" for suggestions on how to choose between similar traits. "New Special Enhancements/Limitations" often introduces modifiers specifically intended to cover important fictional examples.



Don't be afraid to apply plenty of special effects. Even major, game-changing special effects are fine, if they apply to all similar abilities in the setting. For an example, see *Stunts*

(p. 170). That *entire set of rules* is simply an extensive collection of special effects that let superhuman abilities work more like they do in anime, comic books, and action movies.

Below is some additional advice by genre.

### Cyberpunk Abilities

*Advantages:* Implants ("cyberwear") can grant many mundane and exotic physical advantages, but few if any supernatural ones. Extended senses and additional body parts are especially common; see *Switchable Body Parts* (p. 81) and *Weapon Mounts* (p. 138) for details. Many cyberpunk worlds feature Chip Slots (see *Modular Abilities*, p. B71).

*Modifiers:* Most advantages that list a Cybernetic or Digital special modifier require that modifier in cyberpunk. Use Temporary Disadvantage, Electrical (-20%) to represent vulnerability to electrical overload. Large implants – notably bionic limbs – often have Temporary Disadvantage, Maintenance, 1 person, Weekly (-5%). Experimental implants tend to be Unreliable. See *Guns as Innate Attacks* (p. 54) for modifiers suitable for built-in weapons.

### Fantasy Abilities

*Advantages:* Innate gifts are typically mundane (but often cinematic) or supernatural. Learned "spells" can emulate nearly any advantage – notably attacks and mental abilities – and powerful wizards and priests might meet new challenges with Super-Memorization (see *Modular Abilities*, p. B71). Almost any exotic or supernatural trait would suit some fantasy monster, somewhere.

*Modifiers:* Appropriate power modifiers include Divine, Magical, Moral, Nature, and Spirit. Spells traditionally require fatiguing, time-consuming rituals, and aren't physical, making all of Affects Insubstantial, Costs Fatigue, Malediction, and Takes Extra Time suitable. Glamour and Requires Concentrate often fit, and Terminal Condition suits fairy-tale magic. Such accessibility limitations as "Requires material components," "Requires gestures," and "Requires magic words" are common, and worth -10% apiece.

### "Hard" Science-Fiction Abilities

*Advantages:* Most "realistic" special abilities are mundane or exotic, and physical in nature – granted by surgery, genetic engineering, etc. In settings with advanced AI, Computer Brain is likely (see *Modular Abilities*, p. B71).

*Modifiers:* A new use for a body part that prevents it from serving its original purpose calls for Temporary Disadvantage. Drug-activated abilities have Trigger. Experimental technology is often Unreliable. Mental traits that affect the *brain* (not the mind) need Based on HT or Requires HT Roll. The Accessibility, Environmental, and Specific limitations can restrict abilities to particular atmospheres, gravity fields, materials, etc. Add Costs Fatigue, Limited Use, or Takes Recharge to enforce energy conservation.

### Horror Abilities

*Advantages:* Low-powered supernatural advantages – typically mental – are likely for heroes. Exotic traits, if allowed, often result from a curse. Cinematic advantages (even mundane ones) can wreck suspense, and are rarely appropriate. Of course, Evil Things can have almost any kind of trait!

*Modifiers:* Much of the discussion under *Fantasy Abilities* applies, but horror abilities are rarely reliable or flashy. Fitting modifiers include Costs Hit Points, Fickle, Maximum Duration, Nuisance Effect (especially Backlash), Preparation Required (for long rituals), Short-Range, Temporary Disadvantage, Trigger (often involving foul ingredients), Untrainable, and weirder forms of Accessibility (e.g., "Only when the stars are right"). Cultists often end up with Pact, while troubled psis have Unconscious Only and Uncontrollable. Reliable is highly *inappropriate*. The Things, on the other hand, often have the Cosmic enhancement.

### Martial-Arts and Pulp Abilities

*Advantages:* The most cinematic mundane advantages, off-limits in many genres, are highly appropriate

here – pulp heroes are frequently Gadgeteers, Weapon Masters, and so on. *Physical* supernatural and exotic traits can represent secret martial-arts techniques.

*Modifiers:* The most common power modifier is Chi, but Biological works for mad science. Based on Will and Requires Will Roll are commonly added to otherwise physical abilities to represent the triumph of discipline over raw, animal power. The modifiers under *Horror Abilities* fit the bizarre rituals of forgotten civilizations, evil ninja cults, etc.

### Mythic Abilities

*Advantages:* Heroes and demigods of myth generally have a mixture of supernatural advantages and extreme levels of mundane ones – the more cinematic, the better. For actual deities, Control, Create, and Cosmic Power (see *Modular Abilities*, p. B71) are *de rigueur*. Mythic monsters have many exotic advantages.

*Modifiers:* Peculiar usage limits – e.g., “Three times while the sun is in

the sky” – call for creative interpretations of Accessibility, Limited Use, Maximum Duration, Minimum Duration, and Terminal Condition. Heroic gifts often come with a Pact requiring total devotion to a patron deity. Divine beings rarely have severe limitations; often, their abilities are Cosmic, and have powerful enhancements such as Malediction 3, World-Spanning, and Extended Duration, Permanent.

### Space-Opera Abilities

*Advantages:* Almost anyone worthy of being called a hero has cinematic advantages. Space-opera psis have access to most mental advantages, regardless of type. Cinematic aliens and mutants might have almost *any* exotic trait.

*Modifiers:* The Biological and Psionic power modifiers are common. The Unreliable limitation is traditional for experimental rubber-science abilities. Apply the guidelines under “*Hard*” *Science-Fiction Abilities* if they would be *dramatic* . . . but don’t

bother with limitations that merely serve to keep abilities *realistic*.

### Supers Abilities

*Advantages:* Nearly every advantage shows up in *some* comic book. Traits that let the hero adjust his capabilities to suit the situation – e.g., Modular Abilities and Morph – are especially popular. Be sure to use *Alternative Abilities* (p. 11), too.

*Modifiers:* Any power modifier is possible; Elemental, Psionic, and Super are just the most common. Abilities are often Visible, even if traditionally invisible in other genres. Switchable appears on almost any advantage that permits it, Force Field and Reflexive are popular for defenses, and an attack is likely to have Selectivity, Variable, and *many* enhancements so that the hero can tune it from a 1d-2 jet to a 10d explosion. A handful of special enhancements are *meant* for supers, notably Super-Speed for Altered Time Rate (p. 42) and Super-Effort for Lifting ST (p. 58).

### ABSOLUTES

A few classic abilities are *absolute*: invulnerability, death rays, wishes, etc. They’re rarely a problem when a skilled author creates all the heroes, and guides them through a plot that conveniently takes their gifts into account . . . but matters are rarely so simple in a roleplaying game. The GM never knows what the players will try, while the players are never sure exactly what will work. This uncertainty is part of the fun, and the finality of “irresistible forces” and “immovable objects” can diminish that. This makes allowing them a risky proposition – but some important genres simply won’t work without them.

### Unerring Attacks

Attacks that can’t miss – divine thunderbolts, spears of vengeance, etc. – have one of the new forms of Cosmic described on p. 101: “no die roll required” or “no active defense allowed.” Heroes on a budget can obtain *near-absolute* reliability by taking some combination of Accurate, Guided, Homing, and Surprise Attack (p. 104).

## Benchmarking Attacks and Defenses

Below are guidelines on how large an attack must be to simulate a weapon or hazard. Except where noted, damage is per second – the duration of one attack. To *resist* average damage, take DR 3.5 per die; to be *immune*, buy DR 6 per die.

*Acid* (p. B428): Immersion causes 1d-1 corrosion. This can degrade DR.

*Electricity* (p. B432): Household current inflicts 3d burning damage, at worst. Industrial accidents and lightning bolts *start* at 6d and range up to 6d×3.

*Fire* (p. B433): Ordinary fire rarely exceeds 1d burning. To rate other fires, use *Making Things Burn*. For instance, magma should ignite even “highly resistant” items instantly, which takes 30 points of damage – average damage for 8d+2.

*Poison* (p. B437): Most poisons inflict 1d or 2d toxic damage per cycle, and rarely exceed 12d total. The deadliest poisons inflict up to 6d *immediately*.

*Radiation* (p. B435): The most lethal radiation accidents actually inflict less than 1 rad/second. Attacks should rarely exceed 1d rads.

*Weapons* (pp. B267-281): The strongest man is unlikely to inflict more than 4d with a muscle-powered weapon. Pistols range up to 3d; submachine guns, to 4d; rifles, to 9d; grenades, to 10d; and machine guns, to 13d. Rocket launchers and cannon *start* at 6d×2. The heaviest portable weapons (missiles, mortars, etc.) go to 6d×10. Most anti-tank and ultra-tech weapons have armor divisors, too.



## Unstoppable Attacks

There are several ways to create attacks that *ignore* DR: Malediction circumvents DR but allows a resistance roll; Sense-Based bypasses DR but requires sensory contact; and Area Effect or Cone combined with Blood Agent, Contact Agent, or Respiratory Agent affect anyone without special defenses. To *unconditionally* avoid protection requires the “irresistible attack” version of Cosmic (p. B103) – and even then, defenses with Cosmic can still interfere, if the GM allows them.

## Instant-Death Attacks

The simplest attack that slays the victim outright – like a “death ray” – is an Affliction with the Heart Attack enhancement. For reliable lethality, take lots of levels; a godlike being with Affliction 19 (HT-18; Heart Attack, +300%) [760] could instantly kill anyone with human-level HT (20 or less).

Innate Attack can also do the job. The average man has 10 HP and experiences certain death at -5xHP. That requires 60 points of injury, which is about average for a 17d attack. The GM might instead allow a “0d+60” attack that deals a flat 60 points of damage; this costs the same as 18d. Total bodily destruction (-10xHP) calls for 110 points of injury. This is 32d-2, with a flat “0d+110” costing as much as 33d. Any damage type will do, but attacks that only affect the living should be Toxic Attacks. To affect targets with lots of HP or DR, add a few extra dice – or the Cosmic enhancement.

## Disintegration

Follow the Innate Attack guidelines under *Instant-Death Attacks* and use a Corrosion Attack. A target reduced -10xHP by corrosion damage is *gone*: dissolved, disintegrated, or vaporized. Resurrection is impossible. For a cheaper way to disintegrate one specific type of unliving matter, use Create (p. 92) with the Destruction enhancement.

## Petrifaction, Banishment, and Other Permanent Curses

Powerful spells and fantasy monsters can petrify their victim, banish

him to a prison dimension, and so forth. He isn’t exactly dead . . . but his odds of recovering on his own are no better (and possibly worse) than his odds of returning from the grave. Treat all such curses as Afflictions.

Since Heart Attack (+300%) would kill the target on a failed HT roll, barring special medical aid, the GM might let the same +300% buy an effect that removes the target from play *without* killing him. Since either takes care of the target for good in the absence of powerful external intervention, the difference is largely a special effect.

Alternatively, the GM can treat such curses as a combination of Paralysis (+150%) and Extended Duration, Permanent (+150%). Once again, it’s the special effects that matter. It’s no more “powerful” to petrify someone than to paralyze him forever.

Either option costs +300%. The net effect is that the victim is incapacitated indefinitely until he receives a special cure – usually a spell of some kind, in fantasy settings.

## Stopping Time

Beings that can stop time appear frequently in fiction . . . as plot devices. It’s *risky* to trust PCs with such capabilities. If the GM wishes to allow this, he should make the ability costly, and limit its scope and duration. The following enhancement for Affliction is fairly balanced:

*Temporal Stasis*: The victim and his equipment stop in time. Time continues to flow in the rest of the universe, just not for him. He’s frozen in place – in mid-action or even midair. He doesn’t age, breathe, or require sustenance. Injury, disease, and poison halt their progress. He keeps his position in the local frame of reference (usually a planet), but the physical world doesn’t otherwise affect him. He can’t be injured, moved, robbed, etc. In most settings, this extends to supernatural powers (e.g., his mind is unreadable). Likewise, he’s unaware of the universe and can’t act in any way, not even mentally. This lasts for a minute per point by which he fails his HT roll. After that, his actions, perceptions, and so on pick up where they left off. This *isn’t* a metabolic effect; it can afflict objects (see *Afflictions and Inanimate Targets*, p. 40). +1,000%.

If the entire *universe* freezes, the GM may represent it by combining Temporal Stasis with an extreme level of Area Effect. More modestly, a high level of Altered Time Rate (p. 41) with Super-Speed or Non-Combat Speed can give functionally similar results by greatly speeding up just the user.

## Invulnerability

*True* invulnerability that makes every attack bounce off harmlessly has no fair price. A fixed cost, however high, invites comparison with the same number of points spent on Damage Resistance . . . and a finite DR is always less favorable than “infinite” DR.

*Effective* invulnerability is attainable in a variety of ways, each with several inherent limitations to keep things fair. Multiple options could coexist in a given setting.

- *Damage Resistance*. In settings where “invulnerability” means “can’t be harmed by typical threats,” just buy enough DR to stop the deadliest *ordinary* threat, at the rate of DR 6 per die of damage. Before TL6, DR 30 is enough to stop the blows of the mightiest normal man, ballista bolts, early firearms, dragon’s fire, etc. At TL6-8, DR 80 will stop small arms up to heavy machine guns, cars hitting at 50 mph, falls from aircraft, etc. At higher TLs, add levels of Hardened to negate the armor divisors of beam weapons. This gets expensive, but limitations such as Can’t Wear Armor and Tough Skin can make it affordable. The Limited modifier is useful, too, as many supers and mythic creatures are only invulnerable to specific threats.

- *Injury Tolerance (Damage Reduction)*. The GM might permit heroes to buy divisors larger than 4. A divisor of 5 costs 125 points. To price a divisor of 10 or more, find it in the *Linear Measurement* column of the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550), add 2 to the corresponding entry in the *Size* column, and multiply the sum by 25. This gives 150 points for a divisor of 10, 300 points for 100, 450 points for 1,000, and so on. The GM might require Limited, but he could waive this restriction for those who are *supposed* to be almost untouchable. Minimum injury from an attack that pierces DR is always 1 HP – but the

GM may rule that those with Cosmic, +50% only suffer this if the injury is at least 1 HP *after* applying the divisor. See *Injury Tolerance* (p. 52).

• *Injury Tolerance (Diffuse)*. By limiting injury from impaling and piercing damage to 1 HP per attack and that from other damage to 2 HP per attack, this trait provides limited invulnerability. Even the deadliest hits cause little more than flesh wounds. The GM might allow super-tough heroes who aren't truly diffuse to buy this advantage. It *doesn't* help against area effects, cones, or explosions, though.

• *Insubstantiality*. The GM may allow the ability to become insubstantial for just an instant when exposed to damage. Physical and energy attacks pass through harmlessly. Attacks with Affects Insubstantial or Malediction – and spells, Mind Control, and similar abilities – work normally. This is Insubstantiality (Affect Substantial, +100%; Can Carry Objects, Heavy, +100%; Partial Change, +100%; Reflexive, +40%; Unconscious Only, -20%; Uncontrollable, -10%) [328]. Reflexive briefly activates Insubstantiality when hit. Affect Substantial, Can Carry Objects, and Partial Change keep the user from dropping things, falling through the floor, or losing control of other abilities. Unconscious Only and Uncontrollable prevent him from consciously becoming insubstantial – he can *only* avoid damage. Those with this ability can't shield others with their body, of course.

## Wishes

"Granting wishes" can mean many different things. Some godlike entities control the outcome of *events*. Buy this as Super Luck (Wishing, +100%) [200]. Those who can do this reliably might have higher levels of Super Luck (see p. 80). In most games, 12 or 13 levels (2,400 or 2,600 points) suffice to affect *every* die roll made in the user's presence.

Other beings fulfill wishes for *material goods*. Snatcher (Creation, +100%; Large Items, +50%; More Weight, 100 lbs., +40%; Permanent, +300%) [472] can create most items of personal equipment – armor, weapons, etc. Improve More Weight to 1,500 tons (+175%), and raise total cost to 580 points, for enough

capacity to summon a modest castle. The GM should probably set an upper weight limit!

A few beings grant new *abilities*. This is Affliction (Advantage, +10% per point of advantages; Extended Duration, Permanent, Irreversible, +300%). Thus, each level costs 40 points plus the price of the advantages – although one level is probably enough. To keep things fair, the GM might rule that the advantages take effect for only one minute times the

margin of the HT roll, but let the recipient buy them "for real" if he has enough unspent points.

Entities that can grant *any* advantage require Cosmic Power (see *Modular Abilities*, p. B71) with Physical (+50%) and Limited, Afflictions that grant permanent advantages (-50%). This costs 10 times as much (400 points plus 10 times the cost of traits granted). For instance, a god with 600 points in this ability could grant any advantage worth up to 20 points.

## Energy Reserves

Fictional power-wielders often draw on special "power supplies" to fuel their abilities. To represent this, buy Fatigue Points at the usual 3 points apiece but treat them as a new "Energy Reserve" (ER) advantage. This is *always* tied to a particular power source; e.g., 10 FP for psi powers is "ER 10 (Psi) [30]."

An ER can only power abilities of the same source. It can pay the basic FP costs to use advantages, those added by Costs Fatigue, and expenditures for extra effort and stunts (see Chapter 4). It can also fuel related *skills*; e.g., ER (Magical) can energize spells. Powers can still draw on normal FP; if they can't, add -5% to the power modifier.

However, an ER isn't the *same* as FP. Only associated powers can deplete it. Fatigue Attacks, missed sleep, and so on don't sap it, and other powers, wild abilities, and ordinary extra effort can't tap it. Furthermore, depleting an ER causes none of the effects of going below 1/3 FP – and having a full ER doesn't protect against those effects.

An ER recharges by one point every 10 minutes, independent of rest. You can recover FP at the same time if you rest. Factors that alter FP recovery generally have no effect on ER recharge rate.

Skills connected to the ER's source *can* help replenish it. For instance, the Recover Energy spell (p. B248) improves the recharge rate of ER (Magic). Abilities of *that source* can also help. Damage Resistance with Absorption can heal ER, FP, or HP for the usual +80%. Leech can have "Heals ER" or "Only Heals ER" for the price of "Heals FP" or "Only Heals FP." Regeneration can have "ER Recovery" or "ER Only" for the price of "Fatigue Recovery" or "Fatigue Only," and often has an Accessibility limitation such as "Only in direct sunlight" (-10%), "Only on holy days or in holy places" (-40%), or "Only inside a nuclear reactor" (-80%).

## Special Modifiers

*Abilities Only*: Your ER can only pay the basic FP costs of your abilities. It's of no use for extra effort or stunts. -10%.

*One Power*: Only available if you have two or more powers of a given source. Your ER works with just one of your powers. -50%.

*Slow Recharge*: Your ER recharges slowly. -20% for one point/hour; -60% for one point/day.

*Special Recharge*: Your ER doesn't recharge over time. It only recharges via DR with Absorption, Leech, the Steal Energy spell, etc. This is incompatible with Slow Recharge. -70%, or -80% if the energy bleeds away at the rate of one point/second, forcing you to use it quickly.

*Stunts Only*: Your ER is only useful for extra effort and stunts. It can't pay the FP costs for normal ability use. This is incompatible with Abilities Only. -10%.



# CHAPTER THREE

# EXAMPLES



As he ran through the bamboo forest, Huang Pao pondered the question of his destiny – most specifically, of his fate in the next few minutes. He had long since left the regiment of ordinary government soldiers far behind, but he sensed that at least five or six pursuers were keeping pace with him even now. Evidently, the corrupt Minister Chien Ping had sent some of his elite guards – men trained in the martial arts, adept in killing with blades or bare hands and capable enough of focusing their chi for crude but pragmatic effects.

Huang knew that he could defeat two or even three of these hunters, but his skills were not unlimited. He found that, despite his scrupulous self-discipline, a particle of fear survived in his spirit. He had no wish to determine whether he could survive against more such opponents, given the likelihood that he could not and the certainty that

they would have been ordered to slay him.

Hence, he decided to test their agility rather than their fighting skill. Focusing his own chi, he leapt high into the air, grasping the very top of a tall bamboo plant with his fingertips before he could fall back to earth. He let the plant sway downward with his weight then swing back upright, throwing him forward to another. Repeating the action twice more, he was soon running through the upper foliage. He risked a glance backward as he went.

The pursuers were a little further behind, but they were still in sight – and they too were now moving through the heights of the forest. Evidently, these were indeed capable men.

Huang looked around, considering his options further. He glimpsed something through the foliage – a building, high on the mountainside to his left. His grasp of the Tao immediately

suggested its nature; with but a glimpse, he could perceive the detached serenity of its feng shui.

Huang permitted himself a flicker of a smile, and turned his course that way. The guards would catch him sooner now, of course, but not before he reached the monastery – and the monks of the mountain not only forbade bloodshed within their precincts, but could enforce such rules, even against the Minister's own guard.

Now we'll show how everything in Chapters 1 and 2 comes together. *Sample Powers* (pp. 121-136) provides a selection of powers popular in games and fiction. *Sample Abilities* (pp. 136-151) offers worked examples of abilities suitable for a variety of genres, plus a few optional rules related to buying abilities. You can use the abilities alone (for aliens, cyborgs, etc.) or to flesh out the sample powers.



# SAMPLE POWERS

All of these powers follow the guidelines in Chapter 1. The GM decides which powers exist in his campaign. Each entry includes:

**Name:** A “generic” name for the power.

**Sources:** Suitable sources for the power; see *Source* (p. 7). If the power is known by another name when associated with a particular source, that name appears in parentheses. The GM decides which sources are valid in his campaign.

**Focus:** The focus of the power; see *Focus* (p. 7).

**Description:** What the power does, a few fictional precedents (often associated with specific sources), and any special notes that apply to most or all of the power’s abilities.

**Talent:** The name and point cost of the power’s Talent, as well as any special rules for that Talent. Talent gives +1 per level to use the power’s abilities; see *The Role of Talent* (p. 158). Those with Talent can also spend points on *new* abilities for that power.

**Abilities:** Advantages likely to be abilities of the power in most settings – with notes on required or forbidden versions, or modifiers, as applicable. This includes only *some* of the recommendations in Chapters 1 and 2. The GM should customize the list for his campaign.

**Power Modifier:** The “generic” modifiers (see *Sample Modifiers*, p. 26) that best suit the power. Choose the option that matches the power’s source, change its name to suit the power, and use the associated rules and value.

## AIR

**Sources:** Divine, Elemental, Magical, Spirit, or Super.

**Focus:** Gases.

This is the power to create and manipulate gases. Adept practitioners in some settings can even *become* a gas. It might represent direct control over air (Elemental and Super), a college of air spells (Magical), the allegiance of elemental air spirits (Spirit), or the holy favor of a sky god (Divine). Air abilities only affect true gases – not

dust clouds, energetic plasmas, or supernatural or superscience “ether.”

## Air Talent

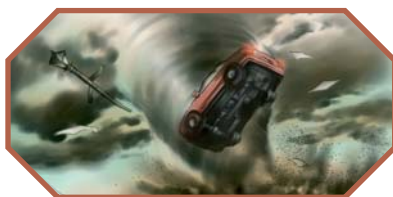
5 points/level

## Air Abilities

Alternate Form (Body of Air); Control (Air); Create (Air or Gas); Damage Resistance, with *either* Limited, Air (-40%) or both Force Field and Limited, Physical (-20%); Doesn’t Breathe; Enhanced Move (Air); Flight; Modular Abilities, with both Limited, Air (-10%) and Physical; Obscure (Vision); Pressure Support; Protected Power; Resistant, to any kind of inhaled threat; Sealed; Telekinesis, with Environmental (-5%); Vacuum Support; Vibration Sense (Air); and Walk on Air.

Innate Attacks are also allowed. They must be crushing, and can only have modifiers that suit air jets, concussion waves, tornados, etc. (GM decides). Add Environmental (-5%) to any attack that shapes *existing* air.

**Power Modifier:** Air. The advantage belongs to the Air power. This modifier is usually Divine (-10%), Elemental (-10%), Magical (-10%), Spirit (-25%), or Super (-10%), and may be both Elemental and Super.



## ANIMAL CONTROL

**Sources:** Divine, Nature, Psionic (“Beast Telepathy”), Spirit, or Super.

**Focus:** Natural, nonsapient creatures.

Animal Control lets the user understand and command *ordinary* beasts. It has no effect on sapient or supernatural creatures. Explanations include an innate attunement to animals (Nature or Super), specialized telepathy (Psionic), and the favor of nature

gods (Divine) or totem spirits (Spirit). Shapeshifting suits shamans and supers, but not psis; the GM might wish to substitute telepathic abilities (see *Telepathy*, p. 134), specialized to animals, for those with the Psionic modifier.

## Animal Control Talent

5 points/level

## Animal Control Abilities

Advantages marked \* involve direct mental contact, and require Specialized, Animals Only, -25% (see *Possession*, p. 67). They work only on ordinary, nonsapient animals.

Allies (animals), with Summonable; Animal Empathy; Damage Resistance, with Limited, Animals (-60%); Detect, for animals or any type of animal; Enhanced Defenses (any), with Limited, Animals (-60%); Mimicry; Mind Control\*; Mind Probe\*; Mind Reading\*; Mindlink, with an animal; Possession\*; Protected Power; Shapeshifting, into any animal form; Speak with Animals; Special Rapport, with an animal; and Telecommunication (Telesend)\*.

**Power Modifier:** Animal Control. The advantage belongs to the Animal Control power. This modifier is most often Divine (-10%), Nature (-20%), Psionic (-10%), Spirit (-25%), or Super (-10%).

## ANTI-MAGIC

**Sources:** Anti-Magic, Divine, or Spirit.

**Focus:** Negating mana, mages, and magical spells.

This power deals with neutralizing magic. In some worlds, anti-magic is a unique power source and the opposite of magic – just as antimatter is the “opposite” of matter. In others, it originates from gods (Divine) or spirits (Spirit) that resent wizards using magic to tamper with creation. In all cases, it’s the anti-power of Magic power (p. 131).

## Anti-Magic Talent

5 points/level

### Anti-Magic Abilities

Damage Resistance, with Limited, Magic (-20%); Detect, for magic, spells, wizards, etc.; Magic Resistance; Mana Damper; Mind Shield, with Limited, Magic (-50%); Neutralize (Magic), but *not* with Power Theft; Obscure (any), with Limited, Magic (-20%); See Invisible (Magical); and Static (Magic).

Specialized Afflictions are also allowed. These must have Malediction, plus either an Advantage enhancement that grants Magic Resistance, Mana Damper, or Damage Resistance against magic, or a Negated Advantage enhancement that negates Magery or Mana Enhancer.

*Power Modifier: Anti-Magic.* If the source is some kind of fundamental anti-magic, this is a +0% placeholder that indicates which abilities benefit from Anti-Magic Talent. Otherwise, it's usually Divine (-10%) or Spirit (-25%).

## ANTIPSI

*Sources:* Antipsi, Biological, Chi, or Super.

*Focus:* Blocking psionic energy and powers.

Antipsi is the anti-power of *all* powers with the Psionic power modifier, regardless of focus. In many settings, the explanation is unusual psionic energy that interferes with the ordinary variety. These “antipsi” emissions might be categorized as psi, but are immune to effects that block psi (including antipsi itself). Another common explanation is interference by bioenergy, whether

through mutation (Biological or Super) or meditation (Chi).

### Antipsi Talent

5 points/level

This Talent doesn't exist in every setting. In many game worlds, Antipsi is always random and uncontrollable.

### Antipsi Abilities

Damage Resistance, with Limited, Psi (-20%); Detect, for psi powers, psi users, etc.; Mind Shield, with Limited, Psionic (-50%); Neutralize (Psi), but *not* with Power Theft; Obscure (any), with Limited, Psi (-20%) or Limited, ESP or Telepathy (-40%); Resistant or Immunity to all psi or specific powers or abilities; See Invisible (Psionic); and Static (Psi).

Specialized Afflictions are also possible. These require Malediction, plus Advantage to grant Damage Resistance or Resistant against psi, or Negated Advantage to rob the subject of specific psi abilities or Talents temporarily.

*Power Modifier: Antipsi.* If the source is antipsi energy, this is a +0% placeholder that indicates which abilities benefit from Antipsi Talent. Otherwise, it's usually Biological (-10%), Chi (-10%), or Super (-10%).

## ANTI-SUPER

*Sources:* Anti-Super, Biological, Divine, Nature, or Psionic.

*Focus:* Negating super-powers.

Settings with generic super-powers typically feature individuals who can negate those powers, regardless of focus. Because this power can interfere with other powers without itself being susceptible to interference, it

most often stands alone in its own “Anti-Super” category. Other possibilities are control over mutant genes through bioenergy (Biological or Nature) or psi (Psionic), or the will of a deity that opposes “abominations” (Divine).

### Anti-Super Talent

5 points/level

### Anti-Super Abilities

Damage Resistance, with Limited, Super (-20%); Detect, for any or all super-powers; Mind Shield, with Limited, Super (-50%); Neutralize (Super), but *not* with Power Theft; Obscure (any), with Limited, Super (-20%); Resistant or Immunity to all super-powers or specific super-powers or super-abilities; See Invisible (Super); and Static (Super).

As with Antipsi (above), Afflictions are allowed if they have Malediction *and* either Advantage to protect against super-powers or Negated Advantage to take away super abilities or Talents.

*Power Modifier: Anti-Super.* If “anti-super” is its own, unique source, this is a +0% placeholder that indicates which abilities benefit from Anti-Super Talent. Otherwise, it's usually Biological (-10%), Divine (-10%), Nature (-20%), or Psionic (-10%).

## ASTRAL PROJECTION

*Sources:* Divine, Magical, Psionic, or Spirit.

*Focus:* The Astral Plane.

This is the power of perceiving and journeying through the Astral Plane. Some travelers stay in an “outer” plane that overlaps the material world, allowing them to view it discreetly; others venture to an “inner” plane that adjoins higher planes of existence. Adept projectors can do both. Astral Projection is traditionally either a psychic discipline (Psionic) or a gift from denizens of the Astral Plane or an adjacent realm (Divine or Spirit). Wizards occasionally unlock its secrets, too (Magical).

*Settings with generic super-powers typically feature individuals who can negate those powers, regardless of focus.*

## ***Astral Projection Talent*** 5 points/level

### ***Astral Projection Abilities***

Alternate Form (Astral Entity), with Projected Form; Channeling, with Specialized, Astral Beings (-50%); Clairvoyance, with Projection; Detect, for astral beings, astral projectors, etc.; Insubstantiality, with Projection; Jumper (World), with Projection; Medium, with Specialized, Astral Beings (-50%); Protected Power; and See Invisible (Ghosts).

In addition, Doesn't Breathe, Doesn't Eat or Drink, Doesn't Sleep, Enhanced Move, Flight, Immunity to Metabolic Hazards, Invisibility, and Possession are available with Accessibility, Only when projecting (-10%). Such abilities work when using advantages with Projection or Projected Form modifiers.

The GM may also allow attacks with Insubstantial Only.

*Power Modifier:* Astral Projection. The advantage belongs to the Astral Projection power. This modifier is usually Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), Psionic (-10%), or Spirit (-25%).

## **BIOENERGY**

*Sources:* Biological, Chi, Psionic, or Super.

*Focus:* The body's internal energy.

Comics and anime often portray powerful mutants (Biological), martial artists (Chi), psis (Psionic), and supers (Super) as being able to direct bodily energies – far more than the human body could realistically contain – to blast enemies, project force fields, fly, etc. Unlike most ray-shooting powers, Bioenergy isn't associated with an element such as fire or light. This makes it a useful catch-all power for energy-projecting heroes who don't fit elsewhere.

## ***Bioenergy Talent*** 5 points/level

### ***Bioenergy Abilities***

Damage Resistance, with Force Field; Flight; Healing; Obscure (any),

as long as it's flashy; Protected Power; Rapier Wit, with Based on HT; Scanning Sense (Para-Radar); Terror, with Based on HT; and Vibration Sense, with Sense of Perception.

Bioenergy can justify almost any kind of Affliction or Innate Attack, too. The kung fu masters of video games and anime can breathe fire, conjure glowing swords, kill enemies with a touch, and so on. The GM should limit each hero to a small number of "signature" attacks and *require* elaborate power names and special effects.

*Power Modifier:* Bioenergy. The advantage belongs to the Bioenergy power. This modifier is typically Biological (-10%), Chi (-10%), Psionic (-10%), or Super (-10%).



## **BODY ALTERATION**

*Sources:* Biological, Divine, Magical, or Super.

*Focus:* The user's physical form.

This is the power of altering the appearance, structure, and composition of one's body. Fiction often attributes Body Alteration to alien physiology (Biological), powerful magic (Magical), or bizarre "rubber body" mutations (Super). In fantasy settings, servants of demons and mischievous gods sometimes possess this power (Divine).

## ***Body Alteration Talent*** 5 points/level

### ***Body Alteration Abilities***

Chameleon; Constriction Attack; Damage Resistance, with Limited, Crushing (-40%) or Tough Skin; Double-Jointed; Elastic Skin; Growth;

Hermaphroditism; Injury Tolerance (any); Mimicry; Modular Abilities, with Limited, Body Parts Only (-20%) and Physical; Morph; Protected Power; Regrowth; Shadow Form, with Finite Thickness; Shrinking; Slippery; Stretching; Super Jump, with Bouncing; and Terrain Adaptation, with Active.

Any advantage that represents extra body parts is also permissible, if it's Switchable (see *Switchable Body Parts*, p. 81). "Always on" advantages bought as part of this power frequently have Switchable, too.

*Power Modifier:* Body Alteration. The advantage belongs to the Body Alteration power. This modifier is generally Biological (-10%), Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), or Super (-10%).

## **BODY CONTROL**

*Sources:* Biological, Chi, Psionic, or Super.

*Focus:* The user's metabolism.

Body Control lets the user take control of his metabolism in order to heal injury, perform amazing physical feats, purge his body of poison, and so on. It's almost *de rigueur* for cinematic masters of yoga and the martial arts (Chi), but could instead be a mutant power (Biological or Super) or even a variant form of psychic healing (Psionic). Fiction often portrays Body Control and Bioenergy as "internal" and "external" paths of a single discipline.

## ***Body Control Talent*** 5 points/level

### ***Body Control Abilities***

Breath Holding; Catfall; Damage Resistance, with Tough Skin; Enhanced Defenses (any); Enhanced Move (Ground); Extra Attack, with Multi-Strike; Lifting ST; Metabolism Control; Perfect Balance; Protected Power; Protected Sense (any); Radiation Tolerance; Reduced Consumption; Regeneration; Resistant, to any *physical* threat; Sensitive Touch; Silence; Striking ST; Super Climbing; Super Jump; Temperature Tolerance; and Universal Digestion.



*Power Modifier:* Body Control. The advantage belongs to the Body Control power. This modifier is usually Biological (-10%), Chi (-10%), Psionic (-10%), or Super (-10%).

## CHAOS

*Sources:* Divine, Moral, Spirit, or Super (“Entropy Control”).

*Focus:* Disorder.

This power deals with increasing the disorder of the universe. It works on every level, allowing the wielder to disorganize material objects and afflict others with delirium. It also includes abilities that protect the user from having order imposed on *his* mind or body. Chaos power most often represents chaos embodied (Moral). Other possibilities are the will of a mad god (Divine) or prankish spirits (Spirit), or even rubber-science “entropy control” (Super). Whatever its source, Chaos is the anti-power of Order (p. 132).

### Chaos Talent

5 points/level

### Chaos Abilities

Channeling, with Specialized, Chaos Spirits (-50%); Detect, for either Chaos or Order; Injury Tolerance (Diffuse), with both Swarm and Switchable; Medium, with Specialized, Chaos Spirits (-50%); Mind Shield; Neutralize (Order), but *not* with Power Theft; Obscure (Divination); Protected Power; Resistant, to the abilities of Order; Static (Order), with Resistible; Telekinesis, with Uncontrollable; Temperature Control, with Heat; Terror (Confusion); and Visualization, with Cursing.

Afflictions with Hallucinating or a Disadvantage that causes insanity (Delusions, Paranoia, etc.) are allowed, but must have Malediction. Innate Attacks that inflict burning or corrosion damage are also part of this power.

*Power Modifier:* Chaos. The advantage belongs to the Chaos power. This modifier is most often Divine (-10%), Moral (-20%), Spirit (-25%), or Super (-10%).

## COLD/ICE

*Sources:* Divine, Elemental, or Super.

*Focus:* Cold and ice.

Cold/Ice power lets the user freeze his foes or bind them with ice, “surf” along an ice slick, and so on. It generally represents direct control over cold (Elemental and Super), but might instead emanate from a god who reigns over winter (Divine). Cold isn’t a *traditional* element to wizards and alchemists, but the GM is free to ignore this and permit a Magical or Spirit version of this power. Cold and Ice are separate powers in some settings.

### Cold/Ice Talent

5 points/level

### Cold/Ice Abilities

Abilities marked \* would suit a separate Ice power; those labeled † are appropriate for a separate Cold power.

Alternate Form (Body of Ice)\*; Binding, with Engulfing\*; Clinging\*†; Control (Hail or Snow), with Natural Phenomena\*; Control (Ice)\*; Create (Ice)\*; Damage Resistance, with *either* Ablative or Semi-Ablative\*, or Limited, Cold (-40%) or Heat (-40%)†; Enhanced Move (Air or Ground)\*; Flight, with Low Ceiling and Nuisance

Effect\*; Modular Abilities, with Limited, Cold (-10%) and Physical†; Obscure (Infravision or Vision)\*†; Penetrating Vision, with Specific, Ice (-60%)\*; Permeation (Ice)\*; Protected Power\*†; Slippery\*; Temperature Control, with Cold†; Temperature Tolerance†; and Terrain Adaptation (Ice or Snow)\*.

Innate Attacks are also possible. Ice attacks are crushing, cutting, impaling, or piercing. Cold attacks inflict fatigue with the Freezing enhancement. Either might add Side Effect, Paralysis if it can “freeze” the victim. Cinematic Cold attacks might instead be Afflictions with the Paralysis modifier.

*Power Modifier:* Cold/Ice. The advantage belongs to the Cold/Ice power. This modifier is usually Divine (-10%), Elemental (-10%), or Super (-10%), and may be both Elemental and Super.

## COSMIC

*Source:* Cosmic.

*Focus:* Everything!

Cosmic power represents the boundless capabilities of deities and (in some settings) the most powerful supers. It doesn’t have a single focus – by definition, it deals with *anything* and *everything* – and the only countermeasure it faces is itself. This kind of



unlimited scope comes at a price: the power modifier and associated Talent are both very expensive.

## Cosmic Talent

15 points/level

### Cosmic Abilities

Any advantage can be a Cosmic ability, as long as it has the Cosmic modifier. When creating a god, the GM should consider forbidding abilities that oppose the deity's sphere of influence; e.g., no fire blasts for a sea god. Since *most* advantages remain available, this doesn't lower the cost of Talent.

Note that a "Cosmic Power" advantage appears as part of Modular Abilities (p. B71). In some settings, that trait totally *replaces* this power, and cosmically powerful entities simply wish abilities into being as needed. In others, the two options coexist. The GM decides which is the case in his campaign.

*Power Modifier:* Cosmic, +50%. This is the *basic* modifier. An attack with a more expensive version of Cosmic must pay the difference between +50% and the full cost of that enhancement.

## DARKNESS

*Sources:* Divine, Elemental, Spirit ("Shadow Control"), or Super.

*Focus:* Shadow.

This is the power to create and control shadow. Its effects range from blotting out light to letting the wielder *become* a shadow. Some adept users can even conjure semi-material shadows to attack enemies. Darkness power is usually a form of direct control (Elemental and Super), but it could also represent the favor of dark gods (Divine) or a rapport with animate shadows (Spirit).

### Darkness Talent

5 points/level

### Darkness Abilities

Allies (shadow beings), with Summonable; Control (Light); Create

(Light), with Destruction (+0%); Dark Vision; Illusion, with Visual Only; Invisibility; Modular Abilities with Limited, Darkness (-15%) and Physical; Night Vision; Obscure, against Ladar or any type of vision; Protected Power; Protected Sense (Vision); and Shadow Form.

Afflictions must be Vision-Based, and have Disadvantage (Bad Sight or Blindness) or Negated Advantage (Dark Vision, Night Vision, etc.). Innate Attacks represent conjured shadows that deliver blows or a chilling touch. Any damage type is possible. All such attacks require Area Effect, Mobile, and Persistent, and either Bombardment or Homing.

*Power Modifier:* Darkness. The advantage belongs to the Darkness power. This modifier is typically Divine (-10%), Elemental (-10%), Spirit (-25%), or Super (-10%), and may be both Elemental *and* Super.

## DEATH

*Sources:* Divine, Magical ("Necromancy"), or Spirit.

*Focus:* Death and the dead.

This power deals with every aspect of death: corpses, ghosts, and curses that steal the victim's life force. It's most common among worshippers of gods that rule death or the underworld (Divine), wizardly necromancers (Magical), and those who command ghosts or death spirits (Spirit). Many regard Death power as evil, but this isn't automatically true – see *Evil* (p. 127) for that.

### Death Talent

5 points/level

### Death Abilities

Allies (undead), with Summonable; Alternate Form (any undead template); Channeling, with Specialized, Ghosts (-50%); Detect, for dead bodies, ghosts, undead, etc.; Leech, but *not* with Steal (Other Score); Medium, with Specialized, Ghosts (-50%); Protected Power; Racial Memory; Unaging; and Unkillable.

Attacks must be lethal Afflictions – usually Coma, Heart Attack, or Disadvantage, Terminally Ill – or Toxic

Attacks. All must have one of Malediction, Melee Attack, or Sense-Based. The GM *might* allow Afflictions with Advantage, Alternate Form that can raise corpses as undead.

*Power Modifier:* Death. The advantage belongs to the Death power. This modifier is most often Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), or Spirit (-25%).

## DIMENSION TRAVEL

*Sources:* Divine, Magical ("Gate Magic"), Psionic, Spirit, or Super.

*Focus:* Parallel realities.

Dimension Travel deals with contacting and journeying to other realities. The number and nature of such realms depend on the setting; this power is most valuable in back-grounds with *many* planes of existence. Dimension Travel is common among wizards who study dimensional gates (Magical) and holy folk who can traverse the domains of gods or spirits (Divine or Spirit). Supers settings often feature parallel worlds, and some supers can move between these using psionics (Psionic) or direct "dimension control" (Super).

### Dimension Travel Talent

5 points/level

### Dimension Travel Abilities

Affliction, with an Advantage enhancement that inflicts Insubstantiality or Jumper; Channeling (Parallel Universes); Clairsentience, with World-Spanning; Detect, for extradimensional phenomena, world-jumpers, etc.; Insubstantiality; Jumper (World), almost always with Interplanar; Medium (Parallel Universes); Protected Power; Snatcher, but *not* with Creation; and Telecommunication (Telesend), with World-Spanning.

*Power Modifier:* Dimension Travel. The advantage belongs to the Dimension Travel power. This modifier is usually Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), Psionic (-10%), Spirit (-25%), or Super (-10%).

## DIVINE

*Source:* Divine.

*Focus:* Will of one particular deity.

A mortal empowered by a deity might simply apply the Divine modifier to the power on this list that best suits his patron's sphere of influence. This isn't the only possibility, though. The "generic" power described below represents a more traditional arrangement: the priest has a few innate gifts that represent holy status, but flashy miracles – healing, smiting, etc. – require specific prayers or spells (see *Clerical Magic*, p. B242).

### Power Investiture

**10 points/level**

At the GM's option, the Power Investiture advantage (p. B77) gives +1 per level to "clerical" spells *and* the specific abilities below. Like other Talents, it leaves open the possibility of earning new abilities in play – if the deity chooses to bestow them.

### Divine Abilities

Deities that would rather have their servants pray for aid than turn them into supermen often bestow these advantages: Allies (servitors of deity), with Summonable; Blessed; Higher Purpose; Modular Abilities (Divine Inspiration), with Limited, Spells Only (-20%); Oracle; Patron (deity), with Highly Accessible; Rapier Wit, with Words of Power; Serendipity; Terror (Awe); True Faith; Visualization; and Wild Talent, usually with Focused, Divine (-20%).

*Power Modifier:* Divine (-10%).

## EARTH

*Sources:* Divine, Elemental, Magical, Spirit, or Super.

*Focus:* Earth and stone.

This is the power to shape and create earth in any form: soil, sand, clay, stone, etc. It might involve direct control over earth (Elemental and Super), sorcery dealing with earth as a traditional magical element (Magical), or calling upon the aid of an earth goddess (Divine) or elemental earth spirits (Spirit). Earth abilities don't normally affect refined metals or other solids.

The GM can easily add such capabilities if he wishes.

### Earth Talent

**5 points/level**

### Earth Abilities

Alternate Form (Body of Earth or Stone); Binding, with Engulfing and Environmental (-20%); Clinging, with Specific, Stone (-40%); Control (Earth or Stone); Create (Earth); Damage Resistance; Detect, for earth, specific minerals, etc.; Modular Abilities, with Limited, Earth (-10%) and Physical; Obscure (Vision); Penetrating Vision, with Specific, Stone (-40%); Permeation (Earth or Stone); Protected Power; Terrain Adaptation (Mud or Sand); Tunneling; and Walk on Air, with Specific, Dust (-40%).

Innate Attacks must be crushing, cutting, impaling, or piercing, and take the form of boulders, earthquakes, sandstorms, etc. Add Environmental (-20%) if the attack shapes *existing* Earth.

*Power Modifier:* Earth. The advantage belongs to the Earth power. This modifier is usually Divine (-10%), Elemental (-10%), Magical (-10%), Spirit (-25%), or Super (-10%), and may be both Elemental *and* Super.

## ELECTRICITY

*Sources:* Divine, Elemental, or Super.

*Focus:* Electrical phenomena.

This power deals with generating and channeling electricity. Its most impressive effects are destructive discharges – like lightning – but precise

modulation is possible, letting the user generate radio signals. Due to its technological overtones, this is most often a super-power (Elemental and Super), and rarely suitable for supernatural powers other than those associated with thunder gods (Divine). The GM is free to make exceptions.

### Electricity Talent

**5 points/level**

### Electricity Abilities

Control (Electricity); Create (Electricity); Damage Resistance, with Limited, Electricity (-40%); Detect, for electricity, radio signals, or magnetism; Modular Abilities, with Limited, Electricity (-10%) and Physical; Obscure (Radar); Protected Power; Scanning Sense (Imaging Radar, Radar, or T-Ray Vision); and Telecommunication (Radio).

This power permits many attack abilities. Afflictions must be stun-only (no special modifiers), have Heart Attack, *or* have both Accessibility, Only on Electrical (-20%) and Unconsciousness to "dampen" machines. Innate Attacks must inflict burning damage, with both Surge *and* Side Effect, Stunning.

*Power Modifier:* Electricity. The advantage belongs to the Electricity power. This modifier is usually Divine (-10%), Elemental (-10%), or Super (-10%), and may be both Elemental *and* Super.

## ELECTROKINESIS

*Sources:* Psionic or Super.

*Focus:* Electromagnetic fields.

*Due to its technological overtones, Electricity is most often a super-power (Elemental and Super), and rarely suitable for supernatural powers other than those associated with thunder gods (Divine).*



Electrokinesis lets the user sense *existing* electricity and electromagnetic (EM) energy, generate low-powered EM fields in order to control that energy, and produce subtle effects in its absence. Standard explanations are psi (Psionic) or exotic “field control” (Super). Electrokinesis *can't* generate the energetic discharges associated with Electricity power (above), but offers more control and subtlety – so much so that it and Machine Telepathy (p. 130) could justifiably be a single power, if the GM wishes.

## ***Electrokinesis Talent*** 5 points/level

### ***Electrokinesis Abilities***

Control (Electricity or Light); Damage Resistance, with Limited, EM Radiation (-40%); Detect, for EM fields or phenomena; Hyperspectral Vision; Illusion, with Visual Only; Infravision; Invisibility; Obscure, against any visual or Scanning sense save Para-Radar or Sonar; Protected Power; Protected Sense (Scanning Sense or Vision); Radiation Tolerance, with Force Field; Scanning Sense (any but Para-Radar or Sonar); See Invisible; Telecommunication (Infrared, Laser, or Radio); and Ultravision.

Affliction is allowed if it has both Accessibility, Only on Electrical (-20%) and Unconsciousness; this is the ability to stop the flow of electricity. The attacks listed for Electricity (above) and Light (p. 130) are also possibilities, but must have Environmental (-40%) to restrict use to the presence of light sources or electricity energetic enough to do damage in the first place (GM's decision).

*Power Modifier:* Electrokinesis. The advantage belongs to the Electrokinesis power. This modifier is usually Psionic (-10%) or Super (-10%).

## **ESP**

*Sources:* Chi, Divine (“Prophecy”), Magical (“Divination”), Psionic, Spirit, or Super.

*Focus:* Knowledge.

Extrasensory Perception (ESP) is the power to acquire knowledge through means other than the five natural senses. Myth and legend attribute this supernatural gift to martial-arts masters (Chi), prophets (Divine), wizards (Magical), psychics (Psionic), shamans (Spirit), and most other mystics and illuminati. The GM makes ESP skill rolls in secret. The better the roll, the higher the quality of the information received. On any failure, the GM will say, “You learn nothing.” If the roll fails by more than 5, the GM will *lie!*

## ***ESP Talent*** 5 points/level

### ***ESP Abilities***

360° Vision, with Panoptic 2; Channeling; Clairsentience; Common Sense; Danger Sense; Dark Vision; Detect, for supernatural beings or activities related to the power source; Enhanced Tracking; Intuition; Medium; Oracle; Penetrating Vision; Precognition; Protected Power; Protected Sense (any *special* sense); Psychometry; Racial Memory; Scanning Sense (Para-Radar); and See Invisible.

*Power Modifier:* ESP. The advantage belongs to the ESP power. This modifier is generally Chi (-10%), Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), Psionic (-10%), Spirit (-25%), or Super (-10%).

## **EVIL**

*Sources:* Divine, Magical (“Black Magic”), Moral, or Spirit (“Demonology”).

*Focus:* Pure Evil.

This power only exists in settings where Evil is a tangible force. The wielder is aware of Evil in all its forms and can use it to corrupt foes, summon demons, and afflict others with chills, disease, terror, and many other unpleasant effects. This power might emanate from Evil embodied (Moral), forbidden magic (Magical), or demonic entities (Divine or Spirit). It's the anti-power of Good (p. 128), and includes basic protection from that power.

## ***Evil Talent*** 5 points/level

### ***Evil Abilities***

Allies (demons), with Summonable; Channeling, with Specialized, Demons (-50%); Detect, for either Evil or Good; Leech; Medium, with Specialized, Demons (-50%); Mind Shield; Neutralize (Good), but *not* with Power Theft; Possession; Protected Power; Resistant, to the abilities of Good; Shadow Form, but *not* with Light Insensitive or Finite Thickness; Static (Good), with Resistible; Temperature Control, with Cold; Terror; and Visualization, with Cursing.

Any *bad* Affliction is acceptable. The Advantage enhancement is only permissible if it causes a disturbing effect (e.g., Shadow Form), while Negated Disadvantage must remove “good” disadvantages (e.g., Honesty). Toxic Attacks that work like disease or poison are also allowed. *All* attacks must have Malediction, Melee Attack, or Sense-Based.

*Power Modifier:* Evil. The advantage belongs to the Evil power. This modifier is most often Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), Moral (-20%), or Spirit (-25%).

## **FORCE CONSTRUCTS**

*Sources:* Magical, Psionic, or Super.

*Focus:* Semisolid force fields.

This power lets the user conjure a force that he can shape into attacks, barriers, objects, and even creatures (although these aren't sentient). This isn't a fundamental force like gravity or electromagnetism, but something slightly mysterious – perhaps a superscience phenomenon (Super), or pure magical (Magical) or psychic (Psionic) energy. Force constructs often feel solid and function like physical objects, but they *aren't* matter and always look slightly peculiar (glowing, green, shadowy, etc.).

## Force Constructs Talent

5 points/level

### Force Constructs Abilities

Allies (tangible force projections), with Minion (+0%) and Summonable; Binding; Control (Mysterious Force); Create (Mysterious Force); Damage Resistance, with Force Field; Illusion; Modular Abilities, with Limited, Force Fields (-5%) and Physical; Protected Power; Snatcher, with Creation and Nuisance Effect, Objects look fake (-5%); and Telekinesis, with Visible.

The force this power shapes can take any number of dangerous, pseudo-solid forms, allowing Crushing, Cutting, Impaling, and Piercing Attacks.

*Power Modifier:* Force Constructs. The advantage belongs to the Force Constructs power. This modifier is typically Super (-10%), and less often Magical (-10%) or Psionic (-10%).

## GOOD

*Sources:* Divine, Magical (“White Magic”), Moral, or Spirit.

*Focus:* Pure Good.

This power enables the wielder to sense and channel the forces of Good. He can call upon benevolent spirits – “angels” – for aid, and can provide warmth, healing, and blessings to those around him. This power normally stems from tangible Good (Moral), but might instead flow from unselfish magic (Magical) or a beneficent higher power (Divine or Spirit). It’s the anti-power of Evil (p. 127), and includes defenses against that power.

### Good Talent

5 points/level

### Good Abilities

Allies (angels), with Summonable; Blessed; Channeling, with Specialized, Angels (-50%); Detect, for either Good or Evil; Empathy; Healing; Higher Purpose; Medium, with Specialized, Angels (-50%); Mind Shield; Neutralize (Evil), but *not* with Power Theft; Protected Power; Resistant, to

the abilities of Evil; Static (Evil), with Resistible; Temperature Control, with Heat; Terror (Awe); True Faith, with Turning; and Visualization, with Blessing.

Any *beneficial* Affliction with Advantage or Negated Disadvantage is acceptable. All such abilities must have Malediction, Melee Attack, or Sense-Based. Good power rarely allows true attacks, save perhaps for cinematic “Rays of Truth” or “Bolts of Pure Good.” If the GM permits these, they’re Burning Attacks with Accessibility, Truly Evil beings only (-50%).

*Power Modifier:* Good. The advantage belongs to the Good power. This modifier is most often Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), Moral (-20%), or Spirit (-25%).

## GRAVITY

*Sources:* Elemental or Super.

*Focus:* Gravity.

This is the power to control the gravity fields of massive objects (affecting weight) and project focused gravity waves. It’s nearly always a form of direct force manipulation (Elemental and Super). Since gravity isn’t a traditional magical element or divine sphere, this power rarely has a supernatural source. Use Psychokinesis (p. 133) for supernatural force control.

### Gravity Talent

5 points/level

### Gravity Abilities

Binding, with Unbreakable; Catfall, with Feather Fall; Clinging, with Attraction; Control (Gravity); Damage Resistance, with Force Field and Limited, Physical (-20%); Detect, for gravity manipulation or massive objects; Enhanced Move (any); Flight, with Planetary; Improved G-Tolerance, with Force Field; Modular Abilities, with Limited, Gravity (-10%) and Physical; Protected Power; Super Climbing; Super Jump, with Planetary; Telecommunication (Gravity-Ripple); Telekinesis; and Walk on Air, with Planetary.

Attacks that represent an abrupt increase in gravity are Crushing Attacks with Cosmic, Irresistible attack (+300%). No ordinary form of DR stops gravity.

*Power Modifier:* Gravity. The advantage belongs to the Gravity power. This modifier is nearly always Elemental (-10%), and often Super (-10%) as well.

## HEALING

*Sources:* Biological, Chi, Divine (“Faith Healing”), Magical, Psionic (“Psychic Healing”), Spirit, or Super.

*Focus:* Healing living beings.

Healing abilities let the user diagnose and treat sickness and injury. Most healers can heal themselves *and* others, but a suitable choice of advantages and modifiers can create a healer who can do only one *or* the other. Common explanations for Healing include a restorative bioenergy field (Biological or Super), control over yin and yang (Chi), faith healing (Divine or Spirit), healing spells (Magical), and psychic healing (Psionic).

### Healing Talent

5 points/level

### Healing Abilities

Create (Drugs); Detect, for disease, poison, vital signs, etc.; Empathy; Healing; Metabolism Control; Penetrating Vision, with Specific, Flesh (-60%); Protected Power; Regeneration; Regrowth; Resistant or Immunity to any noxious *physical* effect; and Special Rapport, with Transferable (but *not* for machines).

Healing doesn’t permit attacks as such, but *does* allow Afflictions that are useful to healers (GM’s decision). Suitable enhancements are any form of Advantage that bestows Regeneration, Regrowth, or another healing-related trait; Negated Disadvantage; and Ecstasy, Sleep, and Unconsciousness (as painkillers).

*Power Modifier:* Healing. The advantage belongs to the Healing power. This modifier can be Biological (-10%), Chi (-10%), Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), Psionic (-10%), Spirit (-25%), or Super (-10%).

## HEAT/FIRE

*Sources:* Divine, Elemental, Magical, Psionic (“Pyrokinesis”), Spirit, or Super.

*Focus:* Heat and flame.

Heat/Fire power commands heat and its usual consequence, fire – although Heat and Fire might be separate powers in some game worlds. A common power in legend and fiction, it’s associated with fire gods (Divine), fire spells (Magical), elemental fire spirits (Spirit), and direct elemental control (Elemental and Super). Psis with such capabilities *might* have Psychokinesis (p. 133) . . . but pyrokinesis (Psionic) is often a unique power.

### Heat/Fire Talent

5 points/level

### Heat/Fire Abilities

Abilities labeled \* would suit a separate Fire power; those with † are appropriate for a separate Heat power.

Alternate Form (Body of Fire)\*; Control (Fire)\*; Create (Fire)\*; Damage Resistance, with Limited for Cold†, Heat†, or Ranged Projectiles\* (all -40%); Flight, with Nuisance Effect\*; Infravision†; Modular Abilities, with Limited, Fire (-10%) and Physical\*; Obscure, against vision or Ladar (smoke)\*, or Infravision†; Protected Power\*†; Scanning Sense (Active IR)†; Telecommunication (Infrared)†; Temperature Control, with Heat†; Temperature Tolerance†; and Walk on Air, with Specific, Smoke (-40%)\*.

A Fire attack is generally a Burning Attack – but an Affliction with Coughing or Suffocation can represent smoke. A Heat attack is a Burning

*Heat/Fire power commands heat and its usual consequence, fire – although Heat and Fire might be separate powers in some game worlds.*

Attack if it delivers a high-intensity “heat ray,” a Fatigue Attack if it elevates the target’s body temperature. In either case, the GM may permit other damage types with the Incendiary modifier.

*Power Modifier:* Heat/Fire. The advantage belongs to the Heat/Fire power. This modifier is typically Divine (-10%), Elemental (-10%), Magical (-10%), Psionic (-10%), Spirit (-25%), or Super (-10%), and may be both Elemental *and* Super.

## ILLUSION

*Sources:* Divine, Magical, Psionic, Spirit, or Super.

*Focus:* Sensory deception.

This is the power to control what others perceive. The illusionist can alter his voice and appearance; conjure illusory scenery and beings (perhaps even semi-material ones); and make things vanish from sight. This is most often a college of magic (Magical) – or a psionic specialty that combines aspects of Electrokinetics and Telepathy (Psionic). It might instead originate from deceitful demons, puckish spirits, or divine tricksters (Divine or Spirit). Direct, subtle light-and-sound control is another possibility (Super).

### Illusion Talent

5 points/level

### Illusion Abilities

Allies (semisolid projections or shadows), with Summonable; Chameleon; Detect, for illusions, projections, etc.; Duplication, with Construct; Elastic Skin; Illusion; Invisibility; Mimicry; Morph, with

Cosmetic; Obscure (any); Protected Power; See Invisible; and Silence.

Afflictions are allowed if they use Advantage to grant Chameleon, Invisibility, Mimicry, Morph (Cosmetic), or Silence to others – or Disadvantage to inflict Blindness, Deafness, No Sense of Smell/Taste, or Numb. All such attacks must have Malediction or Sense-Based.

*Power Modifier:* Illusion. The advantage belongs to the Illusion power. This modifier can be Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), Psionic (-10%), Spirit (-25%), or Super (-10%).

## KINETIC ENERGY

*Sources:* Elemental or Super.

*Focus:* Gross physical force.

This is the power to project beams and fields of force that attract or repel objects, act as reactionless thrusters, and so on. It’s named “Kinetic Energy” rather than “Force” because the only thing it has in common with any believable physical force is that it alters kinetic energy. Kinetic Energy power is intended mainly for highly cinematic supers. Gravity (p. 128) and Magnetism (p. 131) are *slightly* more realistic, while Psychokinesis (p. 133) is more suitable for psionic force control.

### Kinetic Energy Talent

5 points/level

### Kinetic Energy Abilities

Binding, with Unbreakable; Catfall, with Feather Fall; Damage Resistance, with Force Field and Limited, Physical (-20%); Enhanced Dodge; Enhanced Move (any); Flight; Lifting ST; Protected Power; Resistant or Immunity to acceleration, motion sickness, etc.; Slippery; Striking ST; Super Jump, with Maneuverable; and Telekinesis.

Crushing Attacks are also permissible. To stay true to the comics, these should have Double Knockback in a supers setting.

*Power Modifier:* Kinetic Energy. The advantage belongs to the Kinetic Energy power. This modifier is nearly always Elemental (-10%), and often Super (-10%) as well.



## LIFE

*Sources:* Divine, Magical (“Druidic Magic”), Nature, or Spirit.

*Focus:* Life force.

This power represents a special attunement to life and living things. It grants the user a long life in harmony with nature, and is found among priests of nature deities (Divine), shamans who can influence nature spirits (Spirit), and fantasy “druids” who work natural magic (Magical). It often occurs alongside Animal Control (p. 121), Plant Control (p. 132), or Spirit Control (p. 134). In some settings, the “life force” of all living things generates a universal energy field that the gifted can channel directly (Nature).

### Life Talent

5 points/level

### Life Abilities

Animal Empathy; Channeling, with Specialized, Nature Spirits (-50%); Detect, for animals, plants, or all life; Empathy; Healing; Medium, with Specialized, Nature Spirits (-50%); Metabolism Control; Plant Empathy; Protected Power; Regeneration; Resistant or Immunity to any natural threat; Speak with Animals; Speak with Plants; Unaging; and Unkillable.

In fantasy settings, Life power includes Burning Attacks and Corrosion Attacks with Accessibility, Only against the undead (-50%). These attacks cause the walking dead to perish in cleansing fire – or just crumble to dust.

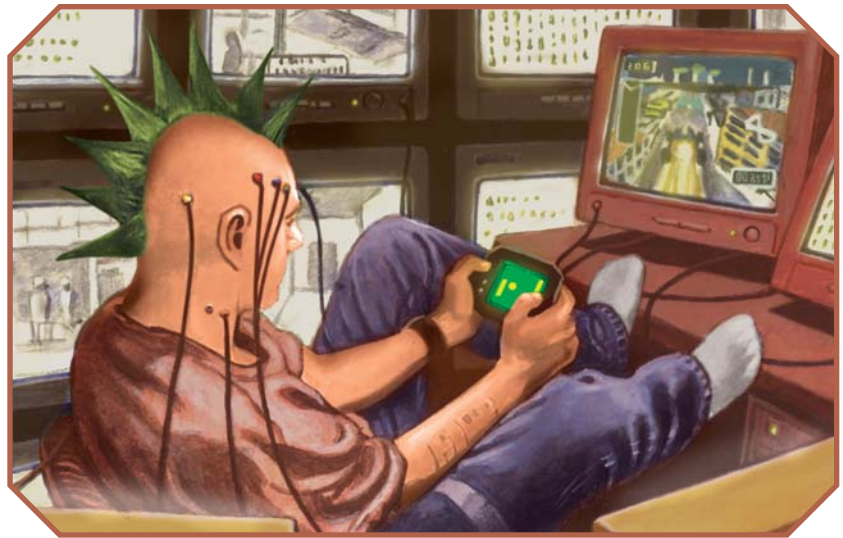
*Power Modifier:* Life. The advantage belongs to the Life power. This modifier is most often Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), Nature (-20%), or Spirit (-25%).

## LIGHT

*Sources:* Divine, Elemental, Psionic (“Photokinesis”), or Super.

*Focus:* Visible and near-visible light.

Light power gives the wielder almost complete control over light. He can focus it in order to enhance his



vision, bend it to hide things from sight, and concentrate it to attack his foes with blinding flashes and lasers. This is generally either direct elemental control (Elemental and Super) or specialized psionic “photokinesis” (Psionic) – but deities associated with the sun, purity, or good might also grant such a power (Divine).

### Light Talent

5 points/level

### Light Abilities

360° Vision, with Panoptic 1; Control (Light); Create (Light); Damage Resistance, with Limited, Light (-40%); Dark Vision; Enhanced Defenses, with Limited, Light (-40%); Hyperspectral Vision; Illusion, with Visual Only; Infravision; Invisibility; Microscopic Vision; Modular Abilities, with Limited, Light (-10%) and Physical; Night Vision; Obscure, against Ladar or any kind of vision; Protected Power; Protected Sense (Vision); Scanning Sense (Active IR or Ladar); See Invisible; Telecommunication (Infrared or Laser); Telescopic Vision; and Ultravision.

The GM might allow almost any advantage modified with Vision-Based as a Light ability, if it suits his campaign.

Allowed attacks are tight-beam Burning Attacks, and Afflictions with Vision-Based and Disadvantage, Bad Sight or Blindness. An attack that focuses *existing* light – meaning it requires strong, direct light to work – has Environmental (-20%).

*Power Modifier:* Light. The advantage belongs to the Light power. This modifier is usually Divine (-10%), Elemental (-10%), Psionic (-10%), or Super (-10%), and may be both Elemental and Super.

## MACHINE TELEPATHY

*Sources:* Psionic or Super.

*Focus:* Digital Minds.

This is the power to establish a mental link with a computer in order to communicate with or control it. It is to Digital Minds what Telepathy (p. 130) is to living minds, and is most often a hybrid power halfway between Electrokinesis and Telepathy (Psionic). It might instead be a brute-force capacity to emit signals that override the normal operation of machines (Super). It only affects machines that have at least a rudimentary computer “brain,” and never affects living beings.

### Machine Telepathy Talent

5 points/level

### Machine Telepathy Abilities

Channeling (Cyberspace); Detect, for Digital Minds, data transmissions, etc.; Invisibility, with Machines Only; Medium (Cyberspace); Mind Control, with Cybernetic Only; Mind Probe,

with Cybernetic Only; Mind Reading, with Cybernetic Only; Mindlink, with Cybernetic Only; Obscure, against any Scanning Sense; Protected Power; Resistant, to any mechanical threat (e.g., nanomachines); Special Rapport, with Transferable, Digital Mind; Telecommunication (any *but* Telesend); and Wild Talent, with External and Focused (skills provided by a “friendly” machine).

Those with Digital Mind can also take Duplication, with Digital; Mind Shield, with Cybernetic; and Possession, with Digital.

Afflictions are allowed, but must have Accessibility, Only on Electrical (-20%). The GM should interpret the effects of such attacks creatively; e.g., Daze puts the machine in “standby mode,” Seizure makes it go haywire, and Unconsciousness turns off the power.

**Power Modifier:** Machine Telepathy. The advantage belongs to the Machine Telepathy power. This modifier is usually Psionic (-10%) or Super (-10%).

## MAGIC

**Source:** Magical.

**Focus:** Casting “spells.”

Wizards normally work magic using specialized skills called “spells,” as described on pp. B234-253. If the GM prefers, though, magic can instead operate through advantages – which can, if desired, be the abilities of a power. To represent a specific “college” of magic, apply the Magical modifier to the most suitable power on this list (e.g., Heat/Fire power for Fire spells). Use the “generic” power below to accompany or replace the spells of *all* magical colleges.

### Magery

**5 points for Magery 0,  
+10 points/level**

At the GM’s option, the Magery advantage (p. B66) gives +1 per level to standard spells *and* Magical abilities. If so, Magery 0 is a prerequisite for all Magical abilities as well as for Magery 1+, and those with Magery can spend earned points to acquire new Magical abilities, even if they didn’t start with them.

## Magical Abilities

The basic abilities of Magic power are: Detect, for magical creatures, spells, wizards, etc.; Mana Enhancer; Modular Abilities (Super-Memorization), with Limited, Spells Only (-20%); Regeneration, with Fatigue Only; and Wild Talent, with Focused, Magical (-20%).

With the GM’s permission, those with Magic power can also buy abilities that simulate spells from pp. B242-253 or **GURPS Magic** – and conceivably even variants or entirely new spells. The GM should strictly forbid any ability that doesn’t fit *his* vision of magic in his game world; thus, this power isn’t truly “open ended.”

**Power Modifier:** Magical (-10%).

## MAGNETISM

**Sources:** Elemental or Super.

**Focus:** Magnetism.

This is a *cinematic* magnetism-control power. It lets the wielder do the kinds of tricks justified by “magnetism” in the comics – e.g., surfing along the Earth’s magnetic field, hurling heavy objects, and working metal – most of which are hard to explain in terms of *realistic* magnetism. Those who possess this power seem to use direct force manipulation (Elemental and Super), justified through rubber science, if at all.

### Magnetism Talent

**5 points/level**

## Magnetism Abilities

Absolute Direction; Binding, with Magnetic (-50%) and Unbreakable; Clinging, with Attraction and Magnetic (-50%); Control (Ferrous Metals or Magnetism); Create (Electricity); Damage Resistance, with Force Field and Limited, Electricity (-40%) or Metal (-40%); Detect, for electricity, magnetism, or ferrous metals; Enhanced Move (Air); Flight, with Planetary; Modular Abilities, with Limited, Magnetism (-15%) and Physical; Obscure, against any kind of magnetic detection; Protected Power; Radiation Tolerance, with Force

Field; Super Climbing, with Magnetic (-50%); Super Jump, with Planetary; Telekinesis, with Magnetic (-50%); and Walk on Air, with Planetary.

To use Magnetism offensively – e.g., to wield ferrous objects as melee weapons or hurl them as missiles – buy a high level of Telekinesis (Magnetic).

**Power Modifier:** Magnetism. The advantage belongs to the Magnetism power. This modifier is nearly always Elemental (-10%), and often Super (-10%) as well.

## MATTER CONTROL

**Source:** Super.

**Focus:** Reshaping matter.

Matter Control lets the wielder alter the shape of macroscopic objects and make fine adjustments to their atomic and even subatomic structure. He can’t affect living beings – only *inanimate* objects – but because many of his abilities alter matter in contact with his body, he might *seem* to control his own structure, too. This power is extremely cinematic, and best reserved for high-powered supers (Super).

### Matter Control Talent

**5 points/level**

## Matter Control Abilities

Binding, with Environmental (ranges from -5% if it “solidifies” air to -20% if it turns the ground to goo); Clinging; Control (for any variety of *matter*); Create (Solid, Liquid, or Gas), with Transmutation; Damage Resistance; Detect, for any kind of matter; Injury Tolerance (Homogenous or Diffuse); Permeation (any); Protected Power; Terrain Adaptation, with Active; Tunneling; Universal Digestion, with Matter Eater; and Walk on Liquid.

Corrosion Attacks are allowed, and represent disintegration. Buy “air to poison” and similar chemical attacks as Toxic Attacks with suitable modifiers: Environmental (-5%), Respiratory Agent, etc.



*Power Modifier:* Matter Control. The advantage belongs to the Matter Control power. This modifier is usually Super (-10%).

## ORDER

*Sources:* Divine, Moral, or Spirit.  
*Focus:* Structure and serenity.

Order power attempts to combat disorganization and impose structure on the world. It enables the wielder to block damage, noise, and other disruptions; restore mind and body to a state of inner peace; and achieve enlightenment by perceiving patterns hidden amidst the chaos of existence. This most often represents order embodied (Moral) or the will of supernatural champions of justice, law, or peace (Divine or Spirit). Order is the anti-power of Chaos (p. 124), and provides protection against that power.

### Order Talent

5 points/level

### Order Abilities

Channeling, with Specialized, Spirits of Order (-50%); Common Sense; Damage Resistance, with Force Field; Detect, for either Chaos or Order; Healing, with Xenohealing, Anything (+100%); Indomitable; Intuition; Medium, with Specialized, Spirits of Order (-50%); Mind Shield; Neutralize (Chaos), but *not* with Power Theft; Oracle; Protected Power; Regeneration; Regrowth; Resistant, to the abilities of Chaos; Silence; Static (Chaos), with Resistible; Temperature Control, with Cold; Unfazeable; and Visualization.

Attacks that *increase* order are also suitable. Most are Afflictions that use Advantage to bestow Indomitable, Silence, Unfazeable, or a similar trait – or Negated Disadvantage to remove Confused, Impulsiveness, Indecisive, and related mental problems. Fatigue Attacks with Freezing are also appropriate.

*Power Modifier:* Order. The advantage belongs to the Order power. This modifier is most often Divine (-10%), Moral (-20%), or Spirit (-25%).

## PLANT CONTROL

*Sources:* Divine, Nature, Psionic (“Plant Telepathy”), Spirit, or Super.  
*Focus:* Natural, nonsapient plants.

Plant Control lets the user commune with and control *ordinary* plants. It has no effect on sapient plant life, magical flora, or other unnatural vegetation. In fiction, this power is usually the result of a profound empathy with plants (Nature or Super), a variant form of telepathy (Psionic), or the favor of nature gods or spirits (Divine or Spirit).



### Plant Control Talent

5 points/level

### Plant Control Abilities

Binding, with Environmental (-40%); Control (Wood); Damage Resistance, with Limited, Plants (-40%); Detect, for a type of plant or all plants; Modular Abilities, with Environmental (-40%) and Physical; Penetrating Vision, with Specific, Wood (-40%); Permeation (Wood); Plant Empathy; Possession, with Plants Only (-25%); Protected Power; Speak with Plants; and Telekinesis, with Environmental (-40%).

Most attacks are just creative applications of Modular Abilities or Telekinesis, but the GM may permit those who can turn plants into weapons to purchase Innate Attacks with Environmental (-40%). Damage is crushing for animated trees, cutting for thorns, fatigue (with Suffocation) for strangling vines, and toxic for poisonous plants. Another common “attack” is Affliction with Advantage, Growth and Accessibility, Only on plants (-25%).

*Power Modifier:* Plant Control. The advantage belongs to the Plant Control power. This modifier is most often Divine (-10%), Nature (-20%), Psionic (-10%), Spirit (-25%), or Super (-10%).

## PROBABILITY ALTERATION

*Sources:* Divine, Magical (“Wishing”), Psionic, Spirit, or Super.  
*Focus:* Luck and fate.

This is the power to alter uncertain outcomes, precipitate fortuitous coincidences, and “bless” or “curse” others. It might represent divine intervention (Divine), wizardly tampering (Magical), psychic visualization (Psionic), the efforts of invisible servitor spirits (Spirit), or a subtle cosmic power (Super). Probability Alteration doesn’t visibly *do* anything; its effects manifest in the outcome of the tasks it influences.

### Probability Alteration Talent

5 points/level

### Probability Alteration Abilities

Abilities marked \* are open-ended. The GM decides how many levels are available.

Detect, for blessed or cursed items, reality alteration, wishes, etc.; Enhanced Defenses; Luck, with Wishing; Protected Power; Serendipity\*, with Wishing; Super Luck\*, especially with Alter Reality and



Wishing; Visualization, with *any* special modifier; and Wild Talent\*.

Afflictions that “bless” or “curse” others fit, too. These must have one or more of Advantage, Disadvantage, Negated Advantage, or Negated Disadvantage, and can only affect Cursed, Luck, Serendipity, Super Luck, and Unluckiness. They must also have No Signature and one of Malediction, Melee Attack, or Sense-Based. The user may suggest specific fates for the subject, but the GM decides what *actually* happens – which always looks like a coincidence. To dictate specific coincidences, add Cosmic, +300%.

*Power Modifier:* Probability Alteration. The advantage belongs to the Probability Alteration power. This modifier is generally Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), Psionic (-10%), Spirit (-25%), or Super (-10%).

## PSYCHOKINESIS

*Sources:* Divine, Magical, Psionic, Spirit, or Super.

*Focus:* Motion.

Psychokinesis (PK) abilities let the user produce kinetic effects – both macroscopic (visible motion) and microscopic (cooling and heating) – simply by willing them. This is traditionally a psi power (Psionic), but gifted priests (Divine), shamans (Spirit), and wizards (Magical) can achieve similar results using their command over supernatural forces. PK is also suitable as a generic superpower (Super), but see *Heat/Fire* (p. 129), *Gravity* (p. 128), *Kinetic Energy* (p. 129), and *Magnetism* (p. 131) before choosing.

### Psychokinesis Talent 5 points/level

#### Psychokinesis Abilities

Binding, with Unbreakable; Catfall, with Feather Fall; Clinging, with Attraction; Damage Resistance, with Force Field and Limited, Physical (-20%); Enhanced Move (Air); Flight; Protected Power; Stretching, with Force Extension; Super Climbing; Super Jump; Telekinesis; Temperature Control; Vibration Sense, with Sense of

Perception; Walk on Air; and Walk on Liquid.

The GM may also permit ST without HP (see *Telekinesis*, p. 82) and Lifting ST (with or without Super-Effort; see p. 58) as PK abilities.

Many Innate Attacks are reasonable: cryokinetic attacks do fatigue damage with Freezing, pyrokinetic attacks deliver burning damage, and telekinetic attacks are crushing. Direct telekinetic attacks on vital areas are Afflictions with Choking or Heart Attack. All PK attacks must have No Signature, and Afflictions require Malediction, too.

*Power Modifier:* Psychokinesis. The advantage belongs to the Psychokinesis power. This modifier is usually Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), Psionic (-10%), Spirit (-25%), or Super (-10%).

## RADIATION

*Sources:* Elemental or Super.

*Focus:* Energetic particles and electromagnetic radiation.

This power lets the user detect, control, and emit dangerous radiation. It's really only suitable as a superpower (Elemental and Super); the scientific sophistication implied by an understanding of radiation meshes poorly with supernatural powers. Like the comics, Radiation power treats radiation as a monolithic phenomenon. In reality, alpha particles, gamma rays, neutrons, X-rays, and so on differ greatly. The GM decides what impact, if any, such distinctions have on this power.

### Radiation Talent 5 points/level

#### Radiation Abilities

Control (Radiation); Create (Radiation); Damage Resistance, with Limited, Energy (-20%); Detect, for all radiation or particular types; Hyperspectral Vision, with Extended High-Band; Modular Abilities, with Limited, Radiation (-15%) and Physical; Penetrating Vision; Protected Power; Radiation Tolerance; Regeneration, with Radiation Only; Scanning Sense (Para-Radar); and Telecommunication (Neutrino).

Radiation power also includes Burning Attacks and Toxic Attacks with the Radiation enhancement. Given the sheer deadliness of radiation in settings without TL8+ shielding and medicine, the GM might wish to impose serious restrictions on these attacks in low-tech game worlds.

*Power Modifier:* Radiation. The advantage belongs to the Radiation power. This modifier is nearly always Elemental (-10%), and often Super (-10%) as well.

## SOUND/ VIBRATION

*Sources:* Elemental, Psionic (“Sonokinesis”), or Super.

*Focus:* Mechanical vibrations of all kinds.

Sound/Vibration power provides total control over mechanical vibrations – including sound, unless the GM rules that Sound and Vibration are separate powers – in air, water, or solids. This lets the user enhance his senses of hearing and touch, generate noise as a diversion, assail his enemies with concentrated sound, and so forth. Sound/Vibration power is most often a specialized offshoot of Psychokinesis (Psionic) or a form of direct elemental control (Elemental and Super).

### Sound/Vibration Talent 5 points/level

#### Sound/Vibration Abilities

Abilities marked \* are suitable for a standalone Sound power; those labeled † are appropriate for a separate Vibration power.

Control (Sound)\*; Create (Sound)\*; Damage Resistance, with Limited, Physical (-20%)†, Sound (-40%)\*, or Vibration (-40%)†; Discriminatory Hearing\*; Illusion, with Auditory Only\*; Mimicry\*; Modular Abilities, with Physical and Limited, Sound (-10%)\* or Vibration (-15%)†; Obscure (Hearing\*, Sonar\*†, or Vibration Sense†); Parabolic Hearing\*; Protected Power\*†; Protected Sense (Hearing)\*;

Rapier Wit\*†; Scanning Sense (Sonar)\*†; Sensitive Touch†; Silence\*; Speak Underwater\*†; Subsonic Hearing/Speech\*†; Telecommunication (Directional Sound\* or Sonar\*†); Ultrahearing/Ultrasonic Speech\*†; and Vibration Sense, but *not* with Sense of Perception†.

The GM might allow almost *any* advantage modified with Hearing-Based as a Sound ability, if it suits his campaign.

Many attacks are possible. Sound attacks are Crushing Attacks, or Afflictions with Hearing-Based *and* Disadvantage, Deafness. Vibration attacks are Burning Attacks with No Incendiary Effect, or Afflictions with no special modifier (stunning only), Nauseated, or Unconsciousness. In extremely cinematic games, Mind Control might be possible, mediated by vibrations (add Based on HT) or sounds (add Hearing-Based).

*Power Modifier:* Sound/Vibration. The advantage belongs to the Sound/Vibration power. This modifier is typically Elemental (-10%), Psionic (-10%), or Super (-10%), and may be both Elemental *and* Super.

## SPIRIT CONTROL

*Sources:* Divine, Magical, or Spirit.  
*Focus:* Spirits and the spirit world.

A variety of powers can become “spirit powers” with the simple addition of the Spirit modifier. This creates a power that deals with a specific class of spirit: demons, ghosts, totems, fire elementals, etc. Spirit Control empowers the user to perceive, communicate with, and bind *all* manner of spirits. Ritual magicians should buy this power with the Spirit modifier, but the capacity to command spirits is just as suitable for fantasy clerics (Divine) and wizards (Magical).

### *Spirit Control Talent* 5 points/level

### *Spirit Control Abilities*

Allies (minor spirits), with Summonable; Alternate Form, with Projected Form; Blessed; Channeling; Clairsentience; Detect, for spirits, spirit phenomena, etc.; Intuition; Jumper

(Spirit); Medium; Mind Shield; Oracle; Patron (major spirit), with Highly Accessible; Protected Power; See Invisible (Ghosts); Spirit Empathy; Telekinesis; True Faith, with Turning; and Visualization.

*Direct* physical attacks are inappropriate, although spirits can be commanded to hurl things (use Telekinesis for this). “Curses” definitely fit, however; almost any Affliction with Malediction is suitable.

*Power Modifier:* Spirit Control. The advantage belongs to the Spirit Control power. This modifier is usually Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), or Spirit (-25%).

## TELEPATHY

*Sources:* Biological, Magical (“Mind Control”), Psionic, or Super.  
*Focus:* Living, sapient minds.

Telepathy is the power of direct mental communication and control. It’s traditionally a psi power (Psionic), but some modern fiction portrays it as a “neural” phenomenon that uses a bioenergy field (Biological or Super). Wizardly mind control (Magical) is another possibility. Telepathy normally only affects living, *sapient* beings (IQ 6+) – but the GM should allow it to work on all *sentient* minds (IQ 1+) in game worlds where the Animal Control power doesn’t exist. Attempts to affect machines or plants fail automatically.

### *Telepathy Talent* 5 points/level

### *Telepathy Abilities*

Detect, for telepathic phenomena, sapient minds, etc.; Elastic Skin, with Glamour; Empathy; Illusion, with Mental; Invisibility, with Glamour; Mind Control; Mind Probe; Mind Reading; Mind Shield; Mindlink; Possession, with Mind Swap or Telecontrol; Protected Power; Racial Memory; Rapier Wit; Social Chameleon; Special Rapport; Telecommunication (Telesend); Terror, with Active; and Xeno-Adaptability. Add Animal Empathy and Speak with Animals in backgrounds where Animal Control doesn’t exist.

Telepaths often have Charisma as a *side effect* of their power, but it isn’t considered one of the power’s abilities.

Allowed attacks are Fatigue Attacks and Afflictions that cause stunning, incapacitation, mental disadvantages, or DX, IQ, or Will penalties. The GM may wish to permit telepaths in horror and supers games to fry the subject’s nervous system for actual injury – a Toxic Attack. All telepathic attacks require Malediction and No Signature, and Afflictions must be Based on Will.

*Power Modifier:* Telepathy. The advantage belongs to the Telepathy power. This modifier is most often Biological (-10%), Magical (-10%), Psionic (-10%), or Super (-10%).

## TELEPORTATION

*Sources:* Magical, Psionic, or Super.  
*Focus:* Instantaneous movement.

Teleportation lets the user move himself or other things across space without traversing the intervening distance. Explanations include transmitting matter to the destination as an energy beam (Super) and warping space through sheer willpower (Magical or Psionic). In some backgrounds, Teleportation allows the user to visit parallel worlds, often by accident (add Uncontrollable and Unconscious to Jumper) – although Dimension Travel (p. 125) is better suited to the task.

### *Teleportation Talent* 5 points/level

### *Teleportation Abilities*

Detect, for Warp, matter transmission, wormholes, etc.; Enhanced Dodge; Jumper (World), but *not* with Interplanar; Protected Power; Snatcher, but *not* with Creation; and Warp, with *any* special modifier.

The only “attacks” normally available are Afflictions with Advantage, Jumper or Advantage, Warp, which teleport other people or objects in their entirety. The GM might permit attacks that teleport away *part* of the target or send foreign objects into his

body. Build these as Afflictions with Malediction, or Impaling Attacks with Malediction and Based on HT.

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

## TIME MASTERY

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

*Focus:* Time.

Time Mastery lets the user observe and communicate with the past; receive information from and send messages into the future (and perhaps summon future selves to assist him!); travel in time; and influence the flow of time. Explanations include the favor of a deity that governs time (Divine), powerful sorcery (Magical), a psychic link between past, present, and future selves (Psionic), or direct “time control” (Super).

### *Time Mastery Talent* 5 points/level

#### *Time Mastery Abilities*

Absolute Timing; Altered Time Rate; Channeling (The Past); Clairvoyance, with Time-Spanning; Danger Sense; Detect, for temporal anomalies, time-jumpers, etc.; Duplication, with Sequential; Enhanced Time Sense; Jumper (Time); Medium (The Past); Precognition; Protected Power; Psychometry; Telecommunication (Telesend), with Time-Spanning; Temporal Inertia; and Unaging.

Afflictions that alter the flow of time are also allowed. These must have Advantage, Disadvantage, Negated Advantage, or Negated Disadvantage, and add or remove Altered Time Rate or Decreased Time Rate. The GM might also permit the Temporal Stasis enhancement; see *Stopping Time* (p. 118).

These abilities can wreak havoc on plots. The GM may restrict PCs to abilities that affect only the past or the future, or time flow in the present. He might even remove the capacity to “move” physical objects (delete

*Vampirism involves far more than the mere theft of vitality through bloodsucking or a chilling touch. It's the power to steal thoughts, dreams, and abilities from the living – perhaps even their physical forms.*

Duplication and add Projection to Jumper).

*Power Modifier:* Time Mastery. The advantage belongs to the Time Mastery power. This modifier is generally Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), Psionic (-10%), or Super (-10%).

## VAMPIRISM

*Sources:* Biological, Magical, Psionic (“Psychic Vampirism”), or Super.

*Focus:* Stealing life force.

Vampirism involves *far* more than the mere theft of vitality through bloodsucking or a chilling touch. It's the power to steal thoughts, dreams, and abilities from the living – perhaps even their physical forms. This might be a feeding mechanism (Biological), an offshoot of necromancy (Magical), traditional “psychic vampirism” (Psionic), or a variation on Anti-Super power (Super). Vampirism doesn't affect machines or inanimate objects.

### *Vampirism Talent* 5 points/level

#### *Vampirism Abilities*

Leech is the core Vampirism ability, and can have *any* set of modifiers. Attacks are equally important, and include Afflictions with Attribute Penalty or Negated Advantage, or perhaps Disadvantage, Amnesia (stolen thoughts); Fatigue Attacks with Missed Sleep (stolen dreams) or another Hazard; and Toxic Attacks. All such attacks require Malediction, Melee Attack, or Sense-Based.

Other advantages that can be Vampirism abilities include Detect (Life); Morph, with Cannot Memorize

Forms and Needs Sample; Neutralize, with Power Theft and possibly Cosmic; and Protected Power.

*Power Modifier:* Vampirism. The advantage belongs to the Vampirism power. This modifier is most often Biological (-10%), Magical (-10%), Psionic (-10%), or Super (-10%).

## WATER

*Sources:* Divine, Elemental, Magical, Spirit, or Super.

*Focus:* Water.

This is the power to create and manipulate water. Gifted users can even *become* water. It might represent direct control over water (Elemental and Super), traditional elemental wizardry (Magical), the favor of a sea god (Divine), or command over water elementals (Spirit). Water includes ice and steam, but Cold/Ice (p. 124) and Air (p. 121) more thoroughly address freezing and gases, respectively.

### *Water Talent* 5 points/level

#### *Water Abilities*

Alternate Form (Body of Water); Amphibious; Control (Oceans), with Natural Phenomena; Control (Water); Create (Water); Damage Resistance, with Limited, Fire or Water (both -40%); Detect (Water); Doesn't Breathe, with Gills; Enhanced Move (Water); Modular Abilities, with Limited, Water (-10%) and Physical; Obscure (Vision); Permeation (Ice); Pressure Support; Protected Power; Sealed; Speak Underwater; Vibration Sense (Water); Walk on Air, with Specific, Vapor (-40%); and Walk on Liquid.



Many Innate Attacks are possible. Gouts of water cause crushing damage, narrow jets inflict corrosion or cutting damage, and attacks that affect the water in the target's body deliver fatigue damage with Dehydration or Drowning.

*Power Modifier:* Water. The advantage belongs to the Water power. This modifier is usually Divine (-10%), Elemental (-10%), Magical (-10%), Spirit (-25%), or Super (-10%), and may be both Elemental *and* Super.

## WEATHER CONTROL

*Sources:* Divine, Magical, Nature, Spirit, or Super.

*Focus:* Atmospheric conditions.

This is the power to manipulate ambient humidity, pressure, and temperature. It might channel storm gods or spirits (Divine or Spirit), involve “weather witching” (Magical), or represent direct control (Nature or Super). Its effects sometimes overlap Air, Cold/Ice, Electricity, Heat/Fire,

*You will buy your weather from me! And by God you'll pay for it.*

– Sir August de Wynter, *The Avengers*

and Water; but Weather Control *isn't* an elemental power. The user can only produce *weather*; e.g., hail, lightning, rain, stifling heat, and wind. He can't emit concussion waves, shoot freeze rays, jam radios, turn to flame, etc.

### Weather Control Talent 5 points/level

#### Weather Control Abilities

Control (Weather, or a subset such as Clouds, Precipitation, or Winds), with Natural Phenomena; Damage Resistance, with Limited, Elemental (-20%); Detect, for clouds, rain, storms, etc.; Enhanced Move (Air); Flight; Modular Abilities, with

Environmental (-5%) and Physical; Obscure, if justifiable as fog, snow, etc.; Protected Power; Sealed; Temperature Control; Terrain Adaptation, for ice, mud, snow, or other conditions caused by weather; and Walk on Air.

A wide variety of Innate Attacks are suitable: giant hail (piercing), lightning bolts (burning), etc. All must have Area Effect, Bombardment, and Overhead. An attack that only works when there's already a violent storm in the area has Environmental (-40%).

*Power Modifier:* Weather Control. The advantage belongs to the Weather Control power. This modifier can be Divine (-10%), Magical (-10%), Nature (-20%), Spirit (-25%), or Super (-10%).

## SAMPLE ABILITIES

These worked examples cover a variety of interesting fictional abilities. Each consists of one or more advantages, often highly modified. When buying them, there's no need to note all the details. Just record the ability's name and cost as you would for a meta-trait.

### ATTACKS

For attacks, the *total* value of all modifiers on each advantage appears in parentheses. When designing an attack with an identical set of modifiers, simply note this value and use the name of the associated ability as shorthand for those modifiers; e.g., “Pistol, +70%.”

You can vary these attacks by adjusting the underlying advantage and then applying the same collective modifier to its cost. For instance, with a built-in firearm, you might simulate hollow-point bullets by changing Piercing Attack to Large Piercing

Attack, or represent a “hot load” by adding more dice of Piercing Attack.

#### Built-In Firearms

These rarely make sense as part of a power. They're intended as stand-alone abilities for cyborgs and robots.

*Antitank Rocket* (+250%): Crushing Attack 6d×6 (Armor Divisor (10), +200%; Explosion 1, +50%; Increased Range, ×20, +40%; Limited Use, 1 use, Slow Reload, -35%; Nuisance Effect, Hazardous back-blast, -5%) [630]. 630 points.

*Assault Rifle* (+150%): Piercing Attack 5d (Accurate +2, +10%; Extra Recoil +1, -10%; Increased Range, ×50, +50%; Limited Use, 3 uses/30 shots, Fast Reload, -10%; Rapid Fire, RoF 10, Selective Fire, +110%) [63]. 63 points.

*Blaster Pistol* (+265%): Burning Attack 3d (Accurate +2, +10%; Armor Divisor (5), +150%; Increased 1/2D, ×20, +20%; Increased Max, ×10, +15%;

Rapid Fire, RoF 3, +50%; Surge, +20%) [55]. *Special Effects:* Tight-beam. 55 points.

*Blaster Rifle* (+310%): Burning Attack 6d (Accurate +9, +45%; Armor Divisor (5), +150%; Increased 1/2D, ×50, +25%; Increased Max, ×20, +20%; Rapid Fire, RoF 3, +50%; Surge, +20%) [123]. *Special Effects:* Tight-beam. 123 points.

*Flamethrower* (+105%): Burning Attack 3d (Armor Divisor (0.5), -30%; Cyclic, 10 seconds, 3 cycles, +100%; Increased Range 4, +40%; Jet, +0%; Limited Use, 10 uses, Slow Reload, -5%) [31]. 31 points.

*Heavy Machine Gun* (+165%): Large Piercing Attack 13d+1 (Accurate +3, +15%; Extra Recoil +1, -10%; Increased 1/2D, ×200, +35%; Increased Max, ×100, +30%; Limited Use, 10 uses/100 shots, Fast Reload, -5%; Rapid Fire, RoF 10, +100%) [212]. 212 points.

*Laser Pistol* (+210%): Burning Attack 3d (Accurate +3, +15%; Armor Divisor (2), +50%; Increased 1/2D,

×20, +20%; Increased Max, ×10, +15%; Rapid Fire, RoF 10, Selective Fire, +110%) [47]. *Special Effects*: Loses damage in smoke; can bounce off mirrors; tight-beam. 47 points.

*Laser Rifle* (+260%): Burning Attack 5d (Accurate +11, +55%; Armor Divisor (2), +50%; Increased 1/2D, ×50, +25%; Increased Max, ×20, +20%; Rapid Fire, RoF 10, Selective Fire, +110%) [90]. *Special Effects*: Loses damage in smoke; can bounce off mirrors; tight-beam. 90 points.

*Light Machine Gun* (+150%): Piercing Attack 5d+1 (Accurate +2, +10%; Extra Recoil +1, -10%; Increased 1/2D, ×100, +30%; Increased Max, ×50, +25%; Limited Use, 10 uses/120 shots, Fast Reload, -5%; Rapid Fire, RoF 12, +100%) [68]. 68 points.

*Pistol* (+70%): Piercing Attack 2d+2 (Extra Recoil +1, -10%; Inaccurate -1, -5%; Increased Range, ×20, +40%; Limited Use, 5 uses/15 shots, Fast Reload, -5%; Rapid Fire, RoF 3, +50%) [23]. 23 points.

*Shotgun* (+135%): Small Piercing Attack 1d+1 (Increased 1/2D, ×5, +10%; Limited Use, 2 uses/6 shots, Slow Reload, -25%; Rapid Fire, RoF 3×9, +150%) [10]. 10 points.

*Sniper Rifle* (+80%): Piercing Attack 9d+1 (Accurate +6, +30%; Increased 1/2D, ×100, +30%; Increased Max, ×50, +25%; Limited

Use, 5 uses, Fast Reload, -5%) [85]. 85 points.

*Sonic Stunner* (+395%): Affliction 4 (HT-3; Armor Divisor (5), +150%; Environmental, Air, -5%; Rapid Fire, RoF 3, +50%; Unconsciousness, +200%) [198]. 198 points.

*Submachine Gun* (+135%): Piercing Attack 3d-1 (Accurate +1, +5%; Extra Recoil +1, -10%; Increased Range, ×20, +40%; Limited Use, 3 uses/33 shots, Fast Reload, -10%; Rapid Fire, RoF 11, Selective Fire, +110%) [33]. 33 points.

## Elemental Attacks

These could be superscience weapon implants, super-abilities, combat spells, or natural attacks for monsters. For comparison's sake, all cost *approximately* 50 points. For a more or less powerful attack, vary the level of Affliction, Binding, Innate Attack, or Obscure. Descriptions and special effects appear under "Notes."

### Air

*Concussion* (+50%): Crushing Attack 6d+2 (Explosion 1, +50%) [50]. *Notes*: Creates a ball of compressed air that ruptures explosively on impact. Might blow out *small* fires. 50 points.

*Super-Breath* (+50%): Crushing Attack 6d+2 (Cone, 5 yards, +100%;

Double Knockback, +20%; No Wounding, -50%; Reduced Range, ×1/5, -20%) [50]. *Notes*: A gust of wind capable of pushing away *groups* of foes without doing serious harm. 50 points.

*Twister* (+225%/+95%): Crushing Attack 2d (Area Effect, 2 yards, +50%; Double Knockback, +20%; Environmental, Air, -5%; Link, +10%; Mobile 1, +40%; Persistent, +40%; Side Effect, -2 DX, +70%) [33] + Obscure 5 (Vision; Environmental, Air, -5%; Link, +10%; Mobile 1, +40%; Ranged, +50%) [20]. *Notes*: Spins existing air into a tiny tornado that hurls people around and stirs up debris. Knockback is *vertical*. The side effect represents dizziness. 53 points.

*Vacuum* (+100%): Fatigue Attack 2d+2 (Area Effect, 2 yards, +50%; Respiratory Agent, +50%; Suffocation, +0%) [52]. *Notes*: Reduces air pressure to zero over a small area, leaving those without breathing gear gasping for breath (unless they don't breathe). 52 points.

*Wind Blast* (+10%): Crushing Attack 9d (Increased 1/2D, ×5, +10%) [50]. *Notes*: Hurls a bolt of compressed air that pummels the target like a clenched fist. 50 points.

### Cold/Ice

*Blizzard* (+210%/+290%): Obscure 2 (Hearing; Area Effect, 16 yards, +150%; Link, +10%; Ranged, +50%) [13] + Obscure 5 (Vision; Area Effect, 16 yards, +150%; Extended, Active IR, Infravision, Ladar, Ultravision, +80%; Link, +10%; Ranged, +50%) [39]. *Notes*: A raging snowstorm that blocks light and infrared (-5), and absorbs sound (-2). Quickly melts and leaves puddles, except in sub-freezing temperatures. 52 points.

*Freeze Ray* (+400%): Fatigue Attack 1d (Accurate +2, +10%; Armor Divisor (5), +150%; Freezing, +20%; Increased 1/2D, ×10, +15%; Increased Max, ×2, +5%; Side Effect, Paralysis, +200%) [50]. *Notes*: This thin, icy beam leaves the victim shivering. The side effect represents *being frozen*. Attempts to chill beer, etc. succeed automatically. 50 points.

Weapon	Damage	Acc	Range	RoF	Shots	Rcl	Notes
Antitank Rocket	6d×6(10) cr ex	3	200/2,000	1	1	1	
Assault Rifle	5d pi	5	500/5,000	10	30(3)	2	
Blaster Pistol	3d(5) burn	5	200/1,000	3	-	1	[1, 2]
Blaster Rifle	6d(5) burn	12	500/2,000	3	-	1	[1, 2]
Flamethrower	3d(0.5) burn	-	25/50	Jet	10	-	[3]
Heavy MG	13d+1 pi+	6	2,000/10,000	10!	100(5)	2	
Laser Pistol	3d(2) burn	6	200/1,000	10	-	1	[1]
Laser Rifle	5d(2) burn	14	500/2,000	10	-	1	[1]
Light MG	5d+1 pi	5	1,000/5,000	12!	120(5)	2	
Pistol	2d+2 pi	2	200/2,000	3	15(3)	2	
Shotgun	1d+1 pi-	3	50/100	3×9	6(3i)	1	
Sniper Rifle	9d+1 pi	9	1,000/5,000	1	5(3)	4	[4]
Sonic Stunner	HT-3(5) aff	3	10/100	3	-	1	[1, 5]
Submachine Gun	3d-1 pi	4	200/2,000	11	33(3)	2	

### Notes

[1] Gets unlimited shots from possessor's internal energy supply. Add Limited Use if this isn't true, or Takes Recharge for an "accumulator" that recharges slowly.

[2] Damage has the Surge modifier.

[3] Damage is *cyclic*: three 10-second cycles.

[4] Doesn't qualify for Extra Recoil because it lacks Rapid Fire.

[5] Failed HT roll renders target unconscious for minutes equal to margin of failure.

## Arms Control

The GM might wish to put limits on the PCs' offensive abilities to keep his campaign from turning into a bloodbath. Attacks no more capable than weapons commonly issued to *ordinary* police and troops in the setting – that is, most LC2+ weapons – are rarely a problem. Advantages are harder to take away and easier to conceal than guns . . . but entire *armies* have similar firepower, and the heroes' enemies can even the odds by buying off-the-shelf weapons.

Built-in attacks comparable to LC1 armaments are *sometimes* a problem. The GM could just forbid them, but it's more fun to permit such abilities to heroes who really want them . . . if they *also* pay for an Unusual Background. Suggested costs are 25 points for attacks on par with portable support weapons, 50 points for those equivalent to light vehicular weapons, and 100 points for those as deadly as heavy vehicular weapons or artillery pieces.

Abilities that emulate LC0 weapons pose a *serious* threat to campaign integrity. If the GM insists on giving the PCs access to strategic weapons, he should charge at least 200 points for an Unusual Background.

These guidelines don't apply to nonlethal attacks or "body weaponry" (claws, venom, etc.), even if they're technically LC1. Such attacks *can* be fight-stoppers, but they're much easier to avoid or resist than an armor-piercing laser. Fatigue Attacks that suffocate, Toxic Attacks that inflict damage in rads instead of HP, and Afflictions that cause comas and heart attacks *aren't* exempt, however – these silent killers are as lethal as any machine gun or blaster.

*Example:* In a WWII supers campaign, the GM might charge no Unusual Background cost for RoF 1-3 attacks that inflict up to 7d damage (comparable to rifles); 25 points for attacks equivalent to machine guns and bazookas; 50 points for attacks as deadly as 20mm

cannon and light antitank guns; and 100 points for attacks comparable to howitzers and aircraft bombs. History-altering "secret weapons" would be LC0, and require a 200-point Unusual Background if the GM allowed them. Nonlethal stunners, tanglers, and so on wouldn't require *any* Unusual Background, despite being futuristic.

### Weapon Mounts

In settings where cybernetic implants or armed robots are common, the GM might feel that the heroes shouldn't pay a lot of points for weapons that *anyone* could buy and install. Such game worlds need a mechanism to reduce the cost of attacks available as standard weapons systems.

The GM may opt to let cyborgs and robots buy one or more instances of Extra Arm (Weapon Mount, -80%) [2]. Each can mount a single weapon that weighs no more than BL. Mounted weapons cost cash – *not* points – and their weight counts as encumbrance. Those with suitable mounts and controls might even cost and weigh *more* than regular ones . . . but they leave both hands free.

A mounted weapon is plugged in, not *built* in. The user can swap it for another weapon with a suitable interface. On average, it takes five seconds to mount or unmount a weapon, but this varies by weapon. Such weapons are *obvious*, and enemies or the authorities can *confiscate* them, just like carried weapons.

This measure is effectively the opposite of an Unusual Background, but the two aren't exclusive. The GM might let cyborgs mount standard weapons for 2 points apiece, require mutants to pay full cost for "natural" attacks that don't exceed such weapons in effectiveness, and charge godlike beings an Unusual Background for built-in strategic weapons.

*Frost Breath* (+250%): Crushing Attack 3d-1 (Cone, 5 yards, +100%; No Blunt Trauma, -20%; No Knockback, -10%; Reduced Range,  $\times 1/5$ , -20%; Side Effect, Paralysis, +200%) [49]. *Notes:* A broad cone of stinging ice crystals that can actually *freeze* those it injures. 49 points.

*Ice Bonds* (+60%): Binding 15 (Engulfing, +60%) [48]. *Notes:* Freezes the victim in ice. Treat FP lost to failed attempts to break free as freezing (see *Cold*, p. B430), but the victim *doesn't* become helplessly entangled on 17-18. This tradeoff is a special effect. 48 points.

*Ice Slick* (+155%): Affliction 2 (DX-1; Area Effect, 4 yards, +100%; Based on DX, +20%; Disadvantage, Total Klutz, +15%; Environmental, Touching ground within area, -20%; Persistent, +40%) [51]. *Notes:* Creates a small patch of ice on the ground. Those who leave the area are free of the Affliction, but must make a new resistance roll if they return. The resistance bonus equals the DR of the victim's *footwear* (heavier boots give better purchase). 51 points.

*Ice Spear* (+25%): Impaling Attack 5d (Accurate +1, +5%; Increased 1/2D,  $\times 10$ , +15%; Increased Max,  $\times 2$ , +5%)

[50]. *Notes:* Hurls a razor-sharp icicle that melts shortly after impact. 50 points.

*Ice Storm* (+255%): Large Piercing Attack 2d+1 (Area Effect, 16 yards, +200%; Bombardment, skill 10, -15%; Overhead, +30%; Persistent, +40%) [50]. *Notes:* Calls down bullet-like hail over a vast area. This can *kill* unarmored victims who don't flee. 50 points.

*Snowball* (+10%): Crushing Attack 9d (Increased 1/2D,  $\times 5$ , +10%) [50]. *Notes:* Lobs a cannonball-sized lump of hard-packed snow or ice that melts shortly after impact. 50 points.



## Earth

**Quicksand (+100%):** Binding 12 (Area Effect, 2 yards, +50%; Environmental, Touching ground, -20%; One Shot, -10%; Persistent, +40%; Unbreakable, +40%) [48]. *Notes:* Turns a small patch of ground into quicksand. Anyone who enters it sinks up to his knees. After 10 seconds, the ground hardens and can no longer trap new victims. 48 points.

**Rain of Stones (+100%):** Crushing Attack 5d (Area Effect, 2 yards, +50%; Blockable, -5%; Bombardment, skill 10, -15%; Overhead, +30%; Persistent, +40%) [50]. *Notes:* Pounds the area of effect with *boulders*. These crumble to dust and blow away after 10 seconds. 50 points.

**Sandstorm (+250%/+110%):** Cutting Attack 1d (Area Effect, 4 yards, +100%; Link, +10%; Persistent, +40%; Side Effect, Blindness, +100%) [25] + Obscure 6 (Vision; Area Effect, 4 yards, +50%; Link, +10%; Ranged, +50%) [26]. *Notes:* Conjures a flesh-tearing blizzard of blinding grit. Machines are more likely to be clogged than blinded. 51 points.

**Stone Missile (+10%):** Crushing Attack 9d (Increased 1/2D, x5, +10%) [50]. *Notes:* Shoots a fist-sized rock at the target. Decide whether it stays behind or crumbles to dust. 50 points.

## Electricity

**Arc (+40%):** Burning Attack 7d (Melee Attack, Reach C, Cannot Parry, -35%; Side Effect, Stunning, +50%; Surge, +20%; Variable, +5%) [49]. *Notes:* An electrical arc that leaps between the user's hands. At its lowest setting, it can jump-start cars (and hearts!); at its highest setting, it can kill instantly. 49 points.

**Call Lightning (+175%):** Burning Attack 3d+2 (Area Effect, 2 yards, +50%; Bombardment, skill 12, -10%; Environmental, Air, -5%; Overhead, +30%; Persistent, +40%; Side Effect, Stunning, +50%; Surge, +20%) [50]. *Notes:* Calls down repeated lightning strikes on the target area. This creates electrical noise nearby. 50 points.

**Dampen (+400%):** Affliction 1 (HT; Accessibility, Only on Electrical, -20%; Area Effect, 2 yards, +50%; Malediction 2, +150%; Selective Area, +20%; Unconsciousness, +200%) [50]. *Notes:* Lets the user shut down electrical devices, in a small area he

can see, by winning a Quick Contest of Will vs. the HT of each subject. 50 points.

**Electric Stun (+65%):** Affliction 3 (HT-2; Accurate +1, +5%; Armor Divisor (2), +50%; Increased 1/2D, x5, +10%) [50]. *Notes:* Delivers a nerve-jangling electrical pulse similar to an electrolaser bolt – a useful *non-lethal* attack for heroic supers. 50 points.

**Electrified Skin (+140%/+90%):** Affliction 1 (HT; Aura, +80%; Link, +10%; Melee Attack, -30%; Secondary Heart Attack, +60%; Underwater, +20%) [24] + Burning Attack 2d+2 (Aura, +80%; Link, +10%; Melee Attack, -30%; No Incendiary Effect, -10%; Surge, +20%; Underwater, +20%) [25]. *Notes:* The user charges himself up like an electric eel. Foes who touch him receive a potentially *lethal* shock. 49 points.

*These could be superscience weapon implants, super-abilities, combat spells, or natural attacks for monsters.*

**Lightning Bolt (+100%):** Burning Attack 5d (Accurate +2, +10%; Increased 1/2D, x10, +15%; Increased Max, x2, +5%; Side Effect, Stunning, +50%; Surge, +20%) [50]. *Notes:* Hurls a destructive bolt of electricity that sets fires and fries machinery. 50 points.

**Surge (+0%):** Burning Attack 10d (Accurate +2, +10%; Increased 1/2D, x10, +15%; Increased Max, x2, +5%; No Wounding, -50%; Surge, +20%) [50]. *Notes:* A low-energy, high-frequency electrical bolt that scrambles machinery *without* harming living targets. 50 points.

## Heat/Fire

**Fire Bolt (+10%):** Burning Attack 9d (Increased 1/2D, x5, +10%) [50]. *Notes:* A simple bolt of flame that sets fires and cooks flesh. 50 points.

**Fireball (+50%):** Burning Attack 6d+2 (Explosion 1, +50%) [50]. *Notes:* Similar to Fire Bolt, but the bolt

explodes on impact, damaging everything nearby. 50 points.

**Flame Breath (+80%):** Burning Attack 5d+1 (Cone, 5 yards, +100%; Reduced Range, x1/5, -20%) [49]. *Notes:* Classic “dragon-fire” attack that blasts foes in a broad cone. 49 points.

**Flame Jet (+0%):** Burning Attack 10d (Jet, +0%) [50]. *Notes:* Lets the user project a flamethrower-like torch from his hand. 50 points.

**Immolation (+50%):** Burning Attack 6d+2 (Aura, +80%; Melee Attack, -30%) [50]. *Notes:* User sheathes himself in flames that incinerate enemies who touch his body. 50 points.

**Inferno (+95%):** Burning Attack 5d (Area Effect, 2 yards, +50%; Persistent, +40%; Variable, +5%) [49]. *Notes:* The affected area erupts in a roaring pillar of flame. At its lowest levels, this is useful as a bonfire or barbecue. 49 points.

**Plasma Torch (+125%):** Burning Attack 4d+1 (Armor Divisor (5), +150%; Melee Attack, Reach C, 1, Cannot Parry, -25%) [50]. *Notes:* A hot, short-ranged torch, useful for cutting through armor. 50 points.

**Smoke (+190%/+100%):** Affliction 1 (HT; Area Effect, 2 yards, +50%; Coughing, +20%; Drifting, +20%; Link, +10%; Persistent, +40%; Respiratory Agent, +50%) [29] + Obscure 5 (Vision; Drifting, +20%; Extended, Ladar, +20%; Link, +10%; Ranged, +50%) [20]. *Notes:* Raises a cloud of smoke big enough to disappear behind. Enemies who try to follow are left coughing. 49 points.

## Kinetic Energy

**Ball of Force (+70%):** Crushing Attack 6d-1 (Double Knockback, +20%; Explosion 1, +50%) [50]. *Notes:* This globe of force explodes on impact, pushing aside anything nearby. 50 points.

**Force Beam** (+50%): Crushing Attack 6d+2 (Accurate +2, +10%; Double Knockback, +20%; Increased 1/2D, ×10, +15%; Increased Max, ×2, +5%) [50]. *Notes:* A pencil-thin beam of force that breaks bones and sends the victim flying. 50 points.

**Force Bonds** (+90%): Binding 13 (Engulfing, +60%; One-Shot, -10%; Unbreakable, +40%) [50]. *Notes:* Conjures glowing bands of force that pin the victim's arms to his sides. 50 points.

**Shove** (-5%): Crushing Attack 10d+1 (Double Knockback, +20%; Increased 1/2D, ×10, +15%; Low Signature, +10%; No Wounding, -50%) [50]. *Notes:* A broadly focused attack that forcefully pushes away the target. The bolt is invisible, except perhaps as a vague blur. 50 points.

## Light

**Darkness** (+150%): Obscure 10 (Vision; Area Effect, 8 yards, +100%; Ranged, +50%) [50]. *Note:* Plunges the area into *total* darkness. Those without enhanced senses are blind while they remain in the area. 50 points.

**Flash** (+400%): Affliction 1 (HT; Area Effect, 16 yards, +200%; Disadvantage, Blindness, +50%; Vision-Based, +150%) [50]. *Notes:* Lobs a "flash bomb" that goes off at a distance, potentially blinding those who see the blast. 50 points.

**Images** (+100%): Illusion (Area Effect, 4 yards, +50%; Independence, +40%; Ranged, +40%; Visual Only, -30%) [50]. *Notes:* Generates believable, fire-and-forget illusions at a distance. Handy as a distraction! 50 points.

**Laser** (+100%): Burning Attack 5d (Accurate +3, +15%; Armor Divisor (2), +50%; Increased 1/2D, ×20, +20%; Increased Max, ×10, +15%) [50]. *Notes:* An accurate, long-ranged laser, suitable for sniping. Attack is tight-beam. 50 points.

## Radiation

**Irradiate** (+150%): Toxic Attack 5d (Area Effect, 4 yards, +100%; No Signature, +20%; Radiation, +25%; Variable, +5%) [50]. *Notes:* Bathes the area in harmful – and *invisible* – radiation. Variable intensity makes it useful for mad scientists. 50 points.

**Particle Beam** (+300%): Burning Attack 2d+2 (Accurate +2, +10%; Armor Divisor (5), +150%; Increased

1/2D, ×10, +15%; Increased Max, ×2, +5%; Radiation, +100%; Surge, +20%) [52]. *Notes:* A tight-beam energy attack that sets fires, irradiates the living, and overloads machines. 52 points.

**Radiation Beam** (+80%): Toxic Attack 7d-1 (Accurate +2, +10%; Increased 1/2D, ×10, +15%; Increased Max, ×2, +5%; No Signature, +20%; Radiation, +25%; Variable, +5%) [49]. *Notes:* The classic science-fiction death ray, invisible and deadly. It can also *save* lives, by sterilizing food and (at low levels) destroying tumors. 49 points.

## Sound/Vibration

**Sonic Scream** (+75%): Burning Attack 6d-1 (Environmental, Air/Water, -5%; No Incendiary Effect, -10%; Side Effect, Deafness, +70%; Underwater, +20%) [51]. *Notes:* A beam of "coherent sound" that cooks the living without the risk of fire. Being *very* broad-beam (not tight-beam), it inflicts full-body damage and can't target hit locations. 51 points.

**Sonic Stun** (+365%): Affliction 1 (HT; Armor Divisor (5), +150%; Environmental, Air/Water, -5%; Unconsciousness, +200%; Underwater, +20%) [47]. *Notes:* Similar to a superscience stunner, this incapacitating attack is useful for heroes who dislike killing. 47 points.

**Sound Effects** (+110%): Illusion (Area Effect, 8 yards, +100%; Auditory Only, -70%; Independence, +40%; Ranged, +40%) [53]. *Notes:* Projects autonomous sound effects that can distract enemies. The user can specify whatever he likes. If he's a musician, he can even have his own personal soundtrack! 53 points.

**Thunderclap** (+395%): Affliction 1 (HT; Area Effect, 16 yards, +200%; Disadvantage, Deafness, +20%; Environmental, Air/Water, -5%; Hearing-Based, +150%; Stunning, +10%; Underwater, +20%) [50]. *Notes:*

Causes a *loud* pop or crash that stuns and deafens those in the area. Might shatter extremely brittle objects. 50 points.

**White Noise** (+250%): Obscure 7 (Hearing; Area Effect, 8 yards, +100%; Extended, Subsonic Hearing, Ultrasonic Hearing, Sonar, Vibration Sense, +80%; Ranged, +50%; Underwater, +20%) [49]. *Notes:* Fills the area of effect with broad-spectrum acoustic distortion. Insomniacs might welcome the soothing hiss . . . 49 points.

## Water

**Dehydrate** (+190%): Fatigue Attack 2d-1 (Based on HT, +20%; Dehydration, +20%; Malediction 2, +150%) [50]. *Notes:* Lets the attacker drive moisture from the victim's body by winning a Quick Contest of Will vs. HT. Also dries out wet equipment. 50 points.

**Fog** (+240%): Obscure 7 (Vision; Area Effect, 16 yards, +150%; Drifting, +20%; Extended, Ladar, +20%; Ranged, +50%) [48]. *Notes:* Summons a fogbank that interferes with vision and ladar. Weakens fire attacks like the Fog spell (p. B253) – but any wind more forceful than a light breeze disperses it. 48 points.

**Water Blade** (+30%): Corrosion Attack 4d-1 (Armor Divisor (2), +50%; Melee Attack, Reach C, 1, -20%) [49]. *Notes:* Projects an abrasive stream of high-pressure water capable of dissolving most materials. 49 points.

**Water Blast** (+30%): Crushing Attack 7d+2 (Increased 1/2D, ×5, +10%; Underwater, +20%) [50]. *Notes:* A water jet focused tightly enough to be lethal at long range. 50 points.

**Water Cannon** (-10%): Crushing Attack 11d (Double Knockback, +20%; No Wounding, -50%; Underwater, +20%) [50]. *Notes:* More broadly focused, this water jet is useful for crowd control, putting out fires, etc. 50 points.

*White Noise fills the area of effect with broad-spectrum acoustic distortion. Insomniacs might welcome the soothing hiss . . .*

<b>Elemental Attack</b>	<b>Damage</b>	<b>Acc</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>RoF</b>	<b>Rcl</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Arc	7d burn*	–	C	Melee	–	[1, 2]
Ball of Force	6d-1 cr ex	3	100	1	1	[3]
Blizzard	Hearing-2	3	100	1	1	Area 16p
<i>linked</i>	Vision-5	–	–	–	–	Area 16p
Call Lightning	3d+2 burn	3	100	1	1	Area 2p [1, 2, 4]
Concussion	6d+2 cr ex	3	100	1	1	
Dampen	HT aff	–	Malediction 2	–	–	Area 2s [5]
Darkness	Vision-10	3	100	1	1	Area 8p
Dehydrate	2d-1 fat	–	Malediction 2	–	–	[6]
Electric Stun	HT-2(2) aff	4	50/100	1	1	[5]
Electrified Skin	HT aff	–	C	Aura	–	[7]
<i>linked</i>	2d+2 burn	–	C	Aura	–	[2, 8]
Fire Bolt	9d burn	3	50/100	1	1	
Fireball	6d+2 burn ex	3	100	1	1	
Flame Breath	5d+1 burn	3	20	1	1	Cone 5
Flame Jet	10d burn	–	5/10	Jet	–	
Flash	HT aff	3	100	1	1	Area 16 [5, 9]
Fog	Vision-7	3	100	1	1	Area 16dp
Force Beam	6d+2 cr	5	100/200	1	1	[3]
Force Bonds	ST 13 bind	3	100	1	1	[10]
Freeze Ray	1d(5) fat	5	100/200	1	1	[1, 6]
Frost Breath	3d-1 cr	3	20	1	1	Cone 5 [1, 11]
Ice Bonds	ST 15 bind	3	100	1	1	[10]
Ice Slick	DX-1 aff	3	100	1	1	Area 4p [5]
Ice Spear	5d imp	4	100/200	1	1	
Ice Storm	2d+1 pi+	3	100	1	1	Area 16p [4]
Images	Illusion	3	100	1	1	Area 4ip
Immolation	6d+2 burn	–	C	Aura	–	
Inferno	5d burn*	3	100	1	1	Area 2p
Irradiate	5d tox*	3	100	1	1	Area 4 [12]
Laser	5d(2) burn	6	200/1,000	1	1	
Lightning Bolt	5d burn	5	100/200	1	1	[1, 2]
Particle Beam	2d+2(5) burn	5	100/200	1	1	[2, 12]
Plasma Torch	4d+1(5) burn	–	C, 1	Melee	–	
Quicksand	ST 12 bind	3	100	1	1	Area 2p [10]
Radiation Beam	7d-1 tox*	5	100/200	1	1	[12]
Rain of Stones	5d cr	3	100	1	1	Area 2p [4]
Sandstorm	1d cut	3	100	1	1	Area 4p [1]
<i>linked</i>	Vision-6	–	–	–	–	Area 4p
Shove	10d+1 cr	3	100	1	1	[3, 13]
Smoke	HT aff	3	100	1	1	Area 2dp [5, 9]
<i>linked</i>	Vision-5	–	–	–	–	Area 2dp
Snowball	9d cr	3	50/100	1	1	
Sonic Scream	6d-1 burn	3	10/100	1	1	[1, 8]
Sonic Stun	HT(5) aff	3	10/100	1	1	[5]
Sound Effects	Illusion	3	100	1	1	Area 8ip
Stone Missile	9d cr	3	50/100	1	1	
Super-Breath	6d+2 cr	3	20	1	1	Cone 5 [3, 13]
Surge	10d burn	5	100/200	1	1	[2, 13]
Thunderclap	HT aff	3	100	1	1	Area 16 [5, 9]
Twister	2d cr	3	100	1	1	Area 2mp [1, 3]
<i>linked</i>	Vision-5	–	–	–	–	Area 2mp
Vacuum	2d+2 fat	3	100	1	1	Area 2 [6, 9]
Water Blade	4d-1(2) cor	–	C, 1	Melee	–	
Water Blast	7d+2 cr	3	50/100	1	1	
Water Cannon	11d cr	3	10/100	1	1	[3, 13]
White Noise	Hearing-7	3	100	1	1	Area 8p
Wind Blast	9d cr	3	50/100	1	1	

### Notes

\* Damage is *variable*.

Area is in yards of radius; d = drifting, i = independent, m = mobile, p = persistent (10 seconds), and s = selective.



*Cone* gives width at maximum range.

[1] Side effect: make a HT roll at -1 per 2 points of penetrating damage or suffer blindness (Sandstorm), deafness (Sonic Scream), paralysis (Freeze Ray, Frost Breath), stunning (Arc, Call Lightning, Lightning Bolt), or -2 DX (Twister).

[2] Surge can disable machinery.

[3] Double knockback.

[4] Bombards the area from *overhead* with skill 10 (Ice Storm, Rain of Stones) or 12 (Call Lightning).

[5] Affliction: make the indicated roll or suffer blindness (Flash), coughing (Smoke), deafness (Thunderclap), stunning (Electric Stun, Thunderclap), Total Klutz (Ice Slick), or unconsciousness (Dampen, Sonic Stun). Dampen only affects those with Electrical.

[6] Treat fatigue as dehydration (Dehydrate), freezing (Freeze Ray), or suffocation (Vacuum).

[7] Affliction: No primary effect. Failure by 5+ on the HT roll indicates a heart attack.

[8] No incendiary effect.

[9] Penetration modifier: Hearing-Based (Thunderclap), Respiratory Agent (Smoke, Vacuum), or Vision-Based (Flash).

[10] Binding modifiers: Force Bonds have Engulfing, One-Shot, and Unbreakable; Ice Bonds have Engulfing; and Quicksand has One-Shot and Unbreakable.

[11] No blunt trauma or knockback.

[12] Inflicts rads equal to damage; see *Radiation* (p. B435).

[13] No wounding.

## Supernatural Attacks

These could be chi, divine, magical, psi, or spirit abilities – add power modifiers as necessary. *Touches* are baneful melee attacks, some of which bypass DR. *Curses* are prayers, spells, and similar rituals that require a nearby subject. *Mental attacks* are longer-ranged effects. Curses and mental attacks call for a Concentrate maneuver, not an Attack. See the accompanying notes for the resistance roll (if any) and special effects.

As with elemental attacks, all of these abilities cost *about* 50 points. Expensive abilities have enough Costs

Fatigue and Takes Extra Time to reduce cost to this level. Adept users can buy off these limitations, while less-capable ones can add higher levels to save points.

## Touches

*Burning Touch* (+250%): Burning Attack 3d-1 (Accessibility, Only on living beings, -10%; Cosmic, Irresistible attack, +300%; Melee Attack, Reach C, Cannot Parry, -35%; No Incendiary Effect, -10%; Variable, +5%) [49]. *Notes*: Causes flesh to cook and blister *without* heat or fire. This attack passes through and has no effect on inanimate objects – including armor. 49 points.

*Chilling Touch* (+290%): Fatigue Attack 1d+1 (Cosmic, Irresistible attack, +300%; Freezing, +20%; Melee Attack, Reach C, Cannot Parry, -35%; Variable, +5%) [51]. *Notes*: Inflicts the effects of extreme cold on a living target, regardless of clothing or armor. 51 points.



*Hand of Death* (+400%): Affliction 1 (HT; Contact Agent, -30%; Cosmic, Lingering special effect, +100%; Delay, Triggered, +50%; Heart Attack, +300%; Low Signature, +10%; Melee Attack, Reach C, -30%) [50]. *Notes*: This attack from kung fu legend looks like a punch (only a martial-arts master could tell otherwise) and *must*

touch bare skin. The victim gets a HT roll to resist. If he fails, the attacker can inflict a heart attack at some unspecified point in the future, from any distance. To escape this fate, the victim must slay his tormentor or convince him to cancel the Hand – there's no cure! 50 points.

*Leprous Touch* (+155%): Affliction 2 (HT-1; Contact Agent, -30%; Disadvantage, Terminally Ill, Up to two years, +50%; Extended Duration, Permanent, +150%; Melee Attack, Reach C, Cannot Parry, -35%; No Signature, +20%) [51]. *Notes*: A subtle "death touch" with no visible effects. The attacker *must* touch his victim's bare skin. The victim gets a HT-1 roll to resist. If he fails, he contracts a wasting disease that will kill him slowly over about two years. Mundane and supernatural medicine work as usual. 51 points.

*Paralyzing Touch* (+155%): Affliction 2 (HT-1; Extended Duration, 3x, +20%; Melee Attack, Reach C, Cannot Parry, -35%; Paralysis, +150%; Selective Effect, +20%) [51]. *Notes*: The victim must roll against HT-1 if touched; DR gives its usual bonus. Failure means he suffers paralysis for three minutes times his margin of failure. Selective Effect lets the attacker touch specific hit locations in order to paralyze them. 51 points.

*Steal Energy* (-15%): Leech 2d+2 (Accelerated Healing, +25%; Only Heals FP, -20%; Steal FP, -25%; Variable, +5%) [49]. *Notes*: The attacker *quickly* steals the target's FP for himself, on a 1:1 basis. Subject to all the usual restrictions on Leech – see p. 96. 49 points.

*Steal Life* (+30%): Leech 1d (Accelerated Healing, +25%; Variable, +5%) [49]. *Notes*: Identical to Steal Energy, above, but transfers HP. 49 points.

## Curses

*Curse* (+365%): Affliction 1 (Will; Based on Will, +20%; Disadvantage, Cursed, +75%; Extended Duration, Permanent, +150%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%) [47]. *Notes*: Curses the victim until he achieves a notable success . . . at which time his victory *and* the curse evaporate. Spells that remove curses work normally. Roll Will vs. subject's Will. 47 points.

*Death Wish* (+400%): Affliction 1 (HT; Costs Fatigue, 4 FP, -20%; Heart Attack, +300%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%) [50]. *Notes:* If the subject fails to resist, his heart stops – which is usually fatal. Costs 4 FP. Roll Will vs. subject's HT. 50 points.

*Diminution* (+400%): Affliction 1 (HT; Advantage, Shrinking 6, +300%; Costs Fatigue, 4 FP, -20%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%) [50]. *Notes:* Shrinks the subject to 1/10 normal size over a period of six seconds. Costs 4 FP. Roll Will vs. subject's HT. 50 points.

*Fear* (+0%): Terror (-2 to Fright Checks; Active, +0%) [50]. *Notes:* Terrifies a single subject within 10 yards who can see or hear the user. Roll Will vs. subject's Will-2. 50 points.

*Feeble-mindedness* (+400%): Affliction 1 (IQ; Attribute Penalty, -20 IQ, +200%; Based on IQ, +20%; Disadvantages, Cannot Speak, Gullibility (6), Hidebound, Short Attention Span (6), +60%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%) [50]. *Notes:* The subject becomes a drooling idiot who can't speak, discern the truth, or focus on tasks. IQ can't fall below 1 (a special effect). Roll Will vs. subject's IQ. 50 points.

*Frog* (+400%): Affliction 1 (HT; Advantage, Alternate Form, Frog, +150%; Costs Fatigue, 4 FP, -20%; Extended Duration, Permanent, +150%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%) [50]. *Notes:* Transforms the victim into a frog. Cancelled by a kiss from a member of the opposite sex, or any spell that removes curses. Costs 4 FP. Roll Will vs. subject's HT. 50 points.

*Madness* (+150%): Affliction 2 (IQ-1; Based on IQ, +20%; Costs Fatigue, 4 FP, -20%; Disadvantages, Delusion (Severe), Paranoia, Phantom Voices (Diabolical), +40%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%; Takes Extra Time 1, -10%) [50]. *Notes:* The subject believes that friends are foes . . . and hears evil voices that tell him to kill. Takes two seconds and costs 4 FP. Roll Will vs. subject's IQ-1. 50 points.

*Pain* (+150%): Affliction 2 (HT-1; Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%; Severe Pain, +40%) [50]. *Notes:* Subject is in such pain that he has -4 on most rolls.

Costs 2 FP. Roll Will vs. subject's HT-1. 50 points.

*Pestilence* (+1,560%): Fatigue Attack 1 point (Based on HT, +20%; Costs Fatigue, 6 FP, -30%; Cyclic, 1 hour; 72 cycles, Highly Contagious, +1,470%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%; Onset, 1 hour, -20%) [50]. *Notes:* An insidious "death spell." After an hour, the subject becomes ill. He loses 1 FP/hour for three days, and is infectious during this time. Remember that at 0 FP, each FP lost saps 1 HP. Costs 6 FP. Roll Will vs. subject's HT. 50 points.

*Sickness* (+150%): Affliction 2 (HT-1; Malediction 1, +100%; Nauseated, +30%; No Signature, +20%) [50]. *Notes:* A quick, easy curse that leaves the subject feeling ill. Roll Will vs. subject's HT-1. 50 points.

*Silence* (+395%): Affliction 1 (HT; Advantage, Silence 5, +250%; Disadvantage, Mute, +25%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%) [50]. *Notes:* Completely silences the subject. He can't speak at all. Treat the involuntary Silence advantage as -10 to hear the subject, reduced to -5 if he tries to make noise. Roll Will vs. subject's HT. 50 points.

*Sleep* (+400%): Affliction 1 (HT; Extended Duration, 100x, +80%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%; Unconsciousness, +200%) [50]. *Notes:* The subject falls into a deep sleep, and can't be awakened for 100 minutes times the attacker's margin of victory (e.g., five hours, if the attacker wins by 3). Roll Will vs. subject's HT. 50 points.

*Slow* (+400%): Affliction 1 (HT; Advantage, Subsonic Speech, +100%; Costs Fatigue, 4 FP, -20%; Disadvantage, Decreased Time Rate, +100%; Malediction 1, +100%; Negated Advantage, Altered Time Rate 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%) [50]. *Notes:* Slows the subject by 50% and robs him of a level of Altered Time Rate (enough to negate the Great Haste spell, p. B251). Also shifts his speech into the subsonic range – he can't speak normally. Costs 4 FP. Roll Will vs. subject's HT. 50 points.

*Strike Blind* (+150%): Affliction 2 (HT-1; Disadvantage, Blindness, +50%; Costs Fatigue, 4 FP, -20%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%) [50]. *Notes:* Instantly renders

the subject blind. Costs 4 FP. Roll Will vs. subject's HT-1. 50 points.

## Mental Attacks

*Cryokinetic Attack* (+210%): Fatigue Attack 1d+2 (Based on HT, +20%; Freezing, +20%; Malediction 2, +150%; No Signature, +20%) [50]. *Notes:* Causes the subject's body temperature to plunge, chilling him (see *Cold*, p. B430). Roll Will vs. subject's HT. 50 points.

*Mental Blow* (+160%/+150%): Fatigue Attack 1d (Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Malediction 2, +150%; No Signature, +20%) [26] + Affliction 1 (HT; Follow-Up, Fatigue Attack, +150%) [25]. *Notes:* A mental blast that wears down the target. Costs 2 FP. Roll Will vs. subject's Will to deliver the attack. If this works, the subject must roll vs. HT to avoid being stunned. 51 points.

*Mental Paralysis* (+400%): Affliction 1 (Will; Based on Will, +20%; Malediction 2, +150%; Mobile 1, +40%; No Signature, +20%; Paralysis, +150%; Selective Effect, +20%) [50]. *Notes:* Paralyzes the victim. Mobile and Selective Effect represent the capacity to limit paralysis to particular body parts and move the paralysis to other body parts by concentrating after a successful attack. Roll Will vs. subject's Will. 50 points.

*Mental Stab* (+165%/+250%): Toxic Attack 1d+1 (Based on HT, +20%; Costs Fatigue, 5 FP, -25%; Malediction 2, +150%; No Signature, +20%) [16] + Affliction 1 (HT; Follow-Up, Toxic Attack, +150%; Seizure, +100%) [35]. *Notes:* A psychic blast that burns out the target's nervous system. Costs 5 FP. Roll Will vs. subject's HT to deliver the attack. If this works, the subject must roll vs. HT to avoid suffering a seizure. 51 points.

*Mindwipe* (+385%): Affliction 1 (Will; Based on Will, +20%; Disadvantage, Total Amnesia, +25%; Extended Duration, Permanent, +150%; Malediction 2, +150%; No Signature, +20%; Selective Effect, +20%) [49]. *Notes:* Obliterates memories. Selective Effect lets the attacker delete specific memories, if desired. To undo this effect, use hypnotism, shock therapy, or Mind Control with Conditioning. Roll Will vs. subject's Will. 49 points.



*Psychic Vampirism* (+100%): Leech 1 (Accelerated Healing, +25%; Malediction 2, +150%; Only Heals FP, -20%; Ranged, +40%; Steal FP, -25%; Takes Extra Time 6, -60%; Temporary Disadvantages, -10%) [50]. *Notes:* Siphons “psychic energy” from a distant target to the attacker at the rate of 1 FP per *minute* of concentration. This carries some of the victim’s personality. The GM picks -10 points of the subject’s mental quirks and disadvantages, and the vampire suffers from these as he feeds. Roll Will vs. subject’s Will. 50 points.

*Pyrokinetic Attack* (+190%/+250%): Burning Attack 1d (Based on HT, +20%; Malediction 2, +150%; No Signature, +20%) [15] + Affliction 1 (HT; Agony, +100%; Follow-Up, Burning Attack, +150%) [35]. *Notes:* The subject’s body temperature rises to the point where he begins to *burn*. Roll Will vs. subject’s HT to deliver the attack. If this works, the subject must roll vs. HT to avoid collapsing due to the searing pain. 50 points.

*Telekinetic Squeeze* (+185%/+250%): Crushing Attack 1d (Based on HT, +20%; Malediction 2, +150%; No Knockback, -10%; No Signature, +20%; Variable, +5%) [15] + Affliction 1 (HT; Choking, +100%; Follow-Up, Crushing Attack, +150%) [35]. *Notes:* A direct attempt to crush the victim’s throat or vital organs. Roll Will vs. subject’s HT to deliver the attack. If this works, the subject must roll vs. HT to avoid choking. 50 points.

## Poisons

Natural, manmade, and fictional toxins range from annoying to instantly fatal. They defy normalization to a particular number of points. Thus, they cost what they cost.

## Venomous Bites and Stings

Poison carried by a bite requires Sharp Teeth [1] or Fangs [2]. Venom on a stinger calls for Striker (Piercing) [5], (Large Piercing) [6], or (Impaling) [8]. Add the cost of this delivery system to that of the venom.

These venoms are “generic” examples, intended to illustrate the principles behind venom design. Real-world venoms can have damage ranging from 1d-3 to 4d, and almost *any*

combination of Cyclic, Onset, Resistible, and Symptoms.

*Average Venom* (+40%): Toxic Attack 2d-1 (Cyclic, 1 day, 4 cycles, Resistible, +15%; Follow-Up, Teeth/Striker, +0%; Onset, 1 hour, -20%; Resistible, HT-3, -15%; Symptoms, 2/3 HP, -3 DX and IQ, +60%) [10]. *Notes:* The victim must make a HT-3 roll an hour after injection and daily for three days. Each failure inflicts 2d-1 injury. Those who lose 2/3 HP or more suffer shakes and fever: -3 DX and IQ until healed. This venom *could* kill an unlucky human. Use it for the nastiest spiders and scorpions, or the average venomous snake. 10 points.

*Fantasy Venom* (-5%): Toxic Attack 6d (Follow-Up, Teeth/Striker, +0%; Resistible, HT-5, -5%) [23]. *Notes:* The victim must make an *immediate* HT-5 roll or suffer 6d injury. Acute venoms this fast and symptom-free are unrealistic, yet entirely suitable for fantastic monsters that can instantly incapacitate or kill a hero with a bite. 23 points.

*Paralytic Venom* (+290%): Affliction 1 (HT; Extended Duration, 300x, +100%; Follow-Up, Teeth or Striker, +0%; Onset, 1 minute, -10%; Paralysis, +150%; Secondary Coma, +50%) [39]. *Notes:* The victim must make a HT roll a minute after being injected. Failure means he’s paralyzed for five *hours* times his margin of failure; failure by 5+ means he falls into a coma. 39 points.

*Strong Venom* (+100%): Toxic Attack 3d-1 (Cyclic, 1 hour, 4 cycles, Resistible, +30%; Follow-Up, Teeth/Striker, +0%; Onset, 1 minute, -10%; Resistible, HT-4, -10%; Symptoms, 2/3 HP, -3 ST, DX, IQ, and HT, +90%) [22]. *Notes:* The victim must make a HT-4 roll a minute after injection and hourly for three hours. Each failure inflicts 3d-1 injury. Those who lose 2/3 HP or more become seriously ill: -3 to *all* attributes until healed. This venom *will* kill those who don’t receive medical or supernatural aid. It’s only appropriate for the deadliest real-world serpents . . . and monsters of fantasy and horror. 22 points.

*Weak Venom* (-30%): Toxic Attack 1d (Follow-Up, Teeth/Striker, +0%; Onset, 1 hour, -20%; Resistible, HT-2, -20%; Symptoms, 2/3 HP, -1 DX,

+10%) [3]. *Notes:* The victim must make a HT-2 roll an hour after injection or suffer 1d injury. Swelling occurs near the injection site. If damage exceeds 2/3 HP – which is rare, unless the victim receives many doses or has few HP – this gives -1 DX until the injury heals. This is typical of all but the worst scorpion stings and spider bites. 3 points.

## Defensive Venoms

These chemical weapons are meant mainly to discourage others from damaging (or *eating*) the possessor, but have their uses as attacks.

*Acidic Blood* (+890%): Corrosion Attack 1d-3 (Always On, -20%; Aura, +80%; Blood Agent, Reversed, -40%; Cyclic, 1 second, 10 cycles, +900%; Melee Attack, -30%) [10]. *Notes:* Someone with this ability seeps acid if he suffers *any* cutting, impaling, or piercing injury. He bleeds on the weapon that wounded him – or his *foe*, if attacked with Claws, Teeth, etc. – which immediately begins to corrode. Until he stops bleeding (see *Bleeding*, p. B420), the acid drips on everything nearby. This works like any other Aura, and the user can deliberately attack others by flicking his blood around. 10 points.

*Deadly Skin/Tentacles* (+80%): Toxic Attack 3d-1 (Always On, -20%; Aura, +80%; Contact Agent, -30%; Cyclic, 1 hour, 4 cycles, Resistible, +30%; Melee Attack, -30%; Resistible, HT-4, -10%; Symptoms, 2/3 HP, Terrible Pain, +60%) [20]. *Notes:* A coating of lethal contact poison that affects anyone whose bare skin touches or is touched by the possessor. The victim must make a HT-4 roll *immediately* and again hourly for three hours. Each failure inflicts 3d-1 injury. Those who lose 2/3 HP or more suffer searing pain until healed. This venom suits the deadliest jellyfish. 20 points.

*Deadly Spines* (+50%): Toxic Attack 3d-1 (Cyclic, 1 hour, 4 cycles, Resistible, +30%; Follow-Up, Spines, -50%; Onset, 1 minute, -10%; Resistible, HT-4, -10%; Symptoms, 2/3 HP, -3 ST, DX, IQ, and HT, +90%) [17]. *Notes:* Must accompany either Short Spines [1] or Long Spines [3]. Anyone injured by the spines must make a HT-4 roll after a minute and hourly for three hours. Each failure inflicts 3d-1 injury. Those who lose 2/3 HP or more



have -3 to *all* attributes until healed. This attack is typical of puffer fish. 17 *points*.

**Irritating Spines** (-20%): Affliction 1 (HT; Attribute Penalty, -3 DX, +30%; Follow-Up, Spines, -50%) [8]. *Notes*: Only available with Short Spines [1] or Long Spines [3]. Anyone injured by the spines must make a HT roll or immediately suffer a terrible itching and burning sensation that gives -3 DX. This is typical of most spiny fish and sea urchins. 8 *points*.

**Stinging Skin/Tentacles** (+180%): Toxic Attack 1d-1 (Always On, -20%; Aura, +80%; Contact Agent, -30%; Melee Attack, -30%; Symptoms, 1/3 HP, Terrible Pain, +180%) [9]. *Notes*: The possessor has stinging cells on his skin, or on non-prehensile tentacles dangling from his body. Anyone he touches on bare skin or who touches him with bare skin is stung for 1d-1 damage. If damage exceeds a mere 1/3 HP, the victim experiences burning pain until healed. Use this for ordinary stinging sea creatures. 9 *points*.

## Gas

These attacks represent “gas grenades” or equivalent abilities, with Acc 3, Range 100, RoF 1, and Rcl 1. They burst on impact, filling a two-yard radius with gas that drifts for 10 seconds. All of these gases are Resistible, and the victim must keep making the *initial* resistance roll until he fails or leaves the area. For most gases, roll every second; for those with Onset, roll on first exposure and again after each full onset period.

**Blistering Gas** (+295%/+175%): Toxic Attack 1d (Area Effect, 2 yards, +50%; Contact Agent, +150%; Cyclic, 1 day, 8 cycles, Resistible, +35%; Drifting, +20%; Link, +10%; Persistent, +40%; Resistible, HT-4, -10%) [16] + Toxic Attack 1d (Area Effect, 2 yards, +50%; Cyclic, 1 hour, 6 cycles, Resistible, +50%; Drifting, +20%; Link, +10%; Onset, 1 hour, -20%; Persistent, +40%; Resistible, HT-1, -25%; Respiratory Agent, +50%) [11]. *Notes*: Mustard gas, or something similar. Anyone who comes into

contact with it must make a HT-4 roll immediately and again daily for a week or suffer 1d injury. Those who *breathe* it must make a HT-1 roll every hour for six hours or suffer 1d injury. These effects are cumulative. 27 *points*.

**Nerve Gas** (+655%): Toxic Attack 2d (Area Effect, 2 yards, +50%; Contact Agent, +150%; Cyclic, 1 minute, 6 cycles, Resistible, +100%; Drifting, +20%; Persistent, +40%; Resistible, HT-5, -5%; Symptoms, 1/2 HP, Paralysis, +300%) [61]. *Notes*: This military weapon is rapidly incapacitating and almost inevitably *lethal*. Anyone who comes into contact with it must make a HT-5 roll immediately and every minute for five minutes; each failure inflicts 2d injury. Once injury passes 1/2 HP, the victim is paralyzed until healed. 61 *points*.

**Sleeping Gas** (+230%): Fatigue Attack 1d (Area Effect, 2 yards, +50%; Cyclic, 1 minute, 3 cycles, Resistible, +40%; Drifting, +20%; Missed Sleep, +50%; Persistent, +40%; Resistible, HT-2, -20%; Respiratory Agent, +50%) [33]. *Notes*: A relatively safe incapacitating agent. Those who breathe it must make a HT-2 roll immediately and twice more at one-minute intervals. Each failure costs 1d FP. This counts as missed sleep, and those who fall to 0 FP sleep until they recover the FP. 33 *points*.

## Ranged Poisons

**Blinding Spray** (+190%): Affliction 1 (HT; Blindness, +50%; Jet, +0%; Reduced Range,  $\times 1/2$ , -10%; Vision-Based, +150%) [29]. *Notes*: A narrow jet of blinding poison. Targets without eye protection must make a HT roll or suffer temporary blindness. 29 *points*.

**Poison Spit** (+15%): Toxic Attack 2d-1 (Blood Agent, -40%; Cyclic, 1 hour, 4 cycles, Resistible, +30%; Jet, +0%; Onset, 1 minute, -10%; Reduced Range,  $\times 1/2$ , -10%; Resistible, HT-3, -15%; Symptoms, 2/3 HP, -3 DX and IQ, +60%) [9]. *Notes*: This jet of venom must hit the eyes or open mouth, or an open wound, to have *any* effect. Victims must make a HT-3 roll a

minute after exposure and hourly for three hours. Each failure means 2d-1 injury. Those who lose 2/3 HP or more grow feverish: -3 DX and IQ until healed. 9 *points*.

**Tranquilizer Dart** (-35%/+210%): Small Piercing Attack 1d (Accurate +1, +5%; Armor Divisor (0.2), -50%; Increased 1/2D,  $\times 5$ , +10%) [2] + Affliction 1 (HT; Follow-Up, Small Piercing Attack, +10%; Unconsciousness, +200%) [31]. *Notes*: Fires a tiny dart that’s unlikely to pierce armor or inflict serious injury . . . but if it inflicts *any* injury, the victim must make a HT roll or fall unconscious. 33 *points*.

## DEFENSES

Defensive advantages are generally straightforward – they work “as is,” or require at most a power modifier. The following examples, taken from fiction, are more complex. They consist of multiple or modified advantages, assembled into “defensive meta-traits” with a fixed cost per level. Multiple levels are cumulative. Write the defense’s name and level *instead* of listing its constituent parts.

To be strictly correct when buying these abilities as part of a power, apply the power modifier separately to each subtrait. If the GM finds this too complex, though, he’s free to treat these meta-traits as new advantages and let players apply power modifiers to the overall cost per level. In most cases, the error involved is small.

## Armor

These defenses are “skin deep.” They protect the user’s body – not his possessions.

**Electromagnetic Armor**: DR 1 (Hardened 4, +80%; Limited, Shaped Charges, -60%) [6]. *Notes*: A special layer that uses an electrical discharge to disrupt the armor-piercing jet of shaped-charged warheads. Each level provides DR 1 against these attacks. This DR *ignores* the (10) armor divisor of such weapons. 6 *points/level*.

Poison Attack	Damage	Acc	Range	RoF	Rcl	Notes
Blinding Spray	HT aff.	–	2/5	Jet	–	Causes blindness.
Poison Spit	2d-1 tox	–	2/5	Jet	–	See description for details.
Tranquilizer Dart	1d(0.2) pi-	4	50/100	1	1	
follow-up	HT aff.	–	–	–	–	Causes unconsciousness.

## Modifying ST-Based Damage

The GM might permit certain attack modifiers on *unarmed* thrusting damage. Options include Affects Insubstantial (for heroes who combat spirits), All-Out (for strong, awkward fighters), Armor Divisor (to simulate martial-arts training similar to Breaking Blow, p. B182), Double Knockback (for cinematic heroes who punch enemies through walls), Incendiary (for flaming creatures), No Blunt Trauma (for martial artists whose strength is “chi projection,” not brute force), No Knockback (ditto!), No Wounding (for semisolid spirits), and Takes Extra Time (for big, *slow* fighters).

The GM may allow other modifiers, but many are strictly forbidden:

- Area Effect, Cone, Explosion, Jet, and anything with such a modifier as a prerequisite: Bombardment, Dissipation, Drifting, Emanation, Erosive, Mobile, Persistent, Selective Area, and Wall.

- Cyclic, Onset, Resistible, and other modifiers intended for toxins.
- Melee Attack, Variable, and Visible, which are *already* built into unarmed damage.

- Modifiers intended only for ranged attacks: Accurate, Blockable, Extra Recoil, Guided, Homing, Inaccurate, Increased Range, Long-Range, Ranged, Rapid Fire, Reduced Range, Ricochet, and Short-Range.

- Modifiers that don't apply to crushing attacks: Double Blunt Trauma, Hazard, Radiation, etc.

- Penetration modifiers other than Armor Divisor: Blood Agent, Contact Agent, Follow-Up, Malediction, Respiratory Agent, and Sense-Based.

To apply modifiers to ST-based damage, follow these steps:

1. Find *thrusting* damage for the highest ST you can use for unarmed combat. This is the sum of regular ST, Arm ST, and Striking ST.

2. Calculate the “effective point cost” of the basic thrust damage from step 1 as if it were a Crushing Attack. Don't pay this cost! You just need it for step 4.

3. Total the desired modifiers. Treat a net limitation larger than -80% as -80%.

4. Multiply the cost from step 2 by the net modifier from step 3 to find the cost of the modifiers. Round *up*. Record a positive cost as an advantage, a negative one as a disadvantage.

*Example:* Kong has ST 15, Arm ST +10, and Striking ST +10. He can strike with ST 35, which gives him 4d-1 thrusting damage. Crushing Attack 4d-1 would cost 19 points, so Armor Divisor (10), +200%, would be a 38-point advantage for Kong, while All-Out, -25%, would be -4-point disadvantage.

Enhancements benefit kicks, punches, and other unarmed melee attacks, but not muscle-powered weapons. Limitations affect *all* ST-based attacks. If you have Claws, Strikers, or Teeth *and* modifiers on ST-based damage, you must buy your body weaponry with exactly the same modifiers.

*Icy Skin:* DR 1 [5] + DR 1 (Heat/Fire, -40%) [3] + Slippery 1 [2] + Temperature Tolerance 1 [1]. *Notes:* Coats the user in a slick skin of ice that

absorbs damage, makes him hard to hold onto, and keeps him cool. Each level (maximum five) gives him DR 1 – *doubled* vs. heat/fire – and +1 on rolls

to break free, and adds HT degrees to the “hot” end of his temperature comfort zone. *11 points/level.*

*Insulated Skin:* DR 5 (Limited, Energy, -20%) [20] + Radiation Tolerance 10 [15] + Temperature Tolerance 5 [5]. *Notes:* An energy-resistant skin barrier similar to the “superconducting armor” seen in some science fiction. Each level gives DR 5 vs. energy, divides radiation dosage by 10, and adds 5×HT degrees to the “hot” end of the user's comfort zone. *40 points/level.*

*Mirrored Skin:* DR 2 (Limited, Light, -40%) [6] + Enhanced Dodge 1 (Limited, Light, -40%) [9]. *Notes:* Gives the user a shiny surface. *Any* movement can turn a hit by a light-based attack, such as a laser, into a graze that reflects off harmlessly. Even direct hits hurt less. Each level (maximum six) gives DR 2 and +1 Dodge against light-based attacks. *15 points/level.*

*Super-Toughness:* DR 1 (Limited, Crushing, -40%; Tough Skin, -40%) [1]. *Notes:* The mysterious physical toughness of comic-book supers! Each level gives DR 1 against *crushing* attacks . . . but follow-up effects on such attacks (poison, electric shock, etc.) work even if the carrier doesn't penetrate DR. This DR has no effect on bullets, knives, lasers, and other non-crushing attacks. *1 point/level.*

### Force Fields

These defenses are projected some distance from the user's body. Most extend just enough to engulf his equipment, but a couple of abilities are useful at longer ranges.

*Acoustic Dampening Field:* DR 2 (Force Field, +20%; Limited, Sound, -40%) [8] + Silence 1 (Dynamic, +40%) [7]. *Notes:* Sheathes the user and his gear in an active sound-canceling field. Each level gives +2 to Stealth vs. hearing at all times and DR 2 against sound-based attacks. *15 points/level.*

*Deflector Screen:* DR 5 (Force Field, +20%; Limited, Ranged Physical, -40%) [20] + Enhanced Block 1 [5] + Enhanced Dodge 1 [15] + Enhanced Parry (All) 1 [10]. *Notes:* A force field that turns projectiles and deflects *all* attacks enough that they're easier to avoid. Each level (maximum three)

gives DR 5 vs. projectiles and +1 to active defenses. *50 points/level.*

**Distortion Field:** Chameleon 1 (Dynamic, +40%; Extended, Infravision, Radar, Ultravision, +60%) [10] + DR 2 (Force Field, +20%; Limited, Electromagnetic Radiation, -40%) [8]. *Notes:* This field actively filters all electromagnetic (EM) energy that crosses it in either direction. Each level gives +2 to Stealth to hide from Radar, Infravision, regular vision, and Ultravision, and DR 2 against EM radiation attacks. *18 points/level.*

**Energy Screen:** DR 5 (Force Field, +20%; Limited, Energy, -20%) [25] + Radiation Tolerance 10 (Force Field, +20%) [18] + Temperature Tolerance 5 (Force Field, +20%) [6]. *Notes:* A field that interferes with *all* dangerous energy. Identical to Insulated Skin (p. 146), except that it also protects the user's eyes and equipment. *49 points/level.*

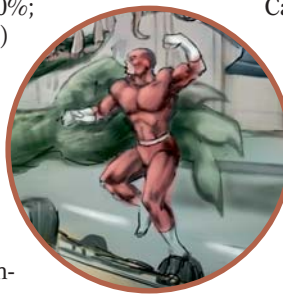
**Force Shield:** DR 1 (Active Defense, -40%; Directional, Front, -20%; Force Field, +20%) [3]. *Notes:* Lets the user actively interpose a small, mobile force field between himself and any *frontal* attack. This is a Block defense at DX/2 + 3. A successful block gives DR 1 per level against the attack. *3 points/level.*

**Reflective Shield:** DR 2 (Active Defense, -40%; Directional, Front, -20%; Force Field, +20%; Limited, Ranged, -20%; Reflection, +100%; Requires DX Roll, -10%) [13]. *Notes:* A force shield that lets the defender bounce *ranged* attacks back at his attacker. It gives DR 2 per level against frontal attacks – but only if the user blocks at DX/2 + 3. Success lets him attempt a separate DX roll to return the blocked damage to the attacker. *13 points/level.*

**Wall of Force:** Crushing Attack 2d (Area Effect, 2 yards, +50%; No Wounding, -50%; Persistent, +40%; Reduced Range,  $\times 1/10$ , -30%; Wall, Rigid, +60%) [17]. *Notes:* Lets the user project a force wall anywhere within 10 yards by taking an Attack maneuver. The barrier is 6 yards long and 1 yard thick, arranged in any shape the user likes. It has DR 6 and 1 HP per level. While it's "rigid," it *doesn't* damage those who collide with it. *17 points/level.*

**Wall of Matter:** Crushing Attack 2d (Area Effect, 2 yards, +50%;

Persistent, +40%; Reduced Range,  $\times 1/10$ , -30%; Wall, Rigid, +60%) [22]. *Notes:* Similar to Wall of Force, above, but the barrier is made of ice, metal, stone, or another solid. Those who collide with it *do* take damage. *22 points/level.*



## MOVEMENT ABILITIES

Most of these movement abilities consist of a single modified advantage – although a few include Enhanced Move, too. As with all of the abilities in this chapter, you can save space on character sheets by noting only the ability's name and point cost.

**Astral Projection:** Jumper (World; Limited Access, Astral Plane, -20%; Projection, Can affect destination, -0%) [80]. *Notes:* The user's mind leaves his unconscious body and enters the Astral Plane. His astral form is visible to and can interact with other astral entities. In some settings, he can enter higher planes of existence by making a "physical" journey. The Move and other scores of his astral form depend on the setting. *80 points.*

**Create Door:** Permeation (Everything; Can Carry Objects, Heavy, +100%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Finite Thickness, 1 foot, -15%; Requires IQ Roll, -10%; Takes Extra Time 1, -10%; Tunnel, +40%) [160]. *Notes:* Lets the user create a "door" through a barrier up to a foot thick, regardless of composition. To do so, he must concentrate for a second and make an IQ roll. It costs 1 FP to open a door, 1 FP/minute to hold it open. *160 points.*

**Create Gate:** Jumper (World; Extra Carrying Capacity, Extra-Heavy, +50%; Special Movement, Must walk, -10%; Tunnel, +40%) [180]. *Notes:* Lets the user open a gate between worlds. Use the standard rules for Jumper and the Tunnel enhancement, except that the summoner (and anyone else who wishes to use the gate) *must* be free to move through the gate – he can't simply vanish. *180 points.*

**Create Portal:** Warp (Extra Carrying Capacity, Extra-Heavy, +50%; Tunnel, +40%) [190]. *Notes:* Lets the user create a portal linking two points in space. This is subject to the usual rules for Warp and the Tunnel enhancement. In particular, the user must have visited or be able to see his destination point. *190 points.*

**Digitization:** Jumper (World; Limited Access, Cyberspace, -20%; Naked, -30%; Special Portal, Terminal, -20%) [30]. *Notes:* By touching a terminal on an information network, the jumper – but *not* his gear – can enter the net as a stream of data, allowing rapid travel between "wired" locations. To resume material form, he must roll against Area Knowledge (Cyberspace) to locate a terminal, and then Computer Hacking to gain access to it. Digitization only provides transportation. To affect computers in other ways, buy modified Mind Control, Mind Probe, Possession, and so on. *30 points.*

**Force Surfing:** Flight (Low Ceiling, 30 feet, -10%; Planetary, -5%) [34]. *Notes:* The flyer moves along a planet's gravitational or magnetic field. He appears to walk on air or glide on a glowing disk of force. He can't venture more than 10 yards from the planetary surface. *34 points.*

**Matter Surfing:** Flight (Low Ceiling, 5 feet, -25%; Nuisance Effect, -5%) [28]. *Notes:* The "surfer" travels five feet above the ground on a projected trail of matter (e.g., ice). This is *visible* and persists for 3d seconds. Attempts to spot or track the traveler succeed automatically until the trail vanishes. *28 points.*

**Matter Transmission:** Affliction 1 (HT; Advantage, Warp, +1,950%; Malediction 2, +150%) [220]. *Notes:* If the wielder wins a Quick Contest of Will vs. his target's HT, he may try an *immediate* IQ roll to teleport the subject with Warp (Extra Carrying Capacity, Extra-Heavy, +50%; Range Limit, Orbital, -5%; Reliable +10, +50%). The +10 for Reliable cancels the -10 for no preparation. The user can send the subject to any place he can see or has visited, subject to his range limit, and can cancel range modifiers by spending his own FP. *220 points.*



**Reaction Drive:** Flight (Newtonian Space Flight, +25%; Nuisance Effect, -5%) [48] + Enhanced Move 11.5 (Space; Newtonian, -50%; Nuisance Effect, -5%) [104]. *Notes:* A “realistic” rocket. It gives a voyager with Basic Speed 5 a delta-v of 30,720 – enough to escape from and return to an Earth-like planet, with room to spare for travel and maneuvering. A rocket is noisy and visible; the flyer *can't* use this ability stealthily. 152 points.

**Reactionless Drive:** Flight (Nuisance Effect, -5%; Space Flight, +50%) [58] + Enhanced Move 10.5 (Space; Nuisance Effect, -5%) [200]. *Notes:* A “reactionless” rocket like those seen in space opera. It can do everything that Reaction Drive can . . . and maneuver *indefinitely*. 258 points.



**Stardrive:** Warp (Blind Only, -50%; Extra Carrying Capacity, Extra-Heavy, +50%; Hyperjump, 1 LY/day, -25%; No Strain, +25%; Reliable +5, +25%; Tracking, +20%) [145]. *Notes:* A space-opera FTL drive. It lets the user cover a light-year per day, along with anything he can carry. It requires precise coordinates (Reliable cancels the -5 for Blind Only), only works in vacuum, and is useless over short distances. However, it never “burns out,” and can follow other FTL travelers by sensing their “trail.” 145 points.

**Tactical Teleport:** Warp (Blink, +25%; Extra Carrying Capacity, Extra-Heavy, +50%; No Strain, +25%; Range Limit, 10 yards, -50%; Reliable +10, +50%) [200]. *Notes:* Supers-style teleportation that lets the teleporter cover *short* distances – up to 10 yards – safely and reliably, with all of his gear. This requires no preparation; he can even use his ability to evade attacks in combat. 200 points.

## MENTAL ABILITIES

Below are mental abilities from each of the four categories defined in Chapter 1 (see p. 14). Such gifts are popular in fiction – especially as psi abilities – so we provide *many* examples. The GM should review these before allowing them to PCs, to ensure that any assumptions made for the sake of concreteness are valid in *his* setting. For instance, most of these capabilities imply the existence of superscience or the supernatural.

### Communications

**Culture Sense:** Social Chameleon (Accessibility, Must converse with subject, -20%; Exposure Time, 1 minute, -30%) [3] + Xeno-Adaptability (Accessibility, Must converse with subject, -20%; Exposure Time, 1 minute, -30%) [10]. *Notes:* The user *temporarily* adjusts to foreign social norms through careful observation or “psychic osmosis.” After a minute of conversation with a sapient being, he no longer suffers penalties for cultural unfamiliarity or differences in Rank or Status. These benefits last for as long as the user interacts with that person or members of the same culture, and for a minute afterward. 13 points.

**Mindshare:** Mindlink (10 billion people; Racial, -20%; Vague, -50%) [33] + Telesend (Broadcast, +50%; Racial, -20%; Vague, -50%) [24]. *Notes:* The communication ability of “hive minds” in speculative fiction. Each member of the race sends his emotions and *general* experiences (no details!) to every other member at all times, with no chance of failure. 57 points.

**Sampler:** Mimicry (Voice Library, +50%) [15] + Photographic Memory

(Accessibility, Sounds only, -80%) [2]. *Notes:* The user stores recordings of everything he hears. He can play back sounds exactly as he heard them, sample them selectively, or just borrow a *voice* to use with his own speech. 17 points.

**Tactical Radio:** Radio (Burst, 1,000x, +90%; Increased Range, x20, +40%; Secure, +20%) [25]. *Notes:* A long-range (200 miles) radio capable of encrypted bursts. Attempts to intercept it are at -3 *and* require the eavesdropper to win a Quick Contest of interception skill against the sender's IQ to understand the message. 25 points.

**Universal Translator:** Mind Reading (Hearing-Based, -20%; Telecommunication, Telesend, -20%; Universal, +50%) [33] + Telesend (Universal, +50%) [45]. *Notes:* The possessor can project his thoughts to make himself understood to anyone, regardless of language. After establishing outgoing contact, he can open full two-way communication. This lets him understand his *subject's* words and intentions – *if* he can hear that person speak. 78 points.

### Influence

**Compel Truth:** Mind Probe (Accessibility, Must converse with subject, -20%; Vision-Based, -20%) [12]. *Notes:* To use this ability, the user must be close enough to touch his subject, engage his mark in conversation, *and* maintain eye contact. If he satisfies all three requirements, he can compel the subject to give one truthful answer per minute. Roll a Quick Contest of IQ vs. Will for each question. 12 points.

**Cyberpsi:** Mind Control (Conditioning, +50%; Cybernetic Only, -50%) [50]. *Notes:* The ability to seize control of a computer or other Digital Mind. The controller must see or touch his subject. Success lets him operate it remotely. Once “inside,” he can try to rewrite its programming (Conditioning). Use Computer Operation for rolls to establish control and Computer Hacking for reprogramming attempts, where either is superior to IQ. 50 points.

**Data Probe:** Mind Probe (Based on HT, +20%; Cybernetic Only, -50%; Invasive, +75%) [29]. *Notes:* A sensitive electromagnetic probe that affects

**Digital Minds.** The user must touch – or be close enough to touch – the computer, and roll a Quick Contest of IQ vs. the HT of its *hardware* (this represents its shielding). If he wins, he can root through its memory by making an uncontested roll against the higher of IQ or Computer Hacking for each piece of data. *29 points.*

**Emissions Scan:** Mind Reading (Based on HT, +20%; Cybernetic Only, -50%) [21]. *Notes:* Enables the user to learn what's being typed on the keyboard and displayed on the screen of a terminal *right now*. To do this, he must have a line of sight to the subject and win a Quick Contest of IQ vs. the HT of the computer hardware. *21 points.*

**Emotion Control:** Mind Control (Accessibility, Only affects members of own or similar race, -20%; Emotion Control, -50%; Independent, +70%) [50]. *Notes:* Directly implants an emotion of the controller's choice in the subject. Roll IQ vs. Will, as usual. This endures without further concentration. Doesn't work on aliens, animals, monsters, or anything else with emotions foreign to the user. *50 points.*

**Illusion Disguise:** Elastic Skin (Glamour, Will-4, -10%; Reduced Time 4, +80%) [34]. *Notes:* Alters the possessor's appearance by projecting a suggestion into the minds of those who can see him. This takes *no* time. Viewers can shrug off this influence by making a Will-4 roll. *34 points.*

**Linguistic Programming:** Mind Control (Area Effect, 8 yards, +150%; Conditioning, +50%; Emanation, -20%; Hearing-Based, -20%; Independent, +70%; Takes Extra Time 1, -10%) [160]. *Notes:* By speaking for two seconds in a master language understood by all sapient minds, the user can "program" anyone within earshot. He can give short- or long-term instructions, and then leave his thralls to execute his orders. Gods often have this ability – usually with Cosmic (+300%). *160 points (310 points with Cosmic).*

**Mental Illusions:** Illusion (Mental, +100%) [50]. *Notes:* Totally hijacks the subject's perceptions. This requires *constant* concentration. Roll IQ vs. the subject's Will. *50 points.*

**Mental Trace:** Special Rapport (One-Way, +20%; Transferable, Any willing/helpless living being, +100%) [11]. *Notes:* Mentally bonds one

subject to the user, who can then discern his subject's mental state at any time. Establishing the bond requires a minute, an IQ roll, and a willing or helpless target. *11 points.*

**Mind Clouding:** Invisibility (Can Carry Objects, Heavy, +100%; Glamour, Will-4, -10%; Switchable, +10%) [80]. *Notes:* The user projects a mental compulsion that makes his body and all of his equipment invisible to living beings. Viewers can see through the ruse by making a Will-4 roll. *80 points.*

**Mindswitch:** Possession (Mind Swap, +10%; No Memory Access, -10%; Ranged, +40%; Specialized, Own race, -40%) [100]. *Notes:* The user can swap minds with another member of his race at a distance. To do so, he must win a Quick Contest of IQ against his target's Will, applying standard range modifiers to his roll. After the swap, neither party has any access whatsoever to the other's mind – just the body. *100 points.*

**Suggest:** Mind Control (Independent, +70%; Suggestion, -40%) [65]. *Notes:* Lets the controller implant a suggestion by winning a Quick Contest of IQ vs. his subject's Will. The victim acts upon the suggestion as if it were *his* idea. This requires no further concentration on the user's part. *65 points.*

**Super-Hypnotism:** Mind Control (Independent, +70%; No Memory, +10%; Suggestion, -40%; Vision-Based, -20%) [60]. *Notes:* Lets the user implant suggestions with a glance. This *requires* eye contact; a touch isn't enough. If the controller wins the Quick Contest of IQ vs. his victim's Will, he can silently convey a suggestion. The subject then carries this out independently – there's no need for further concentration. *60 points.*

**Telecontrol:** Possession (No Memory Access, -10%; Ranged, +40%; Specialized, Own race, -40%; Telecontrol 2, +100%) [190]. *Notes:* Allows the user to control the physical actions of a distant subject without relinquishing control of his own body. He must win a Quick Contest of IQ vs. his target's Will. Standard range modifiers apply. The invader remotely operates his victim's *body* but has no access to the subject's *mind*. He can only affect members of his own race or a nearly identical one. *190 points.*

**Telereceive:** Mind Reading (Multiple Contacts, +50%; Sensory, +20%; Telecommunication, Telesend, -20%) [45]. *Notes:* Enables the user to read the surface thoughts and sensory impressions of multiple subjects (at -1 per additional subject), but only after contacting them with Telesend. Thus, Telesend is a prerequisite. This has one perk: the user can receive from subjects he can't see by "touching" them mentally. *45 points.*

## Information

**Absolute Morals:** Intuition (Aspected, Moral decisions, -20%; Inspired, +100%) [27]. *Notes:* The user *knows*, with 100% certainty, what his religious or philosophical beliefs would have to say about any situation. He can distinguish "good" people, places, and items from "evil" ones without special senses, and always knows what behavior would appease or anger gods, spirits, etc. *27 points.*

**Divination:** Precognition (Active Only, -60%; Directed, +100%; Reliable +8, +40%) [45]. *Notes:* The seer must deliberately meditate on one specific question about the future. On a successful IQ roll, he experiences a glimpse of the future pertinent to his question. He never has passive visions – even if he's in severe danger. *45 points.*

**Pattern Analysis:** Common Sense (Conscious, +50%; Link, +10%) [16] + Intuition (Inspired, +100%; Link, +10%) [32] + Oracle (Digital; Inspired, +100%; Link, +10%) [32]. *Notes:* Lets the user analyze available data and predict outcomes in real time. Make a *single* IQ roll for the entire ability. Success reveals the safest course of action; the most effective path, and its risks; and any choices doomed to failure, and why. It can't predict total coincidence or supernatural interference, however. *80 points.*

**Retrocognition:** Psychometry (Active Only, -20%; Directed, +50%) [26]. *Notes:* The seer must deliberately meditate on a specific question about the past. A successful IQ roll gives him a glimpse of past events surrounding his question. He never has spontaneous visions – even when exposed to potent psychic residues. *26 points.*

*Second Sight: Precognition (Can't See Own Death, -60%; Passive Only, -20%)* [5]. *Notes:* Weak precognition, similar to that claimed by most real-world psychics. At random intervals, the possessor gets brief glimpses of random events. He can't control the content or timing, and has no special capacity to sense danger. *5 points.*

*Time-Scanning:* Psychometry (Active Only, -20%; Directed, +50%; Immersive, +100%; Mundane, -30%) [40]. *Notes:* The scanner mentally replays time at his location. This takes an active effort, and *doesn't* zero in on strong emotions or important events. He sets start and end times . . . and then watches history unfold in real time (he can't "fast forward"). *40 points.*

## Senses

*Analyze Magic:* Detect (Magic; Analyzing, +100%; Short-Range 1, -10%) [19]. *Notes:* Gives the user a Sense roll, at -1 per yard to the target, to detect and analyze magic at roughly the same level of detail as the Analyze Magic spell (p. B249). *19 points.*

*Astral Sight:* Medium (Specialized, Astral Beings, -50%; Visual, +50%) [10]. *Notes:* Enables the user to see the Astral Plane and communicate with entities therein. This ability doesn't work on ghosts, demons, and so forth unless they happen to be astral. *10 points.*

*Electronic Support Measures (ESM):* Detect (Radar and Radio; Precise, +100%; Signal Detection, +0%) [20]. *Notes:* On a successful Sense roll, this ability detects radar and radio signals, and reveals the distance to each source. Make an IQ roll to analyze the signal; success tells a random emission from a targeting lock. *20 points.*

*Hydrophone:* Discriminatory Hearing (Accessibility, Only underwater, -30%; Link, +10%; Profiling, +50%) [20] + Vibration Sense (Water; Link, +10%; Targeting, +20%) [13]. *Notes:* Senses moving objects in the water. Make *one* Sense roll, modified as for Vibration Sense (p. B96), but with +4 for Discriminatory Hearing. Success reveals the target's general class (e.g., "nuclear attack sub"), location, and vector, and gives +8 to

## Total Awareness gives the user a second set of ranged senses that he can put anywhere within a yard of his body and aim in any direction.

identify it, +4 to shadow it, and +3 to hit it with an aimed attack. *33 points.*

*Remote Viewing:* Clairvoyance (Clairvoyance, -10%; Increased Range 19, +190%; Preparation Required, 1 hour, -50%) [115]. *Notes:* This ability simulates the extrasensory capabilities attributed to secret research projects by conspiracy theorists. After an hour of special exercises and meditation, the viewer can displace his vision to any place on the planet! (Increased Range 19 comes to over 11,000 miles; Earth's diameter is about 8,000 miles.) *115 points.*

*Tactical Radar:* Radar (Increased Range,  $\times 100$ , +60%; LPI, +10%; Multi-Mode, +50%; Targeting, +20%) [48] + Enhanced Tracking 4 (Accessibility, Only with Radar, -10%; Multiple Lock-Ons, +20%) [22]. *Notes:* Advanced radar, like that of a fighter jet. It can track five targets at once out to 100 nautical miles, identify them at 1/10 that range, and give +3 to hit any of them with an aimed attack. *70 points.*

*Targeting Laser:* Ladar (Reduced Range,  $\times 1/2$ , -10%; Targeting Only, -40%) [10]. *Notes:* A built-in laser rangefinder with an operational range of 100 yards. Trained on something already spotted by another sense (usually sight), it places a visible dot on the target and measures its precise range. This gives +3 to hit with aimed attacks. *10 points.*

*Telescan:* Detect (Sapient Minds; Analyzing, +100%; Long-Range 1, +50%; Precise, +100%) [70]. *Notes:* Detects sapient minds at great distances. A successful Sense roll gives the location and race of everyone nearby – handy for locating guards and ambushers! A follow-up IQ roll reveals the name a particular person would give if asked; roll once per person. Only a critical success discovers a *secret* identity. *70 points.*

*Total Awareness:* Clairvoyance (Aware, +50%; Reduced Range,  $\times 1/10$ , -30%; Second Nature, +70%) [95].

*Notes:* Gives the user a second set of ranged senses that he can put anywhere within a yard of his body and aim in any direction. He can use and shift the focus of these senses effortlessly, letting him perceive what's going on behind him, in darkness or smoke, etc. at all times. A classic ability of ancient kung fu masters! *95 points.*

*Ultra-Scan:* Para-Radar (Bio-Scan, +50%; Penetrating, +50%; Scanner, +50%) [100]. *Notes:* This ability works like a superscience sensor suite. It ranges and images the target, analyzes its emissions and composition, and supplies a schematic of the interior – complete with details on occupants and machinery. It works in any environment. The GM should let it do anything he has seen a sensor do in a space-opera movie. *100 points.*

*X-Ray Vision:* Para-Radar (Link, +10%; Penetrating, +50%; Reduced Range,  $\times 1/2$ , -10%) [60] + Toxic Attack 1d-2 (Link, +10%; Radiation, +25%) [3]. *Notes:* Quasi-realistic X-ray vision. The user emits radiation out to 100 yards whenever he activates his sense. He *must* make an attack roll for his Toxic Attack against anything he spots – but it's possible to make the Sense roll and fail the attack roll. For "harmless" X-ray vision, use Penetrating Vision (p. B74). *63 points.*

## PHYSICAL TRANSFORMATIONS

These abilities alter the user or subject's body in some beneficial way. They're among the most powerful of special gifts, and merit close GM scrutiny. Where there are multiple paths to a given effect – e.g., Alternate Form vs. a set of Switchable advantages, Modular Abilities vs. Morph, or Healing vs. Affliction with Advantage, Regeneration – the GM is free to rule that only one option exists in *his* campaign.



## Metamorphoses

**Active Camouflage:** Chameleon 3 (Controllable, +20%; Dynamic, +40%; Extended, Infravision, Radar, +40%) [30]. *Notes:* Lets the user adjust his opacity to radar, infrared, and visible light. He can make himself nearly transparent (+6 to Stealth), highly reflective (+6 to others' Sense rolls), or anything in between. Movement has no effect on these bonuses. Clothing halves them to +3. 30 points.

**Rubber Body:** Double-Jointed [15] + Modular Abilities (Cosmic Power, 30 points; All-Out, -25%; Limited, Body Parts Only, -20%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP/5 points, -15%; Physical, +50%; Requires HT Roll, -10%; Takes Extra Time 3, -30%) [150] + Stretching 5 [30]. *Notes:* Gives the user an extremely elastic body. He can bend as if Double-Jointed (+5 to climb, break free, etc.) and stretch body parts at +1 SM per second (maximum +5 SM). He can even *reshape* his body, adding up to 30 points' worth of body parts; see *Switchable Body Parts* (p. 81). It takes eight seconds and a HT roll to add a body part, and costs 1 FP per 5 points the advantage is worth. The user is defenseless while reshaping himself. 195 points.

**Shape-Stealing:** Morph (Cannot Memorize Forms, -50%; Mass Conservation, -20%; Needs Sample, Touch, -5%; Unlimited, +50%) [75]. *Notes:* A shapeshifter with this ability can assume *any* form of roughly his mass, provided its racial template is worth no more than his own. He must touch the person or object he wishes to duplicate for the 10 seconds it takes him to transform – he can't shapeshift on sight or from memory. 75 points.

## Transmutations

**Body of Swarm:** Injury Tolerance (Diffuse; Swarm, +80%; Switchable, +10%) [190]. *Notes:* Lets the user become a swarm of insects by taking a Ready maneuver. His "body" is cohesive enough to affect the world normally but *diffuse* for injury purposes. Once in swarm form, a Concentrate maneuver lets him scatter, effectively becoming insubstantial (see *Injury Tolerance*, p. 52). Regaining cohesion takes a second Concentrate maneuver; returning to ordinary flesh calls for a further Ready maneuver. 190 points.

**Elemental Form:** Alternate Form (Elemental Meta-Trait; Absorptive Change, No Encumbrance, +5%; Active Change, +20%) [Variable]. *Notes:* The user can voluntarily adopt one of the elemental meta-traits on p. B262, absorbing equipment that weighs no more than Basic Lift. He can act during the transformation, but only gains the benefits of his meta-trait after 10 seconds. Cost is 19 points plus 90% of the price of the meta-trait, rounded up. 25 points (*Fire*), 52 points (*Air*), 109 points (*Ice*), 145 points (*Stone*), or 177 points (*Earth, Metal, or Water*).

**Spirit Form:** Insubstantiality (Affect Substantial, +100%; Requires Will Roll, -5%) [156] + Invisibility (Accessibility, Only when insubstantial, -10%; Substantial Only, -10%) [32] + Doesn't Breathe, Doesn't Eat or Drink, Doesn't Sleep, and Immunity to Metabolic Hazards (all with Accessibility, Only when insubstantial, -10%) [72]. *Notes:* Lets the user become an invisible, immaterial spirit in the material world. This requires a Ready maneuver and a Will roll. He requires neither rest nor sustenance in this form. He can use magic and psi on material targets, but must turn off his ability (rendering him vulnerable to suffocation, poison, etc., unlike a materialized spirit) to interact *physically*. 260 points.

**Transparent Body:** Invisibility (Affects Machines, +50%; Fringe, -10%; Switchable, +10%) [60]. *Notes:* The user can alter his body's composition to become transparent. The only way to spot him is to notice the slight distortion when he moves (a Vision roll at -6). Sensors are no more effective than the naked eye, unless they detect something other than electromagnetic radiation (e.g., gravity waves, life, or vibrations). 60 points.

## Restorations

**Healing Drug:** Healing (Affects Self, +50%; Based on HT, +20%; Blood Agent, -40%; Injuries Only, -20%; Onset, 1 minute, -10%) [30]. *Notes:* The user secretes a drug that restores lost HP to anyone who swallows or is injected with it (including himself). After a minute, roll against the subject's HT. Every point by which he succeeds restores 2 HP but costs him 1

FP. Once he's at full HP, there's no further HP gain or FP loss. The user only rolls against HT or pays FP if he's also the recipient. 30 points.

**Laying On Hands:** Healing (Capped, 6 FP, -15%; Faith Healing, +20%; Limited Use, 1/day, -40%) [20]. *Notes:* A holy gift of healing. The healer can spend up to 6 FP per day to heal injury (up to 12 HP) or cure disease (up to -3 on his roll) on anyone his gods deem worthy. He must touch the patient. 20 points.

**Rejuvenation:** Healing (Capped, 10 FP, -5%; Cure Affliction, +60%; Reduced Fatigue Cost 10, +200%; Reliable +5, +25%; Xenohealing, Anything Alive, +80%) [138]. *Notes:* Miraculous healing – like divine intervention or cinematic nanotech – that repairs nearly any harm to anyone. Each application heals 20 HP or cures a disease or Affliction that gives up to -5 on the healing roll. The user rolls at IQ+5 minus normal skill penalties, but needn't pay FP. 138 points.

**Resurrection:** Affliction 1 (HT; Advantages, see below, +2,250%; Contact Agent, -30%; Melee Attack, Reach C, Cannot Parry, -35%) [229]. *Notes:* Brings the dead back to life! The healer must touch the subject's skin, whereupon the patient gets a HT roll. Each point of success grants a minute of Unkillable 1 and Regeneration (Very Fast), both with Cosmic, Works on the dead (+50%). Thus, if he's above -10xHP, he regains 60 HP per minute. If he heals to above -HP, he returns to life. To keep this ability balanced, "Cosmic, Works on the dead" means it *only* works on the dead – not injured living people – and gives *one* try, ever. If the subject fails his HT roll or regains too few HP to revive, he's dead for good. 229 points.

**Universal Antibodies:** Healing (Affects Self, +50%; Based on HT, +20%; Blood Agent, -40%; Disease Only, -40%; Onset, 1 hour, -20%; Reliable +6, +30%) [30]. *Notes:* The healer produces a broad-spectrum anti-microbial drug. An hour after swallowing it or receiving it via injection, an ill subject (who *can* be the healer) gets a roll at HT+6 minus the usual penalty to cure the disease. Success means he's cured, but must pay FP equal to twice the HT penalty. The user only rolls or pays FP if he's also the patient. 30 points.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# POWERS IN ACTION



It was by the most refined and fastidious of investigations that the Professor's machinations were exposed, and it was by the most refined and fastidious of men that the Professor was confronted. Holding himself to be invulnerable, the Professor responded with mere curiosity when his butler brought him a calling card.

"The Poet!" he declared. "Bring him!"

The Poet entered the room with a languid air. His black velvet suit contrasted with the silk brocade of the Professor's smoking jacket.

"Sir," said the Professor, "I would offer you hospitality, but given our respective positions, I am disinclined to such follies."

"Thank you, Professor. Such an offer would be an intolerable burden, given the vigor with which I would feel obliged to refuse it."

"Why, then, have you come?"

"To inform you, Professor, of your defeat."

The Professor permitted himself the smallest of laughs. "You speak of improbabilities!" he declared.

"My associates have explained the **precise** probabilities involved," said the Poet. "Your Hermetic wards, your Atlantean spiritual science, your electrical barriers – all are measured and assessed."

"Then you know that none of your associates can harm me, while your own oracular mauling was never any danger to me at all."

"Indeed."

"How, then, can you dare to cross my threshold?"

"I will explain, sir, as it was explained to me. My gift of foresight, it seems, may be regarded as a perception of probability. Hence, by dint of utterly tiresome mathematical disciplines, the need for which I may never forgive you, I am able to use it to guide my steps, and even –" the Poet winced – "to direct me in physical activity."

He gestured with his cane. Its sharpened tip penetrated the plaster of the wall, and damaged the wires embedded therein. There came the scent of ozone.

"What have you done?" demanded the Professor.

"Disabled your electrical defenses," replied the Poet.

"They will recover in but moments." The Professor searched his pockets for his revolver. But at that moment, a galvanic impulse struck the house.

"That," explained the Poet, "has damaged one of your Hermetic wards." The Professor fell to his knees. "The assault that has passed through that breach will in turn distract you from those intricate Atlantean mesmeric exercises, and thus . . ." the Professor collapsed, blood from his nose staining a gaudy Turkish carpet " . . . comes the final stroke."

Since abilities are based on advantages, and powers are just sets of related abilities, all the rules you *need* to use these things in play appear in Chapter 2 of the **Basic Set**. The rules that follow are *optional* elaborations, intended primarily to simulate the way powers work in particular genres. The GM decides which options, if any, apply in his campaign.

# TURNING ABILITIES OFF AND ON

Certain enhancements and limitations, and several optional rules, require a clear-cut definition of when an ability is *off* and when it's *on*. This isn't always as obvious as it sounds.

## “SWITCHABILITY”

Activation and deactivation always work in just one of three ways for a given ability. *No* ability can belong to multiple categories – although the same advantage can underlie abilities that fall into two or all three categories.

## Active vs. Passive Abilities

Chapters 1 and 2 often differentiate between “passive” and “active” abilities. This distinction affects several optional rules, and is important when customizing Accessibility limitations, the Detect advantage, and anything else that could carry the qualifier “Active abilities only.” Use the following definitions in all cases:

- A *passive* ability has effects that apply constantly, or that activate without the owner's input in a specific situation. If it requires a die roll, the owner or the GM *must* roll – there's no opting out. Passive abilities include body parts (e.g., Extra Arms); defenses (e.g., Resistant and Sealed); abilities that provide spontaneous warnings (e.g., Danger Sense); senses that don't emit energy (e.g., Infravision and Vibration Sense); and sustenance traits (e.g., Doesn't Sleep and Reduced Consumption). Abilities such as Spines and attacks with Aura are also passive: if the possessor touches someone – or if someone touches him – the effects apply whether he likes it or not.

- An *active* ability does nothing until the wielder takes a maneuver to use it – most often Attack, Concentrate, Move, or Ready – or *chooses* to make a die roll. Examples include attacks (Affliction, Innate Attack, etc.) without Aura; most communication and influence traits (e.g., Mind Control and Telesend); movement advantages (e.g., Flight and Warp); and senses that emit energy (e.g., Scanning Sense).

A given advantage can underlie both passive *and* active abilities. Be sure to consider it in the context of its modifiers when deciding which category it belongs in. For example, the Aura enhancement changes Innate Attack from active to passive, while the Active Defense limitation shifts Damage Resistance from passive to active.

The same *ability* can have both passive and active aspects, too. Precognition provides passive warnings, for instance, but also allows the user to concentrate to use it actively. And turning on a switchable ability (e.g., Growth, Mind Shield, or any attack with Aura) counts as an active use, even if the ensuing effects are passive. Unlike the ongoing, passive effects of such abilities, these active efforts *can* trigger sensors or abilities sensitive to active abilities – if only momentarily.

## Always On

An ability is “always on” if its effects apply continuously *and* the only way to turn it off is to obstruct its power source (see *Channeled Energies*, p. 24) or negate it using a special attack (Neutralize, an Affliction with Negated Advantage, etc.). This category includes all abilities with the Always On limitation and any ability that meets *all three* of these criteria:

1. The underlying advantage isn't explicitly switchable in its description.

2. The ability doesn't have discrete “uses” built in or added via Costs Fatigue, Limited Use, Takes Recharge, etc.

3. The ability has *none* of these modifiers: Active Defense, All-Out, Emergencies Only, Fickle, Reflexive, Requires (Attribute Roll), Requires Concentrate or Ready, Switchable, Trigger, Unreliable, or Usually On.

*Examples:* Unmodified Claws, Damage Resistance, Invisibility, and Sealed.

## Switchable

An ability is “switchable” if it meets *both* of these criteria:

1. *Either* the description of the underlying advantage explicitly states that it's possible to switch the advantage on and off with a free action or a maneuver (and this hasn't been changed by adding Always On), *or* it has Switchable or Usually On.

2. It has ongoing effects that last until the user turns them off, stops concentrating (for advantages that require concentration), or stops paying FP (for advantages that normally cost FP or have Costs Fatigue or Usually On).

*Examples:* Flight, Growth, Insubstantiality, Mind Shield, Claws with Switchable, and Innate Attack with Aura.

## Transient

An ability is “transient” if *all three* of the following are true:

1. It's normally off.
2. The user must trigger it every time he wants to use it. This can require a free action, an active defense, or a maneuver.

3. It produces its effects (such as healing, injury, or teleportation) in an instant and immediately shuts off, or has a duration that the user can't control because it relies on a random roll or because the underlying advantage or one of its modifiers (e.g., Limited Use) specifies “uses” of finite duration.



*Examples:* Healing, Jumper, Luck, Obscure with Ranged, Damage Resistance with Active Defense, and all Afflictions and Innate Attacks except those with Aura.

## VOLUNTARY ACTIVATION AND DEACTIVATION

Voluntary activation is only possible for *switchable* and *transient* abilities. Voluntary deactivation is limited to *switchable* abilities (transient ones turn off on their own). The act required in each case depends on the ability.

### Concentrate

Some switchable abilities call for one or more Concentrate maneuvers to activate. These include anything based on Channeling, Clairsentience, Control, Duplication, Elastic Skin, Hermaphromorph, Illusion, Mind Control, Mind Reading, Possession, Shapeshifting, Telecommunication, Telekinesis, Temperature Control, or True Faith. Modifiers can add this requirement to other abilities; e.g., the Swarm enhancement for Injury Tolerance (Diffuse) requires the user to concentrate to scatter his body.

Deactivation varies by ability. Switching off Channeling, Mind Reading, or Telecommunication is a free action on the *user's* turn (he can't break contact on somebody else's turn). Ending Control, Illusion, Mind Control, Telekinesis, Temperature Control, True Faith, or anything with the Requires Concentrate limitation (p. 112) is a matter of ceasing concentration. The user must make this choice at the *start* of his turn – although an interruption might break concentration at any time (see *Involuntary Deactivation*, p. 155). Turning off Clairsentience or reversing Duplication, Elastic Skin, Hermaphromorph, Possession, or Shapeshifting requires one or more Concentrate maneuvers.

A few transient abilities also require Concentrate maneuvers to use. The most important are Allies (Summonable), Create, Detect, Healing, Jumper, Mind Probe, Psychometry, Snatcher, Terror

## Physical and Mental Abilities

The rules sometimes distinguish between “physical” and “mental” abilities. In general, abilities built from physical advantages are physical, while those based on mental advantages are mental . . . but modifiers such as Based on (Different Attribute), Malediction, and Requires (Attribute) Roll can blur this distinction. Regardless of the underlying trait, any ability that requires an IQ, Will, or Per roll to use is *mental*, while one that calls for a ST, DX, or HT roll is *physical*, unless the GM specifies otherwise.

(Active), Visualization, and Warp; active uses of Precognition; and any attack with the Malediction enhancement.

### Attack

Many transient abilities call for an Attack maneuver to activate. The most important of these are Affliction, Binding, Innate Attack, Leech, Neutralize, and any advantage with the Ranged enhancement. (*Exception:* Malediction changes the maneuver needed from Attack to Concentrate.) If the user can't make an Attack, he can't use such abilities.

*All-Out Attack:* An ability that needs an Attack can instead use an All-Out Attack. For a melee attack, all choices are valid except All-Out Attack (Strong) – only attacks with the Melee Attack (ST-Based) enhancement (p. 103) have that option. For ranged abilities, All-Out Attack (Suppression Fire) is only possible for attacks that have Rapid Fire, RoF 5+; otherwise, use All-Out Attack (Determined). Abilities with the All-Out limitation (p. 110) *require* an All-Out Attack to activate – and, if switchable, a continuous string of All-Out Attacks to maintain.

*Move and Attack:* Any ability that uses an Attack also works with a Move and Attack. A ranged ability has a Bulk of -2 for this purpose.

### Free Action

Those with Luck, Super Luck, or Wild Talent can use them at *any* time. For instance, a hero with Wild Talent, an axe, and no Axe/Mace skill could invoke Wild Talent to parry as if he knew Axe/Mace at DX – even if the attack occurred on somebody else's turn. All other zero-time *transient* abilities (notably Rapier Wit and attacks

with enough Reduced Time to work instantaneously) work only on the *user's* turn.

The only *switchable* abilities activated or deactivated with a free action are Mind Shield, attacks with Aura, and switchable advantages that work instantaneously thanks to Reduced Time. The user must switch these on or off at the *start* of his turn.

### Active Defense

The Active Defense limitation (p. 112) creates a transient ability that only works if the possessor is attacked – and only if he would normally get an active defense against the attack. Such abilities are useless if the user is unaware of the attack. If the GM is using *Defending with Powers* (p. 167), these restrictions apply to *any* ability used to defend.

### Move

To use Enhanced Move or Tunneling requires a Move maneuver. Both advantages are switchable – they operate indefinitely until the user stops taking Move maneuvers.

### Ready

All remaining switchable abilities call for one or more Ready maneuvers to turn on *or* off. These include Growth, Insubstantiality, Obscure, Scanning Sense, Shadow Form, Shrinking, Stretching, and Terror; anything modified with Switchable or Usually On; and any advantage with Affects Others, when actually trying to affect another person.

The only *transient* abilities that call for Ready maneuvers are attacks with Takes Extra Time, which require one or more Ready maneuvers before each Attack.

## INVOLUNTARY DEACTIVATION

Any ability might shut down temporarily under certain circumstances. Details vary (see below), but there are two constants:

- If the rules call for involuntary deactivation, all effects of the terminated ability end *immediately* unless the underlying advantage produces a permanent change in the world (e.g., wounds closed using Healing, or damage caused by Innate Attack) or has “residual effects” that persist for a fixed duration unless shut down separately from the advantage (Affliction works like this – as does Mind Control, if the user stops concentrating).

- Once the ability is available again, it requires a new “use” to reactivate. This is especially important if it takes time or FP to activate, or has Limited Use, Preparation Required (the ability now needs preparation), or Takes Recharge (the *full* recharge period must pass).

### *Distraction and Injury*

Mental and physical interruptions only affect *switchable* abilities that require constant concentration; e.g., Control, Illusion, Mind Control, Telekinesis, and anything modified with Requires Concentrate. If the user of such an ability attempts an active defense or resistance roll (against an Affliction, spell, etc.), makes a self-control roll for a mental disadvantage, falls, or suffers affliction or injury, he must make a Will-3 roll. Failure means he loses his focus and his ability switches off. If he’s mentally or physically stunned – or stops concentrating – his ability deactivates automatically.

### *Unconsciousness*

Unconsciousness ends the effects of all *active, switchable* abilities except those built from advantages that explicitly stay on once switched on. For instance, Flight shuts down and the user plunges to the ground, Scanning Sense ceases to emit radiation, and abilities that require constant concentration end (unless they have a “residual duration,” like Mind Control).

While unconscious, it’s impossible to trigger *active, transient* abilities, such as attacks and Wild Talent. If someone falls unconscious after using an ability like this to generate a lasting effect, though, the effect won’t end before its entire duration is up. In particular, Affliction, Neutralize, Obscure with Ranged, and abilities with Cyclic, Delay, Onset, or Persistent always run their full course unless somehow negated.

Unconsciousness *might* affect a *passive, switchable* ability. Most such abilities let the user decide whether they switch off or on, or stay in their current state, when he’s knocked out. This is a permanent special effect, set when he buys the advantage. Traits like this include Growth, Insubstantiality, Mind Shield, Obscure, Shrinking, and Stretching – and advantages such as Invisibility, Mana Damper, and Static, if given Switchable. The only exceptions are Elastic Skin, Shadow Form, and Shapeshifting, which end when the user is knocked out (but see *Once On, Stays On*, p. 109).

Unconsciousness never has any effect on *passive, transient* abilities; e.g., unmodified Luck. It doesn’t affect *always-on* abilities, either – although some always-on advantages (e.g., Damage Resistance and Sealed) are

more valuable than others (e.g., Acute Vision and Eidetic Memory) when unconscious.

### *Interference*

Many abilities – but *especially* those that belong to powers – are subject to being shut down by accidental or deliberate interference.

### *Innate Flaws*

Some advantages – e.g., Shadow Form and Shapeshifting – require the user to specify a particular external influence that cancels their effects. Others, notably Possession, can have special limitations that introduce such a weakness. In the presence of the relevant “spoiler,” the affected ability instantly switches off and can’t be reactivated until the baneful influence passes.

### *Anti-Abilities*

If an enemy uses Affliction with Negated Advantage to remove a specific ability – even one that’s passive and otherwise always on – that ability is deactivated until the Affliction ends. If he uses Neutralize to negate a power, *all* abilities of that power switch off for the duration. Lasting effects endure as explained under *Unconsciousness* (above), but aren’t maintainable.



## Crippled Abilities

The GM may rule that unlucky heroes can suffer from “crippled” abilities, just as they might experience sprains. If so, any critical failure on the roll to use an *active* ability – or for an active use of a passive ability – requires an immediate check for crippling. This is a HT roll for physical abilities, a Will roll for mental ones.

Failure means the ability suffers *temporary* crippling – minor physical or psychic strain – and is unavailable for minutes equal to the margin of failure. Roll once per minute after that; success indicates recovery.

Critical failure results in *lasting* effects: the ability is completely unavailable for 1d months. The GM may allow treatment with special skills – Esoteric Medicine if the ability is chi-based, Religious Ritual if divine, etc. – to hasten recovery, just as Physician skill does for crippled limbs; see *Duration of Crippling Injuries* (p. B422).

Crippling is in addition to the usual effects of critical failure. For alternative abilities (p. 11), note that crippling one ability cripples the whole set. *Passive* abilities are immune to crippling, except during active uses.

### Crippled Powers

Critical failure when using extra effort (see *Extra Effort*, p. 160) or performing a stunt (see *Stunts*, p. 170) with a power can cripple the *power*. Roll against HT if the power modifier is Biological, Elemental, Nature, or Super, or against Will if it's Chi, Divine, Magical, Moral, Psionic, or Spirit. The GM chooses for other powers. Cosmic powers are immune to crippling.

Failure or critical failure cripples *all* of the power's abilities, as described above. Roll as usual for recovery – again, for the *entire power*. As with crippled abilities, the GM may let certain skills hasten recovery.

### Grit vs. Glory

In gritty campaigns, the GM might want *permanent* crippling to be possible. Use these rules, but read “temporary” as “lasting” and “lasting” as “permanent.”

In optimistic games, the opposite might be true: crippling is possible but never serious. Where the rules indicate “temporary” effects, *no* crippling occurs, while “lasting” effects are merely temporary.

*Deliberate* crippling (below) works as usual in either case.

### Deliberate Crippling

To cripple specific abilities, use *either* Affliction with Negated Advantage or Neutralize with One Ability or Precise. To cripple a power, use Neutralize *without* One Ability. Both are temporary, but the GM may permit “called shots” that inflict lasting harm. The attacker is at -4 on his attack roll (with Affliction) or Will roll (for Neutralize, or Affliction with Malediction) if targeting an ability, -8 if targeting a power. If the victim fails to resist, his ability or power suffers *lasting* crippling.

*Brute-Force Attacks*: The GM might let those whose powers include Innate Attacks use them to target the abilities of foes with the *same* power or a *directly opposed* one. Such attacks are at -4. On a hit, find penetrating damage as usual, but instead of converting it to injury, compare it to the point cost of the targeted ability. Consider only the most expensive ability from a set of alternative abilities, but the total cost of advantages connected with Follow-Up or Link. If damage equals or exceeds points, the victim must roll against HT or Will to avoid crippling. This rule especially suits psi powers and super-powers.

## Power Modifier Effects

A power modifier may specify conditions under which *all* of a power's abilities cease to function. Examples include:

*Required Disadvantages* (p. 21): Violating the terms of required disadvantages results in the suspension of all abilities. How quickly this occurs depends on the details of the modifier, but once it does, the abilities deactivate instantly and their effects – including “residual” ones – end.

*Ambient Energies* (p. 24): If the user is cut off from his energy source, his abilities cease to work and shut down immediately. For ongoing effects, the GM should look at how the power defines the energy flow. If energy moves from the source, through the wielder, to the location of the effects, then cutting off the user ends the effects. If the wielder creates a *direct* channel from his source to the location of the effects, then the effects only end after their usual duration.

## Limitations

Any ability can have limitations that switch it off under certain circumstances. Most common are situational Accessibility modifiers such as “Only at night” or “Only while flying.” If the situation changes to one where the ability wouldn't work, it turns off *immediately*. Other common limitations are Environmental (p. 110), which renders the ability useless if the required environment goes away; Pact, which terminates the ability if the user doesn't uphold his end of the bargain; and of course Terminal Condition (p. 112). In all cases, lasting effects also switch off – they *don't* last out their full duration.

## LOSING CONTROL

It is possible to lose control over abilities. They might switch on or off unexpectedly, go completely haywire, or even fall under enemy control.

### Emergencies Only and Uncontrollable

Emergencies Only on a transient or switchable ability means the ability only operates under stress. If a PC takes this limitation, the GM can



switch on the affected ability in an emergency, and turn it off as soon as the danger has passed, without the *player's* consent. See *Emergencies Only* (p. 102) for details.



Uncontrollable means the ability usually works – but under certain circumstances, it can turn on or off, change targets, and adjust variable effects against the user's wishes. With Unconscious Only, the ability *always* works this way. For more information, see *Uncontrollable* (p. 106).

In either case, involuntary activation or deactivation is instant and absolute: the user's ability suddenly starts or stops working – and if it stops, all lasting effects cease as well.

### *Disadvantages and Afflictions*

Those suffering from disadvantages or afflictions (pp. B428-429) that render them unusually volatile or erratic might unwittingly activate or deactivate switchable or transient abilities. The GM decides which abilities switch on and when they shut down. Berserk and Stress Atavism tend to set off abilities that help cope

with the cause of the stress (just like the Uncontrollable limitation). Uncontrollable Appetite triggers abilities related to feeding. Epilepsy and Sleepwalker – and the seizure affliction – can activate almost *any* ability (GM chooses or rolls randomly).

For Flashbacks, Phantom Voices, or Nightmares – or the hallucinating affliction – the GM should tell the player what his character perceives and let *him* decide what abilities he uses. These go off in the “real world,” whatever the consequences. He *can* choose not to use his special gifts . . . but this can backfire if some of the dangers he confronts are real!

### *Mind Control*

Someone under the influence of Dominance, Mind Control, the Charm spell, cinematic hypnotism, or a similar effect can be directed to use any ability that he consciously controls. His controller can order him to turn a switchable ability on or off, trigger a transient ability, or use an active ability for any feat it could normally perform. If the GM is using the optional rules for extra effort, stunts, etc., these are considered “normal” uses.

The controller *can't* order the impossible, however. No amount of mental influence can turn off an always-on ability, make a purely passive ability operate actively, trigger an ability that's “offline” due to interference (p. 155) or crippling (p. 156), or

bypass a limitation that restricts activation (e.g., Emergencies Only or Unconscious Only) or limits uses (Limited Use, Preparation Required, Takes Recharge, etc.).

Also note that the controller isn't in *direct* control of his slave's abilities. He gives his thrall instructions on his own turn; each set of orders requires a Concentrate maneuver. Then his victim uses his abilities on *his* next turn. As soon as control expires, the slave regains control of all his abilities – even those activated while enslaved.

### *Possession*

A few forms of control – such as Possession and the Control Person spell – give the controller dominance over the subject's body, not his mind. While “inside” his victim, he enjoys all the benefits of his puppet's physical abilities and his own mental ones, but his host's mental abilities and his own physical ones are *inaccessible*. In the case of body swapping, these guidelines apply equally to the subject: he has his own mental abilities and his possessor's physical ones. For more information, see *Mind Transfer* (p. B296).

Once possession ends, each party regains his own abilities. Ongoing effects anchored to either body (e.g., nausea or crippled limbs) stay with that body. Those tied to a mind (e.g., IQ penalties or ongoing Mind Control) move with that mind.

## SUCCESS ROLLS FOR ABILITIES

Most active abilities require one success roll per use (although their effects often lead to additional rolls). The GM will sometimes roll in secret for passive abilities, too. All such rolls work as explained on pp. B343-349, with a few added details.

### *Base Skill*

Base skill with an ability is the attribute, secondary characteristic, or skill specified in the description of the underlying advantage – or by Based on (Different Attribute), Malediction, or Requires (Attribute) Roll, if the ability has one of those modifiers – plus Talent with the ability's power:

See *Using Abilities with Skills* (p. 161) for other options.

### *Modifiers and Effective Skill*

To find *effective* skill, start with base skill and add all relevant modifiers from the advantage text, plus any modifier the GM requires for the difficulty of the specific task (see *Task Difficulty*, p. B345). The *Time Spent* rules (p. B346) never apply to ability use. There may be additional modifiers if using optional rules such as *Multiple Feats* (p. 158) and *Trading Fatigue for Skill* (p. 161).

### *Success and Failure*

*Success* means the ability activates and works as intended. On a *critical success*, apply any special benefits noted in the advantage description, and ignore the ability's FP cost (if any).

*Failure* means the ability doesn't go off. You can try again, but if using the optional *Repeated Attempts* rule (p. 159), these future attempts will be more difficult. On a *critical failure*, you lose 1d FP in addition to the usual FP cost (if any), and may cripple your ability; see *Crippled Abilities* (p. 156).

## Special Cases

**Resisted Abilities:** Any ability that requires the user to roll a Quick Contest with the victim is *resisted*. This includes most mental-influence abilities (e.g., Mind Control) and all Maledictions. The user must succeed to activate his ability and win the Quick Contest to affect his subject (see *Resistance Rolls*, p. B348). The Rule of 16 always applies (see p. B349), and resisted abilities never automatically defeat the target's resistance – even on a critical success (a major difference from *Resisted Spells*, p. B241).

**Attacks:** Afflictions, Bindings, Innate Attacks, and abilities with the Ranged modifier activate *automatically* unless they have the Malediction enhancement. The user must roll against Innate Attack skill (p. B201), but this is an attack roll, not an activation roll. Only Talent and ordinary combat modifiers apply. Treat critical success or failure just like any other critical hit or miss; *ignore* the special rules for abilities.

## THE ROLE OF TALENT

Talent with a power acts as a bonus to all success rolls against attributes, secondary characteristics, or skills to use the power's abilities. This includes rolls to activate, attack with, control, or defend with those abilities. This *doesn't* include damage rolls, reaction rolls (except those for Allies with Summonable and Patrons with Highly Accessible), appearance rolls for Associated NPCs bought as abilities, rolls required by limitations, or rolls made by the ability's target. For additional details, see *Pricing Talents* (p. 29).

Some abilities, especially passive ones, rarely call for success rolls. The GM should try to make Talent useful with these, at least occasionally – most often by giving a bonus to an associated skill. If the ability would *never* require a roll, it's acceptable to break the rules and apply another kind of bonus. Some suggestions:

- **Abilities that complement skills:** If the GM feels that a talented hero could employ his ability to improve his odds of success at a task, he may let him add his Talent to his skill roll

for that task. This is cumulative with any basic bonus the advantage provides to untalented users. *Examples:* Chameleon, Invisibility, and Silence would benefit Stealth rolls (so would Shadow Form, but only in the dark); Elastic Skin and Morph would aid Disguise rolls; Metabolism Control would assist Acting rolls to feign death; Mimicry would help Acting or Mimicry rolls for impersonation; and Terror would enhance Intimidation rolls.

- **Life-support abilities:** If a power grants life-support abilities, wielders who possess those abilities might have enough subconscious control over the power to add its Talent to HT when resisting attacks or hazards that the abilities could reasonably oppose. *Examples:* Injury Tolerance (Diffuse) might let Talent aid resistance rolls against Affliction (Advantage, Insubstantiality), while Radiation Tolerance would justify adding Talent to HT rolls for radiation effects.

- **Movement abilities:** Add Talent to rolls to maneuver, perform acrobatics, or avoid fatigue or mishap when using a power's movement abilities. *Examples:* Aerobatics and Flight rolls for Flight; Aquabatics and Swimming rolls for Amphibious; Body Sense rolls for Warp; Climbing rolls for Super Climbing; Jumping rolls for Super Jump; and Running rolls for Enhanced Move (Ground).

- **Physical transformations:** Those who can alter their physical form may add Talent to rolls to resist *involuntary* changes of the same or opposite kind, and subtract it from penalties that their transformation would help avoid. *Examples:* Morph would justify a bonus to resist unwanted shapeshifting spells; Shrinking would explain a bonus to resist Affliction (Advantage, Growth); and Stretching would help cancel penalties to Mechanic skill when repairing hard-to-reach machinery. The GM might also wish to increase the rate at which Growth, Shrinking, and Stretching adjust Size Modifier from  $\pm 1$  to  $\pm(\text{Talent}+1)$  per second.

- **Reality-altering abilities:** Each use of an ability that produces a direct change in reality gets a bonus equal to Talent on the *first* die roll it influences. *Examples:* Luck, Serendipity, and Super Luck.

- **Senses:** Add Talent to Sense rolls affected by a power's sensory abilities. *Examples:* Hearing rolls for Discriminatory Hearing and Ultrahearing; Perception rolls for Vibration Sense; and Vision rolls for Infravision and Microscopic Vision.

- **Switchable body parts:** Add Talent to HT rolls to avoid crippling or harm to body parts added by a power, and to DX rolls where extending or retracting body parts would help (but never to *attack* rolls). *Examples:* Claws, Extra Arms, or Strikers.

See the *Powering Up* entries in Chapter 2 for many specific suggestions. *Extra Effort* (p. 160), *Defending with Powers* (p. 167), *Talent as Resistance* (p. 169), and *Stunts* (p. 170) describe other situations where Talent gives a bonus.

Most of the rules in this chapter are *optional* – the GM can apply them or not, as suits his campaign. However, because Talents give those who use powers a significant edge over those with “wild” advantages, *Multiple Feats* (below) and *Repeated Attempts* (p. 159) are strongly recommended to keep players from wondering why a power modifier should ever give a *discount* on advantage costs.

## MULTIPLE FEATS

In fiction, those with powers – especially psis and supers – often find it difficult to use their powers for several tasks simultaneously. To make powers work like this, the GM may enforce the following rule:

*All rolls for active uses of a power's abilities are at -1 per active ability already “on.”*

Transient abilities receive penalties for abilities “on,” but never cause them – even if they have enduring effects. No passive use of abilities ever receives or causes a penalty for multiple feats. Penalties only accrue for abilities within a power; they never “cross” powers. Lastly, these penalties aren't cumulative with those defined for multiple uses of some advantages (e.g., Mind Control and Telecommunication); they're a generalization of those penalties to *all* abilities of a given power.

*Example:* Revok possesses Telepathy and Psychokinesis. His telepathic abilities include Affliction, Empathy, Mind Control, Mind Shield, and Telesend. His PK abilities are Crushing Attack and Telekinesis.

Revok contacts an ally using Telesend. Since he has no telepathic abilities “on,” he rolls at no penalty. After establishing contact, he uses Mind Control on a foe; this is at -1 for Telesend. Leaving both abilities on, he goes on to attack an enemy with Affliction. He rolls at -2 for two abilities on. However, if he stuns his target, he *isn't* at -3 on further tasks until his victim recovers, because residual transient effects don't count as active.

Revok would have *no* penalty to attack with Crushing Attack or Telekinesis, because they're psychokinetic, not telepathic. He also has no penalty if the GM rolls in secret for Empathy to see whether he notices that his ally is under mind control, because that's a passive use. He would be at -2 to perform an active “scan,” though. And throughout all this, Revok's Mind Shield would give no penalty to *any* task, because it's passive.

## REPEATED ATTEMPTS

Many fictional heroes, confronted with challenges to their powers, grow desperate and fatigued if their abilities fail. This is especially true of comic-book supers, cinematic psis, and chi-powered martial artists. The following rule reproduces this effect.

When the roll to activate an active ability fails, the user may wait five minutes and try again at no penalty. If he tries *that particular feat* sooner, this is a “repeated attempt” (see p. B348) and costs 1 FP. Furthermore, the roll for the second attempt is at -1. Should this effort fail, he can spend 1 FP and try again at -2, and so on, until he passes out from FP loss or his effective skill drops below 3, at which point success is impossible.

If a repeated attempt succeeds, later attempts at that feat no longer cost FP or worsen skill penalties. However, the *current* skill penalty remains until the user waits a full five minutes. What this represents

depends on the power: letting the supernatural interference around the subject die down, calming the mind or body, or simply regaining confidence.

Only successive attempts at the same feat are repeated attempts. This means trying the *same* ability on the *same* subject or an *identical* one, regardless of changes in physical circumstances (distance, speed, etc.). Repeated uses of an ability that requires a Quick Contest (e.g., Mind Control, or anything with Malediction) are always repeated attempts when attempting to affect the *same* subject. Trying to conjure fire on the same patch of ground would also involve the *same* subject.

Attempting to deflect two arrows would involve *identical* subjects. Trying to levitate two handguns held by thugs would, too. Attempting to

affect the thugs themselves wouldn't, though – two sapient beings are never identical unless they're Dupes (see *Duplication*, p. B50).

Consecutive *successful* rolls for the same feat are never repeated attempts. As long as the user continues to succeed, he can do the same thing indefinitely at no penalty. Rolls for *passive* abilities never suffer penalties for repeated attempts, either. DX-based rolls to hit with *attacks* are also exempt, because they aren't activation rolls.

When an advantage that already specifies the effects of repeated attempts – e.g., Mind Probe or Mind Reading – is part of a power that uses this rule, apply the worst penalties, highest FP cost, and longest wait between uses. Don't “stack” the two sets of effects.

## Abilities and Exertion

From ancient myth to modern comics, most great heroes can use their special gifts for *hours* before they tire. This is why so few abilities cost FP, except for repeated attempts or extra effort – even 1 FP per use would tire all but the fittest heroes in seconds. Fictional heroes *do* eventually tire, though. To represent this, the GM may charge FP after prolonged ability use.

*Combat:* Assess the FP cost for a battle according to *Fighting a Battle* (p. B426), but add 1 FP for combatants who activated abilities on themselves (e.g., Warp or Insubstantiality), or 2 FP for those who used abilities to affect the environment or someone else (e.g., Control or Innate Attack).

*Movement:* Long-distance travel with most movement abilities (Flight, Super Climbing, Tunneling, etc.), and out-of-body journeys with abilities that have the Projection modifier, incur the same FP cost as hiking. Top-speed travel – and *all* movement through solid objects using Insubstantiality or Permeation – has the same FP cost as running. See *Fatigue Costs* (p. B426) for details.

*Other Intensive Use:* High-intensity ability use, with only one or two seconds between rolls, costs 1 FP per *minute*. *Examples:* A psi at an airport using Mind Reading on everyone who steps off a plane; a super using his energy bolts to blast a path through a mountain.

*Long-Term Use:* Low-intensity but relatively constant ability use costs 1 FP per *hour*. *Examples:* A stealth mission during which the hero uses Super Jump to hurdle a fence, switches on Invisibility to avoid guards, and opens a lock using Telekinesis; a super-powered researcher using Detect instead of technological sensors to run lab analyses.

The GM should waive these FP costs if the only abilities used have the Limited Use limitation, or are built-in weapons with a finite number of shots. Such abilities consume “uses,” not the owner's internal energy supply. Built-in weapons with no specific limit on shots don't get his exemption, because they *do* rely on the user for power.



## EXTRA EFFORT

The GM may let heroes push *active* abilities past their usual limits by paying FP – much as they would use extra effort to run faster, lift more, etc. (see *Extra Effort*, p. B356). It's up to the GM whether to permit extra effort for all advantages, only for exotic or supernatural ones, or only for abilities that belong to powers.

In all cases, if an advantage offers specific rules for extra effort, use those rules instead. For instance, Clairvoyance lets the user pay 2 FP per minute to double his range without a Will roll, and Warp lets the user trade more than 4 FP for a bonus to his activation roll.

### Trading Fatigue for Effect

Extra effort can increase the raw “output” of any active ability with a *quantifiable* effect beyond its success roll. Examples include:

- *Damage*, for Innate Attack.
- *Level*, for Affliction, Control, Create, Leech, Obscure, Temperature Control, etc.
- *ST*, for Binding or Telekinesis (ST bonus, for Lifting ST or Striking ST).
- *Top speed*, for movement abilities (Flight, Tunneling, etc.), after multiplying for any Enhanced Move.

The GM may permit extra effort for certain passive abilities, too; e.g., DR with Force Field (extra effort increases DR) and attacks with Aura (extra effort works as usual for Affliction, Innate Attack, etc.). He might also allow it to enhance passive abilities for a Power Block (p. 168). In a high-powered supers game, he could even let it temporarily boost the points in a Modular Abilities slot.

To use extra effort, make a Will roll at -1 per 5% increase in effect or fraction thereof; e.g., Affliction 9 represents 12.5% more effect than Affliction 8, so it would require a roll at -3. The maximum bonus to effect is 100%, at -20 to Will.

*Modifiers:* +5 in the situations described under *Emergencies Only* (p. 102), regardless of whether the ability has that limitation. Unlike ordinary extra effort, there's no penalty for missing FP – in heroic genres, heroes

who are in danger and nearly spent seem *more* able to succeed at extra effort! If using a power, add a bonus equal to your Talent.

Succeed or fail, extra effort costs FP. Instantaneous feats (e.g., attacks) cost a flat 1 FP per use. For maintainable abilities (Flight, Telekinesis, Temperature Control, etc.), make the above roll once per minute of ongoing use, and pay 1 FP *per roll*. Should it matter, you must spend these FP after the Will roll and before the roll to use the ability.

Success means you gain the desired increase in effect. This doesn't guarantee success at *using* your ability; you could still fail your Innate Attack roll and miss with your extra-powerful Bolts o' Doom. On a critical success, you don't have to pay FP for your extra effort.

Failure means you achieve only what you would have accomplished without extra effort. On a critical failure, you push your ability too far. It flickers off for a second – your attack is a dud, your force field provides no DR, your Flight cuts out in midair, etc.

– and the task you were attempting *fails*. You must also check for crippling, as explained under *Crippled Abilities* (p. 156). This roll is for your *entire power* if your ability is part of a power. Failure indicates temporary crippling; critical failure means lasting crippling.

Trading fatigue for effect is impossible for *passive* abilities other than those described above, even for active uses; abilities that *already* tie effect to FP spent, such as Healing; and abilities with unquantifiable effects, such as Channeling.

*Machines and Extra Effect:* Those with the Machine meta-trait (p. B263) can't use extra effort, but the GM might make an exception in campaigns with superscience mecha or space-opera starships. Start with the rules above, replace the Will roll with a HT roll, and mark off FP costs against *HT*. For machines with operators, the GM may replace the Will roll with a skill roll (against Engineer, Piloting, etc.), basing skill on the *machine's* HT instead of the *operator's* DX or IQ (see *Using Skills With Other*



*Attributes*, p. B172). Handle HT losses, and repairs made to reverse them, as if they were due to missed maintenance (see *Maintenance*, p. B485).

**Godlike Extra Effort:** In campaigns intended to emulate heroic epics and over-the-top comics, the GM may let heroes trade more than 1 FP for extra effect. Use the same rules, but multiply bonus effect by the FP spent and ignore the 100% limit on the bonus. For instance, a hero who makes a Will-3 roll could burn 1 FP for 15%

more effect . . . or 10 FP for 150% more effect. This greatly magnifies the power of heroes with large Energy Reserves (p. 119). Handle with care!

### **Trading Fatigue for Skill**

You can instead put extra effort into focus and concentration to gain a one-time bonus to your success roll. This costs a flat 1 FP per +1 to the roll, to a maximum of +4. Since this use of extra effort actually *increases* control,

it carries no risk of catastrophic failure. It's up to the GM whether you can combine this with trading fatigue for effect.

This option is available for any *active* ability that requires a roll to activate or a Quick Contest with the subject. Passive abilities can't use it. Neither can abilities that require an attack roll instead of an activation roll – the equivalent option for attacks is All-Out Attack (Determined).

## USING ABILITIES WITH SKILLS

Usually, when an advantage and a skill interact, either the advantage gives a passive bonus to the skill (e.g., Discriminatory Smell gives +4 to Tracking) or the skill picks up in the wake of the advantage (e.g., Body Sense helps recover after using Warp). It's rare for the two to work together *actively*, tackling the task as a team.

This doesn't have to be the case. Supers frequently exploit mundane skills to put their abilities to new and unexpected uses, legendary martial artists have many gifts that blur the line between the studied and the innate, divine blacksmiths incorporate great power *and* prodigious skill in their craft, and so on. These rules are for GMs who desire such things in their campaign.

### SKILLS ENHANCING ABILITIES

Mundane expertise might provide insight into how to bring superhuman capabilities to bear on a problem. If the GM agrees, when a hero applies an ability to a task that he could accomplish using a mundane skill, he may attempt a roll against his skill – based on the *advantage's* controlling attribute (see *Using Skills With Other Attributes*, p. B172) – if this would be better than his usual roll for the ability. For instance, instead of rolling against IQ to use Healing, he might make an IQ-based Esoteric Medicine roll. If Talent affects the ability, it also adds to these special skill rolls.

Below is a list of advantages that could benefit from skills. It isn't exhaustive – players are welcome to dream up new and creative uses for their skills. However, the GM should only allow a skill roll if, in his opinion, the ability supplies a miraculous tool that someone with suitable know-how could truly put to better use than someone without training.

**Binding:** If the attack involves webs, vines, etc., use Knot-Tying to bind a prisoner out of combat.

**Control:** Almost any craft skill – Carpentry, Masonry, Smith, etc. – can replace IQ when shaping suitable materials.

**Create:** Alchemy, Chemistry, or Physics can replace IQ when using the Transmutation modifier.

**Detect:** Many skills can replace IQ for *analysis* rolls. Use Chemistry for chemicals, Diagnosis for diseases, Metallurgy for metals, Physics for radiation, Thaumatology for spells, etc.

**Healing:** Esoteric Medicine or Physician can replace IQ when healing lost HP or curing disease. Use Surgery to repair crippled limbs.

**Illusion:** Artist (Illusion) can replace the IQ roll in most cases – but if the ability has the Mental enhancement, use Psychology instead.

**Innate Attack:** Use Explosives (Demolition) to destroy things out of combat, or Forced Entry to blast open doors.

**Intuition:** Almost any IQ-based knowledge skill might replace IQ when dealing with information salient to that skill (e.g., Navigation, when deciding which way to steer).

**Mimicry:** The Mimicry *skill* can replace IQ when mimicking sounds associated with the appropriate specialty (Animal Sounds, Bird Calls, or Speech).

**Mind Control:** Many skills can replace IQ: Animal Handling to affect beasts, Computer Hacking to control computers (requires Cybernetic or Cybernetic Only), Brainwashing if using the Conditioning enhancement, or Hypnotism when the ability has the Suggestion limitation.

**Mind Probe:** Interrogation can replace IQ when probing living beings. When probing a computer (requires Cybernetic or Cybernetic Only), use Computer Hacking instead.

**Psychometry:** Criminology, Forensics, Search, etc. can replace IQ for *active* attempts to seek clues about past events at a location. Success provides insights appropriate to the skill: motives for Criminology, items for Search, and so forth.

**Rapier Wit:** This normally calls for Public Speaking, but the GM might allow Poetry or Singing – or even Kiai, for *shouting* insults!

**Telekinesis:** Suitable DX-based skills *always* work remotely via this advantage.

**Terror:** Intimidation can replace Will when using the Active enhancement.

**True Faith:** Use Exorcism in place of Will if the entity being repelled is susceptible to exorcism. Religious Ritual might also work, if the user takes the time to conduct a ritual.

**Warp:** Navigation (Hyperspace) can replace IQ if Warp has the Hyperjump limitation.

## ABILITIES ENHANCING SKILLS

The *Basic Set* defines many skill bonuses for passive abilities. Most of these apply all the time; the user doesn't need to *do* anything. Active abilities can also simplify certain tasks – but they require conscious use, and only give bonuses if they *work*. For instance, Telekinesis gives +4 to tasks that benefit from High Manual Dexterity (itself a passive trait that always works) . . . *if* the user makes an IQ roll to use his TK properly. The catch is that active abilities can fail – sometimes badly – and give penalties. This makes them more of a gamble.

The players are welcome to dream up interesting ways for abilities to assist skills. To provide an actual bonus, though, an ability must be a suitable tool for both the skill *and* the task in question. This depends somewhat on the game world – comic-book supers often use their abilities in ways that wouldn't suit a mythic-fantasy setting, and vice versa – but as always, the GM's word is final.

Once the GM and the player agree on what's being attempted, the user rolls normally to activate his ability. Abilities that always activate – e.g., Flight, Innate Attack, Obscure, Telekinesis, and Temperature Control – require an IQ roll to direct them. If the GM lets skills enhance abilities, the user may roll against a skill instead, but this *can't* be the skill that stands to gain a bonus on a success. Talent, if any, applies as usual.

On a success, the user gets a skill bonus for that one task: +2 if his ability does what fine-quality mundane equipment would do, or +4 if its aid is truly miraculous (GM's decision). Inappropriate abilities give no bonus or penalty. These bonuses *aren't* the same as those given under *The Role of Talent* (p. 158). You get a bonus equal to Talent only when your ability is passive and would aid your skill without a conscious effort, or when attempting a skill roll *because* you're using an ability. You get a bonus for enhancing a skill only when you opt to involve one of your abilities in a mundane task that otherwise has nothing to do with your powers. The two never “stack.”

On a critical success, the skill roll succeeds normally (don't bother to roll) if effective skill was 3 or more. The user may opt to roll at the bonus above if he wants to try for a critical success – but if he fails, he fails. If

effective skill was 2 or less, add the +2 or +4 and roll normally if this raises effective skill to 3 or more. If final skill is less than 3, even with the bonus, the task remains impossible. All this assumes an appropriate ability, but in

### Skills for Everyone

In many settings, powers need training to be useful. As explained in *Learning Powers* (p. 35), the GM can require individuals with powers to train if they wish to add or improve abilities. Another, fully compatible option is to associate each of a power's abilities with its own “power skill.” Heroes might learn power skills through trial and error (typical of super-powers), or seek training from ancient masters (traditional for chi, magical, and spirit powers), academies (appropriate for psi and magical powers), or monasteries (especially for chi or divine powers).

When using this option, a power skill exists for any ability – passive or active – that requires an activation roll (not just an attack roll). This is a Hard skill named after the underlying advantage and based on its controlling score. Those who possess the ability must roll against the associated skill to use it. Unskilled users roll at default: (controlling attribute)-6. Talent benefits both trained and default use. Individuals who lack the ability can't learn its skill or use it at default, even if they have the correct power and a high level of Talent.

*Example:* Healing is based on IQ. If the GM requires skills to use psi powers, a psychic healer with Healing must roll against Healing (IQ/Hard) to use his ability – or at IQ-6 if untrained. In either case, his Healing Talent gives a bonus.

The GM decides which powers require skills, and for which abilities. This has *no effect* on the cost of power modifiers or Talents, as the short-term drawbacks balance the long-term benefits. Those without training do have a large penalty (-6 for working at default) relative to individuals with “wild” abilities or powers that don't require skills. Even trainees who know the skill have a small penalty at low levels (-2 or -1 with only 1 or 2 points in the skill). Ultimately, though, they can buy as much skill as they wish, allowing them to perform feats far beyond the capabilities of those limited to just attributes and Talent.

#### Power Techniques

Another option is to let heroes “buy off” the penalties that certain advantages assign to specific feats. Each such specialized use becomes a Hard technique (see *Techniques*, p. B229) that defaults to the controlling attribute at the penalty given in the advantage description. The ability's owner can improve this like any other technique, but can't exceed the controlling attribute. If using power skills, power techniques default to these at the same penalty, and can't surpass the power skill.

*Example:* Healing is at -6 to repair a crippled limb. The GM might permit a healer to learn Repair Limb as a Hard technique. Since this task is at -6, Repair Limb defaults to IQ-6. It can't exceed IQ, or default+6 (7 points). If using power skills, the default is Healing-6 and the technique can't exceed Healing skill.

At the GM's option, even those without powers can learn power *techniques*, if they possess suitable abilities – but only those with powers can have Talent and power *skills*.



*The players are welcome to dream up interesting ways for abilities to assist skills. To provide an actual bonus, though, an ability must be a suitable tool for both the skill and the task in question.*

a silly campaign, the GM might let an *inappropriate* ability give +1 on a critical success, if the explanation was clever enough.

On a failure, the attempt is at -1. This becomes -2 if the ability used was, in the GM's opinion, inappropriate. On a critical failure, the skill roll *also* critically fails, regardless of effective skill – and if the ability was unsuitable, the results should be *embarrassing*, too (-2 to reaction and Influence rolls with any witnesses).

Some examples (this list *isn't* exhaustive!):

*Clairsentience*: +2 to Diagnosis, Lockpicking, Surgery, and similar skills in situations where being able to see *inside* the subject would be useful. This is equivalent to an X-ray machine or endoscope. Being able to see all the cards in a card game is good for +4 to Gambling.

*Control*: See *Control in Combat* (p. 91) for bonuses.

*Create*: +2 to Alchemy, Chemistry, Pharmacy, Poisons, and related skills if using a specialty of Create that can

produce useful substances on demand. This is about as useful as a well-stocked lab.

*Detect*: +2 to Forensics, Observation, Prospecting, Search, etc., when *intentionally* seeking anything the sense can find. A similar bonus applies to Electrician when using Detect (Electricity) to trace wiring. This is comparable to a portable sensor (e.g., a metal detector).

*Flight*: +4 to Acrobatics (*not* Aerobatics), Climbing, Flying Leap, Jumping, and Light Walk rolls, by virtue of "body lightening."

*Illusion*: Using Illusion to project charts, images, and other media gives +2 to skill rolls against Public Speaking, Teaching, and so on during briefings and presentations.

*Mimicry*: +2 to Acting rolls when impersonating someone else.

*Mind Reading*: +2 to Influence skills, Tactics, or Strategy in situations where knowing what the subject is thinking would be useful. This bonus increases to +4 for Detect Lies or Fortune-Telling, *not* cumulative with

the +3 for Empathy (it's a more advanced version of the same thing).

*Obscure*: +4 to Invisibility Art if using smoke or darkness to distract witnesses. This is better than the +3 for a smoke bomb because viewers aren't warned by seeing the bomb.

*Precognition*: +4 to Gambling, Market Analysis, Tactics, or Strategy for a successful *active* use to predict the likely outcome of a game of chance, investment, or battle – and a similar bonus to use Meteorology to predict the weather.

*Psychometry*: +4 to Tracking, but only if you know exactly who you're following.

*Scanning Sense*: +2 to Observation in any situation where the sense would work and be able to spot the objective. This *is* cumulative with the +2 for Detect.

*Telecommunication*: Using Telesend on someone gives +2 to Hypnotism attempts, and to Leadership or Teaching rolls to tell him *what to do*.

*Telekinesis*: +2 to use Filch, cheat at Gambling, or parry with Parry Missile Weapons, by moving objects without using your hands; +4 to DX-based rolls against Lockpicking, Surgery, and any other skill where a pair of hands *inside* what you're working on would be helpful (cumulative with the +2 for Clairsentience).

*Warp*: +4 to Shadowing attempts on foot, if used to bypass crowds, watch your quarry from rooftops, etc. The GM should require one Warp roll per Shadowing roll.

## DETECTING ABILITIES

When it comes to detecting abilities, two rules apply *unless* the underlying advantage specifically says otherwise or has modifiers that make it easier or harder to detect:

1. Observers can only detect the ability if it's currently in use or has enduring effects.

2. *Active* uses are always detectable with vision, hearing, touch, and/or smell, while *passive* uses are only discernable using special senses.

The ability's special effects – and the source and focus of the overarching

power, if applicable – determine which senses work in each case.

### OBVIOUS EFFECTS

If the ability isn't based on a mental-influence advantage (e.g., Mind Reading or Mind Control) or another trait with explicitly invisible effects, isn't totally passive, and isn't enhanced with No Signature (p. B106), then the buyer must describe a set of effects that are obvious to one or more ordinary human senses. These occur whenever

he uses the ability. Observers notice them *automatically*, barring obstructions or missing senses.

If there's any doubt as to whether a potential witness notices the ability, make a Sense roll, modified as usual for his sensory capabilities (e.g., Hyperspectral Vision gives +3 to see visible effects, while Acute Hearing 5 gives +5 to hear audible ones). Observers must *always* roll if the ability has the Low Signature enhancement; see *Low or No Signature* (p. 103) for penalties.

*Advantages with invisible effects, such as Clairvoyance and Telekinesis, are genuinely undetectable to normal senses. The same goes for abilities with the No Signature enhancement.*

In the case of a power, the GM should also specify one or more “special” senses that can detect all of the power’s active abilities by sensing its source or focus. For instance, Detect (Magic) or Magery would sense magical abilities by detecting their source, while Infravision would be able to spot active uses of the Heat/Fire power by perceiving its focus (heat). Special senses work even when normal senses

aren’t available, unless the ability has No Signature.

All of this remains true when the user is undetectable. Invisible heroes who don’t want their abilities to give them away should add No Signature.

## SUBTLE EFFECTS

Advantages with invisible effects, such as Clairvoyance and Telekinesis,

are genuinely *undetectable* to normal senses – even if their consequences are obvious, like a rock tossed with TK – unless given the Visible limitation (p. 112). The same goes for abilities with the No Signature enhancement. In most game worlds, such abilities still leave a “psychic impression,” “supernatural residue,” or “signature” that those with special senses can track down. Psychometry is the best tool for the job, but specific forms of Detect can also work.

Abilities that aren’t currently in use, or totally passive ones, are *never* detectable except with a specialty of Detect specifically designed to identify individuals who have those abilities.

See *Detect* (p. 47) for more on how to rate the rarity of foci and sources when buying the Detect advantage.

# SUPERHUMAN ABILITIES IN COMBAT

Most of these notes apply to *all* abilities with combat uses, but a few – notably those under *Defending with Powers* (p. 167) – describe special moves intended for heroes with powers. The GM decides whether fighters whose abilities *don’t* stem from powers can use such tricks.

## ATTACKING

Abilities with offensive potential – including Mind Control, Obscure, and many other advantages that aren’t “attacks” per se – fall into four categories based on how they work in combat.

### Ranged Attacks

*Includes:* Affliction, Binding, Innate Attack, and abilities that affect others at a distance via the Ranged enhancement. However, attacks modified with Emanation, Malediction, or Melee Attack – or Follow-Up limitations that tie them to melee attacks – fall into other categories.

*Hitting the Target:* Take an Attack maneuver and roll against Innate Attack skill to hit. This is an ordinary ranged attack, and all the rules under *Ranged Attacks* (p. B372) apply.

*Aftermath:* Unless the attack is Blockable (p. 110), the target can only dodge (but see *Defending with Powers*, p. 167). If the attack misses or the target dodges, consult *Hitting the Wrong Target* (p. B389) or *Scatter* (p. B414), as applicable, unless the GM is using *Collateral Damage* (p. 165) instead.

### Melee Attacks

*Includes:* All normally ranged attacks modified with Melee Attack, as well as “touch only” abilities such as Leech and Neutralize. Attacks tied to body weaponry via Follow-Up also involve a melee attack.

*Hitting the Target:* Use an Attack maneuver to launch a melee attack,

subject to all the usual rules; see *Melee Attacks* (p. B369). In most cases, a touch suffices and the roll is against DX or *any* unarmed combat skill – but Leech requires a grapple (with DX, Judo, Sumo Wrestling, or Wrestling) and Follow-Up attacks on Claws, Strikers, etc. call for an actual blow (with DX, Boxing, Brawling, or Karate). A few “touch only” abilities, such as Possession, require a Concentrate maneuver before an attack is possible.

*Aftermath:* The target may try to dodge, block, or parry the touch, grapple, or blow. If he succeeds, the ability has *no effect* unless it has Aura or



Melee Attack (Destructive Parry). In those cases only, the attack affects the defender's shield on a block, weapon on an armed parry, or *arm* on a bare-handed parry; DR applies normally.

### Maledictions

*Includes:* Attacks with the Malediction enhancement, and the majority of mental-influence advantages (e.g., Mind Control).

*Hitting the Target:* Take a Concentrate maneuver and roll a Quick Contest with the target. The only combat modifiers that apply are those for *range*. Use -1 per yard for Malediction 1, the standard modifiers from the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550) for mental-influence traits and abilities with Malediction 2, and *Long-Distance Modifiers* (p. B241) for Malediction 3.

*Aftermath:* The target's defense is his resistance roll (but see *Defending with Powers*, p. 167).

### Emanations

*Includes:* Ordinarily ranged attacks modified with Emanation, advantages such as Obscure and Mana Damper (Switchable), and similar zero-range area-effect abilities.

*Hitting the Target:* Simply take a Ready maneuver and state that you're turning on your advantage.

*Aftermath:* Everyone in the area is "hit" automatically, although they may try to dive for cover (see *Dodge and Drop*, p. B377).

### Optional Rule: Coordinated Attacks

This option lets heroes vanquish tough foes by carefully timing their attacks. There's no restriction on the attacks used – special abilities, fists, guns, etc. – although it's easier to coordinate related powers.

Everyone who wants to coordinate should be able to communicate, if only with a few words or a gesture. The GM may exclude individuals who can't communicate at all. In a realistic campaign, the GM might even require the group's leader to take a Concentrate maneuver and make a Leadership roll to instruct his allies for at least a second before everyone attacks. This might take *several* seconds if the leader can't speak in person

or by radio, and must rely on hand signals. In a cinematic game, ignore this requirement.

In addition, everyone must attack the *same* target at the *same* time. This means that at least some of the coordinating fighters will have to take Wait maneuvers.

As soon as everyone can attack, each fighter attempts his attack roll. Since the attack occurs when the

attackers can coordinate – not when their target gives them a clear shot – everyone rolls at -3 per fighter past the first (-3 for two, -6 for three, and so on). Those with Enhanced Time Sense (p. B52) roll at only -2 per extra attacker. Add +1 if everyone in the group is using a power with the same source or focus, or +2 if everyone is using the *same* power. Talent and all standard attack modifiers apply as usual.

## Collateral Damage

In a high-realism game, the GM should use *Tactical Combat* (pp. B384-392) on a battle map to determine where missed shots go, and *HP and DR of Objects and Cover* (p. B557) to assess damage to the surroundings. In a cinematic game, though, this degree of detail can spoil the mood. The GM is free to decree that all misses vanish harmlessly, of course, but property damage is a hallowed tradition in many genres – especially supers! Below is a quicker, less-realistic alternative for larger-than-life battles.

Whenever an attack misses or is dodged, and whenever *any* area effect, cone, or explosion goes off, roll 3d on the table below. Only roll if there are bystanders or breakable objects present (on a busy street, inside the Secret Underground Fortress, etc.), and only if the attack could actually affect someone or something in the area. Even nonlethal attacks require a roll, though. An Affliction or Fatigue Attack can mean a lawsuit if it causes someone to stumble and break a tooth (or worse), and a "harmless" Binding might foul and damage delicate machinery.

*Modifiers:* Lethal attacks: +2 for 10d damage, +4 for 100d damage, and so forth; +2 if incendiary or burning; +2 if area effect, cone, or explosion.

Nonlethal attacks (Affliction, Binding, Fatigue Attack, etc.): -8.

All attacks: +2 indoors; +2 in the presence of dangerous surroundings (rocket fuel, high-tension cables, etc.); +2 if the attacker is *trying* to cause collateral damage instead of attacking a specific target; -2 per -1 a cautious attacker accepts on his attack roll specifically to *avoid* collateral damage.

**8 or less** – No appreciable damage.

**9-10** – An object susceptible to the attack sustains \$100 worth of damage, or a person is harmed badly enough to justify a \$100 fine or lawsuit; e.g., a broken window or dented fender, or a minor graze or torn shirt.

**11-12** – Damages totaling \$1,000; e.g., a broken computer or car windshield, or a loose tooth or permanent scar.

**13-14** – Damages totaling \$10,000; e.g., a caved-in wall or totaled car, or a broken limb or other major injury.

**15-16** – Damages totaling \$100,000; e.g., a house fire, a blast that shatters every window for a block, or a coma or similar injury that causes lasting harm.

**17-18** – Damages totaling \$1,000,000; e.g., a multi-house fire, or serious injuries to *many* people. The GM might instead rule that a bystander is killed.

**19 or more** – Damages totaling \$10,000,000; e.g., a fire that consumes a city block, the destruction of irreplaceable lab equipment, multiple deaths, or a similar catastrophe.



A fighter can opt out of a Coordinated Attack at the last moment. If so, he ignores the special modifiers above. However, his allies suffer the penalty for the *original* number of fighters involved, as they didn't know their ally's true intentions.

The attackers must choose *one* of these options before anyone rolls to hit:

- **Overwhelm:** This is an attempt to overload the target's defenses with simultaneous attacks from different angles. Each coordinated attacker after the first who hits gives the victim -2 to active defenses or -1 to resistance rolls against *all* of the attacks. Halve this penalty (dropping all fractions) if the target has Enhanced Time Sense.

- **Wound:** The attackers may instead concentrate their attacks on one specific point. They must all be able to attack the same side of the same hit location. Those who hit add their damage together for knockback purposes, which is useful for pushing high-ST foes off precipices, into prison cells, etc. Apply the target's DR *separately* to each attack for the purpose of determining injury – but add together attacks that *don't* penetrate DR when assessing blunt trauma (see p. B379).

After working out the final HP of injury inflicted by each attack – taking into account DR, damage type, hit location, etc. – add the injuries together and treat them as a *single* wound for the purpose of shock, knockdown, stunning, crippling, and anything else that depends on wound size. This lets attackers with relatively weak attacks inflict major wounds on opponents with high DR . . . or blow apart a foe with Supernatural Durability.

Coordinated attackers can even launch (tough!) friends by capitalizing on combined knockback. Apply these rules as usual, but halve “knockback” for a *vertical* launch. The living projectile can coordinate with his launchers; he counts as an attacker, and must make his Jumping roll at the same penalty as the others' attack rolls. Success lets him add his broad-jump distance to horizontal knockback, his high-jump distance to vertical knockback.



### New Technique: Coordinated Attack

**Hard**

*Defaults:* prerequisite skill.  
*Prerequisite:* Any combat skill.

Fighters who practice together may learn this technique for use when coordinating with members of that group (only). It has no maximum level. Apply Coordinated Attack modifiers to this technique and use the result *instead* of combat skill for the attack. If it exceeds combat skill, reduce it to that level before applying other modifiers.

### Optional Rule: Ricochets

The GM may let heroes bounce attacks off walls, the ground, and so on to surprise enemies and hit foes around corners. This is consistent with the laws of physics in comic books and anime. GMs running *realistic* games use this rule at their own risk!

An attack can only ricochet if DR affects it *and* it requires an attack roll. Attacks that bypass DR don't ricochet – they go straight through obstacles. Those that require only a resistance roll (like Maledictions) don't cross the intervening space, and don't *need* a ricochet to hit a target the user knows about.

To attack with a ricochet, the attacker must be able to see his target, detect it using a ranged sense that's equivalent to vision (e.g., Scanning Sense), or know *for sure* where it is. This might be as simple as looking down a hall or peering through a wall with Penetrating Vision – or as complex as using mirrors, cameras, or sensory impressions sent by an ally with Telesend. The GM should require a Sense roll if there's any doubt as to whether the attacker can spot his quarry, at -2 per camera, mirror, telepathic relay, or other “remove.”

The attacker must then describe his attack's path. He can bounce his attack off of as many surfaces as he likes. Each ricochet diminishes the attack's effectiveness, though, so he should try to keep the number low. *Ignore* such details as angle of incidence and the DR and HP of the surfaces. Those would only matter if this rule were realistic!

Once the attacker knows where his target is and how his attack will get there, he rolls to hit. This is a regular ranged attack, with three exceptions. First, the *total* path length – not the straight-line distance to the target – determines the range penalty. Second, if spotting the target required a Sense roll at a penalty, that penalty applies to the attack roll, too. Finally, there's an additional -2 *per bounce*.

If the attack succeeds, the target may defend . . . if he knows he's being attacked. An attack that suddenly comes bouncing around a corner is effectively a surprise attack. An attack from in front of the target that bounces around and hits him from behind or above isn't, but it still gives -1 to defenses *per bounce*. The victim knows he's being attacked, just not from what angle.

Reduce the damage rolled for the attack – or the level of Affliction, Binding, etc. – by 10% per bounce (round down). For a Follow-Up attack, only the carrier is weakened. Don't worry about damage to the bouncing surfaces, though. That's no more relevant than DR and HP were in the first place.

In battles between heroes who can see each other, the GM may reduce this rule to its fundamentals: -2 to hit, -1 to defend, and -10% to damage per bounce.

## DEFENDING WITH POWERS

Defensive advantages – Damage Resistance, Mind Shield, Resistant, etc. – are nearly always passive. The possessor doesn't have to “use” them to enjoy their protection. In the absence of limitations, they work *all the time*.

Buying such a trait as part of a power changes *nothing* – it protects against everything the “wild” advantage does. For instance, Damage Resistance that belongs to a power stops both mundane and powered attacks, and does so regardless of its power modifier or that of the attack (unless one of the power modifiers is Cosmic). Modifiers can change this, of course: a defense with Limited is effective against only *some* attacks, penetration modifiers (Follow-Up, Malediction, Sense-Based, etc.) often let attacks bypass DR, and so on.

In heroic settings, though, individuals with powers often enjoy a broad mastery of their power that transcends its specific abilities. They can bend the usual assumptions, taking control of normally passive defenses in order to defend actively, perhaps even using *non-defensive* abilities to blunt attacks. These rules cover

“power defenses” like this. Work out Power Dodge, Power Parry, and Power Block ahead of time and record them next to the associated abilities on the character sheet.

As with mundane active defenses, power defenses get +1 for Combat Reflexes, +2 for All-Out Defense (Increased Defense), and are unavailable to a fighter who makes an All-Out Attack or doesn't know he's under attack. Power defenses *aren't* mundane defenses, though. A hero can attempt a Power Block and a mundane block on the same turn, has no penalty on future parries if he tries a Power Parry, and *can* attempt a Power Parry during a Move and Attack. No one may use more than *one* power defense per turn, however.

These rules *don't* apply to abilities with the Active Defense limitation. Such abilities use the rules under *Active Defense* (p. 112) instead.

### Power Dodge

If a switchable movement ability or physical transformation is *instantaneous* – either in its unmodified form or due to Reduced Time (p. B108) or Reflexive (p. 109) – the user might be able to use it to evade attacks. This is only possible if the GM feels that activating the ability would cause the attack to pass harmlessly *around* or *through* the defender. Treat this as a dodge, but roll against the following score instead of Dodge:

**Power Dodge = Basic Speed + 3 + Talent/2**

Drop all fractions. Standard Dodge modifiers apply, *except* those for Acrobatic Dodge, bad footing, dodge and drop, encumbrance, posture, relative height, retreating, and shield DB.

Success means the attack doesn't affect the defender at all. Failure means it hits before his ability goes off. Either way, the ability activates. *Exception:* If using *Crippled Abilities* (p. 156), a critical failure means the ability fails completely, in addition to the usual effects of a critically failed defense roll.

Treat a Power Dodge as an active use of the ability for all purposes: detection, FP cost (if any), Limited Use, etc. A physical transformation

leaves the defender in altered-body form. On his turn, he can opt to switch back or remain in that form.

Whether a Power Dodge is better than an ordinary dodge depends on the situation and the ability. It can sometimes avoid attacks that a standard dodge couldn't hope to avoid. Examples include:

*Insubstantiality:* Success means the attack passes right through. This works against *everything* – even area-effect, cone, and explosion attacks. But if the attack has Affects Insubstantial, the Power Dodge is worthless.

*Morph:* A successful dodge means you change shape in such a way that the attack passes over, under, through, or past you. Specify the details; for instance, “I become a mouse and drop under the attack” or “I turn into a giant donut so that the attack passes through the hole.”

*Permeation:* Only allowed if you're standing on a surface you can permeate. Success means you sink into the ground and the attack passes over you.

*Shadow Form:* Success means you become a shadow on the ground, wall, etc., before the attack hits. This lets you dodge in many situations where movement is impossible.

*Shrinking:* Success lets you shrink *away from* or *under* the attack without ducking or sidestepping. This permits a dodge even when restrained.

*Warp:* This advantage has specific rules for evading attacks (see p. B98). Use those *instead* of a Power Dodge.

### Power Parry

An Innate Attack can sometimes knock aside or “shoot down” another Innate Attack, much as one melee weapon can parry another. This is a Power Parry. It's normally only possible in two situations:

1. If the defending and attacking powers share a focus, the defender can exploit his control over the focus to weaken the attack. This is regardless of *source*. For instance, two opponents with Heat/Fire power can use their attack abilities to defend against one another . . . even if one is a priest with a Divine power and the other is a wizard with a Magical power.

2. If the defending and attacking powers are *opposed* (see *Opposed Powers*, p. 21), the defender can partially cancel out the attack by brute force. Again, source doesn't matter. For example, a super with the Cold/Ice power and another with the Heat/Fire power could attack and parry with their icy and fiery bolts.

In games that obey traditional comic-book physics, the GM should ignore all this and let *any* attack parry any other!

The only other requirements are that the parrying ability be currently accessible and have no limitation that prevents immediate activation, such as Takes Extra Time. Neither its *other* modifiers nor its damage type are important. For instance, an expanding ring of frost bought as a Fatigue Attack with Emanation and Freezing can parry a fireball bought as a straight-up Burning Attack. In all cases, the GM's word is final.

Calculate Power Parry as follows:

**Power Parry = 3 + (Innate Attack skill + Talent)/2**

Drop all fractions. For abilities that don't use Innate Attack skill (e.g., Emanations), use the formula under *Power Block* (below) instead. Standard Parry modifiers apply, with a few exceptions: there's no penalty to parry a ranged attack; shield DB only adds if the *attacking* ability has the Blockable or Melee Attack limitation; and modifiers for bad footing, posture, and relative height only apply if the *parrying* ability has Melee Attack.

On a success, each fighter rolls his damage. The defender subtracts his damage from that of the attacker. (*Exception*: If the parrying ability has Wall, subtract its DR.) If the defender rolls less damage than his attacker, the residual damage affects him normally – but if he took All-Out Defense (Double Defense), he *can* try to dodge this. If his damage equals or exceeds that of his attacker, he's unharmed; he doesn't damage his foe. If using *Collateral Damage* (p. 165), roll once on the table, using the larger attack's damage type and the modifier for the *difference* between damage dice.

On a failure, the defender is hit normally. His attack still goes off, though – roll for *both* attacks if using

## *In games that obey traditional comic-book physics, the GM should let **any** attack parry any other!*

*Collateral Damage. Exception*: If the GM is using *Crippled Abilities* (p. 156), a critical failure means the ability fails completely, on top of the usual effects of a critically failed defense roll.

Power Parry is meant for Innate Attacks, but the GM can let Afflictions parry other Afflictions and Bindings parry other Bindings. These attacks cancel out on a level-by-level basis: Affliction 3 reduces Affliction 4 to Affliction 1, Binding 15 reduces Binding 25 to Binding 10, and so on.

The GM might even let *any* attack ability parry any other. If so, 1d of Innate Attack, one level of Affliction, and *five* levels of Binding are equivalent for the specific purpose of negating one another; e.g., Affliction 8 reduces Innate Attack 10d to 2d, and Binding 20 reduces Innate Attack 10d to 6d and Affliction 8 to Affliction 4.

Power Parry is an active use of the parrying ability for *all* purposes.

### **Power Block**

If the GM wishes, those with powers can “reinforce” normally passive defensive abilities to better obstruct incoming attacks. This feat – called a Power Block – is possible in three situations:

1. The attack is Affliction or Innate Attack, the defensive ability is a form of Damage Resistance that's effective against the attack, and the two abilities belong to powers that either have the *same* focus or are *opposed*. The justification here is identical to that for Power Parry, and the GM is free to waive the restrictions on focus.

2. The attacking ability calls for a resistance roll and the defending ability provides a bonus to that roll; e.g.,

Mind Shield vs. Mind Control. In this case, focus and source are unimportant. The GM might even allow a Power Block with an ability that doesn't belong to a power.

3. The attack is Affliction or Innate Attack and the defending ability is a variety of Control or Obscure that could reasonably influence or block the attack's focus; e.g., Control (Light) or Obscure (Vision) vs. a laser.

In cases 1 and 2, the defending ability *can't* have the Active Defense limitation; if it does, it already requires a defense roll to work at all, and can't be reinforced. In case 3, Control and Obscure can't have any limitation that prevents rapid activation (e.g., Takes Extra Time).

Calculate Power Block as follows:

**Power Block = 3 + (HT + Talent)/2, for physical abilities.**

**Power Block = 3 + (Will + Talent)/2, for mental abilities.**

Drop all fractions. Standard Block modifiers apply, *except* those for footing, posture, relative height, retreating, and shield DB.

Success means the attack still hits but the defense is greatly enhanced. A defensive ability gets *double* its usual DR or resistance bonus against the attack, while each level of Control or Obscure provides DR 1 or +1 to resist, as applicable. Thus, a weak-but-talented telepath with Mind Shield 4 could double his resistance bonus to +8, almost ensuring successful resistance, while a smoke-tossing super could use Obscure 10 (Vision) to get DR 10 vs. a laser.

Failure means the defense has *no effect* – not even its usual effect. The attack goes right through it. A defender



taking All-Out Defense (Double Defense) can try another defense; otherwise, he's out of luck. If the GM is using *Crippled Abilities* (p. 156), critical failure can also cripple the ability. Thus, Power Block is a bit of gamble. Use it wisely!

Power Block counts as an active use of the defending ability, even if that ability is normally passive.

## RESISTING ABILITIES

These rules are only for abilities that have resistible effects. They apply specifically to *resistance* rolls – not to attack rolls for resisted abilities or defense rolls against them.

### Uncontested Resistance

Some abilities offer the subject a simple resistance roll against an attribute, Will, or Per, with success indicating that he's unaffected. Examples include Afflictions (except those with Malediction), Terror (unless given Active), and anything with the Glamour or Resistible limitation. Should it be unclear which score to use, assume HT if the ability affects the body, Will if it affects the mind.

*Modifiers to Resistance Roll:* A penalty equal to level-1 for Affliction; the Fright Check penalty bought for Terror; a modifier ranging from -5 to a bonus for Glamour or Resistible. Those attacking with Affliction can use *Trading Fatigue for Effect* (p. 160) to increase the level, and hence the penalty, temporarily. Coordinated Attack (Overwhelm) gives -1 per attack after the first that hits; see p. 165. See *Power Block* (p. 168), *Advantages that Aid Resistance*

(below), and *Trading Fatigue for Resistance* (below) for bonuses.

### Contested Resistance

Other abilities resolve resistance using a Quick Contest between attacker and defender. These obey the rules under *Resistance Rolls* (p. B348). Such attacks include Neutralize, anything modified with Malediction, and most mental-influence abilities – Illusion (Mental), Mind Control, Terror (Active), etc.

*Modifiers to Attacker's Roll:* A bonus equal to Talent; +1 to +4 from *Trading Fatigue for Skill* (p. 161).

*Modifiers to Defender's Roll:* All modifiers to resistance rolls given under *Uncontested Resistance* (above).

Enforce *The Rule of 16* (p. B349) after both sides have added all modifiers.

### Advantages that Aid Resistance

Many advantages give bonuses to resist specific types of attacks, including:

*Damage Resistance:* Adds to rolls to resist Afflictions – but Armor Divisor adjusts DR, while other penetration modifiers (e.g., Follow-Up, Malediction, Respiratory Agent, and Sense-Based) bypass it completely. Enhancements and limitations on the DR can be important, too. Directional and Partial mean the DR only applies if the attack strikes certain hit locations; Limited restricts the bonus to Afflictions in a specific category; and only DR with Force Field covers the eyes.

*Fearlessness:* Adds to rolls to resist any mental-influence ability when the

attacker's objective is to cause fear or induce a Fright Check.

*Fit:* Gives +1 (Fit) or +2 (Very Fit) to any HT-based resistance roll.

*Hard to Kill:* Adds to resistance against Afflictions modified with Heart Attack.

*Hard to Subdue:* Adds to resistance against Afflictions modified with Coma, Sleep, or Unconsciousness.

*High Pain Threshold:* Gives +3 to resist Afflictions modified with Agony or Pain (any level).

*Magic Resistance:* Adds to rolls to resist any ability with the Magical power modifier.

*Metabolism Control:* With the Mastery enhancement, gives a bonus equal to its level to any HT-based resistance roll.

*Mind Shield:* Adds to any IQ, Will, or Perception roll made to resist mental-influence abilities or abilities with the Glamour limitation.

*Protected Power* (p. 69): Gives +5 to resist *direct* attacks on the power itself; e.g., Neutralize.

*Protected Sense:* Gives +5 to resist Sense-Based attacks that exploit the shielded sense.

*Resistant:* Resistant gives +3 or +8 to resist a broad category of attacks; e.g., Resistant (Poison) adds to rolls to resist any Affliction, Fatigue Attack, or Toxic Attack defined as poison. It's possible to buy Resistant against *all* resistible abilities of a given power; focus, or source; see *Resistant* (p. 71) for details.

### Trading Fatigue for Resistance

At the GM's option, the target of any ability that allows a *contested* resistance roll can sacrifice FP for a bonus to resist. When using this rule, the attacker rolls secretly and tells the defender whether he succeeded or failed, but *not* his margin of success. The defender then declares how many FP he wishes to spend (maximum 4 FP), marks off the FP, and makes his resistance roll at +1 per FP used. This only benefits that one roll.

This rule is *optional* – but in the interest of fairness, the GM should probably use it if he allows *Trading Fatigue for Skill* (p. 161). Like extra effort, this option is unavailable to individuals with the Machine meta-trait.

### Talent as Resistance

Those who possess powers enjoy a degree of subconscious control over their power's focus and source, distinct from its specific abilities. This is the reasoning behind *Power Parry* (p. 167) and *Power Block* (p. 168). Optionally, the GM may use the same logic to permit those who have Talent with a power to add it to all rolls to resist that power's abilities. The defender only gets this bonus if his assailant's power has the same source, focus, and power modifier as his own.

# STUNTS

The players *will* eventually try to use the PCs' abilities in ways that no advantage or modifier provides rules for – particularly in campaigns that emulate myth, high fantasy, or comic books. The GM is free to forbid such attempts, of course, but it's more fun to allow them . . . as long as the risks balance the potential rewards.

These rules cover some of the more common heroic “stunts.” They're completely *optional*, and it's up to the GM whether they apply to all advantages, only to exotic or supernatural ones, or only to the abilities of powers. Be aware that these options make abilities *much* more flexible.

In all cases, a critical failure to perform a stunt involving a power can cripple the power, if *Crippled Abilities* (p. 156) is being used.

## COMBINING POWERS

In many kinds of fiction, power-wielders – notably wizards, psis, and supers – can cooperate to produce

effects that exceed their individual capabilities. This stunt, known as *combining powers*, is an involved process that directly links the participants' powers. If the objective is merely to gang up on an opponent, make a Coordinated Attack (p. 165) instead.

Any number of people can combine powers, but only if their powers have the same source: all divine, all psionic, etc. Their powers needn't have a common *focus*, though. For instance, priests of like-minded gods could combine divine powers, and espers and telepaths could combine psi powers. Those with identical powers (all priests of *Loki*, all psionic

*telepaths*, etc.) can combine more effectively, however.

The GM has the final say on who can combine powers with whom.

### Linking Up

The first step in combining powers is “linking up.” This normally requires the *entire group* to be in physical contact (but see below). Topology is unimportant as long as each participant is touching at least one other. The most common configurations are touching a common center and holding hands – often in a circle. In combat, some group members might have to take

*Any number of people can combine powers, but only if their powers have the same source: all divine, all psionic, etc.*

## Creative Uses of Special Effects

Most abilities are “second nature,” like walking and talking. The GM shouldn't require die rolls for *trivial* feats that take advantage of their special effects (see *Special Effects*, p. 113) – any more than he would make the PCs roll against DX to cross the street or IQ to engage in casual conversation. For instance, if Laser Lad buys Burning Attack (Variable), the GM should let him reduce it to 0d and use it as a laser pointer without a roll against Innate Attack skill.

Exploiting special effects in a manner that affects the plot (see *When to Roll*, p. B343, for guidelines) *does* require a roll, just as crossing a tightrope or inciting a riot requires a skill roll for walking or talking. The roll needn't be against the score that usually controls the ability, however. Use DX if reflexes matter, IQ if strategy or planning is important, and a skill if knowledge is involved. The GM might require Laser Lad to roll against Artist skill to burn a complex diagram on the wall, for example. As long as the stunt is still a minor use of special effects, though, it requires no penalties or costs to be balanced.

If a hero wishes to use one of his abilities as a different ability with similar special effects, that should require a die roll *and* involve costs or penalties; see *Using Abilities at Default* (p. 173). This would be the case if Laser Lad tried to blind someone with his laser, using his Innate Attack as an Affliction.

Move maneuvers to get close enough to touch others. Establishing contact with someone in reach requires a Ready maneuver.

Individuals unable to touch the rest of the group physically can still join via a *mental* link. The remote participant must either contact or be contacted by another member of the group using Mind Reading or Telesend. Use the standard rules to initiate contact; this generally requires a Concentrate maneuver. There's one drawback, though: mentally linked participants can only combine powers that originate from the same source as the ability used to establish contact; e.g., a mental link via psionic Mind Reading would only be useful when combining *psionic* powers.

Once everyone is in contact, physically or mentally, they must form a link between their *powers*. Each member of the group must take a Concentrate maneuver and roll against IQ.

*Modifiers:* A penalty equal to the number of *other* people involved (-1 for a group of two, -2 for a group of three, and so on); -2 if connected via a *one-way* mental link; +0 if using a physical link or *two-way* mental link (both parties using Telesend, one party using both Telesend and Mind Reading, etc.); Talent (the *highest* Talent, for those with multiple powers that share the group's common source); +5 if the entire group has the same power.

Success links that individual's powers to the group. Failure means he can't participate, but his power still lets him act as a "bridge" between other group members. Critical failure may cripple his power (see *Crippled Abilities*, p. 156), and cuts off those whose sole link to the group runs through him.

If the entire group agrees, those who failed can try again. *Everyone* must reroll, but this only counts as a repeated attempt for those who failed (see *Repeated Attempts*, p. 159). Use the same rule when a latecomer tries to join – but remember to apply the modifier for the *new* group size.

The GM is free to impose other conditions that suit the powers involved. Onerous requirements should come with compensating benefits. For instance, priests might require a full minute of ritual prayer to link up, but get to roll against the higher of IQ and Religious Ritual skill to do so.

## Combined Powers in Action

Linking up lets the group combine its abilities and Talents. For each task, the group must select one of their number as leader. This person can change from task to task. The leader can use any of *his* abilities for the task, and makes all associated die rolls . . . but he gets a big boost from his companions.

### Talent

The leader's effective Talent is his native Talent, plus 1/2 the total Talent of all group members who share the power he's using, plus 1/4 the total Talent of members who share only the source of that power. Drop all fractions. Effective Talent *can* exceed four levels.

### Ability

If the ability comes in levels, dice, ST points, etc., the leader's effective level is equal to the *highest* level among those who possess the same ability and power, plus 1/2 the total level of all other participants with that ability and power, plus 1/4 the total level of those who have an ability that uses the same advantage but belongs to a different power of the same source. Drop all fractions.

If the ability doesn't come in levels, the extra power lets the leader temporarily add or improve enhancements to his ability, remove or reduce its limitations, or both. Those with the same ability and power as the leader give +50% apiece; those with similar abilities from other powers of the same source give +25% each. The leader can modify his ability in any way his power and the GM allow. The GM should *always* permit boosts in area, duration, and range.

In either case, someone whose ability has limitations can only contribute if the GM agrees that the ability would be useful for *that specific task*.

### Other Effects

If the ability has a FP cost – for normal use or for a special feat like extra effort – the group can divide this among themselves however they please. In the event of a dispute, the GM can split the cost equally or just roll randomly to see who pays.

There are only two drawbacks to combining powers. First, critical failures affect each and every member of the group as if he, personally, had rolled a critical failure. Second, each use of a particular ability by the group counts as a use for *every* participant, for all purposes (repeated attempts, Limited Use, etc.).

### Unlinking

Any participant can end his involvement at any time, as a free action. Unlinking isn't always voluntary, though. A group member who's stunned must make a Will-3 roll, with failure meaning he's unlinked. One who is knocked out, or suffers an incapacitating or mortal affliction (see *Afflictions*, p. B428), is *automatically* unlinked. A physically linked participant is immediately unlinked if movement, knockback, or anything similar

forces him to break physical contact with the group. A mentally linked individual is instantly unlinked if the ability mediating his link fails due to jamming, incapacitation, etc. Those whose sole link to the group is through someone who's no longer linked are themselves unlinked.

The only effect unlinking has on the *group* is the loss of access to the gifts of the unlinked individual(s).

## Example of Combined Powers

Four of the East Side Mutants are trapped behind 10 tons of reinforced concrete in the collapsing stronghold of the nefarious Dr. Boom. They all have Telekinesis (TK), but even their strongest telekinetic, Singularity, can't budge the rubble – his TK 40 can only move 3,200 lbs. at Extra-Heavy encumbrance. The Mutants decide to combine their powers to escape.

Degauss has Magnetism power, Talent 2, and Telekinesis 30; his TK has the Magnetic limitation, but the GM rules that he can lock onto the steel rebar in the rubble. Poltergeist has Psychokinesis (PK) power, Talent 3, and TK 30. Singularity has Gravity power, Talent 2, and TK 40. Sk8ter has Kinetic Energy power, Talent 4, and TK 18. All four have the Super power modifier, so they can combine powers.

The Mutants' leader – a brain-in-a-jar known only as Professor Hippocampus – is across town at Mutant HQ. Sk8ter calls the Prof on her cell phone and fills him in on the situation. The Prof has Telepathy power, Telepathy Talent 4, and Telesend . . . and also PK power, PK Talent 2, and TK 40. Luckily, *both* of his powers have the Super modifier, so he can use Telesend to link up with Sk8ter and lend his PK to the task.

With the Prof in her head, Sk8ter touches hands with her three companions and they all concentrate. Everyone has to roll against IQ, at -4 for four other participants. Talent reduces this to -2 for Degauss and Singularity, -1 for Poltergeist, and 0 for Sk8ter and the Prof (he uses his *best* Talent) – but the Prof has an extra -2 for a one-way mental link, for a net -2. Being smarter than average, everyone succeeds, establishing the link.



Since the group has two psychokinetics and knows that identical powers work well together, they designate Poltergeist as their leader (the 10-yard range limit on TK puts the Prof out of the running). Poltergeist gets her PK Talent; plus 1/2 the Prof's PK Talent, since they share PK power; plus 1/4 the others' Talents, since they share only a source. That comes to  $3 + 2/2 + (2 + 2 + 4)/4 = 6$ .

As for Telekinesis, Poltergeist uses the *highest* level possessed by those who share her power, which is the Prof's 40, plus 1/2 her own TK level, plus 1/4 the others' levels. This is  $40 + 30/2 + (30 + 40 + 18)/4 = 77$ .

Telekinesis 77 still isn't enough to move 10 tons . . . but Poltergeist can apply her high effective Talent to use extra effort. At -1 to Will per extra 5%, she goes for an extra 30%. The +6 for Talent cancels the -6 on the roll. She makes her Will roll, pays 1 FP, and adds 30% to the combined TK level. That comes to TK 100 – and ST 100 is just enough to lift 10 tons at Extra-Heavy encumbrance. With a titanic effort, the Mutants toss aside the concrete slab and escape to freedom!

## TEMPORARY ENHANCEMENTS

Many fictional adventurers blithely modify their abilities on the fly, meeting each problem with a creative solution. Players who want to do this kind of thing regularly should consider taking Selectivity (p. B108) alongside many other enhancements, connecting several related abilities using the *Alternative Abilities* rule (p. 11), or just buying Modular Abilities (p. B71). The GM might allow *anyone* to add temporary enhancements in a pinch, though . . . at a cost.

The first step is to specify the game-world effects of the stunt. The player must tell the GM *exactly* what he wishes to accomplish and which enhancements he feels would let his ability do this. The proposed use must be a simple extension of the ability, consistent with the focus and source of the user's power, and involve only enhancements normally allowed on the underlying advantage.

If the GM agrees that a few enhancements would do the job,

proceed to the next step. If he feels that the desired changes call for an entirely new advantage, see *Using Abilities at Default* (p. 173). And if he decides that the proposed stunt isn't possible, it isn't! In particular, the GM should consider forbidding anything that calls for Link, Reduced Fatigue Cost, Reduced Time, Reliable (but see *Trading Fatigue for Skill*, p. 161), or enhancements that negate the ability's permanent limitations, and only allow Cosmic when truly appropriate.

Adding temporary enhancements requires a Concentrate maneuver and a Will roll for a mental ability, a Ready maneuver and a HT roll for a physical one. In games that use *Skills Enhancing Abilities* (p. 161), the GM might permit a Will- or HT-based roll against a suitable skill instead. Use Expert Skill (Psionics) for psi powers, Meditation for chi powers, Religious Ritual for divine powers, Ritual Magic for spirit powers, Thaumatology for magical powers, and so on.

*Modifiers: -1 per +10% of enhancements added, or fraction thereof. The user can offset this penalty (but never get a net bonus) by voluntarily spending FP; each FP cancels -1 in penalties. Those using powers get a bonus equal to their Talent.*

Succeed or fail, the attempt costs 2 FP over and above any voluntary FP expenditure.

Success means the ability gains the desired enhancements. If the enhanced ability is transient – Healing, Innate Attack, etc. – it gets one “shot.” The user must prepare and roll again if he wants to repeat the stunt. Ongoing abilities get a minute of enhanced use, and the user can maintain the enhanced effects by making a new roll and paying FP every minute. On a critical success, there's no FP cost for that use or minute.

Failure means the ability gains no enhancements but continues to function normally. On a critical failure, it becomes so scrambled that it's unavailable for 1d seconds. This is true even for always-on abilities. In addition, check for crippling (see *Crippled Abilities*, p. 156) – and note that the consequences apply to the *entire power*.

Below are some suggested uses for temporary enhancements. The GM is free to allow whatever he likes in *his* campaign.

## Enhancing Active Abilities

Enhancements that increase an ability's physical *scope* – e.g., Area Effect to widen area, Can Carry Objects to affect more weight, Extended Duration to increase duration (but *never* to permanent), and Increased Range to extend range – are generally suitable for all active abilities that have the relevant parameters. Selectivity is also acceptable; it lets the user switch *off* one or more permanent enhancements that aren't required by his power. The GM should judge other enhancements, particularly special enhancements, on a case-by-case basis.

## Improving Attacks

Some specific temporary enhancements are especially suitable for attacks:

- *Area Effect*: A single level (filling a two-yard radius) is reasonable for any attack, and represents spreading the attack over a small area. Attacks that *already* have Area Effect can add any number of levels.

- *Armor Divisor*: Any attack other than an area effect, cone, or explosion can add a level of this enhancement to represent narrowing the attack to better pierce armor.

- *Cone*: As for Area Effect, except that attacks that lack Cone are limited to a cone a yard wide. This represents widening or “fanning” the attack.

- *Cyclic*: Two or three cycles, with an interval no longer than 10 seconds, are suitable for Corrosion and Burning Attacks that don't normally endure.

- *Drifting, Mobile, Persistent, and Selective Area*: An attack with Area Effect can have Persistent or Selective Area as a temporary enhancement. Drifting and Mobile can always accompany Persistent.

- *Low or No Signature*: The user can always try to attack stealthily, unless his ability has glaringly obvious effects (GM's decision).

● *Rapid Fire*: The GM might allow this as a kind of Rapid Strike with a ranged attack. Maximum RoF shouldn't exceed twice regular RoF (giving RoF 2 for most attacks).

● *Variable*: This lets the attacker "pull his punch" with an ability that doesn't normally allow that degree of control.

● *Wall*: Attacks that have the +30% level of Wall can boost it to the +60% level, letting the user shape the effects. Attacks that lack Wall in the first place can't add it.

The GM *shouldn't* allow temporary enhancements that change the attack's fundamental game-world effects – for instance, by turning a beam to gas. This restriction might prohibit some of the options above, and nearly always excludes Aura, Blood Agent, Contact Agent, Follow-Up, Guided, Homing, Jet, Malediction, Overhead, Respiratory Agent, Sense-Based, Side Effect, Symptoms, Underwater, and most Damage Modifiers.

## Enhancing Passive Abilities

Few passive abilities are suitable for temporary enhancement. Those that have active *uses* are the exception. When actively using such abilities, the wielder can enhance them as described for active abilities.

## Extending Defenses

Most defensive abilities aren't under the user's conscious control – they're passive and always on. The GM should generally forbid temporary enhancements on them, with two exceptions:

*Force Fields*: Fictional heroes with personal force fields often extend them to protect others. The GM should allow the combination of Affects Others *and* Area Effect on any ability that already has Force Field. See *Affects Others* (p. 107) for details on combining these modifiers.

*Mind Shield*: The Force Field enhancement is intended to protect the user's eyes and possessions. It rarely makes sense for Mind Shield, which protects the *mind*. The GM should permit it in conjunction with Affects Others *and* Area Effect,

though. This allows powerful mentalists to protect their friends – a feat often seen in fiction.

## USING ABILITIES AT DEFAULT

The GM might permit cinematic heroes to press active abilities into service as related abilities based on *totally different advantages*. For instance, a super with a laser built from Innate Attack might retool it as a blinding Affliction in an emergency. Such temporary capabilities are called "defaults," by analogy to skill defaults (p. B173). The flexibility of defaults comes at a price, however. Those who plan to engage in constant improvisation are better off with Modular Abilities (p. B71).



Before allowing any default, the GM should have the player describe the proposed stunt's precise game-world effects. The player must specify the ability he intends to use, the one he wishes to emulate, and why he thinks his character could make the first serve as the second. There must be an *uncontrived* relationship between the special effects of the two abilities – and if a power is involved, both abilities must belong to the power. Thus, only related abilities of the same power default to one another. It's up to the GM what defaults, if any, are possible for "wild" advantages.

The default ability *must* share the starting ability's power modifier and all of its usage limitations: Accessibility, Costs Fatigue, Limited

Use, Preparation Required, Takes Extra Time, Takes Recharge, Trigger, Unreliable, etc. If the starting ability requires 10 seconds of concentration and costs 5 FP, so does anything that defaults to it . . . and if it only gets one use per day, the default use counts.

Finally, the point value of the default ability can't exceed that of the one providing the default. Use both abilities' *final* costs, after all modifiers. Don't stop the game to do math, though. The GM should simply estimate the point costs involved. Of course, the players are welcome to work out likely default uses before play begins, if they *want* to run the numbers.

The GM decides whether a default is possible given these considerations. If it is, skip to the next step. Otherwise, he rolls secretly against the hero's IQ, with +4 for Common Sense but at -2 or more if a disadvantage such as Bad Temper or Overconfidence is involved. On a success, he tells the player that the proposed improvisation isn't possible. On a failure, he applies the rules below – penalties, FP costs, etc. – but *doesn't* say that the stunt is impossible. When the time comes to *use* the ability, though, it has only its usual effects. Default use is risky for those with an inflated view of their capabilities!

Improvising one ability from another requires a Concentrate maneuver and a Will roll if the starting ability is mental, a Ready maneuver and a HT roll if physical. A Will- or HT-based roll against a skill might be possible instead; see *Temporary Enhancements* (p. 172) for details.

*Modifiers*: -2 per 25% of the starting ability's point cost the default ability is worth, or fraction thereof; e.g., for a 40-point ability, this would be -2 for a default that costs 1-10 points, -4 for 11-20 points, -6 for 21-30 points, and -8 for 31-40 points. Apply another -2 if the two abilities aren't of the same general type – both attacks, both defenses, both communications abilities, etc. The user can offset these penalties (but never get a bonus) by spending FP; each FP cancels -1. Those using powers may add their Talent.

Succeed or fail, the attempt costs 3 FP *over and above* any voluntary FP expenditure.

Success means the ability works as intended. If it's transient, each use of this stunt gives one "shot." If it's ongoing, the user gets a minute of operation, after which he must roll again and pay FP for another minute. On a critical success, there's no FP cost for that use or minute. Whatever the ability and however great the success, default abilities get -2 to all required die rolls due to unfamiliarity (see *Familiarity*, p. B169). In addition, if the user lacks the skill needed to wield the ability, he must use that skill at default. These penalties are cumulative. The GM may allow heroes to reduce the penalties for use (not for the stunt itself) by buying a technique.

Failure means nothing happens, but the ability continues to function normally. This is obvious except when the stunt is impossible and the person attempting it fails his IQ roll and tries it anyhow. On a critical failure, the ability – even one that's always on – goes offline for a second, and the user must check for crippling (see *Crippled Abilities*, p. 156), with the results affecting his *entire power*.

Below are some common options for default use. The GM is the final judge of what's possible.

### Amplify

Fictional heroes often "overload" nonlethal attacks, turning them into Innate Attacks. This is especially likely for Afflictions – a blinding light beam becomes a scorching laser; a paralysis ray becomes a neural disruptor; and so on. In the case of Binding, amplification typically involves bludgeoning victims with the projected force or matter. Even Obscure can have lethal potential; e.g., thickening blinding smoke into choking gas.

Occasionally, amplification lets a *non-attack* ability work as an attack. For instance, a desperate hero might use Control to concentrate ambient energy into a weapon, or ramp up the output of Scanning Sense or Telecommunication for offensive use. This can result in Affliction or Innate Attack. The -2 for different ability types is mandatory here!

### Moderate

It's also possible to "tone down" an ability to produce more subtle effects. The usual application is to turn Innate Attack into a nonlethal weapon; e.g., dial back a sonic blast to a deafening Affliction, or strategically place ice bolts to act as an icy Binding. If the power's *focus* is fundamentally dangerous – like death magic or gamma rays – the GM shouldn't allow nonlethal effects as defaults, though.

By accepting the extra -2 for changing ability types, attacks can also emulate *non-attack* abilities, such as Scanning Sense and Telecommunication. For instance, a sonic blast could become Sonar or Directional Sound.

Moderation isn't just for attacks. Many advantages could be "less extreme" versions of others: Possession might act as Mind Control by influencing the target's mind without utterly dominating him, Terror might serve as Rapier Wit by unnerving victims without terrifying them, Flight might scale back to Super Jump, and so on.

### Target

Another option is to wield the ability with greater *precision* than usual. Examples include modulating

Scanning Sense as makeshift Telecommunication; aiming Binding at the eyes to act as a blinding Affliction; employing Neutralize to burn out one specific ability, turning it into an Affliction with Negated Advantage; and using subtle Mind Control to convince the subject he's afraid, causing Terror. If the default use corresponds to *physical* precision – e.g., aiming at the eyes – use the *larger* of the -2 for unfamiliarity and the usual penalty to hit.

### Broadcast

Conversely, a normally precise ability might act entirely differently when spread over an area. Tight-beam Telecommunication might serve as Scanning Sense; someone with Illusion could generate "noise" that acts as Obscure; some types of Innate Attack might disperse enough to function as Create (*especially* those that project electricity, light, or sound); and Telesend could project a disconcerting aura that works as Terror.

### Reverse

Even "opposite" abilities might default to one another, if they're part of a power that regards them as halves of a single, two-way capability (GM's decision). For instance, the wielder of a power that includes Control (Air) and Control (Vacuum) might reverse the flow of air, allowing one Control to default to the other. Likewise, the user of a power that offers Precognition and Psychometry might actively use one as the other by looking in the opposite "direction" in time. Reversed uses are *always* at -2 for changing ability type.

## SOURCE-SPECIFIC RULES

For each power in the campaign – or at least, each *source* – the GM should examine the options in this chapter and choose those that give the "flavor" he desires. Not every power need allow defaults, extra effort, and so on. A few powers might even be subject to unique rules. Here are some recommendations for optional rules to use with common power modifiers (see *Sample Modifiers*, p. 26), including:

*Beneficial Options:* Suggestions as to which effectiveness-boosting options best suit that power source, based on fictional precedents. *Abilities Enhancing Skills* (p. 162), *Creative Uses of Special Effects* (p. 170), and *Talent as Resistance* (p. 169) should apply to *all* powers – and the first two to "wild" advantages as well – if they apply at all.

*Limiting Options:* Recommended "controls" on such powers. *Skills for Everyone* (p. 162) qualifies because those who don't spend extra points on special skills must rely on their defaults, giving them an effective -6 to use their abilities.

*Special Rules:* Additional optional rules and notes that apply only to those powers.



If the GM feels that a given power is simply *better* because it enjoys many beneficial options or suffers from few or no limiting ones, he's free to adjust its power modifier or assess an Unusual Background cost.

## BIOLOGICAL POWERS

**Beneficial Options:** *Skills Enhancing Abilities* (p. 161) often applies, since the user's special gifts are "natural" and as easily incorporated into mundane training as ordinary physical capabilities. In most worlds, the only absolute limit on what these powers can accomplish is the wielder's supply of bioenergy; thus, *Temporary Enhancements* (p. 172), *Trading Fatigue for Effect* (p. 160), and *Using Abilities at Default* (p. 173) are highly appropriate.

**Limiting Options:** Biological abilities are about as tiring as lifting, running, and so on – and like physical feats, they can lead to crippling strain if pushed too far. *Abilities and Exertion* (p. 159) and *Crippled Abilities* (p. 156) are strongly recommended.

### Special Rules for Biological Powers

**Targeting Biological Abilities:** Fighters who've studied biological powers might be able to target the unusual organs responsible for these gifts. To attempt this, the attacker must observe the target ability in action and make a successful roll on Expert Skill (Bio-Powers), Physiology (*Homo superior*), or other obscure skill set by the GM. Success lets him target that ability at -8 using any impaling, piercing, or tight-beam burning attack. Figure injury as for the torso. A major wound (see p. B420) cripples the ability. Use *Duration of Crippling Injuries* (p. B422) to determine recovery. Permanent crippling is possible. To overload a power without damaging the target, use *Deliberate Crippling* (p. 156) instead.

## CHI POWERS

**Beneficial Options:** The customary link between these powers and the more colorful claims made for the martial arts sets the tone. *Coordinated*

*Attacks* (p. 165) and *Defending with Powers* (p. 167) suit larger-than-life combat; *Power Techniques* (p. 162) complement mundane combat techniques; and *Skills Enhancing Abilities* (p. 161) makes it possible for those with cinematic skills to get the most out of their gifts. Mighty efforts are elemental to martial-arts mythology, so *Trading Fatigue for Effect* (p. 160) and *Trading Fatigue for Skill* (p. 161) also fit.

**Limiting Options:** *Abilities and Exertion* (p. 159) and *Crippled Abilities* (p. 156) are highly appropriate, given the blurry line between chi-fueled feats and ordinary physical ones. *Repeated Attempts* (p. 159) is ideal for settings where true masters do things on the first attempt while novices squander their chi trying and failing. Given the emphasis on training in martial-arts fiction, the GM may wish to consider *Skills for Everyone* (p. 62).

### Special Rules for Chi Powers

**Chi Imbalance:** If a chi-user somehow manages to cripple his *power*, he suffers a chi imbalance in addition to the usual effects. This takes the form of a long-term affliction; see *Chi* (p. 26) for details.

**Skill Use:** Those who possess a chi ability and a cinematic martial-arts skill that cover similar ground – Invisibility and Invisibility Art, Super Jump and Flying Leap, etc. – get +4 when they use the ability to enhance the skill, and may roll against the skill instead of an attribute to use the ability. The GM should also consider letting Power Blow replace Will for extra effort with chi powers. Finally, Body Control and Meditation might stand in for HT and Will, respectively, when checking for crippled chi abilities or powers. In all cases, only use a skill if it's *better* than the usual score.

**Targeting Chi Abilities:** The Pressure Secrets skill (p. B215) can target physical chi abilities by striking the vitals, or mental ones by striking the skull, at an *extra* -2 to hit. If the victim suffers at least one point of injury, roll a Quick Contest of Pressure Secrets vs. the subject's HT (physical) or Will (mental). Victory cripples the target ability for 2d seconds, after which it recovers automatically.

## COSMIC POWERS

**Beneficial Options:** Godlike powers should have access to the entire gamut of options – even when other powers don't – unless the GM deems a particular rule inappropriate for his campaign.

**Limiting Options:** *Collateral Damage* (p. 165) is a classic result of battles that involve truly awesome powers. *Crippled Abilities* (p. 156) should apply when using optional rules that charge FP to "push the envelope," but not at any other time. The GM should also consider waiving *Abilities and Exertion* (p. 159). Of course, demigods might stumble and sweat as much as anyone else in a *silly* campaign . . .

### Special Rules for Cosmic Powers

**Laws of Creation:** In keeping with myth, the GM may rule that even godlike powers are subject to certain basic restrictions built into the universe, and that there's no way to remove these limits . . . save, perhaps, with the unanimous agreement of *every* wielder of cosmic powers. For instance, the GM might declare that cosmic abilities can't disrupt the mass, orbits, and so on of astronomical bodies (planets, stars, etc.) – even when the rules suggest that this is possible.

## DIVINE POWERS

**Beneficial Options:** *Combining Powers* (p. 170) is ideal for complex rituals involving many priests. Holy folk can sometimes use skills such as Exorcism and Religious Ritual to direct their abilities; this is a special case of *Skills Enhancing Abilities* (p. 161). Use *Temporary Enhancements* (p. 172), *Trading Fatigue for Effect* (p. 160), *Trading Fatigue for Skill* (p. 161), and *Using Abilities at Default* (p. 173) when those blessed with divine powers pray for additional aid.

**Limiting Options:** When mortals smite foes with divine might, their imperfect control is likely to cause *Collateral Damage* (p. 165). Other ways to represent the limited ability of holy servants to control divine will are *Multiple Feats* (p. 158) and *Repeated Attempts* (p. 159). In settings where each miracle demands a specific ritual, the GM may wish to use *Skills for Everyone* (p. 162).

## Special Rules for Divine Powers

*Angering the Gods:* On a critical failure when using optional rules to improve or alter a divine ability, don't use *Crippled Abilities* (p. 156). Instead, make a reaction roll for the deity, at -1 per similar failure since the miracle-worker last paid penance, sacrificed, etc. A Poor or worse reaction results in the same outcome as violating the power's required disadvantages; see *Divine* (p. 26). Even an ordinary, *successful* application of a divine ability can produce such effects, if the deity doesn't approve.

*Holy Days:* Divine powers might track a sacred calendar created by the GM. This could be astronomical (solar, lunar, celestial, etc.), numerological, or seemingly *random*. Certain days or seasons might give skill bonuses or extra effect, while others impede power use. Bonuses and penalties should roughly cancel out over the course of a year.

*Sanctity Level:* In settings where holy powers resemble magic, the "sanctity" levels mentioned for *Clerical Magic* (p. B242) might affect divine abilities. These parallel mana levels (see *Mana*, p. B235), with the following effects:

- In areas of *no* sanctity (places deliberately desecrated with respect to the deity, sites of very high sanctity for diametrically opposed deities, etc.), the abilities don't work at all.
- In areas of *low* sanctity (sites of high sanctity for diametrically opposed deities, and natural places opposed to the deity's sphere of influence; e.g., the sea, for a fire god), die rolls to activate the abilities are at -5.
- In areas where sanctity is *normal* (most places, including the temples of unopposed divinities), *high* (the deity's own temples, as well as natural places

attuned to the deity's sphere of influence; e.g., a volcano, for a fire god), or *very high* (ancient and powerful temples, sites where the deity has performed miracles, etc.), the abilities work normally.

## ELEMENTAL POWERS

*Beneficial Options:* These powers emphasize direct control over an element. In most cases, this implies sufficient precision to fight creatively using *Coordinated Attacks* (p. 165) and *Defending with Powers* (p. 167), as well as some latitude to adapt abilities on the fly via *Temporary Enhancements* (p. 172), *Trading Fatigue for Effect* (p. 160), *Trading Fatigue for Skill* (p. 161), and *Using Abilities at Default* (p. 173).

*Limiting Options:* Most elemental abilities are *energetic*, and should be subject to both *Abilities and Exertion* (p. 159) and *Collateral Damage* (p. 165). When spending FP to "push the envelope," *Crippled Abilities* (p. 156) applies. Since precise control requires undivided attention, the GM should consider enforcing *Multiple Feats* (p. 158).

## Special Rules for Elemental Powers

*Aspect:* As a twist on *Talent as Resistance* (p. 169), the GM may rule that Talent with an elemental power means the possessor has an innate "aspect" toward his element . . . and away from its opposite. He gets a bonus equal to Talent on all rolls to resist his element in any form, mundane or powered – but Talent acts as a *penalty* whenever he must resist the opposed element. For instance, Heat/Fire Talent 3 would give +3 to

resist Heat/Fire abilities and ordinary heat, but -3 to resist Cold/Ice abilities and ordinary cold.

*"Out of Your Element":* The Elemental power modifier is in essence an Accessibility or Environmental limitation that prevents elemental abilities from working in situations where the element can't exist or the opposed element prevails. In environments where the element is merely suppressed – not completely shut out – the GM may assess a -1 to -9 penalty to related abilities. The power is unavailable in situations where the penalty is -10 or more. For example, in hot environments, Cold/Ice abilities might be subject to the penalties to HT rolls under *Heat* (p. B434).

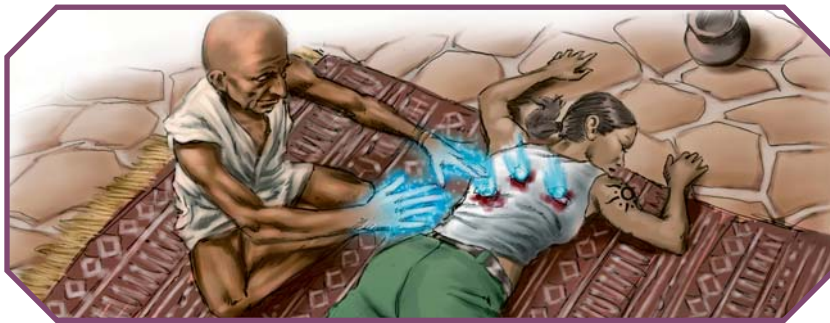
## MAGICAL POWERS

*Beneficial Options:* Use *Combining Powers* (p. 170), not *Ceremonial Magic* (p. B238), when those with magical abilities cooperate. Dedicated students of magic might practice *Power Techniques* (p. 162) and have access to *Skills Enhancing Abilities* (p. 161), rolling against Thaumatology and other arcane skills to employ their gifts. The dramatic reason to use magical powers instead of spells is to permit improvisation; thus, the GM should consider *Temporary Enhancements* (p. 172) and *Using Abilities at Default* (p. 173).

*Limiting Options:* To keep magical abilities in line with spells – which have a FP cost to maintain and take -1 per spell "on" – the GM should probably enforce *Abilities and Exertion* (p. 159) and *Multiple Feats* (p. 158). He might also adopt *Skills for Everyone* (p. 162) and require mages who desire precise control over their abilities to learn spell-like skills.

## Special Rules for Magical Powers

*Backfires:* If a mage critically fails when attempting to use temporary enhancements or default abilities, roll on the *Critical Spell Failure Table* (p. B236) instead of using *Crippled Abilities* (p. 156). A roll of 17 on the table, which would cause a spell-caster to forget his spell, means the ability is crippled.





*Drawbacks of Magic:* The Magical limitation (p. 27) is worth -10% because magical abilities work at -5 in areas of low mana (and not at all if there's no mana), allow targets with Magic Resistance a bonus to resist, and are subject to disruptive spells – Blocking spells can ward off attacks, Dispel Magic can end ongoing effects, and spells that resist magic can block new effects. In Quick Contests with spells, use the ability's controlling attribute or skill as its effective skill level. If it normally requires no roll, use HT for a physical ability, Will for a mental one. Talent still applies.

## MORAL POWERS

*Beneficial Options:* Banding together against Evil, Chaos, or some similar menace is a venerable fantasy tradition, so the GM should consider permitting *Combining Powers* (p. 170) and *Coordinated Attacks* (p. 165). An interesting alternative is to allow only Good or Order to combine powers, while only Evil or Chaos can coordinate attacks. In epic moral conflicts, it's traditional for opposing powers to obstruct one another and for true heroes to push themselves past their limits; thus, *Defending with Powers* (p. 167), *Trading Fatigue for Effect* (p. 160), and *Trading Fatigue for Skill* (p. 161) all fit.

*Limiting Options:* Apply *Abilities and Exertion* (p. 159) when champions use their capabilities in wearying patrols, vigils, and battles to thwart The Other Side. *Collateral Damage* (p. 165) is crucial to epic battles between Light and Darkness. The GM should also look at *Multiple Feats* (p. 158), as it forces heroes to make difficult choices about *where* to apply their limited capabilities, which is quite fitting in great moral struggles.

### Special Rules for Moral Powers

*Faltering:* Don't use *Crippled Abilities* (p. 156) for critical failures with moral powers. Instead, the hero must make an immediate Will roll. Failure means a moment of doubt or hesitation, which counts as a violation of his power's required disadvantages; see *Moral* (p. 27). Any application of moral abilities can

have similar consequences, if the wielder is acting against his cause.

*Places of Power:* Sites associated with noble – or heinous – acts can acquire a moral “charge” over time. This gives from +1 to +5 to use the moral power behind said deeds, but a matching penalty (-1 to -5) to employ its anti-power. This can be a serious obstacle when taking the battle to the enemy!

## NATURE POWERS

*Beneficial Options:* *Combining Powers* (p. 170) is logical for any power that emanates from a “life energy” field that ties together every living thing. *Skills Enhancing Abilities* (p. 161) – especially with such skills as Herb Lore and Naturalist – supports the traditional identification of nature guardians as wise men. The GM should also entertain *Trading Fatigue for Skill* (p. 161), as it permits those who wield nature powers to work around the penalties for despoilment and technology . . . at a cost.

*Limiting Options:* A common assumption in folklore is that nature responds poorly to constant prodding, making *Repeated Attempts* (p. 159) appropriate. Nature also appears to reserve *Collateral Damage* (p. 165) for urban areas, leaving wild places untouched. *Skills for Everyone* (p. 162) isn't appropriate in most cases – wise folk might be learned, but the formality of study is almost antithetical to nature in its wildest form.

### Special Rules for Nature Powers

*Aspect:* As with elemental powers, the GM may rule that *Talent as Resistance* (p. 169) works somewhat differently here. Talent with a nature power might add not only to rolls to resist that power, but also to resistance rolls against truly natural threats, such as plant and animal poisons. If so, it acts as a *penalty* to resist toxic pollution, genetically engineered diseases, and other “abominations.” It also subtracts from any roll to adapt to or use surgical implants or bionics.

*Despoilment and Technology:* Remember to apply the special modifiers under *Nature* (p. 28) to all rolls to use nature abilities.

## PSIONIC POWERS

*Beneficial Options:* Telepaths linking up to form a collective mind is the archetype for *Combining Powers* (p. 170); the GM might wish to permit this option for psi powers even if he forbids it elsewhere. Use *Defending with Powers* (p. 167) for mental blocks, stopping bullets with PK, and so on – and *Temporary Enhancements* (p. 172) to extend such defenses to others. Psi academies often teach *Power Techniques* (p. 162) for feats like active Precognition, and train psis to employ their gifts as extensions of mundane capabilities, leading to *Skills Enhancing Abilities* (p. 161). *Trading Fatigue for Effect* (p. 160) is a standard fictional trope – but so is a penalty for trying too hard, which makes *Trading Fatigue for Skill* (p. 161) unsuitable.

*Limiting Options:* In most game worlds, psis can burn out their powers if they are careless or unlucky (*Crippled Abilities*, p. 156), are capable of concentrating on only a few tasks at a time (*Multiple Feats*, p. 158), and tend to break a sweat if their initial attempt is frustrated (*Repeated Attempts*, p. 159). Psi is famously difficult to control without training, which the GM can represent with *Skills for Everyone* (p. 162).

### Special Rules for Psionic Powers

*Brain vs. Mind:* Psi powers flow from the *mind* and stay with the psi if he switches into a body with another *brain*. However, the psi's current brain must work properly if he wishes to use psi – just as a computer must be functional for software to run on it. At the GM's option, a psi must make a HT roll for each psi power whenever he suffers a major wound (see p. B420) to the eye or skull. Treat failure exactly as per *Crippled Abilities* (p. 156). Also roll if suffocation, surgery, or drugs inflict over HP/2 as brain damage.

*Psi-Tech:* Superscience countermeasures are almost standard in settings with psionic powers. Antipsi helmet lining might grant Mind Shield 6 (Limited, Psionic, -50%), and add \$1,000 to helmet cost and 1 lb. to weight. Typical antipsi drugs might give Resistant to Psionics (+3) for



6 hours and costs \$100 per injectable dose – but such agents, being experimental, are likely to have side effects on a failed HT roll (the irritating conditions on p. B428 all fit). The GM should let gadgeteers develop better drugs using *Ultra-Tech Drugs* (p. B425) with *Gadgeteering* (p. B475).

## SPIRIT POWERS

**Beneficial Options:** Like other ritualists, sorcerers can cooperate to produce powerful effects; see *Combining Powers* (p. 170). Skills such as Ritual Magic and Symbol Drawing could logically replace attribute rolls for spirit abilities – a version of *Skills Enhancing Abilities* (p. 161). *Trading Fatigue for Effect* (p. 160) and *Trading Fatigue for Skill* (p. 161) are both excellent ways to represent “sacrifices” made to spirits for more potent results.

**Limiting Options:** Since spirits are notoriously indifferent to the harm they cause in the material world, the GM may wish to roll for *Collateral Damage* (p. 165) for any use of spirit abilities that could conceivably cause damage. *Multiple Feats* (p. 158) is eminently suitable, since only the greatest sorcerers can command more than a few spirits. In some worlds, each ability involves specific spirits called with a unique invocation; handle this with *Skills for Everyone* (p. 162).

### Special Rules for Spirit Powers

**Angering the Spirits:** Attempts to use spirit abilities call for a reaction roll, per *Fickle* (p. 110). If the result is Neutral or better, the sorcerer can try his ability; otherwise, he can’t, and future invocations are at a cumulative

-1 to reactions. If the roll to *use* the ability critically fails, handle it just as if the initial reaction roll had come up Poor. If the critical failure involved extra effort, treat it like a Very Bad initial reaction. These effects are instead of *Crippled Abilities* (p. 156), and the cumulative reaction penalty replaces *Repeated Attempts* (p. 159).

**Blood:** In many worlds, the only way to get spirits to do you a favor is to offer them blood. If this is true, extra effort with spirit powers costs HP instead of FP.

**Ritual Modifiers:** If the GM wishes to make spirit abilities work more like traditional rituals, he may apply some or all of these modifiers:

- **Affecting others:** Most abilities that work on others assume that the target is in the sorcerer’s physical presence. Some have stricter requirements, like touch. Those that can affect targets that *aren’t* present – Telesend, Maledictions on those viewed remotely, etc. – require a representation of the subject to work, and even then have a penalty for his absence: -1 for a video or DNA sample, -2 for a photo or blood sample, -3 for hair or fingernails, -4 for clothing, -6 for a drawing, or -10 for nothing. Optionally, these modifiers can replace *Long-Distance Modifiers* (p. B241) for abilities that would normally use them.

- **Consecration:** -1 to -5 for ritually desecrated ground, +0 under most circumstances, or +1 to +5 for specially consecrated areas.

- **Regalia:** -3 if the sorcerer lacks proper ritual trappings – masks, robes, etc.

- **Ritual length:** To negate the above penalties, the sorcerer can take extra time to use his ability. Shifting a time requirement of seconds to

minutes, one of minutes to hours, or one of hours to days gives +3; two steps give +5; and three steps give +7.

## SUPER-POWERS

**Beneficial Options:** Super-powers typically occur in cinematic settings, and the GM should plan accordingly. Super-teams often work together by *Combining Powers* (p. 170) and making *Coordinated Attacks* (p. 165). In battle, supers routinely use *Defending with Powers* (p. 167) and *Ricochets* (p. 166). And it’s essential to the genre for heroes to stretch their powers with *Temporary Enhancements* (p. 172), *Trading Fatigue for Effect* (p. 160), *Trading Fatigue for Skill* (p. 161), and *Using Abilities at Default* (p. 173).

**Limiting Options:** *Abilities and Exertion* (p. 159) explains why supers without massive levels of Enhanced Move can’t fly to Mars, and why even the toughest heroes get ground down by war, natural disaster, etc. *Collateral Damage* (p. 165) is practically required for super-battles. Super-powers are similar to psi powers in most other respects – they’re the same thing in some worlds – and should use *Crippled Abilities* (p. 156), *Multiple Feats* (p. 158), *Repeated Attempts* (p. 159), and possibly *Skills for Everyone* (p. 162).

### Special Rules for Super-Powers

**Super-Tech:** In hallowed comic-book tradition, the GM may rule that weird-science technology can affect super-powers. This is typically the purview of gadgeteers and the operatives of “black” agencies. *Reliable* technology works like the shielding or serum used against psi powers (see *Psionic Powers*, p. 177). More potent gadgets create rays or fields that simulate Neutralize or Static, and shouldn’t show up in the hands of common thugs. In most cases, they’re *flawed*, with 1d/2 bugs (round up); see *Gadget Bugs Table* (p. B476). Furthermore, they rely on weird science and have 1d-3 side effects (minimum one); see *Random Side Effects Table* (p. B479). All such flaws are permanent – the GM shouldn’t let gadgeteer PCs engineer them away to create “perfect weapons.”

### FP Cost and Source

Sometimes, using an ability costs FP. This requirement might be built into the underlying advantage, a result of the Costs Fatigue limitation, or a consequence of the special rules in this chapter. If the ability belongs to a power, *all* such FP costs are subject to any special rules for FP associated with the power’s source in the game world. For instance, since FP spent on magic spells recharge in one second in areas with very high mana (see *Mana*, p. B235), so do FP spent on magical powers. Likewise, if sacrifices to spirits can supply FP for sorcery (see *Sacrificial Magic*, *GURPS Fantasy*, p. 165), the same FP can fuel spirit powers.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# POWER GAMES



*There was a blonde. A blonde to make a grand hierophant kick a hole in a stained glass window. She had, in fact, done so on three separate occasions. My client was annoyed by this, and wanted her to stop.*

*I was looking for her on the streets of*

*Sparta Tertia. I didn't think that I was getting very far, but the goons trying to persuade me to drop the case clearly disagreed. I'm used to bruisers pushing me into dark corners and telling me to back off, and I'm used to finding that I've got a shadow – but when that shadow tries*

*to eat my lower soul, just as a warning, I take it badly.*

*So I went to the top. I walked through the front door of the Shrine of Dark Gateways, and a pale, nervous fellow with watery eyes jumped up from the front desk and tried to tell me that I couldn't come in without an appointment.*

*"So make me one," I said. "I haven't got time for the runaround."*

*He tried to talk some more, but just then, there was a shimmering in the air, and somebody who looked like he had some authority was standing there. I decided I was getting somewhere.*

*Of course, the new fellow had to spoil the moment by ordering two heavies I hadn't seen before to throw me out, but when I said a word, and their hands caught fire as they touched me, he started listening to sense.*

*It was all a family problem, of course. The tough cases always are.*

Powers and abilities increase the options for character design. Hence, they increase the scope of the GM's task. This chapter deals with the art of running games in which powers loom large.

## ORIGINS

The various powers discussed in earlier chapters have an equally wide range of possible *origins* – things or events that grant powers to a being. Source and origin are *not* the same thing. Source defines how a power works; origin defines how it came to exist. For example, a character might have psi powers as the result of a genetic mutation, a superscience drug treatment, or quasi-mystical training – but the powers work in exactly the

same way in each case. The available origins determine much of the campaign flavor, and are in turn related to the setting's laws of nature and tech level.

Available powers in an ultra-tech, very materialistic game may be technological and mechanical in nature – the product of devices built into robots and cyborgs. A character in that setting with Telecommunication

will probably use radio, laser, or infrared. In a psi-based game, Telecommunication will probably mean Telesend with the Telepathic limitation. On the other hand, psionic technology *might* permit robots to be built with superscience "psychotronic circuitry," giving them Telesend – or psis might actually have power over the electromagnetic spectrum, enabling them to communicate via radio.

## BIOLOGICAL POWERS

Biological powers are often inborn traits. However, they could also be the result of weird lab accidents, super-science treatments, or divine gifts (or even curses: for example, vampires). Nonhuman races or genetically modified humans may have such powers, though most will have just a few minor abilities.

## CHI POWERS

Chi powers are usually the product of intensive training, similar to cinematic martial arts. Precisely *which* abilities are available, and how they are acquired, may be specified as part of the campaign background. (“You employ the Hundred-Pace Leap! You must have studied at the Green Mountain Monastery!”) Players may come up with ingenious stories to get around these restrictions (possibly requiring Unusual Backgrounds), and really advanced chi adepts may create unique tricks of their own.

## COSMIC POWERS

Cosmic powers involve direct control over the universe. A shorthand definition is that they’re “what gods do.” As such, in most campaigns, they will be limited to gods or extraordinarily insightful beings – and if no gods exist and no great insights are possible, cosmic powers may be banned outright.

Furthermore, even gods may be restricted by their natures. A fire god might be unable to control anything under the ocean, either because his powers are limited by the mystical nature of water or because he has a binding pact with the god of the sea that neither may venture into the other’s realm. (Indeed, legends may say that water douses fire *because of* such a pact. In a mythic fantasy game, this may be true.) Nor do all gods necessarily have cosmic powers; those who are just powerful spirits or creatures of magic may be bound by the same ultimate limitations as lesser beings.

Allowing the Cosmic enhancement has many implications. It bypasses many restrictions that enable the GM

## Racial Abilities

Defining a race in game terms is usually the GM’s job; he should have the clearest idea of its nature. See the rules for template design in Chapters 7 and 15 of the *Basic Set*. Remember that racial abilities don’t usually constitute a power, though some races do have powers – usually biological or psionic, or technological in the case of robots.

to keep a game under some kind of control. Anyone with cosmic powers is playing at the level of the gods, at least some of the time. Even if the campaign allows for divine PCs, they might be better treated as having mostly noncosmic powers; a god may only be able to produce ordinary fire, especially if fire isn’t part of his sphere of influence. The high cost of cosmic powers should keep problems under control.

## DIVINE POWERS

Cosmic powers are what gods do. Divine powers are what gods empower their servants (priests, angels, daemons, etc.) to do. In some games, they *might* take the Cosmic enhancement (a god with transcendent powers may lend out a fragment of them), but this is *not* mandatory.

Hence, divine powers usually have a very specific origin – the favor of a god. This may imply Clerical Investment, but this *isn’t* universal. A devout hermit might receive the ability to work miracles without becoming part of a temple hierarchy. More important, divine powers are restricted by the rules set by the deity. Gods give aid on their own terms! Players who dislike having their PCs told what to do should *not* take divine powers, and campaigns should only be built around such powers if the players are comfortable playing in a world where some beings definitely outrank them.

## HIGH-TECH POWERS

High-tech powers come from science and technology. In some campaigns, this may be cinematic super-science, or alien or pre-catastrophe knowledge far beyond the PCs’ understanding.

What technology can do depends very much on the nature and TL of the campaign. In a gritty near-future game, a few cyborgs may have powerboosters in their bionic limbs, giving them a little Striking ST and Super Jump. In a space opera setting, robots with “memory metal frames” may have Shapeshifting, Stretching, and countless other abilities.



## MAGIC POWERS

Most *GURPS* campaigns focusing on magic will probably *not* use the *Powers* rules; rather, they will employ the “spells” system from Chapter 5 of the *Basic Set* and *GURPS Magic*. However, in some cases, usually in superhero or lightweight fantasy stories, wizards can employ powers without apparently learning and casting specific spells. These characters may



## Unified Metaphysical Theories

In some settings, there may be no fundamental distinction between “magical” and “spirit” or even “divine” powers; “magicians” work by commanding or petitioning supernatural beings. Similarly, a world’s gods may be exceptionally powerful spirits (certainly, some beliefs make little distinction between the two categories), or creatures of great magical power – far beyond any human wizard, perhaps, but not actually different in kind. Likewise, the gods, or friendly spirits, may grant their priests or servants useful abilities – which may in fact be “spells.” A wizard might gain the ability to fly or hurl lightning bolts after years of study, while a priest might have the same knowledge and skill placed in his brain as a reward for his prayers, but they could still end up employing the same methods to exploit the laws of the universe in the same way.

Of course, whether or not the various power-users know that they are manipulating the same basic forces is another question. If there’s a rivalry between “toadying priests” and “atheistic wizards,” they might *both* become angry at anyone who points out the truth. Certainly, gods with any pride will object to being placed in the same category as mere human conjurers.

Giving apparently different powers the same origin and fundamental nature has various practical advantages for the GM. It can make interactions between different power-users easier to manage, for example. However, it may also make the setting feel less rich and complex.

### Magical Psi

In some settings, “magic” and “psi” both tap the same energies, in one case by study and formal disciplines, in the other by raw talent and willpower. If magic is simply psi power unlocked by self-hypnosis, the way that magical powers are defined for game purposes should reflect this.

“Pseudo-magical psi” might be stopped or negated by anti-psi powers (-5%) and have a minor Accessibility limitation to reflect the need to perform brief incantations, make small “casting” gestures, and have “spell components” to hand (-10%) for a net power modifier of -15%. (This assumes a low-tech generic fantasy setting where psionic technology doesn’t exist, or at least can’t produce effective countermeasures.)

On the other hand, if psi can achieve almost anything, but most humans need *lots* of complicated procedures and tools to produce even restricted effects, it may be simplest to treat it as magic. Psi might even use the standard *GURPS* spell system. (“Mana levels” would probably not vary much in such a setting, although some areas might be more “psi-friendly” than others.) The most important practical effect is that “magic” and “psi” could always interact directly, able to detect, negate, and even enhance each other.

### Cosmic Magic

Likewise, magic and psi may be “cosmic” in nature, manipulating reality directly – though only the most powerful adepts comprehend its true nature and potential. Magic and full-blown cosmic powers may interact, and magicians might shed most of the restrictions on their powers as they advance in the art.

have internalized the principles of magic so completely that they can improvise new effects at whim, they may be using gifts granted by magic-manipulating deities, or they may have been enchanted like a living magic item.

## PSIONIC POWERS

The idea of “psi” is relatively modern, but in the last 50-60 years, it has become the concept most often used to explain super-powers in fiction. Psi appears in a wide range of stories: low-key horror (such as Stephen King’s *Carrie*), science fiction with fantastical twists (such as Julian May’s “Pliocene Exile” and “Galactic Milieu” series), and superhero comics.

The essential idea here is that a conscious mind – or perhaps any biological organism – can affect the physical universe directly. Occasionally, theories will involve some kind of energy source or a physical process that fits in with accepted science – for example, telepathy might be explained as the brain generating low-power electromagnetic waves – but mostly, things come down to *consciousness* somehow influencing reality. Many or all humans may be potential psis, needing only the right training or insights to unlock the power, or psi may be a rare mutation or the result of a superscience treatment. Some fictional nonhuman races are naturally powerful psis, as a result of evolution, divine gifts, or their own systems of science or training.

## SPIRIT POWERS

The idea of commanding spirits probably represents the oldest concept of magic. Spirit powers are very appropriate in some “mythic” or “folkloric” campaigns. They may be inborn, the result of special training, or a gift from a spirit-ruler. They usually differ from divine powers in that the spirit does not imbue a human with power but must itself be present to perform a task, and in that the relationship between mortals and spirits is more equal than that between mortals and gods – more likely to involve negotiation than worship. Still, the distinction between priests (who deal with gods) and shamans (who deal with spirits) is fuzzy.

## Some Weirder Origins

*Transcendent Attunement:* The powers of nature or morality may transcend even the gods, and grant powers to beings who are psychologically attuned to these cosmic principles. This idea fits with “Moral” or “Nature” powers (p. 27), and works well in fantasy universes with pantheistic metaphysics. It is less appropriate for settings where phenomena are explained by quasi-scientific logic or personified by gods.

*Evolutionary Regression:* A character might gain the ability to access his “evolutionary heritage” through superscience biochemical treatments or “psychic” methods. This implies a Biological power with a lot of minor Switchable physical abilities such as Brachiator, Claws, or Gills (plus, optionally, Racial Memory). The power modifier can vary, depending on exactly how “regression” works. It may require special drugs or lengthy meditation, and induce temporary IQ loss or psychological disadvantages.

*Digital Reality Control:* Some people are aware that the entire universe is a computer simulation – and have root access, or at least a set of cheat codes. This access can grant Cosmic powers, although the system may have restrictions. Higher levels of authorization grant more spectacular abilities. A “regular user” might have to obey the laws of physics, while “superusers” might be able to fly or create multiple “shells” of themselves.

*Nanite Command:* In a far-future world where everything and everyone is suffused with “nanites” – microscopic super-technological robots, capable of high-speed molecular manipulation – someone whose genetic code or neural patterns authorize him to control the nanites could have seemingly “magical” powers). He might create and destroy objects (subject to the availability of suitable materials, and to constraints from the laws of thermodynamics), or communicate and observe events over great distances by tapping the nanite communication web.

## SUPER POWERS

The “Super” power modifier on p. 29 can be used in settings where “super powers” are a specific class, as distinct as “magic” or “psi.” They might come from a mutation in some human brains (making them conceptually similar to psi), a “quasi-cosmic” ability to distort reality itself, radical changes to the human body caused by an alien virus, or infusions of alien-cosmic energy.

However, not all powers in a “superhero” game may use this modifier – *especially* if the setting resembles traditional comics, which regularly feature a mixture of biological, chi, cosmic, divine, elemental, magical, nature, psi, and other powers, with a vast range of origins, all *called* super-powers. Many “super” characters may not even have powers in this

book’s sense at all, instead featuring superhuman attributes, minor abilities, or high-tech gadgets.

Even if there is a single source for all super-powers, the modifier may be defined differently. Marvel Comics’ mutants can be identified by mutant detectors. There are devices that can suppress any mutant power, but no other super-powers. The power modifier used in such a setting would have to incorporate a limitation to reflect this. Another option for a variant supers campaign is to include more

severe, even dangerous limitations in the modifier, such as Nuisance Effect (Backlash) plus Uncontrollable. Powers become impossible to control and unpleasant to use, and heroes may even become tragic figures.

While “super powers” may encompass a broad range of effects, GMs should discourage players from giving supers a random assortment of such abilities. Most comic-book heroes and villains have a clear focus and theme to their powers.

*In hallowed comic-book tradition, the GM may rule that weird-science technology can affect super-powers. This is typically the purview of gadgeteers and the operatives of “black” agencies.*



# CHARACTERS

Many *GURPS* PCs are essentially realistic. Even a barbarian swordsman or a space pilot is simply a human being – with exceptional skills, yes, but nothing too unlike things that any of us might learn.

Powers make characters much more exotic. They also have consequences for scenario and campaign design. It's easy to come up with challenges for normal human PCs: a sheer cliff, an NPC who refuses to tell some important secret . . . However, if a hero can fly or read minds, such problems quickly vanish. The way to deal with this might be to restrict the powers available, or it might be to come up with different challenges.

There are a number of considerations here, starting with questions to be answered before any PCs are designed.

## POWER LEVEL

Almost every campaign has a fixed starting PC point level. That special powers are available does *not* mean that the campaign must have a high starting value. It's possible to run very interesting powers-heavy campaigns with the starting point level set deliberately *low*. A PC with a low-strength, short-ranged, or unreliable power must use it cautiously and inventively. Every couple of experience points

spent on it will likely make an important difference. Genre fiction is full of such characters – young psis discovering their powers, trainee martial artists, apprentice space knights, and so on. On the other hand, impressive and colorful powers do tend to be expensive, so many powers-oriented games work best with substantial starting totals.

In games where PCs start with 100 points or fewer, powers and exotic abilities will be low-powered or limited, especially if the PCs are supposed to be competent in other ways; 100 points (plus a few disadvantages) *can* buy moderately respectable powers, but these won't be much use if the character is hopeless at everything else. A well-balanced team can get around this problem, if the players are willing to run highly specialized PCs.

That doesn't mean that powers are useless in low-points games, especially if they are rare in the setting. An ordinary person with the ability to fly, however slowly, can accomplish plenty. Someone with just enough natural armor to stop pistol bullets and sword cuts can survive incidents that would kill ordinary mortals, even though he must watch out for heavy weapons. Powers in such campaigns often need extra time and special procedures to activate, making them useless in combat – but someone who can see

through walls, predict the future, or talk with spirits can avoid many fights, or ensure that they only happen on favorable terms.

"Real" powers usually require starting levels of at least 150-250 points. This doesn't produce superheroes, but it does enable PCs to be capable adventurers, with an array of advantages and skills, and still manifest a power or two. "Empowered" PCs on this level still find ordinary humans of the same point level – who are merely tough, smart, and good with weapons – to be useful partners and dangerous opponents. PC parties may well consist of a mixture of types – psionic adepts and their warrior bodyguards, meditative monks who have refined their control of chi, brethren who concentrate more on martial arts, or cyborg warriors and their support technicians.

"Real" powers-focused campaigns may require several hundred points – exactly how many depends on the intended style. Just 500 points buys someone who can pass fairly convincingly as a comic-book superhero, but who may not quite be able to emulate the feats seen in four-color comics (appropriate for a stories about the gap between the myths of heroism and harsher realities). A well-designed 750-pointer can probably defeat any number of normal human opponents. In all cases, much depends on the balance of defenses, hit points, and regenerative abilities, and also on just how exotic the available powers are, compared to mundane technology.

For PCs who can pass as gods, starting point levels in four figures are essential. At this level, however, the GM needs to set very strong guidelines as to how points should be spent, and what PCs should be capable of accomplishing. An invulnerable individual who can slaughter whole human armies *might* be able to demand worship, and could be created with less than a thousand points, but if he can't answer prayers or travel to the heavens, he's rather unconvincing in the role.

## Consistency vs. Realism

PC powers aren't usually "realistic." There are exceptions – robots or genetically modified beings might have abilities that are perfectly plausible in terms of known science, such as built-in weaponry or the ability to fly – but most of the traits covered by this book are blatantly fantastical.

Even so, powers should generally work in a logical, structured way. Magic and psi aren't realistic, but that doesn't mean they have to lack rules. Historically, many beliefs about how magic worked were *full* of internal logic. Ideas about psi derived from serious, though largely unsuccessful, scientific research.

On the other hand, a setting may call for totally unpredictable, arbitrary, subjective powers. GMs can administer such things as they see fit, but will have to make arbitrary judgments about what will work. They will also need the trust of their players. Players who come to RPGs expecting consistency and a sense of objective "fairness" may not be happy if these disappear at crucial moments.



## Disadvantage Limits

Character disadvantages have a large effect on the style of any campaign. The guideline of no more than 50% of base point levels holds fairly well for PCs in the 100-300 point range, but outside this range, different limits may well be appropriate.

In a game with 50-point adolescents just discovering their unreliable powers while hunted by sinister forces, mandatory or logical disadvantages – Social Stigma, low Wealth, Enemies, and so on – may exceed that 50% even before the players start individualizing their characters. Conversely, if the PCs are built on 750 points, letting them have -375 points in disadvantages may leave them virtually unplayable, and certainly incapable of following interesting plot leads. Indeed, for a four-color superhero game, the GM can enforce a disadvantage limit as low as -50 to -100 points, ensuring that the heroes have no problems beyond the traditional high-mindedness and a couple of enemies.

## POSSIBLE ORIGINS

The “metaphysics” of a game world define what origins the PCs’ powers may have. It’s important for GMs to veto PCs who don’t fit. If the setting is “agnostic,” with no gods visibly present, no one can have divine powers. For that matter, if there are only a few active gods, and each provides a known, restricted set of powers to its servants, an individual who claims to commune with some previously unknown deity is either a liar, deluded, or the bearer of world-shaking revelations.

Likewise, if the campaign is about the discovery of psi powers in a world much like the present day, “magic” should be excluded. The presence of magic will destroy the game’s sense of science-fictional cohesion.

There is nothing wrong with settings in which powers derive from a wide range of sources. However, there’s also a lot to be said for working within constraints and exploring the implications of well-defined systems.

Nor need everyone in the game world *know* the limits of its internal

logic. Empowered people can lie or be deluded about their powers. A devious god might provide humans with unusual powers under a false name, in order to draw worshippers away from a rival. A naturally gifted psi might think that his powers are divine gifts or temptations offered by evil spirits. This is a common theme in stories, with liars being exposed or gifted characters learning the truth about themselves.

## WHAT’S ALLOWED

GMs can restrict not just power origins, but also the exact abilities involved. If psi is defined to represent simply a sensitivity to low-strength electromagnetic patterns, then mind-reading and ESP are plausible, but telekinesis or teleportation are inappropriate.

In games that focus on low-powered abilities, the GM can require specific limitations. For example, psis might be able to paralyze opponents or move moderate weights with several seconds of intense concentration, but in an unexpected fight, they’d have to resort to fist and gun like everyone else.

Starting PCs may simply be banned from buying powers above a

certain level, or some abilities at *any* level. In a game about young, untrained, “wild talent” wizards, the PCs may be capable of only a few, unreliable, short-ranged effects. They can improve later, with practice, study, and bonus character points – but getting from here to there is the point of the game. Limited starting point levels help with this, but some players may try to juggle disadvantages and limitations and distort character designs to get more starting power than fits the game concept.

## UNUSUAL BACKGROUNDS

The Unusual Background advantage can be a useful tool in permitting players to develop “possible but exotic” character concepts without unbalancing the game. GMs should try to avoid over-using this; if *all* PCs have to take an Unusual Background, presumably their powers aren’t as unusual as all that. Also, the point costs of *GURPS* powers and abilities were chosen to be as fair and internally balanced as possible; it shouldn’t be necessary to charge Unusual Background costs just to stop anyone from being too powerful.

Rather, someone with an Unusual Background should have radically



*unusual* abilities, giving the wielder an edge by virtue of their scarcity. They should be able to gain some advantage in fights (say, because they can breathe fire in a world where empty-handed combatants can't usually attack at range). Most people will fail to take simple, logical precautions against them. (If a teleporter can get into any room that he can see on live TV, people may be careful where they allow cameras – unless teleportation is thought to be a myth.) If powers *don't* carry an Unusual Background cost, then other people should be prepared for them. A telekinetic cat burglar has a huge advantage in a "secret powers" campaign; in one where telekinesis is old news, he might well choose another career.

The problem is with games where most or all of the PCs possess powers that are new and rare in the world in general. The first wave of superbeings will have huge advantages – but their powers won't be "unusual" among PCs. If powers are going to be truly *universal* in the party, then it's not worth requiring an Unusual Background – the GM can just drop the starting point level. But if some of the players are going to play normal humans, and if the rest of the world isn't going to adapt to the existence of these powers very quickly, then the special advantage granted by the powers justifies an Unusual Background.

### Cost

The appropriate cost for an Unusual Background is closely linked to other details of the campaign, and may be proportional to starting point levels. A 50-point Unusual Background for a given power would mean that only a really determined player would take it in a 150-point campaign; in a 500-point game, it would be less of a problem.

In general, 10 points is appropriate if the character merely gains minor, occasional benefits, has an unusual combination of commonplace powers, or has a couple of levels more of the related talent than anyone else. A cost equal to 20-30% of PC starting points suits a power that is rare enough to cause surprise, but which is

known to most opponents, or which grants substantial advantages given considerable effort. (Examples might include short-range teleportation that requires an hour of meditation per use, weak and unreliable telepathy or ESP in settings where such are held to be impossible, or magic in a superhero game that focuses heavily on psi powers.) Charging 50% of starting points is only appropriate for gametwisting powers that grant a reliable "killer" advantage; playing the only empowered priest of some powerful deity *might* merit 50%.

GMs should feel free to vary such costs, especially if players insist on taking powers that make the game much harder to GM – although if the power is really a severe nuisance, it's often better to ban it outright. However, the campaign style, and what PCs may be able to achieve, should be negotiated between the players and GM, and negotiation means compromise; a GM may choose to permit a player to take Precognition – so long as he gives it the Unreliable limitation and takes a 100-point Unusual Background . . .

## PCs vs. NPCs

In games, PCs generally start at the same point value, but NPCs can vary enormously. While opponents intended to engage PCs in one-to-one physical combat will usually be *around* the same value, some may be master warriors, able to take on the entire PC party simultaneously, while others may be weak cannon-fodder, or simply noncombatants with a single talent that the plot requires. Even "one-to-one" opponents may actually have quite different point values. A focused combat specialist might be designed to take on a versatile PC with many points spent on noncombat abilities, and hence be a tough fight despite being "weaker" in point terms. Another foe might have greater personal abilities to balance some equipment that the PCs have acquired. Powers-oriented games amplify this variation even further, especially if characters are especially vulnerable or resistant to particular attacks. A mighty vampire may be brought down by an elderly priest with True Faith, a crucifix, and a supply of holy water, while an unworldly wizard may be outmaneuvered by a weak but clever mind-controller who knows which leaders and law-enforcers to dominate.

In addition, some powers may only be available to NPCs – or maybe only to PCs, if the campaign concept is "the last gods" or "the first genetic upgrades." Players are often unhappy if they are told that NPCs can do things that PCs can never accomplish, but this may be inevitable if the campaign is basically a war story, and the enemies are relentlessly hostile aliens with specific biological powers or devoted servants of evil who receive special "dark" powers. (If the players insist on playing renegades from the other side, GMs *might* permit this with an Unusual Background.)

### Spirit PCs

In some games, the PCs might be spirits. Such beings often embody and control some aspect of the universe on a local scale, making Elemental powers (p. 27) very appropriate. Most will have Elemental or Spirit meta-traits (pp. B262-263), or even both. The GM may define racial templates for various types of spirit, or, for a wilder game, give the players a free hand and a high starting point level, and see what they come up with.

If spirits are susceptible to summoning or control, they may have disadvantages such as Duties (often Involuntary) and Reprogrammable. Their supernatural natures may also give them Dreads or Revulsions. On the other hand, if they build *good* relations with shamans or summoners, they may have useful human Allies.

Remember also that not every “unusual background” is worth any points at all. If someone acquires ESP thanks to 10 years of study in a Himalayan monastery, but other characters gain the same power thanks to the unexpected side-effects of a new type of aspirin, that’s no special advantage – unless the monks also taught other useful techniques, or the drug had other, negative effects on everyone who took it.

## BALANCING POWERS

While a character’s point total defines how powerful he is, broadly speaking, how those points are distributed is also immensely important. The balance among offense, defense, and mobility needs to be watched quite carefully. Given the flexibility of a point-based design system, it’s all too easy to come up with characters who can destroy anything in their path, but never hit a moving target and fall over the moment they themselves are hit, or who can never reach a battle in time to help.

GMs may wish to define a value for expected damage from common attacks by PCs and major NPCs, along with guidelines for combat skill levels, notes on how the PCs are expected to get around, and so on. They may also set a hard upper limit on damage from attacks, to prevent players from coming up with PCs who solve every problem by hitting harder than anybody else. PCs should ideally be able to withstand at least a couple of hits from a “campaign average” attack and survive; rugged “tanks” or “bruisers” might be able to withstand several and keep on coming, while more agile types who depend on avoiding rather than soaking up damage should still be able to suffer at least one unlucky moment and continue breathing, if not standing.

Attacks are mostly defined by the number of dice they do. An average roll does 3.5 points of damage per die, but good or bad rolls can vary from the average. Remember also that impaling, cutting, and large piercing attacks do substantially increased damage after subtracting DR. Characters can survive a hit by having

enough DR to stop damage or lots of hit points to absorb it. The latter can be safer in many ways, giving resistance to all sorts of harm and requiring less-frequent rolls to survive when current hit points go negative, but hit points do get worn away by repeated hits. Not taking damage at all is always safe. A good HT score is invaluable for individuals who frequently get into fights; rolls to remain conscious and alive, and to withstand poisons, drugs, and suchlike, are matters of life and death.

Nonpowered characters with normal human levels of strength often have difficulty matching the damage levels that can be inflicted by super-strong PCs, let alone a foe with many points in Innate Attacks. Players of “talented normals” who focus on subtlety and skill rather than raw power should still make sure that they can do *something* in a fight. Good weapons can help, as can clever tactics, intelligent use of “placed shots” at hit locations, and other tricks, but it may be advisable to give PCs whose concept doesn’t call for flamboyant powers something subtle but effective. A martial artist might have minor chi powers that provide Striking ST. Alternatively, the subtle hero can leave the major opponents to his colleagues, while taking down cannon fodder, sneaking in and out of enemy bases, or piloting vehicles.

## POWERS VS. OTHER ABILITIES

Not all special abilities are powers. While a power can provide a logical underpinning for extraordinary talents, it’s perfectly possible to come up with capable PCs who don’t have such things. Even if most PCs can fly, hurl fire or lightning, and shield themselves with force fields, a “merely” strong, fast, smart individual, maybe with some minor advantages such as Claws or Eidetic Memory, or some well-chosen equipment, may survive and distinguish himself in their company. Comic-book examples include DC Comics’ Batman or Marvel’s Captain America. At times, it may also be important to determine how the different types of character features interact.

## Supernatural Advantages

*Blessed* (p. B40) indicates a relationship with a deity or higher power, as do divine powers. Everyone who receives the aid of the same being will usually be expected to cooperate, while those who are supported by hostile gods will generally be hostile to each other. Blessed characters who receive visions may be expected to give guidance to those with more active divine powers.

*Channeling* (p. B41) and *Medium* (p. B68) may permit someone to communicate with the same spirits that a character with spirit powers employs. This can be useful if, for example, the spirit power is fickle and fails because of an unfavorable reaction roll. The channeller or medium may be able to ask *why* it is unhappy. Likewise, *Spirit Empathy* (p. B88) can enable the user to sense the spirit’s feelings. At the GM’s option, especially if there is some specific penalty reducing the chance of success, the empowered character may be able to correct the problem and then attempt a reroll without the usual penalty for repeated attempts.

In addition, a channeller or medium may be able to contact spirits who have recently served someone with spirit powers to ask them about the tasks they performed. This is strictly optional, and may not work very well; “servant” spirits may be bound to silence by the powers that control them, may fly off to distant planes as soon as they have completed their tasks, or may simply be uninterested in things mortals consider important. (“Yes, I started a fire here at some shaman’s request. No, I didn’t notice what he looked like, or what it was I burned.”) Imaginative use of these abilities may help solve a lot of mysteries, and adds to the atmosphere of games with active spirits; *all* dealings with them can become roleplaying opportunities. However, this gives GMs more work to do, as each spirit may have a personality. For simplicity, GMs can roll a reaction for any spirit, and then play out the result to the full. Spirits *are* generally held to be whimsical and slightly unpredictable . . . (Also see *Spirit PCs*, p. 185.)





*Dominance* (p. B50) changes the nature of a victim, which may have all sorts of consequences for his powers. For example, a goddess of life may regard vampires as abominations. Anyone to whom she grants divine powers will lose them if he is infected with vampirism. (Whether he can forge a new relationship with a god of death, and gain new divine powers thereby, is up to the GM – but switching sides should be a complicated role-playing exercise.) In some settings, such transformations reshape the victim's spiritual essence, destroying many types of innate powers. The psychological trauma and new hungers associated with such a transformation can play havoc with the victim's capacity for focused concentration. Other powers may survive, however. Vampires are often depicted as talented wizards, presumably meaning that magical powers can survive the transition to undeath.

*Illuminated* characters (p. B60) have a direct insight into the nature of the universe. This may enable them to identify other individuals with cosmic, moral, possibly even divine or spiritual powers, or to recognize those powers in action. They can certainly recognize spirits associated with Illuminated conspiratorial factions, which should extend to recognizing when they are summoned using powers.

*Magery* (p. B66) bestows a sensitivity to magical forces. GMs may *optionally* permit a mage to

recognize a living being imbued with powerful magical forces (such as strong innate powers), and perhaps even extend the rule to other supernatural categories such as spirit powers. Levels of Magery may also function as the talent to use with magical powers; see p. 29.

*Magic Resistance* and *Mana Dampener* (p. B67) oppose or negate magical powers. This is a large part of the definition of the Magical power modifier (p. 27).

*Mana Enhancer* (p. B68) raises the effective local mana level. In a world where the natural level never falls below "low," anyone with both this and powers with the Magical power modifier will rarely, if ever, be disadvantaged by mana-level variations. GMs may rule that the Magical power modifier (p. 27) is only worth -5% if combined with this advantage.

*Mindlink* (p. B70) ensures automatic successes for uses of Telesend and Mind Reading between linked characters. The GM may extend this to other basically telepathic powers, such as Illusion with the Mental enhancement (p. 95). This automatic success *might* be limited to psionic powers, but it's also conceivable that, for example, a god might provide his priests with the ability to communicate mentally, giving them Mindlink and "telepathic" divine powers.

*Oracle* (p. B72) and *Precognition* (p. B77) imply sensitivity to cosmic, divine, or spiritual forces. Omens and precognitive flashes relating to

characters with major powers of these types may be strong and clear, giving a bonus to rolls to sense and interpret them. When great forces are loose in the world, oracles and seers tend to notice!

*Power Investiture* (p. B77) might function as the talent for divine powers; see p. 29.

*Psychometry* (p. B78) often works by detecting faint "residual energies." Objects that have been in contact with magical, psionic, moral, or cosmic powers may have especially strong residues, giving a bonus to the roll. An object touched by the powers of absolute evil may cause a Fright Check!

*Reawakened* individuals (p. B80) might acquire powers or talents without training. However, if the power is essentially physical (if it is biological or technological in nature, or involves a brain mutation), remembering that one had such a thing in a previous body is little use. Remembering a past life as a chi adept may be a good start, but the character may still have to spend time mastering the forces in his new body. Reawakened people might also recall encountering certain powers in past lives and be able to remember appropriate countermeasures.

*Terror* (p. B93) may be linked to the use of certain powers – especially cosmic or moral powers, which are often unnerving for a mere mortal to witness. "Only after using power" may be a reasonable limitation here, with a value depending on how easily and often the power can be used.

*True Faith* (p. B94) is generally associated with benevolent deities, and may provide protection against demonic powers, malevolent spirits, and powers based directly on supernatural evil. At the GM's option, evil divine and moral powers, and any spirit power effect based on the summoning of "unlawful" spirits, may be excluded from the one-yard zone around someone asserting True Faith. This may seem like a large bonus for anyone with the advantage, but they have limits of their own. It may also seem like a significant restriction on those powers, but True Faith is generally rare enough that it's not worth increasing the size of the power limitation.

In a few settings, pure law, chaos, or even evil may inspire True Faith, protecting against manifestations of opposing principles.

## Exotic Advantages

*Detect* (p. B48) may be used to detect a specific power source, or possibly a power focus. The frequency of occurrence of a given source or focus depends on the setting. As a guideline, cosmic powers are usually rare (except in “gods walk the earth” mythic games), anything that requires an Unusual Background is probably rare or occasional, and very few powers are very common.

*Digital Mind* (p. B48) grants immunity to “telepathic” powers and spells that affect living minds. Any psionic or magical power that affects the mind or perceptions *might* fit.

*Speak With Animals* and *Speak With Plants* (p. B87) may grant the ability to communicate with beings who possess “animal powers” or “plant powers” respectively – especially if they are visibly nonhuman.

## Cinematic Skills

In general, skills or techniques are considered “cinematic” if they have Trained By A Master or Weapon Master as a prerequisite or, in the case of techniques, if they relate to a specifically cinematic combat option (such as Dual-Weapon Attack with melee weapons). Others may be flagged as cinematic on a case-by-case basis; *Enthrallment* (p. B191) may qualify, as it produces quasi-supernatural effects.

Cinematic skills permit PCs to accomplish superhuman feats comparable to minor powers. Most are associated with the kinds of cinematic martial artists who are Trained By A Master, and indeed a character may well have both cinematic skills and chi powers. In fact, in some campaigns, Trained By A Master might be a prerequisite for chi powers. But the skills alone can accomplish plenty, often with fewer complications!

If cinematic skills and chi powers do coexist in a campaign, remember that they explicitly have the same basis. Somebody who can sense chi manipulation in use (“This is a strong one!”) will notice cinematic skills, and something that disrupts a character’s chi will also reduce or negate them, perhaps imposing the same penalty on cinematic skill rolls and any roll that benefits from the chi power’s Talent.

Similarly, GMs may declare that *Enthrallment* skills are actually low-level manifestations of magical or psi power. In the former case, they might not work in a no mana area, Magic Resistance might add to Will rolls to resist them, and the effects might be dispelled like magic (perhaps with a penalty to the roll, because of the subtlety of the effect). In the latter case, the Static Psi advantage and technological anti-psi defenses might block them. In either case, a Mind Shield would also defend against them.

## Magic

While some of the powers discussed in this book are magical, standard *GURPS* magic functions outside the powers rules, using the *Magery*

advantage and spells purchased as skills. (See Chapter 5 of the *Basic Set*, and *GURPS Magic*.) If a game setting includes both powers and spells, they provide two different ways to achieve exotic effects that may appear similar.

Spells and magical powers interact in various ways. If a spell that is normally resisted by some other spell interacts with a magical power that doesn’t normally require a die roll to function, it is resisted by a roll against the better of the power-user’s IQ or Will, plus any Talent applicable to the magic power. For example, if a spellcaster casts *Dispel Magic* on someone using magical *Flight*, and the flyer has IQ 12, Will 10, and three levels of magical power Talent, he rolls against  $12 + 3 = 15$  to keep the power working.

Knowledge spells can be used to detect magical powers, just like spells and items. *Detect Magic* can determine that magic powers of some kind are currently operating on or through an object (“that ring is magic”). *Identify Spell* can determine what powers have been used on or by the subject in the last five seconds (“he’s using a power”). *Analyze Magic* can tell which magical powers are operating on the subject (“he’s been affected by a power”). The latter two spells will tell the caster “there’s magic here, but it’s an innate power, not a spell” and will give a fairly good idea of what the power does – “it enables him to fly by interacting with the air” or “it works on the target’s mind, probably to extract information, rather than to send messages or control.” Additional spells in *GURPS Magic* operate similarly in relation to powers.

Of the spells from the Meta-Spells college, *Counterspell* only works against powers if the caster possesses the exact same ability himself (GM’s decision as to whether a much weaker or stronger version, or one with slightly different enhancements or limitations, is the same ability), but *Dispel Magic* can negate all sorts of abilities. *GURPS Magic* provides many spells that expand this college, and which can interact with powers. *Scryguard*, *Scrywall*, and *Scryfool* shield against magical *Clairsentience*; *Suspend Spell*, *Ward*, *Reflect*, and *Great Ward* can oppose another’s use of a ability that the caster possesses; and so on. *Penetrating Spell* can be

## Power Talents and Cinematic Skills

GMs *might* permit chi power Talent to act as a Talent for cinematic skills that involve chi manipulation. However, most of these are combat skills, which should *not* normally gain benefits from Talents, so this isn’t recommended. If GMs decide to permit it anyway, the cost of the Talent should be increased to 10 or 15 points/level. It would grant a reaction bonus from martial arts adepts and the like; such people recognize and respect each other! Likewise, if *Enthrallment* skills are actually a form of magic or psi, *Magery* or an appropriate power Talent *might* give a bonus to the skill roll.



used to give a magical attack power an armor divisor.

Spells may also interact with other types of powers, although only powers with an innate limitation that makes them susceptible to such countermeasures can be dispelled, warded, etc., as a matter of course. Rather, specific spells may oppose powers in specific ways. For example, Pentagram (from *GURPS Magic*) might keep spirit powers from crossing it (roll a Quick Contest between Pentagram skill and the power-user's IQ + talent, or use the relevant spirit's attributes as usual if they are known). This is a small limitation for spirit powers, as Pentagram is fairly rare and cannot be used very effectively in combat, and so does not affect the Spirit power modifier. Sense Spirit might be used to detect the entities invoked by spirit powers; Deflect Energy can be used to parry fireballs, lightning bolts, etc., created by all sorts of powers; Resist Cold can protect against elemental cold powers; and so on.

**Auras:** The Aura spell (and possibly some similar powers and devices) detects whether someone has Magery and some other supernatural facts. People with magical powers probably have similar auras to a mage. The GM might suggest that they look slightly different and drop hints as to the nature of any powers possessed. The aura of anyone with other supernatural powers may appear distinctive – elemental or spirit powers will almost certainly color a person's aura (magical fire powers might give a ruddy, flickering aura; elemental fire powers might make one's aura blaze fiercely), and that of someone with moral powers could be very striking. Any being with cosmic powers will probably have an *astounding* aura.

## GAMING WITH POWERS VS. POWER-GAMING

Roleplaying games are supposed to be about playing *characters*, not simply moving a piece around and fighting other pieces. With some players, this may just be a matter of time. After a few sessions of flying around the scenery, hurling fire blasts, and

clouding minds, they'll start thinking about what the people behind these spiffy powers are like. GMs should avoid the sort of antagonistic mindset that makes them seek ways to cripple PCs; players who've gone to the trouble of designing powers should get the chance to use them.



Still, it's worth reminding them occasionally that their powers can't do *everything*, and that the PC has other concerns. If a power has built-in limitations that mean it can be negated, then use them when it's logical to do so. Intelligent, competent opponents may well analyze the PCs and come up with countermeasures. There should also be situations in which power use is impolite or socially dangerous. Hurling magical effects around while visiting the royal court may be illegal, is certainly likely to make the guards intensely nervous, and may mark one down as a gauche braggart in the eyes of sophisticated courtiers.

### Disadvantages

The *GURPS* disadvantage system is an invaluable tool in reminding players that PCs have an existence beyond their powers. Quite a few empowered characters have major

Secrets, whether they're the "secret identity" of the four-color superhero or shadowed mysteries associated with magical training. It's usually easy to set up a situation in which using powers would threaten a PC's Secret . . . or in which powers are completely irrelevant to a problem associated

with the Secret. Many superheroes have complicated soap-operatic private lives, and while a supervillain can usually be targeted with a cosmic energy megazap, using that same power on a romantic rival or an irritating kid sister is hardly heroic. Codes of Honor and other idealistic psychological features can also create useful complications; see below for more on this.

### Mentors

In many stories, the training required to acquire or control powers gives protagonists their personality and motivation. Classic sources for training include:

- Martial arts movie monasteries.
- Sorcerers who take apprentices.
- Mature, idealistic teachers who act as mentors to teenage mutant superheroes (or ninja turtles).



A campaign may be built around a school, which provides a structure and quite likely a Duty and Patron for every PC, at the cost of limiting things slightly. Alternatively, they may all have trained at the same institution in the past, making it simply a bit of shared background, and maybe a useful source of Contacts and occasional plot threads; or they may be at odds with their old school, making it a source of formidable Enemies with deep knowledge of the PCs' abilities; or it may have been destroyed and the PCs' mentors killed, giving the group a major Enemy and a lot of motivation to fight. Pupils may have a Sense of Duty to their mentors, or a Duty to a school that sets that as the price of admission – or they might rebel, developing Obsessions to prove themselves independently, or just adopting attitudes directly opposed to a school's ideals.

Teachers often demand Pacifism, a Code of Honor, or Fanaticism from all students, and may even claim that certain powers are impossible to attain otherwise – which may be true, if the power modifier includes required disadvantages. However, plenty of stories involve renegade ex-students or failed apprentices who nonetheless retain dangerous amounts of training, and these can make fascinating Enemies – “dark reflections” of loyal students. Conversely, the heroes may have cast off their corrupt teaching, and the “loyalists” may be the dark reflections.

It *may* be possible for a renegade to retain his powers, despite required limitations that should prevent this. A rival school or teacher may help him to adapt his knowledge. An enemy god may replace divine powers with something similar that can use the same talents. A really determined renegade may simply apply cleverness or sheer force of will. The “loyalists” may still retain an edge, thanks to their use of the “unsullied” power, but this advantage may seem rather theoretical, and demonstrating its importance may involve some long, hard fights.

### *Blank Slates vs. Spotlight Hogs*

Not all empowered characters feel the need for training, and some players select disadvantages that don't

## The Forgetful Hero

One way that writers prevent empowered characters from handling every problem with yet another display of power is by having them seemingly forget some of their abilities. Every long-time fan can tell stories of superheroes or fantasy wizards struggling with a problem that they could brush aside with a trick that they demonstrated only a few episodes earlier.

However, it's not something that really works in games. Players are notorious for squeezing every last drop out of PCs' abilities. Some players can be amazingly forgetful, inefficient, or dense from time to time, but such lapses are rarely timed to make the plot more entertaining.

On the other hand, fictional characters are rarely as failure-prone as RPG heroes. They may not always win, but they rarely fail in *trivial* ways. They suffer colorful catastrophes at entertaining moments, or misjudge situations dramatically. A stealthy hero rarely “fails his roll” to slip past an ordinary guard . . . although if some master villain is checking the perimeter at that moment, that's another matter.

Players often regard low skills or power activation rolls as “un-dramatic,” and prefer powers that are completely reliable. It might be better to regard unreliable abilities as “emergencies only” options, to be “forgotten” at other times. If the game uses the optional rule for *Influencing Success Rolls* (p. B347 – highly appropriate for cinematic campaigns), players can ensure that such abilities work anyway, so long as they don't use them too often. The rule for *Using Abilities at Default* (p. 173) provides another way of letting heroes pull occasional tricks that they “forget” at other times.

really imply much in the way of personality – either because their character concept is built more around physical than psychological factors, or because they see psychological problems as an annoying restriction on their ability to do what they like. The latter is fine so long as they are nonetheless interested in developing some kind of personality, but if their sole interest in the PC is his ability to go round blowing things up, a GM who wants to include more subtlety in the game may find it very hard to enjoy playing with them.

Having *some* of a PC group be “blank slate” personalities can be fine. It may even be a relief, if other players are roleplaying to the point of excess. The less melodramatic PCs can play off the others and develop as individuals as the campaign proceeds. But if the entire group seems bland and unmotivated, the GM will have to work hard to run plots more subtle than a glorified assault course, and may have to throw in one or two melodramatic NPCs to provide some interest and provoke reactions.

Players who are *too* dedicated to personality-driven characters can be just as much of a problem as “blank slates.” If the entire group tries too hard, the worst that is likely to happen is a bit too much noise and slow progress. More often, one or two players will turn out to be “spotlight hogs,” taking up all the GM's time. The solution is to ask such players to calm down and let other people do something, while deliberately setting up events to give other PCs the chance to shine, but GMs should watch out for character descriptions where personality seems to be given *much* more emphasis than powers.

## CONSTRAINTS

Other factors in a game can constrain PCs from using their powers to deal with every situation.

### *Honor*

Concepts of honor or propriety, usually described in terms of character disadvantages, are an extremely powerful constraint on fictional and

legendary heroes. Medieval-fantasy knights tend to have Code of Honor (Chivalry), four-color superheroes traditionally have Pacifism (Cannot Kill), and an individual who sees his power as a gift from the gods may have Disciplines of Faith.

Such limitations round out a PC and prevent him from solving every problem the same way. When the question is whether it's right to fight at all, whether one fights with sword, rifle, or mystic thunderbolt is hardly relevant. There's no *obvious* reason for empowered characters to live by stronger codes than normal mortals – except, perhaps, that the discovery that one has powers could make anyone reflect on one's place in the world – but powers and honor codes tend to go together in fiction. It's honor or idealism, not powers, that make a hero admirable.

### Personal Style

Anyone can fight monsters, commit crimes, or search for treasure – but if you don't look good doing it, where's the satisfaction? Being good at such things is important because it allows for variation – one doesn't have to go for the boring optimum in every situation.

A style can take the form of Compulsive Behavior, Overconfidence,

or Trademark, but if it's an important feature of the setting as a whole, GMs can enforce it in subtle ways. Heroes may be expected to be generous to the poor, accept friendly challenges from visiting warriors, boast colorfully round the fire, or hang out with media stars. Somebody who fails to act thus cannot expect to be *treated* as a hero. Not being taken seriously may seem merely irritating at first, and some players may enjoy a feeling of misunderstood loner angst, but it should ultimately prove frustrating and uncomfortable. Recognized heroes get cooperation (from law enforcers, other heroes, or the general public) in situations where less impressive people get less.

In any case, players who are interested in playing in a specific genre, whether Hong Kong action movies, classic superheroes, or Celtic epics, often want to play a “proper hero” as seen in the source material. Even if they want to play angst-ridden, misunderstood anti-heroes, there's a difference between that and mere thugs.

The mere suggestion that they are being “uncool” may lead them to change. GMs shouldn't assume that it will always work; players tend to like their PCs alive as well as cool, and if the GM seems to make coolness too dangerous, some will choose survival over style. Also, some may only have a

marginal interest in the genre, in which case, the idea that most heroes behave in a particular, suboptimal way will just earn a shrug and a mutter of “more fools them.” But if they become engaged with the style of the campaign, and acquire a feel for what is and isn't accepted and respected, many will modify their behavior accordingly.

### Reputation

Reputation ties into both honor and personal style; being known as dishonorable or unstylish is certainly a valid basis for a negative Reputation. “Dishonorable” usually implies a reaction penalty with most or all members of a society, whereas “unstylish” may only cause trouble with devotees of a particular ideal of heroism – though that means everybody, in some societies! Negative Reputations can be acquired in play, if a PC behaves badly enough in front of enough people.

In short, PCs have to deal with the ramifications of their actions. These can range from dirty looks, high prices, and poor accommodations in a village where they are regarded as bullies, through not receiving employment from nobles who think that they are incompetent, up to being classed as enemies of the realm and outlawed. All the built-in consequences of a bad reaction roll can, and eventually *will*, hit PCs who acquire a large enough penalty – and things will eventually go beyond even this.

A *really* bad Reputation will reach the ears of people with social and legal power. From Bronze Age city governors who hear that the PCs have blasphemed against the gods, and who therefore order the guard to run them out of town, to modern-day newspaper editors who run virulent anti-superhero campaigns that influence politicians, a bad name can influence all sorts of figures who never get to hear the PCs' stories or encounter their looks, charisma, or social skills.

This can be a “big stick,” and should be used sparingly, or at least gradually. A bad Reputation takes time to build up. It's not the same thing as a bad report, inconvenient for a few days and forgotten in a month; rather, it's an accumulation of many such reports.



## Oversight

Some characters may be systematically watched by groups and factions who are concerned by what they may do with their powers (government agencies will have many reasons to worry), directly involved in their personal histories (priests with divine powers usually serve active gods), or just curious (as with anyone who draws intensive press interest). This sort of thing may be represented on character sheets by an Enemy (Watcher) or Duty disadvantage, but *anyone* who is observed using powers (or doing a lot of other typical PC things) may draw some kind of attention – especially if they acquire a Reputation. This shouldn't usually be intrusive or excessively annoying, unless it comes from a specific disadvantage or the PCs do something overly dramatic or unwise, but it may be enough to remind wiser players that actions can have serious consequences. In most game worlds, there are police, military, state-sanctioned

## GM Bribery

If the conventions of a genre clash with sensible, rational PC behavior, GMs can offer some kind of in-game benefit for “playing along.” For example, they could hand out “plot points” in exchange for appropriate behavior or when the players accept a genre-typical plot twist without too much protest. Conversely, GMs could dock players a couple of plot points when they blatantly act in a way not typical for the genre.

Plot points might be used to “purchase” one-time benefits, such as a single reroll or to avoid spending Fatigue or Hit Points.

This option is similar to the guidelines in the *Basic Set* for awarding bonus character points for good roleplaying, combined with the optional rule, *Influencing Success Rolls*, on p. B347, and GMs may certainly use these rules instead.

superbeings, organized crime, or potent conspiracies who can (at the very least) cause the PCs trouble.

The behavior that pleases an oversight group may *not* be what is considered “noble” or “heroic” in the setting. In some cases, watchers may even try to nudge PCs *away* from such ideals. A government agency that monitors superheroes might want to know their

real identities, might be less worried than they are about protecting human life, and might even use them for morally ambiguous missions. A deity who keeps an eye on his demigod progeny might have feuds with other gods, so that the demigod's family loyalties might clash with his sense of general piety.

# ADVENTURES

Obviously, adventures for PCs with powers have to allow for what those powers can do. This is sometimes harder than it sounds; a flash of ingenuity from a single player may short-circuit a whole scenario.

## POWERS AS PLOTS

In “empowered” campaigns, scenarios can be *about* the powers. Power origins may be central to plots. If psi powers can be granted by a super-science drug, then anybody researching that chemical may need to be investigated, watched, or guarded. A spiritually empowered monster-slayer might find that the beings who empowered him are taking an interest in his career.

Powers can also have social “side-effects.” If the PCs are among the first generation to possess a telepathic mutation, their own families might become nervous of them. Priests of a particular goddess who are granted divine powers will have priestly

responsibilities, such as guarding temples or preaching.

Broader plots may involve the nature of powers in the setting. Superheroes might find themselves investigating the common origin of all super-powers or opposing a supervillain who uses dangerous technology to transform ordinary humans into super-minions. Sometimes, the two sides in some great conflict each wield a different power, and possessing a power obliges a being to join in the war; moral good vs. moral evil is an obvious example.

Divine and spirit powers have whole campaigns' worth of plots attached, as they come from powerful beings who tend to have personal rivalries, strong moral codes, and long-term objectives. In some cases, they simply issue instructions to their servants, but it may be more interesting if patron gods take a somewhat “hands off” approach, or are unable to speak directly to mortals very often. PCs will have to work to determine their wishes, or deal with unreliable intermediary spirits.

## MEANINGFUL CHALLENGES

If powers can defeat certain problems with trivial ease, then empowered PCs should face greater challenges – or at least different ones. These challenges should *not* always render those powers irrelevant. Rather, they should be tough even *with* those powers, and some incidents should require something more.

At the simplest, this means that heroes should fight enemies of roughly equal power. It can also mean that a hero must play detective to track down an enemy before fighting him, or a mythic warrior who needs to build a temple to his god overnight must consult with architects and theologians to create an appropriate design. Problems may arise when a PC's power is temporarily unavailable, forcing him to choose between waiting to act or acting without the power.

Coming up with suitable challenges is much easier if the opposition, or the world in general, knows



*But he who, with strong body serving mind,  
Gives up his mortal powers to worthy work,  
Not seeking gain, Arjuna! such an one  
Is honorable.*

– *The Bhagavad-Gita*

that powers exist and has some idea what they can do. Adventurers who always have the advantage of surprise face far fewer real challenges. This doesn't mean that every enemy should know how to negate the PCs' powers, but if there *is* such a countermeasure, it should come up at least occasionally. Groups facing superhuman foes may deploy heavier weapons or more troops, while organizations facing telepaths will be very careful about internal secrecy. The heroes of ancient Celtic myth sometimes had known dooms that enemies could attempt to activate.

### *Threats of Force*

Some empowered PCs may be so robust that they are effectively immune to any violence that they are likely to face – at least, they may *think* they are. However, it's hard to create a character who's immune to *any* conceivable threat, and probably

impossible to come up with one who can always keep every associate and innocent bystander from harm. Even Superman has not only kryptonite but friends and loved ones to worry about. There's usually something, somewhere, that can supply the right kind of damage to hurt any hero.

### *Mysteries*

RPG mystery stories are tricky to run at the best of times. If the PCs include clairvoyants and telepaths, they can seem completely impossible. However, there are plenty of precedents in fiction.

It is generally essential for opponents to know something about the PCs' powers for mysteries to work. If technological mind shields and ESP barriers or reliable magical wards and protective charms are widely available, competent criminals *will* use them. Simpler protections could also work. Criminals might take to wearing

masks even when committing quiet burglaries with no witnesses, while smart crooks might simply take extra care to avoid *any* suspicion or attention to avoid the risk of telepathic probing.

If the powers have limited range in space and time, it's easier to keep things challenging. A crime that took place a week ago can't be solved by someone who can't look more than 24 hours into the past – but he could still be hugely helpful in tracking suspects. A telepath can only read the mind of a known, available suspect, and reading over a hundred minds could involve a lot of time and effort.

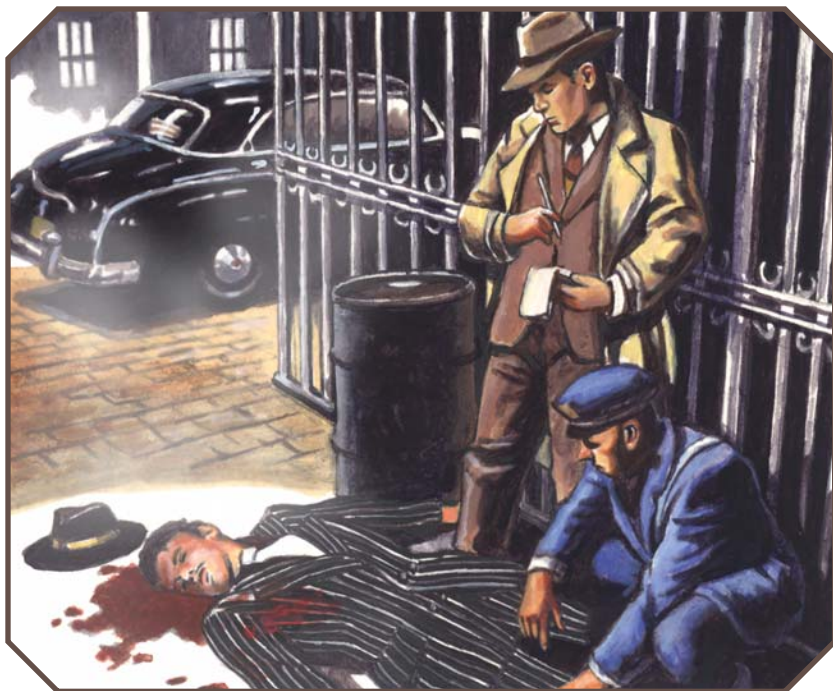
Another possibility, especially in a world with secret powers, is a “mystery” where the truth is known as soon as the investigators use their powers, but acquiring *proof* that can stand up under legal scrutiny is a lot harder. Criminals would have to take great care to obliterate all physical evidence of their actions – but then, some manage to avoid detection even in the face of modern forensic techniques.

Solutions to the problems posed by particular abilities are discussed further on pp. 194-198. General advice on running mysteries can be found in *GURPS Mysteries*, available from e23 ([e23.sjgames.com](http://e23.sjgames.com)).

### *Time and Distance*

One difference between classic “low fantasy” or historical settings and anything set in the present day or an SF future is the speed of transport. A journey from one country to another that would involve weeks of strenuous riding and sailing can take mere hours aboard a commercial airliner. Heroes who can fly, teleport long distances, or run like the wind merely make this difference more pronounced. Even fast long-range communication, without physical travel, can disrupt some plots.

The GM should be prepared for travel and communications to work more like a modern-day game than a medieval setting, whatever the nominal tech level. On the other hand, there's no reason to ignore the subject entirely. GMs are fully entitled to track distances, calculate journey times, and insert the odd problem en route.



Complacent PCs may get themselves into trouble. A fast runner moving independently of the main party may be ambushed, and any solitary scout who lets himself be caught up in fights *will* get into trouble sooner or later. A party may end up scattered all over the map and incapable of coordination if the PCs aren't careful. Meanwhile, communications may be subject to interception, disruption, jamming, or faking.

### **Social Taboos**

Reputations and "proper" behavior are discussed on p. 191, but to repeat the point: living up to the image of the "proper" hero can be a challenge in itself. Some heroes are powerful enough to live by their own rules – and players may even make a point of doing so, especially if the conventional morality of the setting disagrees with their own personal ideals – but that makes the PCs into rebels and outcasts.

Social revolutionaries are at war with society – a determined and well-supported enemy. Just because heroes preach a radical new morality won't make it universally accepted; most people are extremely attached to conventional ideas, and can be fiercely brave in defending them. If the characters don't even *try* to justify their actions, resistance will be even more explicit and determined. In some settings, the PCs may come into conflict with actual gods, who make and enforce moral laws – and even if the deities don't drop thunderbolts on uppity mortals, they may empower champions of their own.

### **Normals**

Even if no gods intervene, ordinary people may oppose the "heroes" – which raises the question of how the nonpowered inhabitants of a setting can be made relevant.

Most PCs, even the most powerful ones, need *something* from mundane society: food, assistance in laboratories or libraries, legal and prison systems to hold captured villains, or just ammunition. The more the adventurers alienate the mass of humanity, the harder, more grudging, and more unreliable such relations will be. Cash

payments or sheer terror may accomplish a lot, but even if no normals make a principled stand, the "heroes" may find that their suppliers suffer all sorts of inconvenient "accidents." Even if only a minority of the population objects to them, those objectors may provide support and information to the heroes' enemies. The worst social rebels are seen as monstrous – and monsters inspire monster-slayers.

## **PLOT-STOPPERS**

The following are among the most egregious game-wrecking abilities. They need to be watched and controlled. If it's clear that a particular ability will damage a campaign, it *can* just be flatly prohibited – but it's best to have a good reason for this absence, in terms of game-world logic. If the ability is one of the chosen genre's standard features, a ban may look very odd.

### **Healing**

Healing is a staple of RPGs, but it also causes problems. If the PCs come to regard any risk of physical injury as a transient threat, an obstacle that would realistically make people look for an alternative route may end up as a joke. "A pitfall with spikes? We'll be okay." Healing can also render tragic NPC death scenes farcical, and make heroes complacent about endangering innocent bystanders.

Banning healing may be fairly easy, especially in worlds where scientific logic applies. Breaking things and people is simple, but – thanks to the laws of thermodynamics – putting them back together again can be hard. Even with magic, achieving a permanent cure may require a permanent enchantment, world-altering spells, or just a heavy expenditure of energy, and the cure may even be reversed in no-mana areas.

Genre conventions also apply. Healing, as opposed to "self only" regeneration, is rare in superhero comics, though not entirely unknown. (A known healer might be overloaded with pleas to help out with ordinary medical problems and end up employed in a hospital rather than fighting crime.) In some fantasy settings, healing magic is fairly widespread, but is controlled by religious groups with their own rules.

If healing is available, GMs should try and keep the level of potential damage from any given threat at least slightly uncertain. PCs may not fear mere injuries, but will be worried if there seems to be a possibility of damage so extreme that it will keep them out of action even after the healer's ministrations, or even instant death. GMs are justified in calling for Will rolls before adventurers willingly risk serious harm, even when they are *certain* that they'll survive and can get instantly healed. This reflects reflexes and survival instincts. People flinch

*Some heroes are powerful enough to live by their own rules – and players may even make a point of doing so, especially if the conventional morality of the setting disagrees with their own personal ideals – but that makes the PCs into rebels and outcasts.*

from pain, even when it isn't accompanied by any significant injury, but players don't necessarily accept that their characters have such natural reactions. If an injury was especially gory or painful, came from an unexpected direction, or was worse than expected, or the healer was slower or less efficient than expected, a Fright Check may be justified, possibly at a penalty. Repeated pain and injury, even if transient and in a good cause, can leave the toughest of adventurers subconsciously scarred.

If the heroes are visibly depending on healing, their opponents are very likely to target the healer. It's simply good tactics.

### *Mind Reading and Mind Probe*

If a mystery hinges on something that NPCs know but the PCs don't, mind-reading powers can end the adventure in seconds. Sometimes the trick is to make sure that the heroes don't see any reason to read an NPC's mind, but this is rarely a reliable technique, especially if they're in the habit of using their powers indiscriminately. Keeping knowledgeable NPCs out of the way isn't always feasible.

However, there are often limits on the use of such powers. If mind reading is known to exist, using it without the subject's permission could be an illegal invasion of privacy. Telepathic detectives might have to obtain warrants to search a suspect's mind. Even without legal constraints, there might be social problems. Psychically examining high-Status suspects could be fraught with difficulty. Many people are likely to find the idea repulsive, or have serious personal secrets that are irrelevant to the current case. *Some* official telepathic investigators might have specially extended Legal Enforcement Powers permitting them to probe suspects on reasonable suspicion (essentially a form of "violating civil rights," which usually adds 5 points to the advantage cost, up to the normal maximum of 15). A member of a trusted organization, or someone with a personal Reputation for his rigorous code of ethics, might have more leeway. But those would be considerable privileges, specific to

the setting and the character, and not completely effective even then.

### *Mind Control and Possession*

If an enemy who can read your mind is worrying, one who can override your willpower is truly terrifying. Mind-controlling heroes can be real plot-wreckers; taking control of an enemy not only eliminates that foe instantly (if temporarily), it provides additional help against other opponents. A mind-controlled victim can be cross-examined at will, making this an effective if indirect form of mind-reading, prone to derail mystery plots. The mind controller *does* need to know what questions to ask, but "What should I ask?" is a good start . . .

Fortunately, these powers almost always come with complications. Often, controlling an opponent requires all of the controller's attention or has an unreliable duration, so the PCs never know quite when they're going to lose their pawn. Cunning enemies may pretend to be still under control when they aren't, enabling them to blindside the controller at the worst moment. While controlling an enemy leader is often the most effective tactic of all, "master villain" types often have formidable willpower *and* invest in psionic or magical protections.

Most importantly, such powers are almost always strongly constrained by ethical or legal considerations. Taking away a person's free will is widely seen as vile, and may be explicitly criminalized if society knows that it's possible – although a brief use of control, in a good cause, without making the subject do anything immoral, may be forgiven. If the law *does* become involved, the use of mind control can lead to huge complications. Proving that the accused wasn't under somebody else's control when he committed the crime, or when he confessed, could be very hard indeed.

### *Insubstantiality*

People with the power to become intangible are formidable. They can not only slip in and out of hostile areas unimpeded, making them almost as effective at spying and

solving mysteries as a clairvoyant, they can become effectively invulnerable when they choose.

There are usually ways to stop such beings – force fields, alchemically enhanced wall materials, or magical wards – and to hurt them using specially augmented attacks, but all these require some justification and preparation. Players may justly complain if every opponent seems to automatically negate the power on which they spent so many points. A more challenging but fairer response is for antagonists to act *intelligently*.

By and large, insubstantial PCs aren't invisible, can't move much faster than ordinary people, and have to become substantial to eat and sleep. Hence, they can be caught on security cameras, followed or (with difficulty) tracked, and eventually cornered. GMs should keep a close eye on movement speeds and times.

Even in combat, "ghosts" generally have to become substantial in order to hit back, so competent tacticians will try to watch their movements and keep an attack in reserve. Really effective opponents may simply arrange ambushes or surprise attacks, and aim to take out the "ghost" before he can react. If the problem continues, an NPC *will* invest in countermeasures.

### *Invisibility*

Invisible PCs have more problems with walls and locks than their intangible counterparts, but are even harder to locate. They can do unspeakable things in public and waltz through any security measures based on human observation.

Fortunately, effective countermeasures can be cheap and mundane. Invisible intruders can be spotted by guard animals (dogs, geese, etc.) that have keen senses other than sight, and may set off relatively simple security devices such as pressure pads. Once foes realize that they have an invisible problem, they should triple-check any "false alarm" and always assume the worst about where the foe might be. In combat, improvised tricks involving flour or paint may be effective, or combatants can simply saturate an area with grenades, gas, magic, or automatic weapons in "spray and pray" mode. Invisible enemies are scary, but far from unbeatable.



## Penetrating Vision and Clairsentience

Powers that can see through barriers are yet another way to short-circuit an entire plot. A conventional “dungeon crawl” or an espionage mission may be cut short even by very limited powers that can survey the dungeon or probe the enemy base with minimal risk.

Of course, the intruder must know where to look. If the power takes time or effort to use, PCs can still be surprised or ambushed by totally unexpected traps or foes. Few people are likely to keep such abilities active full-time; they would make it hard to see where one was going. Interpreting observations can also be tricky. A guard in a full-face helm may be alert or dozing on his feet; may respond to an attack by fighting, running away, or ringing a bell to summon a dozen friends; and may turn out to be a rank beginner or an elite warrior. Reading written secrets is all very well, but if they’re buried among thousands of pages of routine records, finding them could take days.

If such powers are known to exist, or even suspected, competent opponents will take countermeasures. Even if active magical wards or psionic screens are unavailable, keeping secrets in the dark, or encrypting them, may render them secure. Fake objects, humanoid dummies, and false documents can all help.

Any society with serious concerns about privacy and personal modesty will regard powers of this type with suspicion. A known clairvoyant may be treated as a snoop or voyeur. In settings where powerful men keep carefully guarded harems, and public immodesty is severely punished, anyone who can see through walls would be advised to keep the fact *very* quiet.

### Precognition

The ability to foretell the future is difficult to GM, and can easily wreck whole campaigns. GMs should never feel obliged to permit it if it would be too troublesome. If it *is* available, exactly how to deal with it depends on the exact form it takes, and how firmly fixed the future might be.

The GM has to walk a fine line. The future may not always work out exactly as foretold, but shrugging and saying “You only saw one possibility” makes the ability worthless. On the other hand, perfectly reliable predictions make the entire game futile. There are several possibilities; GMs should make it very clear from the first which one they have chosen.

the power activates; each play-through actually represents a vision, until the seer decides to let one actually happen. (This tends to require the Directed enhancement, p. 68.) Unfortunately, this method tends to be lengthy and boring. It’s also *very* hard to handle when NPCs have the power. Alternatively, the GM may give visions that will be perfectly true if the PCs



First, Precognition may be very restricted and inherently uncontrollable. Passive Only (p. 69) is mandatory, and One Event (p. B77) may also be required. For a really annoying version, add Nuisance Effect (“seizures”) and Uncontrollable, so that the seer is prone to startling or terrifying visions at inconvenient moments, and may acquire a Reputation for insanity. This approach is common in fiction. Seers have dreams or waking visions which indicate that *something* (usually bad) is going to happen, and may pick up some clues about the nature of the threat (“An attack on the town! I see darkness and fire!”), but details are always uncertain. This is a good storytelling device, and means that the heroes are less likely to be caught completely unaware, but it may be too frustratingly vague for players.

Another option is to say that the future is fixed, *given* a particular set of actions by the seer. This can be simulated by permitting precognitives to “replay” events from the point where

remain passive, but which they can change by any action they take – but in most cases, it’s hard to imagine PCs not doing *anything* about future events.

Precognition might also give 100% accurate but very brief “flash visions” of the future, with enhancements such as Directed and Reliable prohibited. These scenes *will* happen (and if they’re unpleasant, that’s just tough – there’s a reason why some seers are unpopular), but what they mean, and what’s going on “offstage,” remain undetermined. For example, the vision might show a hero being shot and falling to the floor covered in blood – but the wound may turn out to be superficial, or the gun might be loaded with blanks and the hero could be faking, or the shot might miss entirely and the blood might come from an earlier fight. GMs have to come up with plausible future scenes, based on their plans for the campaign, and making them come true may require a lot of manipulation.

Finally, predictions may be inherently tricky and ambiguous, in the best traditions of the Oracle of Delphi and newspaper horoscopes. This is often a feature of specific fortune-telling methods, which can add all sorts of limitations: Active Only (p. 69) is normal, and most will add some of Preparation Required, Takes Extra Time, Trigger, or Gadget Limitations – or Fickle, or possibly Pact, if the information actually comes from an unpredictable spirit or deity. (Directed can be added for more-controllable methods.) However, it may simply be a feature of *all* Precognition in the game world. Players should be told that they're buying the right to ask questions that the GM can answer like a gas-inhaling priestess, a lawyer, or the Devil – *not* the right to put the GM on the witness stand. High skill just means good odds of activation. Interpretation should generally be roleplayed.

One possibility with this last approach, especially suitable with PCs who use mystical styles of “fortune-telling,” is to read up on just such a method from the real world – the tarot would probably work well – and, when the power is activated, break out a tarot deck, yarrow stalks, or whatever, and make a reading. The GM then decides what the reading means – without telling the players – and starts manipulating events toward that result. Of course, the fear of a bad reading, or the GM's ability to be confusing, may deter people from ever using the power – but the temptation of knowing the future, however uncertainly, is *very* strong . . .

To repeat: whatever option the GM selects, he should make the decision clear at the start of the campaign and then *stand by it*. Some players may ask how they can acquire clear, detailed, unambiguous precognition. The answer can be “**You can't.**” If they don't like the level of uncertainty, they can always spend their points elsewhere. GMs are never obliged to permit game-wrecking powers.

If the plot *requires* a particular result or scene, the GM can and *should* twist events mercilessly toward that result: NPCs show up or wander off as required, die rolls get fudged, and any NPC who is “fated to do well” has Ridiculous Luck *and* Serendipity.

Yes, this is railroading; players who use precognition are literally and explicitly *asking* to be railroaded. They aren't entitled to complain, and good players might well help in some way.

If two rival seers are both using precognition while attempting to manipulate events, some kind of Quick Contest may determine who gets the most desirable result – but it might be just as reasonable to say that both get screaming headaches and must retire to bed.

Soothsayers whose precognition threatens the campaign can be dealt with by various methods. For once, GMs can become *somewhat* arbitrary with a clear conscience: messing with destiny is traditionally considered to be asking for trouble. Ambiguous predictions, fuzzy images as all history turns on some random trivia, those screaming headaches, and interventions by gods charged with safeguarding fate and preventing mortals from knowing too much are all plausible in some settings, especially if the players have been warned. Anyone viewing a future that contains a high probability of terrible events such as his own death might also be required to make a Fright Check.

Precognition isn't usually legally or socially controlled, but some religions consider it blasphemous (knowledge of the future is the prerogative of Heaven), and some legal systems assume that it's impossible and treat it automatically as fraudulent. Anyone known to possess the ability may attract *lots* of attention from the curious . . . and the obsessive.

### Shapeshifting

Shapeshifting can be a minor trick or a game-wrecking problem, depending on precise details and how it's used. Being able to look like someone or something else, instantly, is almost as good as Invisibility, and clever users can achieve numerous other effects as well.

However, many subtle effects of this power demand judgment and skill. Just looking like someone else will usually work for a useful moment, but actually *impersonating* someone requires the ability to emulate their voice and mannerisms. The right skills (mostly Acting, Disguise, and

Mimicry, and sometimes Fast-Talk) can deal with this, but rolls should be required, with whatever modifiers are appropriate. Some impersonations will need various kinds of Cultural Familiarity or Savoir-Faire. Some simply will not work unless the target is very carefully studied beforehand.

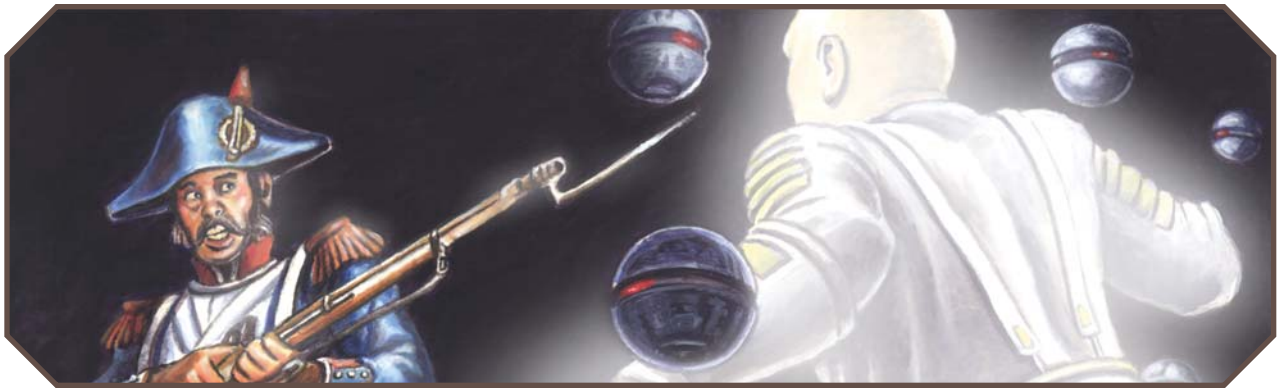
Opponents may not act instantly, but the morphing PC can never be quite sure whether somebody is taken in entirely, somewhat distracted, or seriously suspicious but trying to draw the impersonator in further. GMs should require and make a lot of die rolls, some of them “dummies,” to keep players nervous. If opponents know they have a shapeshifter to worry about, they may be driven to paranoia, but they can also institute defensive measures, from high-tech or magical tests to password systems.

Remember also that there are usually limits to the abilities that an alternate form can possess. GMs should be careful that PCs capable of taking multiple forms don't try things that are actually beyond their ability.

### Warp and Jumper

Warp represents one of the most “magical” of powers. Jumper achieves many of the same effects and more. The problem is, they can also reduce the tension of many plots. A long-range teleporter can leave any adventure when the going gets difficult, and even a short-range version enables a PC to escape from any conventional prison cell and to bypass many security measures.

Part of the solution is to be very sure to enforce all the built-in problems. PCs must be able to see or visualize their destination, and can still fail and temporarily disable their ability from time to time. Most uses also cost FP, and GMs should be sure to enforce all the relevant rules on that, too. Encumbrance limits are another rule to watch closely; aside from the fact that adventurers may find that they can't carry bulky loot or heavy weapons when they vanish, they will almost certainly be incapable of taking friends or allies along – and even if they don't care about this, their allies might be very unhappy about being left in the lurch.



Those who make a habit of traveling to unseen locations may run into dangerous, or at least unexpected, situations on arrival. GMs shouldn't make a habit of this unless players are complacent – in which case, PCs may transport themselves right into a trap or ambush. This is, after all, another ability that competent enemies will assess carefully for limitations. If captured, known teleporters may well find that they are subject to especially harsh conditions in order to baffle their ability. They may be drugged, blindfolded, or held in pitch-black rooms, and kept unaware of their precise location. Enemies may take hostages to dissuade a teleporter from just wandering off, and will probably hold valued items in secret locations, protected by fast and deadly traps.

While this sort of ability often may not be heavily legally controlled, it's unnerving enough that anyone known to possess it will be regarded with some caution. If someone commits a series of baffling mystery thefts, a teleporter may well find himself under suspicion, however solid his alibis.

## RUNNING ADVENTURES

Adventures for empowered PCs are generally much like other sorts, though some scenes may be a little larger and more dramatic. However, there are some specific issues to consider.

### Spotlight Time

Giving PCs "spotlight time" means allowing each of them a chance to *participate* – an opportunity to roleplay and earn a mention in stories. In

games involving powers, one of the most important things about spotlight time is that everyone should have a chance to show off their particular specialties.

It's generally better not to be too formulaic about this, especially in games with diverse powers. If every adventure has an obstacle for the flyer to fly over, an NPC for the telepath to read, a weight for the "brick" to lift, and so on, the results will look very artificial. Most players are happy enough to take a back seat in some sessions, so long as they get chances to shine in others, or an opportunity for a little roleplaying somewhere along the line. Some heroes' function is to act as a confidant or psychological foil for the others. However, if a PC gets no significant spotlight time at all for several consecutive sessions, there is a problem.

Some players make their own spotlight time, ingeniously finding opportunities to use what they've got. Although excessively pushy players may need a little polite restraining, this saves the GM from having to work too hard. Others may need more encouragement, especially if their powers are most effective when used with a little ingenuity; the other players can help here, and GMs shouldn't discourage them. Very shy, retiring players, especially those unfamiliar with the rules, may even be prompted by the GM. It's better not to overdo this, or the game can end up looking like a story told solely by the GM, but the occasional hint is fine.

### The Human Touch

GMs should also make sure that there are places and times where powers are irrelevant and *everybody* gets a

chance to roleplay. Having the PCs swept off by one emergency after another, with barely a pause for breath in between, may be very exciting – but it may also get boring. GMs shouldn't be afraid to say "you'll have to spend a couple of days back at base" or "it'll take you a week to sail there," and shouldn't hurry past that downtime if the players look eager to roleplay out some personal stuff.

In powers-oriented campaigns, however, action scenes may *be* the big opportunities for characterization. Quiet types can show their true worth or grow in confidence when their powers prove essential in battle. The grandstanding, fireball-tossing superhero and the devious creature of living darkness demonstrate their personalities by using their powers. The ruthless avenger, the honorable paladin, and the emotionally balanced martial artist can all show their true natures in action.

## MEANINGFUL REWARDS

Most PCs can be rewarded with wealth, improved abilities, nifty new tricks or devices, and perhaps status or fame, but PCs who are *already* really powerful may require different incentives.

Even an empowered hero should have some *reason* to adventure. Rewards should ideally involve some movement toward a goal. A warrior out of Celtic mythology may dream of becoming a respected member of a king's household, and perhaps eventually a king himself, all within the limits of the Celtic code of honor . . . or he may simply hope for a glorious career culminating in a noble death in battle.



But even such a short-lived hero may want to defeat certain foes, and ensure the security and prosperity of his family, before the end.

While some heroes move from one short-term problem to the next, never worrying too much about the future, others have grand concerns tangential to their adventuring career. A mystic may seek communion with the godhead, while a wizard may want to understand the deeper nature of physical reality. The snag with this sort of thing is that it can distract a PC from adventuring altogether, but he may have lesser reasons to travel and fight or his quest may involve a necessarily practical element – the search for ancient secrets in far-off lands, say, or the need to perfect skills as the path to enlightenment.

### *Improving and Enhancing Powers*

Experience points, the traditional reward for PCs, can certainly be as useful to those with powers as to anyone else. However, using them to improve powers may need some special treatment.

Buying levels of a power-related Talent is generally fine, on a par with getting better at most skills. Likewise, buying an extra die or two of an

The presence of powers has implications for the parameters of campaign design.

## **BACKGROUND**

To begin with, a campaign needs a general setting – often meaning a specific time, not just a place.

### *Historical*

The snag with empowered games in the historical past is that powered beings don't seem to have existed in history. Even if they did, they apparently failed to use their powers to change the world – so where's the fun?

One possible solution is to set the campaign in an alternate version of the past where powers, having appeared recently, are about to *start*

## **Plot Points and New Abilities**

Abilities can't usually be gained or improved in the middle of an adventure – unless doing so fits the campaign style and genre. In a campaign that uses “plot points” (p. 192), a player might be permitted to spend experience to improve or add abilities during the adventure if he spends a plot point as well.

“If I concentrate my icy fog onto one spot, I can drop the temperature well below freezing. If I remember my freshman physics right, that should make this metal brittle. Hey, I must remember this trick . . .”

Innate Attack, increasing the strength of a telekinetic ability, or improving any power's range a little is often comparable to increasing a mundane attribute – justifiable as a matter of exercise and training.

More radical changes include removing limitations, adding enhancements, and adding whole new abilities to an existing power. Such things *may* be justifiable: a telepath might realize that the powers of the mind aren't bounded by distance (adding the Long-Range enhancement, p. 108) or learn to transmit images as well as words (gaining the Illusion ability with the Mental enhancement, p. 95), a fire elemental might learn to focus its blasts to punch through defenses (Armor

Divisor, p. B102) or spread them wide (Area Effect, p. B102), or a shaman could master a whole regiment of new spirit-servants with associated abilities.

As this suggests, many abilities and refinements come with new insights, or as rewards for good work. Mentors may teach new lessons to pupils who've proved themselves worthy, patron gods may grant new miracles to priests who've served well, and wizards can acquire scrolls of lore when they plunder ancient ruins. The natural plot break that often follows a successful adventure can give PCs a chance to consider what they've learned recently, practice new techniques, and compare notes.

# **CAMPAIGNS**

making changes. Such a game can be based on myth (Gilgamesh-style demigods bestriding the city-states of ancient Mesopotamia), a mixture of myth and novelty (Greek philosophers discovering the power of psi and having to deal with Olympian gods who don't approve), or a complete “what if” (aliens with cosmic powers and transcendent technology land in the mid-Victorian era, and recruit and “upgrade” humans to serve as guides and guards).

Another alternative is the “very secret history” game, where powers are being used deep behind the scenes, and the PCs seek to impose their own slant on events that follow the broad pattern of known history. The players may know who'll be king next year – but will that king serve their faction,

or an enemy? They may even be specifically charged with keeping the world as it is recorded in our history books, with the threat that, if they fail, it will become a disastrous alternate history. See *Keeping It Real*, p. 200, for ideas about how such secrecy could be maintained.

### *Modern*

Exotic powers give the GM quite enough work in themselves, so it may be easiest to set campaigns in the most familiar milieu of all: the modern world, or something almost indistinguishable. After all, there are plenty of popular “powers-heavy” genres that use this setting, from four-color superheroes through many kung fu movies to tales of teenage vampire hunters.

## Keeping It Real

In settings that resemble real history or the present day, but with powers, GMs need an explanation of why these abilities haven't changed events and society beyond recognition.

Powers may be a deep secret, because the people who possess them fear persecution by "mundanes" or because they simply value their privacy. Empowered people may be "enlightened," preferring not to disturb the world too much, or devious behind-the-scenes manipulators. They might also serve – or *be* – godlike beings, constrained by rules or traditions from direct action in human society but able to fight each other in the "divine realms."

Alternatively, powers may be publicly known, but only just have appeared. A campaign can explore the consequences of newly emerged powers: what *would* happen if a new drug enabled 1% of its users to teleport? In some cases, the changes may be predictably large, even pre-ordained, and the campaign can be about how the PCs handle them; for instance, they might be imbued with supernatural power to act as soldiers in some looming Armageddon.

Long-established powers that haven't changed the world are hard to explain, but do appear in fiction. They may simply be very rare, and not powerful enough in total to make huge differences; a few people who can hurl small fireballs or make their skin as tough as steel really aren't much different from a few people who own firearms and Kevlar vests. If powers are difficult or dangerous to use, that makes them effectively rare; they'll change a few emergencies, and a few daredevils and fanatics will make a habit of using them, but most people prefer to avoid risk. If they're very dangerous to other people, heroes may have the job of dissuading foolish or desperate people from summoning demons or turning themselves into walking bombs . . . or of clearing up the mess afterward.

Or powers may cancel each other out, as in some superhero comics. A few villains go around robbing banks or trying to conquer the world, a roughly equal number of heroes spend their time stopping them, and everyone else gets on with their lives.

If the powers in such a campaign are secret, the world can resemble our own very closely – although if powers have been around for very long, the GM will need an explanation of what role, if any, they *really* played in history. If they're publicly known, powers may still somehow not make much difference to the world. See *Keeping it Real* (box) for more on this.

### Futuristic

In the future, all sorts of powers may become possible – especially those derived from advanced technology such as cybernetic implants, genetic engineering, or robotics. In some settings, advances in hypothetical sciences such as "applied psionics" enable humans to master the powers of the mind, while encounters with

alien races introduce other beings with special capabilities. In a few settings, magic "returns" or is discovered on alien worlds, or "the future" is used as a fantasy setting, with a few references to our own world as "the distant past." In a rigorous hard-SF campaign, the logic of such things should be carefully worked out; in wilder science fantasies, less explanation is required.

### Totally Fictional

A "powers game" can avoid many problems of logic by being set in an entirely imaginary world, whether the classic made-up fantasy continent or an alternate history where the open presence of powers has changed everything. As with futuristic games, a "rigorous" style demands that the

consequences of these powers be worked out. Even in a more fantastical game, the setting should have, for example, a *social* place for empowered individuals. Often, they'll be the rulers, but scholarly wizards might do better as advisors in the courts of secular kings or presidents, while enlightened sages might even prefer to become hermits.

## STYLE

The style of a powers game determines how it is played, and often what optional rules and restrictions are applied.

### Realistic vs. Cinematic

Most powers are somewhat unrealistic; real people can't do these things. However, it's perfectly possible to treat the subject in a logical, "realistic" fashion. A blast of telekinetic force can injure the target in exactly the same way as a thrown rock, empowered heroes can fail disastrously if they attempt dramatic stunts, and love may be a messy and misleading emotion, not an all-conquering miracle.

Still, some genres, notably mythic fantasy, space-operatic SF, and four-color superheroism, are *highly* cinematic. GMs should follow most or all of the guidelines on pp. B488-489 (unless the whole idea is to subvert the conventions). Other games may be grittier: a hero going up against a world-controlling conspiracy or fighting sanity-blasting horrors from outside time, should expect a tough fight . . . won, if at all, by effort, sacrifice, and intelligence.

Realism may work best in controlled doses, as when a superhero who's spent years fighting colorful villains realizes that blandly efficient conspiracies are quietly ruining his world far more effectively than any costumed foe, or a dead loved one turns out to be really, permanently dead, despite the hero's nobility.

### Action vs. Investigation

Powers tend to mean *action* – energy blasts, flying heroes, and rugged warriors shrugging off countless blows – but some are subtle, useful less in combat than for investigation and research. "Empowered investigator"

campaigns can be tricky to run – a hero with the senses of a bloodhound or the ability to speak with the dead can solve many mysteries with minimal effort – but also very entertaining. At the very least, heroes may have to trace the source of a subtle problem, using wits and skill, before they stomp on it with raw power. This two-part plot structure, investigation followed by big fight, is standard in many campaigns and genres.

In games featuring secret plots and conspiracies, investigation is the *main* activity. A major fight means that someone has failed disastrously, or at least that the current adventure has come to a revelatory climax. Likewise, if everyone in a particular situation has similar powers, they may cancel out, leaving investigation or social manipulation as the only way for anyone to achieve their ends. Campaigns can involve various proportions of violence and thoughtfulness; GMs should adjust the balance to taste. Even the most popular superhero comics feature master detectives as well as bulletproof flying men.

### **Serious vs. Humorous**

High-powered characters create tension in the mood of a campaign. On the one hand, they probably have great and very serious concerns: the struggle between good and evil, problems of bigotry and persecution, the question of how the world should be governed, and so forth. On the other hand, people who can make weird things happen just by waving their hands, who wear bizarre costumes, and who are prone to agonize about the fate of humanity over breakfast can't help but look slightly ridiculous.

*We've got a blind date with  
Destiny – and it looks like she's  
ordered the lobster.*

*– The Shoveller,  
Mystery Men*

Most good campaigns include elements of both seriousness and comedy, although the proportions vary. Empowered characters tend to make both aspects more pronounced; the threats and dilemmas are vast, but so are the results of folly or clumsiness.

Some campaigns focus not only on seriousness, but on *darkness*. Angst-ridden protagonists are popular, and the drawbacks associated with some categories of power – such as vampirism or religious dedication – are certainly less than fun. On the other hand, powerful characters can *get things done*; many people would say that they have far less right to angst than less-powerful folk whose problems are no smaller. Serious but optimistic games deal with saving the world, successfully battling evil, and so on; admirable stuff, if a little pompous. Optimistic lightweight games are more obviously enjoyable, though they may end up ducking all the issues that make for good, strong plots – if nothing ever goes tragically wrong, then getting things right is less of an achievement. Finally, humorous campaigns with bumbling, unsuccessful protagonists can be very funny, but may also end up feeling very frustrating – nothing ever goes right, and the players can't even angst about it – and if the heroes have powers, they just end up looking like bigger idiots.

## **PREVALENCE OF POWERS**

The nature of a world with powers will be heavily influenced by how widespread those powers are. There may be a large difference between the prevalence of powers in the world in



general, and in the places where the PCs mostly operate. If the world is inhabited by billions of ordinary mortals, but game events take place in the realms of the gods, then powers are effectively very common.

### **Unique**

If the PCs are the only beings with significant powers, they'll bestride the world like gods – or demons. However, they'll also be *targets*. If they're known to be powerful, they will inevitably be feared, and some very competent factions may make serious attempts to destroy them. If they're too powerful for that, anyone who knows about them will regard them with utter terror. If they aren't powerful enough to be a threat, their powers will make them objects of curiosity, some of it dangerous.

More to the point, the PCs decide what changes powers make to the world – subject to complications. They may set out to do good but end up fighting the wrong people, tearing down systems without putting anything in their place, or being manipulated by “friends.” This could turn into a battle of wits between the players and the GM, but that shouldn't be the objective; ideally, the conflict will be between the morality of well-roleplayed PCs and the nature of the game world.



## Rare

More likely, powers will be few and far between, but not limited to the PCs. (This could mean that they are limited to a single group of people who are *not* the PCs!) Again, known empowered beings are likely to be regarded with fear or curiosity, but the PCs will be subject to less extreme pressure.

Individuals who choose to use their powers for different purposes or to support different causes may well end up clashing. This could range from polite debates over whether it's better to fight crime, help the starving, or let humanity find its own way to great battles between heroes and villains, as the champions of different moral codes or the soldiers of different nations. If powers are both rare and secret, the chances for conflict may be less; different groups may go for years without meeting.

## Common

If powers are commonplace, the pressure is off the PCs, and the trick is to use powers *well*. This probably works best if the game isn't really focused on abilities, but simply a campaign that happens to feature powers. For example, a high-tech future could feature such advanced biotechnology and cybernetics that anyone can be "superhuman" who really feels the need, or a "high-magic, low-fantasy" setting could give a few useful spells to anyone who's prepared to study the art.

Even if many people have powers, not everyone uses them with heroic effectiveness. In a world where many people have weapons and some combat training, PCs can still be heroic warriors. Likewise, PCs may use common powers to more heroic ends than most NPCs.

## Universal

If *everyone* has powers, the game world will probably be a very strange place. This situation could result from a sudden change – a cosmic accident, say – or from years of technological progress or magical education.

If these universal powers are very diverse, working out the consequences for society will be extremely difficult, and the results might be an unstable anarchy. It's probably better not to try

to run a rigorously logical game – if anyone you meet could in fact turn out to be capable of *anything*, there's no way for PCs to make useful plans or tackle subtle mysteries – but it may be possible to do a lot with tongue-in-cheek social activity and bizarre allegory.

More often, "universal powers" settings give everyone the *same* power, but at different levels. A few "crippled" individuals may lack it altogether. For example, Alfred Bester's classic SF novel *The Stars My Destination* is set in a world where everyone except for a few unfortunates can teleport, though the power is *thought* to have defined limits . . .

## SECRECY

Finally, there's the question of whether powers are widely known and accepted or secret and potentially feared. Openly known powers imply a world that is rather unfamiliar, even if it appears to resemble the present day. Secret powers are more limiting for the players, as they'll have to worry about preserving secrecy (or breaking it and surviving) rather than using their powers to the full. In a world of secrecy, the more

dramatically powerful a PC is, the *less* effective he may prove. On the other hand, in a setting where powers are well known, merely having a power may not make one anything special.

There are two main reasons for keeping powers secret: fear and greed. Empowered characters may fear being burned as witches, pilloried as freaks, or drafted as super-soldiers. Anyone known to have an exceptional power will attract *some* kind of attention. Even if most people aren't actually hostile, some will be superstitious, want to exploit the possessor, or treat him as a celebrity and destroy his privacy.

Wanting to avoid such difficulties seems only reasonable, but *greedy* power-users want more. Powers can be used for personal profit in countless secret ways – but if they're known to exist, all sorts of countermeasures may be possible. A totally secret telepath can easily advance in business or politics, or become a great seducer; if telepathy is well-known, however, many people might wear mindshields or become deeply suspicious of anyone who seems to "read" them too well. If the individual's powers are well known, his prospects of success will vanish. Conspiracies and factions will try to keep powers *well* hidden.

## Transitional Campaigns

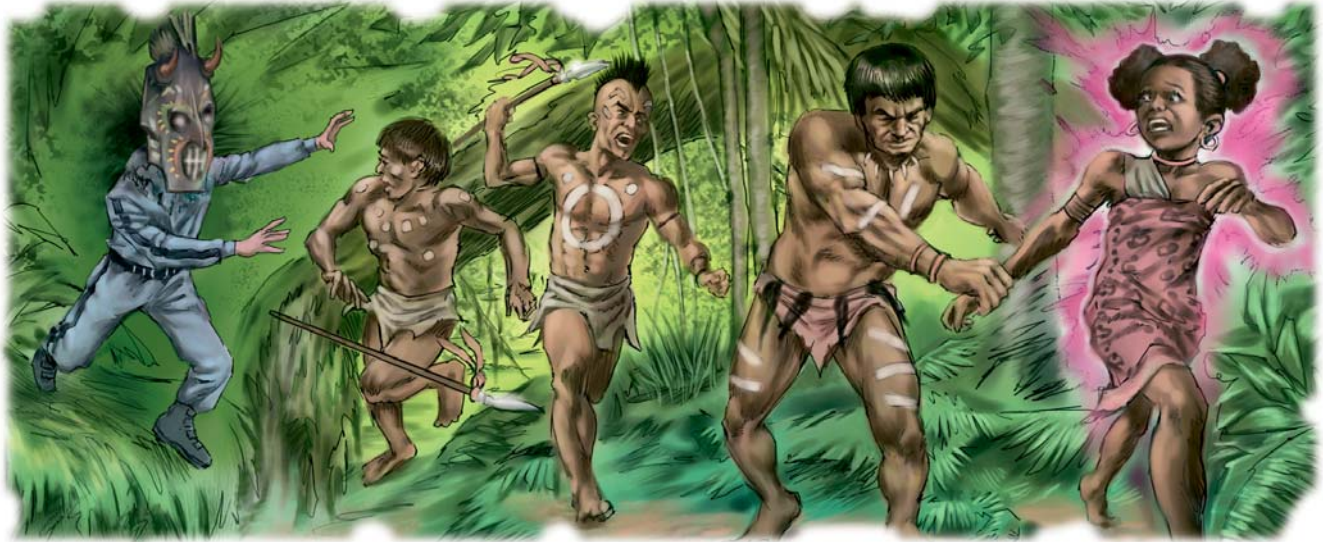
Transforming a campaign from one that didn't include powers to one in which they exist is a big, tricky change. It will have radical consequences, and it may or may not be to the taste of the players. GMs should be especially careful; it's easy to annoy people who thought that they'd signed up for one sort of game, only to get something different.

The change may have been planned from the start, as part of some kind of radical revelation. It might also be an unexpected but logical consequence of events in the course of long-term play, or an attempt to revitalize a tired campaign by adding something radically new. The GM must decide what powers are now available – they will almost always share a single class of origin – and what power modifiers, limits, etc., will apply. The powers are likely to be defined quite specifically by the GM rather than by the players.

PCs may simply have to respond to and investigate sudden displays of power from previously "mundane" NPCs. They may also acquire powers themselves, instantly or over time. In this case, the GM may simply permit the players to buy them with bonus character points, but few players are likely to have saved enough to acquire substantial powers. A GM who wishes to shake a campaign up may either award everyone an allotment of points to be spent on the player's choice of a power, or simply grant each PC a predefined power. The former has the advantage of giving the players freedom of choice; the latter may be more appropriate if the GM wants to control the nature of these new powers precisely.

## CHAPTER SIX

# EMPOWERED GENRES



*I reached the village less than an hour after sunrise, but as soon as I rounded the last bend in the trail, I realized that I should have moved faster. There were far fewer people among the huts than there should have been, and I could hear the shouts and screams of the others from the forest to the west. The sound of a mob bent on murder is quite distinctive when you've heard it often enough.*

*I donned the mask of Wolf, and broke into a sprint. I went right through the village, ignoring the old and confused – and one weeping woman, most likely a mother – as I passed. When I reached the scene of the trouble, I saw that I was in time, but only just.*

*The child was still alive, and I could*

*see her power flickering about her – too weak to do her any good, blatant enough to get her killed. One man, doubtless one of the village's noblest hunters, had her by the arm and was wrenching hard enough to dislocate it. Another two had just caught up, and had their spears raised, ready to strike at any moment.*

*I cast Wolf aside and donned the mask of Terror. It hurts like hell to call up anything so primal and foul, but there was no time for subtlety. I hit all three would-be saviors with one blow, and they dropped to the ground screaming.*

*A nearby man came at me with a club raised. I donned the mask of Bear; my punch smashed him into a tree. He*

*didn't try to get up again. Everyone else backed off long enough for me to get hold of the child and get her away.*

*An hour later, she'd recovered enough to talk as we sat together in a clearing. "Are you demon-touched, too?" she asked.*

*"That's one thing to call it," I answered, and then she was distracted by the sound of great wings descending.*

*"Is that . . . an eagle-demon?" she asked, suddenly quivering with fear again.*

*"Not exactly," I said, as the ornithopter landed.*

This chapter provides a brief overview of various genres involving powers.

## MYTHIC FANTASY

As *GURPS Fantasy* says, the fantasy genre exists on the border between reality and myth. *Mythic* fantasy takes it far toward the latter. Its heroes may

even be gods. It shares high fantasy's concern with wonder, but it can also be as horrific as anything in dark fantasy, as comic as anything in light fantasy,

and as adventurous as anything in sword and sorcery. It can even share some of the psychological realism (and ubiquitous magic) of low fantasy.

## BY THE BOOK: MYTHIC FANTASY

The main question about a mythic fantasy campaign is just *how* mythic it's going to be. PCs who are merely favored by the gods are different from those who *are* gods.

### *Power Level*

Campaigns that feature merely heroic humans can have a starting level of around 150-250 points. If some or all of them are demigods, 300-400 may be more appropriate. Mythic heroes who expect to shape the world by their actions start at 500 or more. True gods and titans probably need at least 1,000 points.

### *Unusual Backgrounds*

In some mythic settings, supernatural forces regularly walk the earth, and even ordinary mortals aren't too surprised to encounter them (although they may be rationally fearful). No Unusual Background is required for protagonists who wield divine powers or reality-warping magics in such cases. One might still be required for a power that is unusual even among the gods, such as psi in a world that mostly features magic.

However, in "epic heroes" games, full-fledged magical powers or obvious divine gifts may be prohibited entirely, or permitted only with a 50-point Unusual Background, in order to preserve the focus on powerful but essentially human protagonists. Relatively limited supernatural abilities that fall short of being an actual power, such as Achilles' near-total immunity to physical harm, might require a lesser Unusual Background, perhaps 25 points.

## SUBGENRES

Subcategories of mythic fantasy can primarily be defined in terms of the power levels of the protagonists, although the cultural background of a story – its implicit assumptions about metaphysics, the nature of heroism, and divine law – can make a large difference to the flavor and style.

## Powers in Non-Mythic Fantasy

Fantasy is often taken to require magic, but other powers – psionic, divine, moral, or cosmic – can take its place in ensuring the wonder and other-worldliness of a setting. (They may, of course, be *called* magic.) The powers available in such games should be specifically defined by the GM; if every sort of power is available, the setting will become either mythic or just silly. However, a few powers can make a fantasy world more exotic.

For example, while Yrth (see *GURPS Banestorm*) mostly uses the *GURPS* spell-magic system, it also features a few religious mystics of various kinds. Each faction of mystics has a small number of unusual advantages, each with the Pact limitation. In effect, each faction has its own power.

### *Epic Heroes*

The heroes of Homer's works, the Germanic legends of Siegfried, and the Anglo-Saxon tale of Beowulf are "merely" mortal men writ large. They're great warriors and leaders, may be of divine descent, and they sometimes wield magic weapons, but they don't fly or throw lightning. Some modern fantasy stories operate on a similar level. Tolkien's Númenoreans are long-lived, noble-spirited humans who shape the early history of Middle-Earth.

Fantasy of this type downplays powers – or leaves them in the hands of deities, angelic beings, and strange wizards and enchantresses. However, they may appear occasionally, in the form of a small piece of aid from some supernatural Patron or an incidental threat. Using blatant powers in combat may be considered unworthy or dishonorable although supernatural strength or vitality, and the occasional magic weapon are accepted heroic features.

### *Wondrous Heroes*

The heroes of, for example, Celtic mythology are much like those of the Homeric tales – leaders of society, often partly divine. However, they can master truly supernatural feats, leaping onto spears in flight or bringing down a dozen foes with a single sling-stone. In other words, they have powers.

These heroes are still essentially "augmented humans" – faster,

stronger, and deadlier than most, able to use amazing tricks and maybe the odd magic spell, but not actually gods. Many such stories are concerned with the heroes' mortality; they seek to make their mark in the world and achieve noble goals before they die. The gods themselves are far above the heroes; they may act as Patrons or behind-the-scenes Enemies, but woe betide any hero vain enough to think that he is on their level.

It's not impossible for wizards, sorcerers, or miracle-working priests to play a heroic role in this sort of fantasy, although most are seen as weird bit-part players who come and go through the lives of the warriors, occasionally dispensing aid, advice, or threats.

### *Tales of the Gods*

In some legends, gods are shown behaving very like mortal humans – except that the world they live in is *bigger*, one way or another, and their actions have global consequences. When Thor gets into a drinking contest, his opponents magically connect his horn to the sea itself – and his efforts cause the tides! This is an extreme case, far beyond the scale that most games can handle, but in some worlds, the adventures of godlike beings may be quite manageable. Roger Zelazny's *Lord of Light* and *Creatures of Light and Darkness*, in which the "gods" are powerful psis with ultra-tech equipment, provide one useful model.



Often, the gods are very like mortals in their motives and reactions, if only for comic effect. They're vain, quarrelsome, ambitious, jealous, passionate, loyal, or spiteful. Given that the purpose of the gods is to *enforce* morality and law rather than to *obey* it, they may act rather badly by mortal standards. However, they are usually bound by family loyalty, vows, and the specific rulings of higher gods, rather than behaving in a completely anarchic fashion.

## MYTHIC FANTASY GENRE CONVENTIONS

In this genre, players should always feel that every action has a chance of ending up in *myth*. Motivations should be grandiose; even petty personal lusts can lead to decade-long wars and the fall of nations. In some cases, protagonists are walking symbols or embodiments of some principle or race. Even the most mortal of them will become inspirations to peoples yet unborn.

Campaigns in which gods or near-godlike beings appear should aim for a sense of *significance*; these are cosmic forces interacting, establishing a template for how the world works. The *death* of a god leaves a whole aspect of reality ungoverned. At the same time, the human pettiness of these great entities provides countless opportunities for comedy.

In some cases, mortal heroes may be able to "borrow" some of the power of a god by re-enacting his legend, maybe with a "spirit journey" to the realm of the gods, into the underworld, or to confront some powerful being. In some cases, this may be a process of initiation into magical mysteries; in others, the journey may be an incidental part of the hero's career – though it may still change him significantly.

While mythic heroes are people who get things done – conquering cities, saving the world, stealing fire from the gods – it's entirely possible for them to fail. Tragedy is as important as heroism in myth. Heroic death in battle isn't necessarily considered to be defeat, but it's death nonetheless. Heroes who overreach themselves –

for example, by trying to acquire immortality – may suffer painfully for their ambition.

## MYTHIC ORIGINS

The heroes of mythic fantasy are typically close to the gods – sometimes *genetically* close. Even in legends and stories about human protagonists, many are the descendants of human-deity couplings. The gods may also possess magical techniques that they can use to empower their chosen agents, such as "apples of immortality" or the treatment that made Achilles largely invulnerable. In other cases, human characters seek near-divine status by mastery of supernatural powers – although that is notoriously difficult in legend, where hubris is often punished.



The commonest power origin is "divine ancestry," which may grant biological, magical, divine, cosmic, or even elemental powers. (Some heroes might also command spirits.) Mortals who achieve heroic status through intensive study might have magical or spirit powers; those who are favored by the gods would have divine powers.

Although western myths don't talk about "chi" as such, the part-divine heroes of European myth had greater strength, vitality, and life energy than lesser mortals. Treating this divine vitality as chi, assuming that it can be unlocked by training and prayer, and using this book's rules for chi powers could work very well.

## MYTHIC FANTASY ANTAGONISTS

If the heroes of mythic fantasy are grandiose, their opponents must be on the same scale. At a minimum, they challenge the PCs' ambitions and

ideals. In some cases, they symbolize opposing cosmic principles.

## Deities

On occasion, even if the heroes aren't actually gods, their opponents *are*. If the gods are true immortals with cosmic powers, while the PCs are merely capable mortal men, divine enemies cannot attack the heroes *directly*, or the campaign won't last very long. Gods may refrain from direct action out of a sense of sportsmanship or in obedience to divine law, but they can still be terribly dangerous foes, directing rival heroes, monsters, and minions against their mortal foes, and perhaps controlling the elements or even fate itself. If they're lucky, the PCs have divine patrons who are using *them* as agents, and who will make sure that the enemy deities don't cheat.

A PC may make an enemy of a god because he, his patron, or one of his parents is also a god and a hated rival to that enemy; because his actions interfere with the god's plans; or because he has offended the god in some incidental way. This offense may be accidental or trivial; gods are terribly prone to grudge-bearing, and don't have a human sense of proportion. Destroying a god's sacred places or injuring his priests are classic mistakes, but so is harming the god's offspring – and given that many gods are the parents of monsters, which inherit a fragment of the god's power but little of his intelligence or restraint, those heroes who kill monsters can suffer disastrous consequences.

Players who get the feeling that their PCs have become mere playing pieces in the private games of uncaring gods may become irritated. Even the heroes of legend occasionally took the considerable risk of telling the gods that they objected to being used. However, if a patron god has a serious objective that accords with the PC's ethics, the hero may be willing to go along with it. It may be more important to make sure that the players don't rely on their divine patron to get them out of trouble at every turn, but this can be easy enough. Friendly gods may be bound by the rules just as strongly as the enemy, or may just not be *that* friendly.

## Wizards

In mythic fantasy, a wizard's powers can be *vast*; some wizards dream of approaching godhood. Heroes or demigods who are committed to defending the order of the cosmos may regard wizards as metaphysical anarchists who'd tear down the universe for the sake of personal power. Ambitious wizards may ally with dark gods or demons, opening gates to Hell in exchange for personal rewards.

Heroes sometimes confront wizards directly. The result may be a titanic battle – or it may just as easily be short and anticlimactic, as the hero skewers the wizard before he can get a spell off or the wizard vaporizes the hero on sight. Wizards don't generally see themselves as fighters, bound by codes of warrior honor. They tend to attack heroes through minions: armies of faceless guards, the occasional high-grade underling with a few magical augmentations, and some trained or summoned monsters. In a sword-and-sorcery-flavored fantasy, the heroes battle through these forces to a final confrontation in the wizard's lair (usually a tower). In other cases, the heroes may have to locate some magical key to the wizard's power and destroy or commandeer it.

## Monsters

Mythic-fantasy monsters are more than big ugly carnivorous animals. Like the gods and heroes they so often fight, they may symbolize something important – perhaps explicitly, perhaps just by virtue of being monsters. At a minimum, they represent the power of untamed nature or raw chaos, devouring any human who comes their way out of casual hunger – or threatening to devour, say, the sun itself.

Mythic monsters are often unique, not members of a “species” in the modern biological sense. (See *GURPS Fantasy* for more on this.) As mentioned above, they are often the offspring of gods. Deities who symbolize evil, destruction, or primal chaos (such as Loki or Tiamat – beings mostly feared rather than worshipped) are often happy to sire devastating monstrosities. Other deities (such as Poseidon) are little concerned with the well-being of individual humans, and

look on their monstrous progeny with an indulgent eye, as long as they don't threaten the world as a whole.

Mythic monsters may threaten the hero, his friends, or helpless strangers, or they may have been set to guard some important treasure or magic item. Powerful heroes go toe-to-toe with monsters; those with lesser abilities use trickery or borrowed magic. Monsters don't usually employ minions or subtlety, although some may engender lesser monstrous spawn.

## Rival Heroes

Mythic heroes face few opponents who are truly their equals, but when they do, it's often because those antagonists are very similar to them indeed. They may be servants of antagonistic gods, or simply after the same loot as the PCs. The fate of humanity and the world may well depend on which faction's representatives win out. In some myths, arrogant heroes see other heroes, on the same side, as rivals. Jealousy can then distract everyone from important matters, leading to dangerously competitive behavior and even violence.

In some cases, rival heroes may wield strange, dark forces, or even be partly nonhuman – perhaps descended from or created by a deity who

doesn't limit himself to human forms – and hence be somewhat monstrous. In general, though, a rival hero should be someone a PC can respect and understand, if not necessarily like. Codes of honor may oblige heroes to fight fairly against rivals, not resorting to the sort of tricks that are considered legitimate against monsters and evil wizards. Human rivals can also have the support of leaders and factions in human society, friends who will assist them or try to avenge them. In stories with a tragic twist, a rival might be a friend or blood relation to the hero.

## MYTHIC MAGIC

If magic is a common feature of fantasy, then mythic fantasy must feature *mythic* magic. In some cases, this can be a matter of raw power: mythic priests who bring down fire on whole cities with a gesture, mythic necromancers who call up dead armies with a word, and mythic gods who twist reality with a thought. Super-wizardry may be represented as a power with a large number of abilities, the Cosmic Power version of Modular Abilities (p. B71), multiple levels of Wild Talent (p. B99), or Ritual Magic (p. B242) with high levels in the core skill and many paths.

## Playing Monsters

The protagonists of high-power mythic fantasy aren't necessarily human. Some don't even *look* it. PCs might have the shapes of supernatural beasts out of legend or nightmare, often with exotic powers tied to those forms. (While “being a dragon” isn't a valid power, “flame breath” or “mighty wings” might be.) GMs can veto the idea of monster PCs if they wish – there may be practical problems – but if the game can handle really high-level powers, questions of physical shape should be trivial. Apart from anything else, mythic nonhuman beings are often shapeshifters, and can take human guise when convenient.

On the other hand, radically nonhumanoid monsters are often viewed in myth as the enemies of humanity. Gods generally represent cosmic order and tend to be somewhat human in shape and thinking. Great monsters, by contrast, represent primal chaos, implacably hostile to everything human. Playing rebels may be cool, but playing rampaging forces of destruction is likely to get boring fairly fast. Still, some myths feature benevolent nonhuman super-beings such as the Chinese Ki Rin (or Kilin), or nonhuman creatures in service to the gods such as Odin's ravens, so anything is possible. *GURPS Dragons* has rules and guidelines for playing one important type of high-powered mythical creature.

## Wuxia Fantasy

Chinese “wuxia” martial arts movies have become especially well-known in the West in recent years with the success of films such as *Hero*, *House of Flying Daggers*, and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. These are melodramatic fantasies, although their settings are often nominally “historical” (using a *very* loose, mythologized version of history). Martial arts adepts often use impressive chi powers, mostly to augment their innate physical abilities: they can leap over buildings, run through treetops, and parry any missile. Some movies feature wilder abilities, such as flame breath and flight.

This subject will be covered in more depth in *GURPS Martial Arts*; wuxia movies are more about advanced fighting arts than superhuman powers. Still, wuxia sometimes comes very close to mythic fantasy, with legendary heroes battling whole armies to decide the fate of nations. The key differences are the explicit focus on chi, rather than divine and magical effects, and the absence of active gods. Enemies tend to be human, or possibly formerly human undead, although these enemies often wield impressive chi-based powers of their own.

Along with oriental weapons, costumes, and scenery, such stories tend to involve eastern philosophies such as Taoism or Buddhism; their heroes are often *very* concerned with the moral and ethical aspects of their actions. Tragedy – especially the conflict between love and duty – is a common theme.

In other cases, magic may be restricted and structured enough that the standard *GURPS* spell system is appropriate – but at very high power levels. There may be no cap on levels of Magery, and little restriction on acquiring more with earned character points or even training. Any wizard worthy of the name will have *at least* Magery 3, granting potential access to every spell in *GURPS Magic* (which is strongly recommended for such campaigns). See p. 188 for rules on the interaction of spell-magic, Magery, and powers.

Obviously, a “mythic magic” setting permits powerful spells, and the general mana level may well be high. But this *isn't* mandatory. In some stories, “mythic” magic is relatively subtle or uncommon, for all its power. As *GURPS Fantasy* points out, scarcity makes magic all the more wonderful when it does appear. The average mana level of the game world might actually be *low*; mythic wizards are impressive because they can overcome this penalty. Low mana also serves to *help* mythic wizards; it reduces the danger from critical failures. Some wizards might control “places of power” – small zones of higher mana – and will fight like rabid

wolves to acquire and defend such advantageous terrain. GMs should be wary of letting PCs acquire a place of power, as they may become unwilling to venture away from home. This is fine in a campaign structured around noble estates and politics, but unfortunate if the GM was planning an epic quest.

### Spell Availability

Not every spell in *GURPS Magic* is necessarily available in a mythic-fantasy world. In a setting that focuses on heroic mortal warriors on one hand and transcendent deities on the other, wizards may be marginal characters with a limited repertoire of effects. Some specific spells might

certainly be contrary to the setting’s core assumptions.

For example, many myths state firmly that humans are all doomed to die, and mortality cannot be transcended. In a world where this is an absolute law, Resurrection should be unavailable – and Halt Aging and Youth might also be banned, although wizards who merely avoid death for a few decades aren’t the same thing as true immortals. Lich might be in the same category, or it might be considered a blasphemy that enables a wizard to circumvent the laws of the gods – for a while. Even the likes of Restoration and Regeneration might be banned, fitting the harsh atmosphere of some myths.

A plot might revolve around a wizard who seeks to cheat death by researching prohibited spells. In a traditional sort of setting, this will have ghastly consequences for the researcher and perhaps for the whole world, although some GMs might take a “modern” attitude, saying that ambition is a fine thing and breaking rules set by smug deities is heroism. Another possible candidate for prohibition is Plane Shift. Journeys to the realms of the gods or the dead are supposed to be major quests, not just spell-castings.

Spells should not be prohibited just because they’re “too powerful.” Power is part of the point of mythic fantasy. GMs who think that a specific spell could be a game-wrecker but who want it to be an occasional possibility can always adjust its parameters, especially by increasing the energy cost or making it *obscure*. Beginning characters might only know an obscure spell if they have a 50-point Unusual Background, and PCs who wish to learn it might have to go on great quests.





## MYTHIC FANTASY ADVENTURES

Most gamers probably feel that they have a very good idea how fantasy adventures are supposed to go. However, these ideas may not always apply to mythic fantasy, which aspires to *significance*.

Mythic heroes don't just slay a few goblins to protect a village; they battle whole armies and save whole nations. They *certainly* don't venture into dungeons to plunder them for gold coins and minor magical swords; they journey into the underworld to face Death himself, and return with the weapons of the gods. Even the most human of epic heroes fight decade-long wars and rise to rule kingdoms.

Hence, mythic fantasy campaigns may have a strong main plotline to give them focus, and perhaps a fixed duration. They end when the war is over, all the monsters have been slain, or the world is created and functioning. ("Sequel" campaigns may be possible – a 10-year war may be followed by a 20-year voyage home.) Others may be more open-ended, but the PCs should have or find a very clear place in the world. They may have to defend the universe, or at least their corner of it, against attacks by demons, titans, or rival gods, all the while dealing with the internal politics of their own faction.

## Tales of the Uncanny

"Uncanny" fiction evolved from folklore via late Victorian tales of ghosts, animated mummies, and psychical research. Vampire stories, especially Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, had dangerous foes and some tough, active heroes. The likes of William Hope Hodgson's "Carnacki the Ghost-Finder" introduced an element of weird science. Supernatural horror became a feature of the pulp magazines of the 1920s and '30s, notably in the work of H.P. Lovecraft and his followers. Lovecraft's monsters are totally alien beings and ancient, inhuman gods, and his heroes are in danger of losing their minds as well as of dying horribly. On the other hand, many pulp stories that began with seemingly supernatural events actually turned out to be detective mysteries with natural explanations. The form survives today as a branch of horror fiction, in movies as well as print.

The approach taken by such tales ranges from subtle mystery, through genteel horror and weird-science ghostbusting, to "splatterpunk" gruesomeness. The heroes tend to be normal humans; to fight the supernatural, they employ specialized knowledge, religious faith, or just willpower and a trusty shotgun. However, some are in contact with the spirit world, and the problems they face can be decidedly powerful: ghosts who can possess the living, vampires, reanimated Egyptian mummies, or Lovecraftian monstrosities. A few of these nonhuman beings are even depicted in a fairly sympathetic light; powerful nonhuman PCs might not be entirely out of the question in a wilder campaign.

Remember that tragedy is a common theme of myth. A mythic campaign could culminate in the deaths of the PCs or the destruction of the universe. Even those catastrophes might be followed by sequel campaigns, if this doesn't diminish the

tragedy and heroism of what went before too much. Dead heroes can find new battles to fight in the afterlife, while demigods who survive the end of their universe could become the creator-gods of its replacement.

## MODERN ADVENTURE

Once fiction and literature became distinct from myth, the supernatural and superhuman became less common in stories. While magical or divinely granted powers continued to

appear occasionally, it was the pulp magazines and related fictions of the 1920s and '30s which brought superhumanly powered heroes back to the foreground. Combining fantasy with horror and science fiction, the pulps gave birth to many ideas about empowered heroes that remain popular today.

Modern action-adventure stories are in many ways the heirs of the pulps, and some of them feature more-than-human characters. Aside from the implausible toughness and luck of many heroes, some have martial arts, psionics, or supernatural abilities. While there are plenty of modern adventure novels, this genre's stories and style are shaped by movies and TV.

### BY THE BOOK: MODERN ADVENTURE

Modern adventure heroes vary by subgenre, but most are a little beyond the most exceptional of realistic humans. Pulp and other games may feature a single empowered PC supported by a team of "competent normals"; see p. 209. High skill levels, and *especially* wildcard skills (p. B175), are often appropriate for "pulpier" campaigns.

#### *Power Level*

If the hero has powers, they should be *effective*; 250 points is probably the



minimum viable starting level. A magically enhanced monster-slayer, a mystical adept, or an advanced cyborg might require much more than this, but even these characters should be recognizably human. Games that go above 500 points are moving into “supers” territory (see pp. 222-234).

Some members of a group may be empowered, while others, built on the same base points, are “merely” normal humans with very good attributes and skills. A common idea in the pulps is that the square-jawed, can-do hero is ultimately a match for any strangeness, although *some* heroes have a little exoticism of their own.

### *Unusual Backgrounds*

Most modern adventure games will be limited to one class of power, or at most two or three, and the powers will be the focus of the campaign – so Unusual Backgrounds won’t usually be required. However, some odd personal histories might merit one. If the PCs are all chi-using martial artists from a remote Asian monastery, obliged to find their way in the modern world, then an American monk, who is already familiar with Western culture and who has Contacts and high-tech skills, might have to take a 20-point Unusual Background. A pulp hero who is the only person in the world with powers could certainly require an Unusual Background.

*In modern entertainment, a successful story or character needs to stand out to be noticed. The simplest way to achieve this is to have a gimmick, which may mean a power.*

## SUBGENRES

In modern entertainment, a successful story or character needs to stand out to be noticed. The simplest way to achieve this is to have a gimmick, which may mean a power. While heroes and gimmicks vary widely, there are some identifiable categories.

### *Pulp Crime-Fighting*

Most of the original pulp-era stories of two-fisted crime-fighting involved competent but unpowered humans – detectives and cops. However, a few featured heroes with exotic powers. The Shadow, for one, sometimes demonstrated a psychic ability to “cloud men’s minds with his thoughts.” There were also a few more-than-human heroes in other

fiction of the period. The Nyctalope, with his artificial heart and ability to see in the dark, appeared in French novels starting in 1908, and was one of the first crime-fighting heroes to possess non-supernatural super-powers. The hero of Philip Wylie’s 1930 novel *Gladiator* gained superhuman strength and invulnerability from his mad-scientist father’s experiments.

To recreate the full flavor of their sources, pulp crime-busting games should generally be set in the historical era of the original pulps. Pulp plots typically featured straightforward gunplay and fisticuffs, but often also involved international travel. Many were fairly sophisticated detective mysteries. The **GURPS Third Edition** supplement **GURPS Cliffhangers** is a detailed guide.

Almost-superhuman adventurers such as the Shadow, Doc Savage, and the Avenger often accumulated a crew of loyal, capable, and *human* assistants and friends. Sometimes, these sidekicks were less capable than the title character, but provided extra hands. In other cases, they had special talents of their own.

While the main focus of the pulp crime-fighting genre is on battles against ordinary crooks, more exotic foes also appeared – scheming foreigners with fanatical followers, mad scientists, and femmes fatale. A leading villain would probably be supported by armies of faceless goons, either fanatically loyal or rather stupid (and often both). A few opponents had their own uncanny abilities. Pulp morality was generally black-and-white, so bad guys were unambiguously *villains*. They could have some complexity in their personalities, though, to make them a little more interesting.

## Pulp Chi

Chi-based powers are not generally a feature of the original pulps. Exotic legends about martial arts masters hadn’t entered the western mainstream in the period. On the other hand, there is a rich tradition in Asian cultures of pulp-like stories about heroes who can focus and employ their chi, and wild martial arts have become a feature of the modern descendants of the pulps.

Even in the original pulp era, stories about the uncanny abilities of eastern yogis and mystics had become popular in some circles. Classic pulp heroes such as the Shadow sometimes used weird powers that they had learned somewhere in Asia. Hence, chi powers might be incorporated into pulp campaigns without endangering the essential flavor. Their users should be either Asian themselves, or experienced travelers who’ve learned things “out east” that even their friends find unbelievable. GMs who wish to permit such options without having chi powers take over the game can require such PCs to take an Unusual Background with a cost of 10% or 20% of the campaign’s starting point totals.

## Martial Arts

Martial arts stories in a modern-day setting don't tend to include as many wild chi powers as historical wuxia movies (p. 207); the more familiar scenery would make such things look a little too ridiculous. Still, the heroes often display far greater abilities than any realistic human, and can add "gun fu" to the traditional high kicks and swordplay.

This is a literally cinematic sub-genre, and the majority of movies involved come from the energetic Hong Kong film industry – although Hollywood has noticed their popularity and imitated them. Typical heroes for a modern martial arts movie are ultra-tough cops, martial artists called away from their monastic retreats by some personal problem, and even mercenary criminals with a code of ethics. They usually fight human foes – ruthless criminals or renegade martial artists – but, in some stories, they collide with the paranormal. In a few cases, the heroes actually wield magic against evil sorcerers or supernatural monsters.

## Monster Hunters

Monsters are in the world – vampires prowling the darkness, aliens abducting motorists for experimentation, werewolves lurking in forests, and fish-men emerging from the sea on moonless nights. Unlike the victims and investigators of conventional horror, the heroes of a monster-hunter game fight back on equal terms.

Powers may be limited to the monsters, with the heroes' skill and high-tech equipment evening the odds, or may be granted to at least some of the "good guys." Such "hero powers" can be anything: refined martial arts skills and chi manipulation, magic learned from ancient tomes or ancient blessings passed down the generations (as in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*), or technology so advanced that it verges on super-powers. Heroes may even be "monsters" themselves, turned to the side of good (see the TV series *Angel*, or the *Hellboy Sourcebook and Roleplaying Game*).

Power often has danger attached, Magic may be associated with dark forces so that mastering it edges the user toward evil. Other powers, combined with the obsessive focus and

## Horror and Monster-Only Powers

Horror games (including "Uncanny Tales" – see p. 208) may limit powers to NPC monsters. The heroes of stories from dragon-slaying myths to *Dracula* and *Alien* are ordinary mortals. They use skills, weapons, and wits to defeat creatures far more physically formidable than themselves.

Certainly, the heroes of real *horror* games should be scared, even if the bad things that define the genre mostly happen to somebody else. Any powers they *do* possess should be limited enough that they can't defeat every threat, or come with a cost, usually horrific.

### Anti-Monster Tactics

Heroes fighting powerful monsters should tailor their tactics to the opposition. Knowledge is the key, which may mean hours in dusty libraries, complex scientific analysis, or just asking the right people. The heroes will want to acquire anything that hits known weaknesses or blocks known attacks – wooden stakes and garlic, glowing green meteors, technological mindshields, whatever it takes. They should exploit numerical advantages; it's usually easiest and best to divide the enemy up and pick them off one at a time, unless they can get a whole group of them with a *guaranteed* killing method. Smart heroes look for terrain and conditions that give any possible benefit, press every advantage, and aren't ashamed to run when necessary.

caution of the effective monster-hunter, can endanger a hero's sanity. Battling with monsters, one can become a monster – metaphorically or even literally.

Monster-hunting stories never quite forget their roots in horror. Even if the heroes are tough, innocent bystanders can endure horrible fates . . . and unlucky or careless heroes can suffer very badly. The border between heroic monster-hunting and raw horror is fuzzy. A game can cross back and forth, depending on the power of the monsters and the resources currently available to the hunters.

Such games also typically have much in common with the "Secret Powers" subgenre (p. 214). If the world resembles our present day, but there are monsters out there, this truth must be a secret. This may well suit both sides; the monsters prefer that their victims not take precautions, while the hunters want to avoid mass panic. Conversely, the hunters might struggle to acquire enough evidence to convince the public, or at least the authorities. The monsters might be all in favor of mass panic (perhaps they feed on human fear, or they will warp reality to their own

advantage when enough people believe in them), and hunters work to suppress both infestations and the rumors that follow them.

## Cross-Time Adventures

If multiple timelines exist, and some of them produce beings with exotic abilities, adventuring across the multiverse can become a powers-heavy campaign. The "Infinite Worlds" in the *GURPS Basic Set* and *GURPS Infinite Worlds* is precisely such a setting, and its secretive ISWAT recruits all the empowered individuals it can get. ISWAT has robots, vampires, and allegedly even exiled gods.

## Cinematic Technothrillers

The "technothriller" genre attempts to maintain at least a façade of realism, with plausible human heroes using equipment somewhere at the cutting edge of what's known to exist. At the point where such stories merge into science fiction, some heroes may be enhanced in some way, even possessing powers.

Such heroes include (very expensive) cyborgs and the products of



genetic engineering programs. Their abilities are generally impressive but not as flamboyant as those of comic-book superheroes – enhanced strength, running speed, and reaction times, or impressive mental abilities. In short, they can appear on TV without wiping out the special effects budget. Heroes may have the patronage of a suitably high-tech agency (and an associated Duty), or they may be freelancers or renegades with dangerous Enemies.

## MODERN ADVENTURE GENRE CONVENTIONS

Modern adventure stories combine escapism and fantasies of significance with a grounding in reality. They're about being tough enough to deal with threats, charismatic enough to be popular, and lucky enough to have survivable adventures – but all in the “real world,” making the competent hero somebody with whom the audience can identify. That's not to say that things should be too easy for the heroes – many of them suffer a lot – but even suffering serves to add an edge of gritty plausibility.

Heroes are typically self-assured, honorable but not priggish. Many are always ready with a quip, refusing to take enemies as seriously as the enemies take themselves. Others are grimmer, perhaps pursuing justice or revenge for some terrible incident in the past, but even the vengeful hero will generally be wounded and tragic rather than blatantly psychotic. Exotic powers don't have to be central. A hero may set up a situation with precogni-

tion, blindsiding the foe by teleporting – and then dropping him with an old-fashioned punch.

Personal powers may or may not be unique, but it's never *easy* to replicate them; the world has to remain recognizably akin to the one in which we live. Magic has strange costs, psychic or chi powers require innate talent and intensive training, and advanced technology is experimental, expensive, and hard to operate or replicate. Dangerous inventions and ideas may even need to be suppressed for the safety of the world.

## ORIGINS FOR MODERN ACTION HEROES

The modern action hero is generally human, but may be highly trained, technologically modified, or magically talented. He might be an alien visiting Earth, but even then, he'll almost certainly *appear* human.

His powers should be reasonably subtle, with origins tied to the theme of the game: technological or genetically engineered for high-tech adventures, magical or quasi-magical for supernatural stories, chi-based for martial arts games, “moral” (or maybe cosmic) for moral parables about angels on Earth, and so on. A campaign may mix things up – chi-based and psychic powers can appear in magic-oriented games as other aspects of the supernatural. In wilder games drawing their flavor from the whole range of “pop fantasy,” any origin may coexist with weird superscience. The more power origins the GM permits, the weirder the campaign will be. Weirdness is fine if that's what people want, but “modern-day

adventures” differ from “superheroics” in their stronger grounding in plausibility. “Single source” games may be more satisfying.

## MODERN ANTAGONISTS

The nature of “modern” opponents varies. Monster-slayers fight monsters, martial arts adepts face crime lords and renegade martial artists, and so on. Still, there may be some crossovers, and some types can fit in anywhere.

### *Gangsters*

Crime is widespread, and generally seen as a problem, but when the heroes of the story have more-than-human powers, ordinary muggers and bank robbers aren't serious opposition. Crime needs to be *organized* to be a big enough problem.

Gangsters *can* be played rather stereotypically, especially in pulp games. In the '30s, that means a dark overcoat and an ill-fitting suit; today, it means whatever “street style” is fashionable. On the other hand, crooks with a personal, nonstereotyped appearance can seem all the more sinister. Some street slang and a sneering, laconic delivery also help the hood or hit man sound the part; ruthless greed and a gun with a high rate of fire make him dangerous.

To provide heroes with something clear to fight, organized crime may need a strong leader – the crime lord. Such a foe may be a ruthless, street-smart gang boss, a mobster whose underlings owe quasi-feudal loyalty, or a cerebral mastermind. These bosses need some pragmatic tactical smarts. Many have enough corrupt public officials in their pockets, or enough carefully arranged cover stories, that heroes who care about due process will have a hard time bringing them down. Even if they die or go to prison, the mean streets will soon throw up a replacement.

Crime bosses are unlikely to have powers of their own, but it's not impossible; it might help them keep employees in line. A boss who feels threatened by empowered heroes may employ empowered enforcers and bodyguards.

## Upgraded Animals

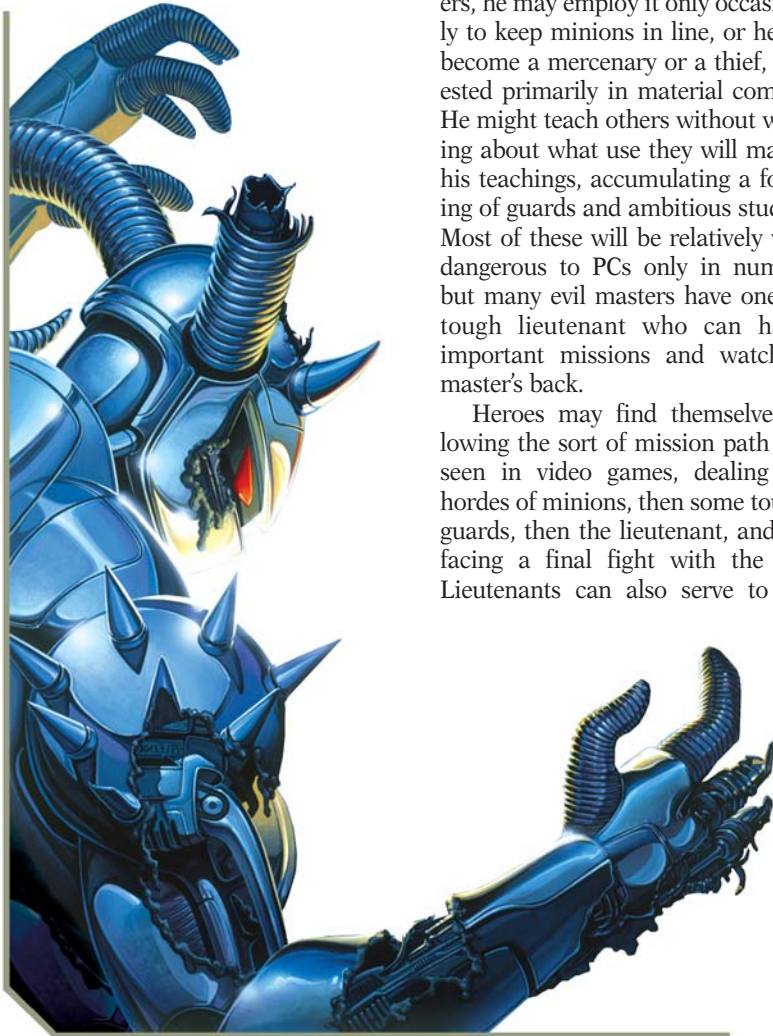
A subcategory of modern adventure fiction features animal protagonists. Aside from fantasies in which animal intelligence is simply taken as given, this can be explained in terms of biological or cybernetic experiments “uplifting” the creatures' intellects.

Animals can be created as PCs in *GURPS* easily enough. They won't generally have actual powers (unless these are a separate side effect of the experiments), but they may well have “animal abilities” such as flight or superhuman senses.

## Terrorists

Terrorists make effective villains because of their edge of uncontrolled violence. Ordinary criminals are, for the most part, merely selfish; they only cause harm to others when there's something in it for themselves. Terrorists, on the other hand, are in the business of spreading fear and destruction. They are often fanatical and sometimes suicidal, making them harder to stop and deadlier when they succeed.

Terrorists can also challenge heroes' assumptions and beliefs. However deranged their methods, they are often inspired by some genuine injustice or past wrong. This makes it hard to undermine their fanaticism and gains them support from less active but equally dedicated sympathizers. It also means that heroes who track them back to their bases or seek to analyze their strategies may confront their own side's dirtier secrets.



While most fictional terrorists have normal human levels of competence, an empowered foe who dedicates himself to extremist ideals is especially fearsome. A super-terrorist may simply perform acts of spectacular violence, but an even greater threat might come from subtler powers. If fanatics are hard to stop at the best of times, how much worse would they be if they could divert guards with mind control or anticipate countermeasures with precognition?

## Evil Masters

If the hero who desires powers and cinematic abilities must learn them from a master, the most formidable of foes may be a master who has turned to evil.

The classic evil master sees power as desirable in itself, rather than as a tool or a side effect of enlightenment. He may enjoy using his training for the dominance it gives him over others, he may employ it only occasionally to keep minions in line, or he may become a mercenary or a thief, interested primarily in material comforts. He might teach others without worrying about what use they will make of his teachings, accumulating a following of guards and ambitious students. Most of these will be relatively weak, dangerous to PCs only in numbers, but many evil masters have one very tough lieutenant who can handle important missions and watch the master's back.

Heroes may find themselves following the sort of mission path often seen in video games, dealing with hordes of minions, then some tougher guards, then the lieutenant, and then facing a final fight with the boss. Lieutenants can also serve to keep

some PCs entertained while the party leader tackles the boss. Because the evil master and his lieutenant can resemble dark mirrors of the heroes, such fights can become very personal; revenge is often an important motive.

## Mad Scientists

Mad scientists, a common feature of "pulpier" tales, make dangerous opponents because they can match even the smartest hero for intellect, and their creations are often formidable in combat. Fortunately, they're also mad. They rant wildly, less interested in conquering the world efficiently than in having their genius recognized. They are especially fond of complicated and unreliable deathtraps.

Any self-respecting mad scientist will have created at least one example of applied superscience. This may simply be an invention from a tech level or two ahead of the rest of the game world – modern players in pulp games may recognize the "death ray" as a laser, or the "super-bomb" as a nuclear weapon – but mad science is often rather divergent, contradicting mainstream scientific theories. Villainous inventions are usually the sort of dangerous science which needs to be suppressed, and mad scientists often give up on an idea after it's been used on one failed plot, and move on to something new.

## Supernatural Monsters

When modern-day "empowered" stories feature supernatural creatures as opponents, they usually fall into one of two general types. The *beast* is simply a tough combat opponent. There may be plot complications involved in determining its motives and weaknesses and tracking it down, as well as in actually killing it. Supernatural monsters can be smart and have flexible powers, but a merely tough or evasive foe, such as a rampaging werewolf or an acid-dripping blob, can be interesting enough for a single adventure.

The *boss monster* is a more complicated problem. It has considerable power, but even more importantly, it has intelligence, minions, and great plans. Slaying a beast probably

represents the climax of a single scenario; defeating the boss can be the climax of a whole campaign. Supernatural boss monsters typically have extensive, flexible powers, making it hard to destroy them even when they're cornered. Some are dark gods or embodiments of chaos and *cannot* be destroyed, only driven off. Other common boss monsters include "master" vampires and demon lords.

Supernatural monsters have either of two general natures: traditional or uncannily alien. Some ideas about what's "traditional" for monsters originate in the pulp era or thereabouts – the suave vampire is essentially a Victorian invention, while the bipedal "wolf-man" is largely a creation of the movies. This category ranges from rampaging werewolves and lurching zombies, through tragic ghosts that need to be exorcised rather than destroyed, up to Dracula-style "mastermind monsters." *GURPS* details for such creatures can be found in a number of places, including Chapter 6 of *GURPS Fantasy*.

Alien monstrosities range from fairly straightforward extraterrestrial races up to near-godlike "Things Man Was Not Meant To Know." They may have wildly inhuman powers. Psychic

abilities are commonplace. Many alien creatures are physically formidable, with superhuman senses and strength, as well as claws or fangs. Horror-story alien races are also sometimes shapeshifters, enabling them to infiltrate human society. Many aliens manage without powers as defined in this book, but a range of biological and psionic abilities may be appropriate.

## MODERN ADVENTURES

Empowered adventurers in a close analog of the modern world must be subtle – otherwise, the setting will soon change beyond recognition. Their battles may still be quite spec-

tacular; they just have to take place in back alleys or on remote islands. The virtue of action-adventure stories traditionally lies in energy and speed. Characters may be somewhat two-dimensional, and plots rather predictable, but the stories *work* because they sweep audiences up in the excitement of the moment.

Typically, plots are *reactive*. A house is reported to be haunted, or criminals begin a crime spree, or vampires are killing people, and the heroes set out to put matters to rights. The heroes investigate the problem, distracted from time to time by lesser villains, villain minions, or personal issues, until a new development emerges. This may not be good news: the villains may achieve some incidental goal, the heroes may suffer a serious defeat, or a supposed friend may actually be a traitor. Thus, the heroes pursue more desperate courses of action until they finally confront the villain, just in time to prevent his final victory.

This is an effective plot structure, though it shouldn't become a strait-jacket. In other cases, a plot can center on the PCs' weaknesses. They may be tempted by power or find that their organization has been corrupted or subverted, so that they must reform it or escape.

Adventures that follow the format of the source material can be highly *episodic*. When they resemble short stories or standalone TV series episodes, this means thwarting a different villain or solving a new mystery every week; when they run to greater length, it means dealing with an ascending series of threats before defeating the source of evil and bringing about a happy ending. In the latter case, many "chapters" may end on cliffhangers.

## Explorers

One alternative plot structure found in the pulps and SF is the journey of exploration. The heroes may be literal explorers, or they may be archaeologists or other sorts of scientists.

The heroes' opponents may be rival explorers, especially if there's something valuable to find. It's also possible to discover lost cities or hidden peoples (or, in space opera games, whole planets) run by villainous leaders, who will very likely attack the visitors, and who certainly deserve to be taken down a peg.

## Going Macrocosmic

A "macrocosmic" campaign features major protagonists who are gods, archangels, lords of Hell, or manifestations of universal principles or powers – not *just* superhumans, but beings whose actions literally shape the universe. Plots in such a setting may involve defending the universe or attempting to make a major change in the nature of things – or they may be more personal, even soap-operatic, with the emotional complications gaining a grand and primal edge.

A macrocosmic campaign usually features one or more worlds inhabited by normal "human-level" beings. Some of the action takes place there, and the protagonists have some reason to take an interest in these lesser beings. If this world resembles Earth, the campaign will tend toward cosmic supers (p. 224). If it's a fantasy world, the campaign will have more in common with high-power mythic fantasy (pp. 203-208).

In *GURPS* terms, protagonists in a macrocosmic campaign may be built on thousands or even tens of thousands of points, or may simply transcend the point system entirely – it's silly to try to assign a point cost for omnipotence! Such entities generally possess abilities such as very long-range teleportation, matter creation, ESP, Unaging, and Unkillable, many of them with a Cosmic enhancement – and probably substantial Modular Abilities (p. B71), enabling them to do almost anything if they really try.



# SECRET POWERS

In some campaigns, powers are important, available to both heroes and villains – but are kept secret from the general public. This may be because selfish factions want the added advantages that come when most people don't know that they should defend against powers, or because public exposure would cause huge problems for everyone. The “visible” world is usually based on present-day reality, although it's perfectly possible to set such stories in the historic past, the future, or a fantasy world. Thus, Secret Powers games have a large overlap with the Modern Adventure genre (pp. 208-213); the difference is a specific focus on secrecy. They also overlap with the Psionics genre (pp. 217-219), which often features subtle powers.

## BY THE BOOK: SECRET POWERS

Powers in a secrecy-oriented campaign should be fairly limited, almost always tightly constrained by the campaign concept. Some nonhuman PCs (such as angels or vampires) may all have very similar abilities. To keep things interesting, such beings may actually come in subcategories with different specializations and talents.

### *Power Level*

Human agents in a game where conspiracies just know a few useful tricks should be competent enough to catch those conspiracies' attentions, but need not be super-powered; 150-200 points may be a perfectly adequate starting level. At the other end of the scale, secret superheroes or angels in material form may well come in at several hundred points. Nonhuman PCs should have enough points to buy appropriate racial templates. When in doubt, GMs should err on the low side; secret powers games are about thinking problems through, not blasting them aside.

### *Unusual Backgrounds*

Here as elsewhere, PCs shouldn't have to take an Unusual Background

just to have powers that are part of the campaign's basic concept. However, in some “conspiracy” campaigns, most of the conspirators and their opponents are nonpowered humans. Powers exist, but as the exotic and rare products of the conspiracy's experiments or accidents. In that case, empowered PCs who get a real, special advantage should also have an Unusual Background.

## SUBGENRES

If “secret powers” games are defined by secrecy, then the genre's subcategories are defined by the types of powers involved.

### *Conspirators with an Edge*

In some low-key stories, the existence of powers is just one of the secrets to be discovered – possibly even one of the *less* important ones. This secrecy is enforced by one or more conspiracies, either because they fear those powers and want to destroy them or because they are carefully preserving a monopoly.



This sort of campaign is set in a paranoid world of plots, spies, and betrayal, in which “freelance powers” are likely to be hunted down, and even those who align themselves with a conspiracy can't be sure who to trust. The most common power type is probably psionic, but conspiracies may also use advanced technology to augment their agents (giving them technological powers, or biological powers via genetic engineering), or even adopt advanced training that grants chi powers.

### *The Scheming Sorcerers*

In the real world, magic is generally regarded as imaginary. But suppose that modern materialism is a convenient fiction created by scheming magic-wielders who decided to go undercover?

The traditional capabilities of magic would give any conspiracy a huge edge. If the conspirators are occasionally seen as eccentrics or lunatics, which just means that their victims and enemies are even less likely to guess what's really going on. The sorcerers may be the unchallenged rulers of the world, or they may face some kind of secret opposition – anything from dedicated secret agencies with a little bit of high technology to old-school religious witch-hunters who might even have divine powers of their own.

The *GURPS Third Edition* supplements *GURPS Voodoo* and *GURPS Cabal* depict such “conspiracies of secret magic.” It's possible to run secret magic games without using powers as such, but there will be *some* powers around in most cases.

This style of campaign comes close to “Monster Hunters” (p. 210) and “Nightmares in Conflict” (below); the difference is that “sorcerers” are generally human, seeing themselves as using trained skills rather than gross powers. However, there may be some monsters, subordinate to the human sorcerers or on a par with them. Human PCs may find themselves fighting demons, exorcising ghosts, or collaborating uneasily with forgotten gods.

## Secret Superheroes

A secret superheroes campaign adopts many of the assumptions and features of a supers setting (pp. 222-234) – except for the ones involving highly visible public activities, such as battles between flying, energy-blasting figures over major metropolitan areas. This tends to rule out colorful costumes, although “secret supers” may wear practical, rugged gear that could pass as drab bodysuits, and some of them may favor quirkish personal styles of clothing and appearance.

The assumption is that the exotic power sources of the typical supers world exist, but most people who discover that they have powers also decide to be tactful about them. They may fear persecution by frightened “normals” or be controlled or hunted by some powerful agency that wants to preserve a near-monopoly over powers. Hints about the existence of super-powers may seep out to the public and press, but be dismissed as exaggerations or sheer nonsense. Very few observers understand the potential of the most powerful supers.

In such a campaign, there is less need to make combat nonlethal than in a standard “four-color” game. PCs are more likely to be secretive if they face a real danger of being killed by a lucky shot from a thug or security guard, and the fear of persecution is more likely to seem real if some supers sometimes kill “normals,” accidentally or otherwise.

## Comic Illuminati

Many ideas about secret conspiracies and hidden powers are rather ridiculous, especially for anyone who tries to believe *all* of them. It's entirely possible to play them for comedy. Although many “conspiratorial” games exclude superhuman powers, or at least downplay them to keep the focus on serious human concerns, a comic game can let them run riot.

The *GURPS Third Edition* supplement *GURPS Illuminati University* shows one example of this comic approach. Many beings who students could encounter had powers of one sort or another. A “supermarket tabloid” game could also work,

pitching cattle-mutilating aliens and vampires against psychics, redneck mutants, and Bigfoot. The PCs might be government agents battling to prevent public hysteria, valiant reporters attempting to expose the truth to a mysteriously cynical public, or innocent freaks caught in the crossfire.

## Nightmares in Conflict

Secretive beings with vast supernatural powers walk the streets of the modern world – and they *aren't* human . . .

Games on this theme draw on ideas that have long been present in genre fiction. The reason why the powers and conflicts in this subgenre are kept secret is usually simple. While the monsters are powerful, maybe even controlling society from the shadows, they couldn't stand up to the combined power of an alerted and angry human race. So even rival “monster” factions unite to hunt down anyone who threatens their security. Fortunately for them, few people in the modern world believe in monsters. Because of this secrecy, such games tend to focus on power politics and social scheming, but the protagonists have powers in reserve for when they need them.

Campaigns may also be built around (fairly) normal mortals discovering terrible secrets, though the powers will lie in the hands of NPCs only. Games of empowered hunters fighting against secret monsters move toward the “Monster-Hunters” subgenre of Modern Adventures.

## Heaven vs. Hell, Today

Or Heavens vs. Hells, or Law vs. Chaos, or whatever. Great cosmic powers use the Earth as their battleground, but secretly and relatively subtly. Perhaps there's an explicit agreement not to worry their mortal pawns too badly, perhaps both sides simply recognize that an overt battle would destroy the world that both

seek as a prize, or perhaps some still higher power has made a rule. For instance, God may have declared that humans should choose their path of their own free will. *Knowing* that angels and demons exist, let alone meeting them, would remove real freedom of choice.

One treatment of this theme is Steve Jackson Games' *In Nomine*. The comic *Lucifer* is another. However, the idea of subtle conflicts of higher powers being fought out in the mundane world is probably as old as religion. Mortals usually serve as agents of one side or the other, often being granted powers of their own when they sign up.



## SECRET POWERS GENRE CONVENTIONS

In a Secret Powers campaign, there should be some logical reason that will convince individuals who know the truth not to speak out. The powers themselves may not be visible, or ordinary mortals may forget or rationalize away anything that they do see. There may also be some powerful faction or agency diligently enforcing the secrecy. Really sophisticated conspiracies may even fight battles in public in broad daylight without anybody noticing; in that case, anyone who does anything obvious must be assumed to have lost by default (unless they can utterly obliterate their opponents in the process).

*In many cases, the structure of the campaign will define both the origin of the antagonists and the nature of their powers. Rivals with similar or diametrically opposite powers provide strong, interesting opponents, and plenty of motivation to fight.*

Factions and conspiracies are not only a common feature of this genre, they can also provide a source for powers. Such conspiracies are usually ancient and appear monolithic to outsiders, while actually being shot through with factional politics. Their prime concern is usually power for its own sake, but they may also have specific ideas about what's good for humanity . . . or more cryptic objectives, obscure even to their own agents. Naturally, they must be ruthless and efficient, although they may have become somewhat cumbersome and inflexible over the years. Different factions are usually bitter rivals, but there is often a certain amount of quiet cooperation going on.

There are often places where powers *can* be exercised in relative safety, perhaps even more effectively than usual. These may vary from minor secret bases and hidden schools, up to whole extra-dimensional realms – Heaven and Hell, spirit worlds, dreamlands, and so on. These secret places can serve as strongholds . . . or battlegrounds.

## **SECRET POWER ORIGINS**

The power origins appropriate in a secret powers campaign are largely determined by the subgenre. What does matter is how the PCs discover they have powers, and how they react to the discovery. If powers are seen as a curse, there's scope for lots of angst. If they are given out, very carefully, to loyal agents of the conspiracy, then empowered "freelance" PCs must be rebels, which requires a lot of explanation. If they're an acci-

dent of birth, then empowered characters may find themselves hunted by powerful forces, intent on recruiting or destroying them.

Conspiratorial groups will try hard to control powers and power-wielders. When a faction has extensive access to powers, those powers are likely to be either the basis for its whole existence – their origin is also the origin of the faction itself – or the key to its strength, and hence one of the most important secrets which it must keep.

If, on the other hand, such groups are weak or relatively ineffective, and humans gain powers at random, there will probably be a number of confused and nervous power-wielders wandering around. Some may be located by well-meaning groups; others may find each other and form secret gangs or societies; others again will doubtless fall into the clutches of criminals, minor conspiracies, or fanatics. This can give a campaign its overall structure: the PCs start out trying to survive, then join or form a stable group with an ideal, which eventually has to solve the problems caused by less fortunate or high-minded individuals.

## **SECRET POWERS ANTAGONISTS**

Enemies for secretly empowered PCs must either know about the secret or be powerful enough to be a threat anyway. An enemy may know enough to be a threat without knowing *everything*, and any foe tough enough to survive a battle against the heroes will come out of it with some idea about their nature.

## **Rival Powers**

In many cases, the structure of the campaign will define both the origin of the antagonists and the nature of their powers. Rivals with similar or diametrically opposite powers provide strong, interesting opponents, and plenty of motivation to fight. Their main drawback for plot purposes may be that the PCs have little reason to do anything *except* fight them, at every opportunity.

## **Turncoat Powers**

A slightly more complex type of opponent is one who started out on the same side and chose to turn against his former allies. Given that intrigue and betrayal are often part of a secret powers campaign, such foes are bound to appear from time to time. They will probably have betrayed important secrets to the enemy, and quite likely cost some lives in the process, so they can inspire considerable righteous wrath.

Moreover, played cleverly, they can unnerve their former friends just by existing. Introspective PCs should wonder if they, too, could fall – and maybe reassess the reasons for their loyalty. What tempted the traitor? Or is betrayal sometimes the honorable course?

## **Mortals/Mundanes**

Although powers should provide a serious advantage, "normals" can still be a threat. They have numbers, some of them can fight, and the need to preserve secrecy can be crippling in combat. (Morality aside, "leave no witnesses" isn't always a feasible option.) Depending on the setting,



religious faith – or strong unbelief – may even disable some powers.

In worlds resembling present-day reality, “mundanes” include police and intelligence agencies with substantial resources and excellent investigative skills. The question of how much “the government” knows can become a worrying problem.

## SECRET POWERS ADVENTURES

A secret powers campaign should involve subtle, thoughtful adventures. The PCs or their foes may be able to deploy formidable powers, but public fireworks are discouraged. Careful planning should be at least as important. Plots can cover faction politics, investigations of which groups are responsible for which events, efforts to recruit or eliminate new talents or to escape being recruited, protecting secrecy, and preventing witch-hunts.

Which is not to say that the occasional big set-piece battle is out of the question. If one group goes for broke – attempting to grab power, destroy its

An entire fictional genre has developed around what it might be like to be able to manipulate the world directly using force of will, examining what the consequences of such powers might be for society. Such stories often involve newly discovered psis being persecuted by fearful normal humans or exploited by amoral power groups. In other tales, psis are established, respected figures – cops in futuristic SF settings, or wizards in pseudo-medieval fantasy worlds. In still other settings, psi powers are widespread enough that those who possess them aren't automatically very remarkable.

## BY THE BOOK: PSIONICS

PCs in Psionics campaigns can rely as much on courage and skill as on powers, or they can be galaxy-dominating supermen.

## Illuminati

Historically, the Illuminati were (or are believed to have been) a secret society founded by Adam Weishaupt in Bavaria in 1776, with the objective of taking over the world. Although it was apparently suppressed by the church and German governments in the 1780s, some conspiracy theorists believe that the society survived and plays a large part in the hidden history of the world.

More generally, the term “Illuminati” is used for any powerful, secret, conspiratorial group. The term hints that the conspirators possess a special understanding of the world that guides them in their quest for power. A number of groups have claimed such knowledge throughout history, including the Cathars and the original Assassins. Because such groups are secretive, they are prime paranoia fodder.

While Illuminati-style groups are often portrayed as basically ordinary humans, the idea that they are “illuminated” can suggest that they have special powers. If nothing else, it is only logical for an Illuminatus to have the Illuminated advantage (p. B60). Special knowledge and insights can also suggest psi powers (especially ESP or telepathy). Some of the original Illuminati certainly dabbled in magic. Wealth might grant access to advanced technology.

enemies, or pull off some weird and dangerous scheme – the PCs may have to do whatever's necessary to stop them. Likewise, there will be battles in

whatever hidden realms or pocket dimensions exist. However, quiet victories are best.

## PSIONICS

### *Power Level*

PC point totals should be determined by the campaign's intended atmosphere and style. “Adolescence metaphor” stories can feature limited starting values, as low as 50 points and certainly no more than 150, although GMs may be generous with experience to represent the flowering of new powers. Protagonists in the “psychic wars” are usually more experienced and capable psis or brilliant researchers, tough secret agents, or special forces troops; 250 points would be entirely reasonable. Space-opera or fantasy games can feature truly formidable psis, built on several hundred points – though more than about 750 is probably getting out of hand.

One option that can work very well is a split of starting points. Players in an “adolescence metaphor” game might be given 25 or 50 points with a disadvantage cap of -10 or -20 points. On top of this, however, they get

another 50 points, plus more from disadvantages, to buy powers. They might also be banned from buying more than one or two levels of Talent at the start.

### *Unusual Backgrounds*

When psi powers are the campaign focus, there's no need to require an Unusual Background. However, if they are rare and hard to control, and PCs may well be nonpsionic, an Unusual Background may be appropriate, with a level depending on how rare psi powers are.

If most psis peak at a specific power level, exceptional individuals might be seen as very special. If most teleporters are limited to line-of-sight “jumps,” someone who can teleport several miles into a place he can't see can bypass most anti-teleport protections. Such a PC might have to take a 50-point Unusual Background.

## SUBGENRES

Subcategories of the psionics genre are defined partly by the setting, and partly by the nature of the lead characters.

### *The Adolescence Metaphor*

Protagonists may discover their powers in adolescence and have to come to terms with being different. They may spend some time feeling lonely and persecuted before finding others of their kind. When they eventually master their powers, they become formidable. This plot appears in A.E. Van Vogt's *Slan* and numerous children's SF stories.

In other words, psi can be a metaphor for adolescence. If the youth gains power and respect quickly, this is wish fulfillment; if he has to learn hard lessons, it is more of a moral fable. In this type of story, widespread psi may be new, or at least secret, ensuring misunderstandings and probably persecution.

Alternatively, psi may be well-established but difficult to master. The adolescent psi might have to deal with manipulative factions, press attention, and friends and family, who may be jealous, frightened, or exploitative.

### *The Psychic Wars*

In the present or near future, psi powers have been discovered. Training methods or psionic technology are being developed, but this new source of power has been co-opted by powerful factions – governments, intelligence agencies, and giant corporations – and kept secret. The heroes are psis who just try to do the right thing. This is the basis of a number of SF novels and Japanese manga and anime stories.

Plots can range from “adolescence metaphor” tales with dark and ruthless parent-figure factions to superhero stories with less-flashy costumes. The most typical treatment, though, overlaps with the “Secret Powers” genre, borrowing much of its style from paranoid conspiracy thrillers and the grittier sort of espionage story. Telepaths and ESP users make effective spies, able to ferret out any secret

protected by conventional means. They can also guard against both psionic and mundane spies. Intelligence agencies would naturally become major players in the psychic wars. Even without psi, protagonists are often asked to do terrible things to defend against enemies who are supposed to be worse. Psionics merely adds an extra level to this.

“Psychic war” stories often feature experimental technology and drugs that boost or emulate powers. These inventions may be dangerous to the user. GMs can see *GURPS Ultra-Tech* for useful ideas, but should limit technological aids; these stories are primarily about people, not raw power.

### *Science Fantasy*

Science fiction (pp. 220-222) maintains at least a façade of rational logic, generally treating psionics as susceptible to rational analysis. Science fantasy uses some of the same tropes, but drops rationality in favor of an extreme sense of wonder. Psi may function very much like magic, alongside incomprehensible “ancient technologies” and suchlike.

Science fantasy may be set in the far future, with technology either regressed or advanced and splintered into barely comprehensible arts; in some galaxy far away and quite possibly long ago; or in a world transformed by catastrophes or miracles. (See p. 220 for more on post-catastrophe stories.) Psionic gifts in such settings may be the result of mutation or genetic engineering, or taught by organizations styled like a temple or a school of magic.

## PSIONICS GENRE CONVENTIONS

Being “special” is often depicted as lonely and alienating, and a psi can still be a failure despite his advantages – but powers, especially telepathy, can also be a way for an individual to form relationships. High power levels may cause someone, usually a villain, to tip over into megalomania. Normal humans are often shown as fearing and persecuting what they don't understand. The genre's concerns with accidents of birth and

genetics means that family relationships sometimes loom large; heroes and villains may turn out to be cousins or brothers.

## PSIONIC ORIGINS

Psi powers are generally either inborn or the product of a special training regime, newly invented or kept very secret (thus explaining why not everyone has powers). These two origins can be combined; individuals can have different degrees of *potential* psionic power, but those with aptitude may still need training to unlock it.

If some humans are born psis, there should be some explanation why psi powers weren't widely noticed for much of history. If the power needs training or technological aid to be effective, the process could be newly invented or an old secret. Psi talents could be a mutation triggered by radiation from nuclear technology, some kind of industrial pollution, or a side effect of a new drug. Meddling aliens in the distant past may have inserted the genes into human cells, to be activated at a certain point in our evolution. Or perhaps latent psi powers are simply *very* hard to trigger, and only the modern world's population makes them statistically likely to occur – but once they've been found, science can learn to trigger them in others.

## PSIONIC ANTAGONISTS

At a minimum, effective opponents must be able to withstand the most common psi powers – which usually means, given telepathy's prominence, that they need good mental defenses. The ability to hit back is less crucial; the heroes are usually ordinary human beings with a few exotic talents, and unless they happen to have strong telekinetic shields, weapons such as firearms are sufficient once the violence starts.

### *The Conspiracy*

Psi powers may enable their possessors to ferret out secrets, cause carnage while seemingly unarmed, or go places where normal people can't. Any self-respecting conspiracy will want to control such powers itself – or, if that

isn't possible, to destroy them. In stories about psionic powers, there is often at least one conspiracy run by amoral psis.

A conspiracy of competent psis, in a world with few countermeasures, will be extremely powerful, able to overwhelm any ordinary PC group, even one with psi powers of its own. Unless the heroes are meant to be hunted fugitives, it's necessary to limit the conspiracy's capabilities.

If the conspiracy's leaders are much more powerful than the PCs, the campaign has an inherent balance. The heroes can defeat any number of enemy agents, but if they ever cross paths with their chief antagonists, they're in serious trouble. Matters come to a satisfying climax when the heroes have acquired the resources or skill to defeat those leaders.



### The Government

From a sufficiently cynical or paranoid viewpoint, a government differs from a conspiracy only in that its existence, and some of its activities, are public knowledge. Politicians and law enforcers could probably make a plausible case for controlling those who have psionic powers. They may be sincere in such concerns, frightened for their own power, or a little of each.

Rulers usually attain their positions by political skill or social influence rather than raw personal power, but they can recruit formidable aid . . . and they have the resources of a whole nation to call upon. Also, the PCs can't just destroy them and walk away. *Someone* has to run the country, and if the old leaders were destroyed by psis, their replacements may be even more determined to deal with the problem.

Psis who discover that others of their kind are test subjects in secret government labs or targets for state-

sponsored assassins may expose the fact. Unless propaganda has turned the citizenry against psis on a massive scale, these abuses will probably be shut down. The government will doubtlessly disavow these "horrific excesses" and promise a thorough house-cleaning. How sincere they are about this, and how much they *really* knew, depends on the general nature of the campaign. Even if the country isn't being run by paranoid murderers, they may be scared or amoral enough to turn a blind eye.

### Rogue Psis

The obvious opponent for a psi hero is a psi villain. "Rogue" psis may be amoral mercenaries, puppets of an enemy faction, or ruthless power-seekers. Major "rogue" psis will often be

more powerful than the PCs at the start of the campaign, which may well center on gaining the experience and training to defeat them. They usually have one of two personality types: nervous and dangerously unstable, or coldly controlled. The former are likely to be puppets or mercenaries, merely after profit or short-term survival. Conversely, powerful mercenaries and psionic master villains must be calm and efficient.

A specific type of rogue psi found in some stories is the psychic vampire, who takes energy or satisfaction from others. This may involve draining life energy directly or feeding on extreme emotions. Those who steal enough to kill each time, or who feed on suffering, are monsters; the heroes' main task is usually just to *stop* them. However, their behavior may be a form of addiction, making them not cold-blooded serial killers but twitching junkies.

### Aliens

Psi powers typically appear in science fiction or modern-day paranoia settings. Both of these also commonly feature aliens, which may be a completely separate aspect of the setting or be tied up with the presence of psi. Human psi powers may have developed as a result of alien experiments on kidnapped humans or have been unlocked by alien teachings. Ancient alien visitors may even have implanted genes for psi power . . .

Aliens may be as psionically adept as humanity, much more powerful – or psionically weak, even "psi-blind." Such crippled aliens will need other resources to make them serious antagonists; one obvious option is superior technology, with perhaps just enough knowledge of psionic science to build some kind of limited anti-psi screens or jammers. Meddling amoral aliens might be trying to transform humanity into obedient psionic servants and tools. Aliens in these stories are often shapeshifters, infiltrating human society. This makes them hostile to telepathic humans, who can penetrate their disguises. Aliens might also have psi powers that are *different* from those possessed by humans – humans can read minds while aliens can master telekinesis, or humans can teleport much farther than aliens but take longer to trigger the power.

## PSIONIC ADVENTURES

Psionic campaigns tend to be cat-and-mouse games of investigation and detection, subversion and evasion, with occasional outbursts of violence. While these set-piece battles can be exciting, it's often more important that the campaign includes interesting, motivated, capable figures on both sides, and a slew of ongoing plots and problems for the heroes to tackle.

Adventures also often become journeys of self-discovery for the heroes, as they learn to control their powers, moving from early vulnerability to a level where they can defeat some great enemy. GMs should permit players to spend bonus character points on abilities and Talents at a rate that reflects such progress.



# FUTURISTIC SF

SF games are most likely to feature technological, biological, or psi powers. Others appear on occasion, but too much that's explicitly supernatural (as opposed to merely "beyond the comprehension of current science") is likely to destroy the sense of quasi-scientific logic that distinguishes the genre.

## BY THE BOOK: FUTURISTIC SF

Futuristic SF may have ordinary human protagonists, with an occasional alien or robot who has fairly minor powers, or it may focus on powers.

### *Power Level*

SF campaigns with "normal" human heroes usually involve skilled individuals with all the benefits of high-tech medical care and advanced educations. The usual minimum for starting PC point totals is 150 points, and 200-250 is quite reasonable for elite interstellar explorers and ultra-tech commando squads. Disadvantages tend to be minor. Advanced medicine and psychology should eliminate many problems, and elite services prefer stable, adaptable recruits.

Cinematic games featuring "best of the best" heroes – psis, genetically enhanced humans, or aliens with expensive racial packages – can move into the 300-to-500-point range. *Lensman*-style galactic champions or posthumans with a huge array of genetic modifications and access to extraordinary cybernetic resources can go even higher.

### *Unusual Backgrounds*

An Unusual Background is only required if the PC has something both unusual in the setting and genuinely advantageous. Merely being an alien, genetically enhanced, a psi, or a robot doesn't qualify. Being a member of a rare species or embodying experimental technology might.

Data, in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, is the only (known)

sapient android in the Federation. However, he'd have to pay points for his strength, resilience, and rapid calculation ability anyway, and they only rarely give him a significant advantage. He'd probably have a 10- or 20-point Unusual Background.

John Crichton, in *Farscape*, wouldn't have an Unusual Background as the only Earthman in his part of the galaxy; that merely makes him a minor curiosity. He probably *does* have one for his unique comprehension of wormhole physics, especially his intuitive ability to anticipate wormhole events.

## SUBGENRES

While hard SF is very different from space opera, the two are on a continuum, with all sorts of "space-ships and blasters" stories somewhere in between.

### *Pulp Space Opera*

SF as a marketing category was a product of the pulp era (see p. 209). Pulp SF ranged from "planetary romances" by the likes of Edgar Rice Burroughs and C.L. Moore, with heroes wandering the deserts of Mars or the jungles of Venus, to the galaxy-spanning interstellar wars of E.E. "Doc" Smith (see *GURPS Lensman*). "Space opera" developed in the pulps. Most had continuous action and straightforward morality, with little time for thoughtful scientific speculation – chemical rockets could span interstellar distances and atomic fuel could be hurled into furnaces with shovels. This style spread to comic strips and movie serials such as *Flash Gordon* and *Buck Rogers*. The *Star Wars* movies are a modern recreation.

Such stories most often featured square-jawed or intellectually brilliant *human* heroes. Writers looking for more-futuristic thrills would often throw in a few aliens who might have exotic racial abilities (i.e., biological powers). Aliens and human heroes could also be psis; Smith's stories involve enormously powerful telepaths, and what is *Star Wars*' Force but psi power?

### *Modern Space Opera*

Space opera evolved from its pulp roots to its modern form. Modern "media" space opera really begins with the appearance of *Star Trek* in the '60s. *GURPS Traveller* is one of many examples of this subgenre in RPGs.

Modern writers pay at least lip service to scientific and technological logic – starships use fusion or antimatter power and "hyperspace" or "warp drives" – and the special effects have grown increasingly impressive over time. Some writers seek to merge hard SF into stories of spacefaring adventure; others set "gothic" tales in the far future, with ancient, decadent stellar empires and half-forgotten science. Aliens, robots, and other characters with superhuman abilities remain popular. Psionics have faded, as real-world research has failed to produce clear evidence of their existence, but they still sometimes appear.

### *Post-Apocalypse SF*

Post-apocalypse SF is based on the idea of some disaster wiping out civilization. In some less-realistic versions, some of the survivors develop powers. Their offspring may display radiation-induced mutations, or the disease virus may have bizarre side effects. There may also be some "old technology" around, including robots, cyborgs, or the products of genetic engineering.

Such settings often resemble genre fantasy, with "feudal" rulers dominating patches of the landscape and monsters lurking in the wilderness. They also have an element of horror, given the billions of deaths in the background story.

### *Transhumanist SF*

Modern hard SF abandons the less plausible wonders of space opera, avoiding "superscience" technologies such as antigravity and faster-than-light travel. It can still feature impressive personal powers, because transhumans are less bound by limitations that earlier writers took for granted. Settings range from cyberpunk worlds with cyborgs and

vast computer networks to “transhumanist” futures such as the one depicted in *Transhuman Space*.

“Transhuman” or “posthuman” heroes may be heavily genetically modified, with biological abilities impossible to ordinary humans, or they may be computer programs – artificial intelligences or “uploaded” human minds – installed in robot bodies. However, this *is* hard SF, and abilities should look scientifically plausible. A genetically enhanced transhuman *might* produce shocks like an electric eel, given extensive modification, but throwing lightning bolts hundreds of yards would be difficult with any sort of biological body. Likewise, a robot might be capable of flight, but would need wings, rotors, or a powerful engine.

## SF GENRE CONVENTIONS

Science fiction is a broad field; the conventions and possibilities of the space-going version are discussed at length in *GURPS Space*. When they concern themselves with personal powers, however, stories are often more limited. An alien race or human mutant may possess a single ability, or a robot’s built-in systems may

function as simply another gadget. That said, a few stories take a broader approach; some of Roger Zelazny’s novels, such as *Lord of Light*, involve a wide array of technological and psi powers, used with almost superheroic flair. SF writers and fans may talk about the genre’s regard for scientific consistency, but space opera tends to use the trappings, not the rigor.

### *SF and Psionics*

Psi powers are sometimes assumed to be a natural aspect of the universe, as comprehensible and controllable as electricity, which means that psionic science and technology can exist. “Psionic SF” includes near-future variants of the adolescence metaphor (see p. 218), post-apocalypse stories in which psi ability is a common mutation, and grandiose space operas in which the heroes’ mental powers compete with starship weaponry to provide the most spectacular set pieces.

Space opera doesn’t pay too much attention to *theories* about psi. It’s a plot device and a source of wonder. However, stories may feature psionic technology, including devices such as “psionic shields” that enable normal humans to defend themselves against telepathic intrusion.

## ORIGINS FOR SF HEROES

SF heroes tend to be fairly normal; even aliens or robots with exotic powers are, after all, just born or built that way. Psi powers may be inborn or produced by training, or even induced by superscience, but those are just features of the setting. Typically, starship crews or soldiers in interstellar armed forces are depicted as receiving *good* training, but that’s just how elite explorers and warriors tend to be.

A few empowered SF heroes do have unusual abilities even by the standards of their universes. They may be exposed to weird influences on strange worlds or in the ruins of fallen alien civilizations. Or they could be changed and trained by meddling super-aliens. In “transhuman” SF, they may well be genetically modified – a theme which earlier space opera avoided, although a kind of selective breeding was common enough, whether informal (as with heroes who came from heroic families) or deliberate (as in the “Lensman” stories).

## SF ANTAGONISTS

Space travel may lead to encounters with dangerous beings, but human society also continues to produce criminals, tyrants, and other nefarious individuals.

### *Militaristic Aliens*

Militaristic aliens range from unemotional robotic conquerors to glory-loving macho warriors. Their cultures tend to be extremely regimented, with huge military budgets. They see human society as weak and divided, although they may respect some human warriors as honorable opponents.

Militaristic aliens don’t have to have powers – good weapons, determination, and numbers can achieve plenty. If they are empowered, they may all have offensive abilities (rarely better than a good blaster, but symbolic of their attitude), or they may include a subgroup of spies or leaders with advanced mental abilities. They are generally quite tough – well-armored or just very healthy.





## Sneaky Aliens

Whereas militaristic aliens set out to conquer the universe by raw power, organization, and frontal assaults, sneaky aliens are masters of subversion and intrusion. Typically psis or shapeshifters, they may set out to soften their enemies up for a military assault, they may seek political power, or they may be totally selfish predators with strictly individual goals. Some are carnivores with a fondness for sapient flesh – SF counterparts to the vampire and werewolf.

## Star Beasts

Nonsapient animals shouldn't usually be a threat to well-equipped high-tech heroes, but some may have biological or psionic powers that compensate for lower intelligence and their lack of technology. Human heroes may find themselves trapped in a base or starship, light-years from home, with limited equipment and an alien monster on the loose. One modern cliché is a devious and ruthless human faction that wants to capture the star beast for exploitation, and to whom the heroes are disposable. Monsters typically display instinctive cunning, as well as implausibly active metabolisms and bizarre life-cycles.

## Cosmic Aliens

Militaristic or sneaky aliens want power and control over others, but cosmic aliens already have lots of power – and want to play with it. Space opera uses such beings as plot devices, with little regard for plausibility – but then, it's hard for humans to say what is plausible behavior for a vastly superhuman being. Cosmic

Tales of superheroes and supervillains, sometimes known as “comic-book supers,” place high-end powers in the foreground. They will usually involve several different power types. Villains want to fulfill their selfish desires, heroes want to stop them, and the fights are spectacular. These stories can verge on a kind of morality play, especially as both sides often favor flamboyant costumes and



aliens naturally have vast, almost supernatural powers.

A cosmic alien who wants to destroy ordinary beings can generally do so with ease, unless other cosmic aliens work to prevent it. Cosmic antagonists in SF are more often *nuisances*: playing games with the heroes, studying them and setting weird tests, or using them as pawns in complex plans. Heroes may play along, try to distract or even outwit the alien, work with its cosmic rivals, or study it for weaknesses.

## SF ADVENTURES

Space opera plots are often high-energy action-adventure stories involving exploration (see the box on

p. 213) or warfare. Some heroes are fugitives, with enemies who think it's worth chasing them across light-years. Life on board a starship can lead to technical problems and stories of interpersonal relationships. Cosmic aliens can show up and cause trouble for their own peculiar reasons.

Other stories are set on inhabited planets. Detective mysteries, espionage, and diplomatic relationships can all be given a few twists by the presence of aliens, robots, and advanced technology. Psis struggling for control of a near future world overlap with the “Secret Powers” genre. Dealings with alien civilizations or “transhuman” changes in the nature of humanity can lead to violent conflicts over long-term policy.

# SUPERS

meaningful codenames. However, it's perfectly possible for superhero stories to feature subtle characterization and moral complexity.

This genre originated in comic books, and that remains its primary medium, although “supers” have also appeared in novels, radio, television, and the movies, often as spin-offs from comics.

## BY THE BOOK: SUPERS

Supers campaigns in general have few constraints – both the level and the range of powers may be vast. This, of course, makes it extremely important for the GM to make *all* relevant facts about the setting *very* clear. If magic doesn't work, or technological mind



shields are available off the shelf, say so! Superhero comics have featured virtually every type of power, though “moral” powers are rare; the genre takes enough of a modern, materialistic approach that people aren’t usually powerful *just* because they’re very good or evil. On the other hand, a campaign might focus on a single type of power, such as mutations or magic, and explore that theme.

Wildcard skills (p. B175) are often *extremely* appropriate. Super-scientists aren’t just bright and well-read; they’re frequently omni-competent. An instinctive grasp of every weapon in a broad category or a spectacular talent for all sorts of engineering may be classed as a super-power in its own right – so combining Gadgeteer, Gunslinger, or Weapon Master and a wildcard skill may be entirely appropriate.

### **Power Level**

“Supers” are by definition superior to the run of humanity. The absolute minimum plausible starting level for the grittiest vigilante campaigns is 250 points, and most will start at higher levels – possibly *much* higher, from 500 up to 1,000 or more. The higher the baseline point total, the more important it is to provide guidelines for reasonable attack damage levels, defenses, and so on.

### **Unusual Backgrounds**

In a typical comic-book supers setting, full of exotic powers, the idea of an “Unusual Background” is effectively meaningless. *Every* major character has an Unusual Background, to the point where people speculate about

cosmic entities influencing probability to create all these champions.

In a more restricted campaign, the Unusual Background advantage may restrict the *really* unusual or offbeat. PCs who’ve mastered some widespread power source that most people are still struggling to comprehend or who have access to advanced technologies in a world where most powers are magical might qualify. The cost is up to the GM, but should usually be quite high (*at least* 10% of starting base points); supers PCs have a lot of points to play with, and unusual character features may amplify the effectiveness of already-significant powers.

## **SUBGENRES**

Most supers subgenres derive from phases in the history of comics over the last 60 years or so. Some even represent conscious reactions to something that went before.

### **Four-Color Supers**

The “baseline” type is usually set in the present day, but sometimes takes place in a space-operatic future or the recent past. “Four-color” stories feature spectacular powers, flamboyant costumes, melodramatic dialogue, and fairly clear morality – all stuff appropriate for comics aimed at fairly young audiences. Still, the basic format is robust and adaptable.

This subgenre has passed through a number of phases in its history. “Golden Age” comics, from the 1930s through the ‘50s, were straightforward and energetic. Morality tended to be very uncomplicated – heroes were good, and always won out in the end,

while villains were evil and had to be stopped, though heroes could always manage this without excessive force or moral compromise. Deep character motivations and detailed attention to continuity were uncommon.

The “Silver Age,” starting in the late ‘50s and early ‘60s, produced what is now generally seen as the archetypal pattern for superheroes. The colorful costumes, morality, and powers survived from earlier days, but superheroes now gained deeper characterization and a little more attention to continuity and plot logic. Dialogue became wittier and more verbose, and heroes sometimes slipped into angst or pretentiousness.

With decades of history behind them, and many ideas having seen heavy use, the modern four-color style tends to be somewhat self-aware, even cynical. “Mainstream” superheroes remain essentially moralistic, but it’s possible for them to endanger opponents and maybe even cause some deaths; accidents happen. Meanwhile, supervillains, who always had an uncanny ability to survive defeats and escape from prisons, sometimes seem close to victory. In an uncertain and complicated world, four-color heroics sometimes shades into other subgenres.

Four-color superheroics can seem artificial and slightly campy, with “superheroism” treated as a career choice, “supers” forming trade associations, and the world threatened on a weekly basis but somehow never feeling really endangered. But it can also include fairly deep meditations on power and humanity. A campaign can cover a range of flavors, though it’s hard to recover a sense of seriousness if there’s been too much camp, while an emphasis on grittiness and darkness moves stories into a different subgenre.

### **Super-Vigilantes**

Even early in the history of super comics, a darker style of story would sometimes appear alongside four-color heroism. Strictly speaking, most superheroes are vigilantes – unauthorized crime-fighters who actually break a few laws themselves. However, the term is mostly used of a dark and brooding sort of hero, who may well *kill* criminals.

*But, fortunately, Moir had discovered that his sister was mediumistic – in other words, that she was a battery of that animal magnetic force which is the only form of energy which is subtle enough to be acted upon from the spiritual plane as well as from our own material one.*

– Sir Arthur Conan Doyle,  
*Playing With Fire*

Vigilante stories usually feature relatively low-powered characters on both sides of the battle; apart from anything else, the threat of death and serious injury should be ever-present, and any street punk (or cop) with a handgun should be a real danger to a careless or unlucky PC. Many vigilante heroes have *no* powers – just high levels of skill and some good equipment. Still, a minor power can give a vigilante a crucial edge, which can keep him alive from one episode to the next.

Vigilante supers can sometimes “cross over” with their four-color brethren. Although the latter may disapprove of vigilante tactics, some modern heroes tolerate such allies when the opposition is even worse. Games about vigilantes and other lower-power supers operating in a “four-color” world can combine the “set dressing” of wild powers and the occasional exotic plot device with a more controllable, gritty level of action. It’s best to establish from the outset of such a game what kind of moral code and how much brutal pragmatism is going to be normal in the campaign.

### High-Power Horror

In a world where some beings are powerful, secretive, and villainous, plots can easily shift toward horror, especially if four-color conventions are relaxed slightly. After all, even if the heroes survive, innocent bystanders can easily suffer terrible fates, and very powerful opponents can seriously threaten the world – even the universe itself – with destruction or damnation.

This mixture of supers and horror usually involves supernatural powers, and occasionally poorly controlled psi or very weird science. The heroes may be powerful, but their powers probably come with a heavy price. They may be transformed into monsters (*Swamp Thing*), forced to share their bodies with barely controlled demons (*Ghost Rider*), or driven to the edge of sanity by terrible knowledge (*Animal Man*). They may dream of being restored to normal humanity –

## Historical Supers

While “supers” stories are mostly set in the present or future, a few are set in the past – usually in alternate histories, so that flamboyant empowered beings can be added with less trouble.

Superhero comics date from 1939, and stories set from then onward often set out to reconstruct the style of comics of a specific era – or to reassess them in a modern light. *Comics* set in this period often come from a writer’s ransacking of the publisher’s back catalogue. World War II is popular, as it combines a distinctive style with the opportunity for heroes to fight real, much-reviled enemies. (Explaining why the heroes didn’t change the course of the war can be hard, but not impossible; see p. 200.) Later decades, such as the 1950s or ‘60s, present more difficult challenges, but not impossible ones.

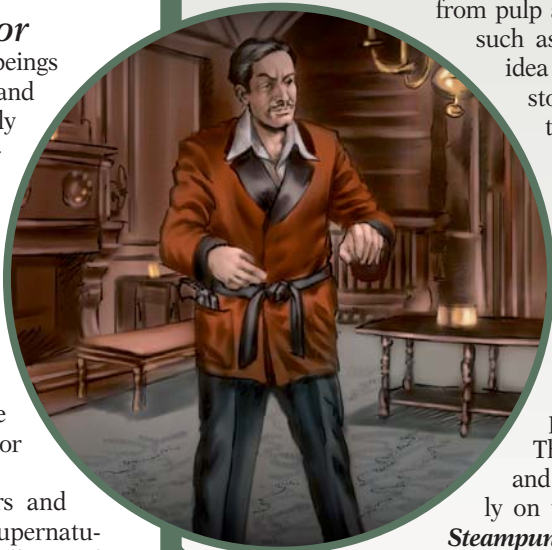
Supers stories set in earlier eras are often alternate histories that ask “What if four-color supers appeared in Ancient Rome (or Elizabethan England, or the Wild West)?” They may also (or instead) draw on the heroic myths and imagery of their chosen period, telling tales of paladins and wizards in medieval times or steam-powered gadgets and revived mummies in Victorian England (which overlap with the “Extraordinary Gentlemen” style discussed below), but adding a touch of superheroic flamboyance. Either way, they require a certain amount of work to set up – the GM has to be familiar with the chosen era *and* have a good idea how to handle powers – but they may repay the effort for gamers who are interested.

### Extraordinary Gentlemen

This subgenre is a modern invention, typified by Alan Moore’s *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. It marries elements from pulp and proto-pulp fiction with concepts such as superheroes and super-teams. The idea is to take characters from period stories, give their powers full rein, and then have them work together, often fighting menaces from the same period fiction.

“Extraordinary gentleman” stories can be quite modern in their attitudes and sensibilities, although they can also play the chosen period as straight as modern audiences will accept. (Authentic period codes of honor are one thing; authentic period racial attitudes are another.)

They can also feature a lot of “retrotech” and scientific ideas, and may draw heavily on the “steampunk” genre (see **GURPS Steampunk**).



and hence be vulnerable to tempting offers from clever villains. Enemies sometimes seek to steal their power, envying the very thing that the hero hates.

High-power horror plots often have a large personal element; heroes alternate among saving the world,

defending their few friends, and seeking cures for their conditions. The heroes may sometimes whine, but their powers *shouldn't* make them happy; this is *horror*, after all. On the other hand, they have the satisfaction of saving the world from really terrible fates.

## Cosmic Supers

Many four-color stories involve *very* powerful characters. These plots may involve threats to the entire world (or the universe), interstellar wars, and encounters with truly godlike beings. It's possible to run a whole campaign on this level. Examples include Marvel Comics stories involving Adam Warlock and Captain Marvel, and DC Comics' "New Gods" stories.

"Cosmic" supers may be straightforwardly adventurous, but are often somewhat horrific; the universe holds great dangers, and cosmic-level villains can be mind-bogglingly powerful. Even the noblest cosmic heroes can seem rather detached from the human concerns of most four-color supers; after all, they have whole worlds to worry about.

This subgenre can overlap with "Tales of the Gods" Mythic Fantasy (p. 204) and with the "Heaven vs. Hell" Secret Powers approach (p. 215). As in those cases, stories often involve visits to an ordinary-seeming Earth, whose inhabitants remain unaware of the great struggles taking place in the wider universe.

## Postmodern Supers

"Postmodern" supers stories are created by writers who are aware of the formal conventions of four-color style and play with their consequences.

In the simplest version, superhumans at least *try* to follow a version of the typical four-color conventions –



but the universe proves remorselessly unresponsive, resulting in dramas of ideals vs. harsh reality. "Logical" supers often have very limited powers or are just well-trained humans. More typical superheroes may find that even the greatest powers leave them with weaknesses and blind spots. Superheroes may actually be *manufactured* by cynical factions who hide their sinister schemes under colorful costumes and innocent cultural assumptions inspired by generations of comics.

Some supers abandon the essentially reactive approach of traditional comics. Instead of waiting for bad things to happen, they set out to make the world a better place. This often ends in tears, or at least turns the heroes into ruthless manipulators, but some writers suggest that proactive heroes would actually do more good. Mark Gruenwald's *Squadron Supreme*

and Alan Moore's *Watchmen* are classic examples of this sort of post-modernism; more recently, *The Authority* explores other angles.

In a more tongue-in-cheek or bizarre story, supers may be aware that they are living under peculiar rules, and even make flippant references to the fact. Heroes may say that they are *obliged* to fight each other when they first meet, even if they know that they're really on the same side (a comics cliché mostly designed to show how two popular heroes compare). Or they may comment how strange it is that no one ever recognizes them, despite the skimpiness of their masks. In itself, this is simply a joke, but the idea can be extended as the protagonists probe the true nature of their artificial-seeming reality. Recent comics series such as *Marvels* and *Powers* have looked at "superhero universes" from the point of view of ordinary people – press reporters, cops, and so on – living in the shadows of these peculiar demigods.

Characters may end up exploring different aspects of their world, finding different ground rules and conventions at work, just as different comics set in the same "superhero universe" may have distinctly different styles and atmospheres. They may fight reality-warping menaces (*Doom Patrol*) or wonder who benefits from the artificiality of their world (*Planetary*). "Postmodern" superhumans often eschew "sillier" superheroic conventions such as skimpy masks, cumbersome cloaks, frivolous codenames, or unsustainable secret identities.

## Cartoon-Animal Supers

The earliest stories featuring super-powered talking animals were probably anthropomorphic-animal cartoons that parodied four-color comics. More recently, some "furry" supers stories have taken the idea more seriously, using the animal form of the protagonists as a distancing device, a way to make the characters even more different from mundane humanity.

A "furry supers" campaign can be played as a fairly straightforward four-color game, in which the people beneath the masks happen to be cats, dogs, rabbits, and turtles . . . or it can emphasize the nonhuman nature of even non-super characters, giving "ordinary" talking animals modifiers to their attributes, enhanced senses, and "racial" enmities (dogs fight cats, wolves eat pigs).



## SUPERS GENRE CONVENTIONS

Four-color supers is a very formalized genre, with many conventions that have more to do with comics marketing than internal logic. That said, any supers campaign can eliminate some of the standard features, and some subgenres do so deliberately. If too many conventions are discarded, however, it stops being a supers game as most people understand the idea.

### Secret Identities

The traditional four-color hero is an idealistic freelance crime-fighter with a mundane day job. To protect his friends and family (and his privacy), he adopts a dual identity, fighting crime with costume and code-name, then performing quick changes to return to his mundane life and ordinary name. The hero's "civilian" persona is often mild-mannered, even wimpish. This helps obscure the truth and reflects a heroic tendency not to boast about one's power – but it also makes superheroes a more appealing fantasy for unprepossessing and downtrodden adolescents.

Secret identities are *not* universal, even in four-color comics; some superheroes are celebrities, or live quiet but not very secret lives. Still, the idea is quite widespread.

### Masks and Costumes

A secret identity won't last long if the hero looks the same in both guises, so supers often wear masks. These are typically bizarrely small and skimpy (sometimes nothing more than a pair of eyeglasses!) – despite which, even a superhero's family will generally fail to recognize him in costume. Indeed, some get by for years with no mask at all.

For supers with no secret identity, a costume might seem like a pointless affectation, but actually, some kind of special clothing can be entirely logical. Anybody who engages in athletic combat will want unencumbering clothes, and a recognizable costume will help a hero exploit a reputation for good deeds and effectiveness, or a villain to



intimidate victims with his reputation for evil. Costumes may also incorporate body armor (though most in the comics seem too skimpy for this) or gadgets, while dark colors can help with stealth. Some heroes see their costumes as uniforms, showing their allegiance; a few become living symbols of a nation or cause, and wear lurid flag-based garb.

*Cloaks and capes*, one traditional feature of superheroism, have been the subject of much cynicism in recent years. They look stylish, certainly, and may make wearers more intimidating if swirled with panache, but they also have the clear potential to cause a lot of practical problems, getting stuck in doors, caught in machinery, and so on. The presence or absence of cloaks may be a subtle marker of a setting's "four-color flavor" level.

GMs might even declare that "Can wear a cloak without silly accidents" is a **GURPS** perk (just like the ability to run comfortably in high heels; actually, some female supers' costumes defy common sense in multiple respects). Generous GMs can then allow a +1 bonus to influence skills when the PC can use the cloak to look imposing – and of course, it

*could* be used in combat with Cloak skill, though few supers seem to bother with this.

### Super Names

A secondary identity also implies a second name, but "super names" go beyond that. They're a personal trademark, something for ordinary humans to speak with admiration or fear, and often a broad hint as to what the character can do. Like costumes, they may indicate identification with some nation or cause. They may also be tagged onto an unidentified super by sensationalist press reporters, or carefully selected by some calculating government or corporate sponsor.

### Gun Control

Guns do appear in superhero stories, and not just in the hands of criminals and ordinary cops – but most superheroes don't carry them. Many do not need to, but in some cases, having a backup sidearm to go with less combat-oriented powers would seem only logical. Even so, guns tend to be limited to "vigilante" or quasi-military characters.

There are several reasons for this. First, guns are distinctly lethal, and idealistic heroes who refuse to kill

## Minor Gadgets

Even supers with innate abilities often have one or two minor gadgets, or even cybernetic implants. Some are talented inventors in their own right, while others are given handy devices by super-scientist allies or friendly agencies. Team radios are commonplace.

This can work fine in games. A gadget or two can help distinguish one character from another with similar powers, and can also fill some practical requirement that isn't covered by the PC's innate powers. A telepath might wear body armor, giving him a better chance of survival if he gets caught up in gunplay, while a brawler with superhuman toughness and strength might use a flight gadget to keep up with his more mobile allies.

couldn't use them without risk. Second, they're hard to disguise, forbidden in many places, and would seem inappropriate for many heroes' mild-mannered secret identities . . . someone who wanders around with one in civilian gear will have it noticed sooner or later, and it will then draw comment, if not worse. (Eccentric "theme villains" who carry weird gadgets rather than guns may also sometimes gain the benefit of surprise.) Innate powers are much less likely to be detected, so it's probably better to rely on them if the hero has them. If the PC is a member of a persecuted minority, whether an ethnic group or super-powered mutants, a gun may also cause further trouble, and the hero may prefer to look as harmless as possible: "My powers are an *accident* – but I *choose* not to carry weapons." Training to real competence with a gun may also distract supers from learning to use more important powers.

Finally, in the world of urban crime-fighting which is the primary arena of the superhero story, guns are the mark of the criminal – "the enemy." Cops go armed, but they have to fight crime without the benefit of super-powers. The heroes don't have that disadvantage.

## SUPER ORIGINS

The diversity of the powers in superhero stories is reflected in the diversity of their origins. Indeed, the "origin story" is a much-discussed feature of the genre. It can set the tone for a super's whole career: is he a dabbler in weird science or strange lore, lucky,

unlucky, the gullible pawn of a manipulative faction, or just *dedicated*? His origin may also involve someone who becomes a long-running Enemy (and who may even gain powers at the same time), or an important Dependent. Later major revisions may revisit this origin, revealing that it wasn't an accident after all or that someone with an apparently minor role in the story was really much more significant.

If super-powers are to remain at all special, power origins must be rare and difficult or impossible to reproduce. Sometimes, it turns out that a lab accident actually triggered mutant genes, or that a cosmic being secretly intervened. Some powers may be acquired by intensive training, but this requires a large degree of natural talent and years of study. Alternatively, the superhuman may have been kidnapped by experiment-loving aliens who don't choose to explain their motives.

### Accidents

Accidental origins, usually involving science labs or large energy sources, are perhaps the most common, although they may have become a little less popular in recent years as the sheer weight of implausibility became ever more obvious. In some cases, the "accident" involves an attempt to induce powers that succeeds beyond anyone's dreams, but with radical side effects (such as turning the subject into a megalomaniac villain) that make it unlikely to be repeated. Perhaps some alien object or substance was present, or the hero

was uniquely susceptible, or the key secret was known to only one person who subsequently died.

Accidental origin stories are typically associated with the "cutting edge" science of the time. In the '30s and '40s, supers got their powers from chemicals; in the '50s, '60s, and '70s, it was radiation; in the '80s, it was "cyber"; most recently, it's been genetic engineering or nanotechnology. (Witness the change in Spider-Man's origin from the original comic book to the recent movies.)

### Purchased Super-Powers

If super-powers can be granted by identifiable processes, scientific researchers will recreate them, sooner or later. It may take a while, and the resulting treatments may be pricey and unreliable, but it's a logical consequence. Likewise, engineers may build "battlesuits" that render the wearer effectively super-powered.

Such treatments should generally be kept rare and expensive. If it costs, say, \$10,000,000 to acquire super-powers, a small number of millionaire industrialists, aristocrats, and third-world dictators might be interested – although if they're told it will hurt a lot, and the nature and reliability of the results can't be guaranteed, most will probably spend their money elsewhere. However, some might offer the option to a trusted bodyguard or two, just as many governments and a few very large corporations would doubtless acquire a few trusted super-agents.

Sometimes, the "power process" is cheaper but highly unreliable, with horrific side effects such as a shortened lifespan or a high proportion of lethal failures. If these problems are publicly known, only dedicated fanatics will seek powers. In other cases, ruthless organizations and crime lords may acquire small armies of deluded super-goons.

Battlesuits are logically harder to keep rare – it's the nature of modern technology to be mass-produced – but they may have to be hand-crafted at huge expense by genius engineers, and operated by highly skilled users who understand their weird intricacies.

*Dr. Evil: Scott, I want you to meet daddy's nemesis, Austin Powers.*

*Scott Evil: What? Are you feeding him? Why don't you just kill him?*

*Dr. Evil: I have an even better idea. I'm going to place him in an easily escapable situation involving an overly elaborate and exotic death.*

*Scott Evil: Wait, aren't you even going to watch them? They could get away!*

*Dr. Evil: No, no, no. I'm going to leave them alone and not actually witness them dying. I'm just gonna assume it all went to plan . . . What?*

– *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery*

## Dialogue

Superheroes are big talkers. This is necessary in comics, because it lets writers transmit information that's hard to depict pictorially, but it's also part of many heroes' personalities – whether the speech in question takes the form of high-minded proclamations, obsessive vows, or snappy witticisms that drive villains to enraged distraction. Villains, meanwhile, are often incorrigible ranters, to the point that a taciturn villain, who only makes threats he can carry out, seems all the more sinister for his restraint.

In all but the grittiest of carefully written comics, heroes seem able to deliver a multi-sentence speech in the time it takes them to throw a punch.

GMs running four-color games should respect this convention; if a player can come up with a good heroic line, never claim that they don't have time to say it. However, super-verbosity only goes so far; if a speech runs to more than the length that can fit into a single-panel speech balloon, it *can* be cut short by events.

Some supers with relatively subtle powers, such as the ability to absorb the energy of others' attacks and use it for themselves, even make a point of boasting about their abilities . . . when they'd surely do better to keep quiet and exploit the ensuing surprise. GMs may choose to allow supers to take the Visible limitation (p. 112) when a power is not *actually* visible but the

character's bragging and behavior make its effects obvious anyway.

## Death Is Unreliable

Comics writers can rarely resist bringing back an interesting character for another story – even after he was supposedly killed. (Certainly, killing off a popular hero is commercially unwise!) Death is notoriously impermanent in the genre; any kind of get-out clause can be and has been used, from magic through cloning to “I got better.” Villains *very* rarely die “on stage”; even if they don't return for a while, the possibility of their involvement can feature in intervening plots.

In games, NPCs as well as PCs may have the option to spend bonus character points to modify die rolls (p. B347) – and should often have a few in reserve to ensure that they succeed on HT checks to avoid death and other rolls to escape terminal problems. Major characters may also be permitted to buy several levels of Hard to Kill (p. B58) with minimal or no justification.

## Earth, the Cosmic Crossroads

While supers stories generally accept modern cosmology, making Earth a very small body in a very large universe, they also tend to treat our world as somehow important. For one thing, humanity is often said to produce a much greater number and variety of super-powered beings than any alien race; we have “unstable genes” or

## Alternate History and Supers

Alternate histories are an occasional theme of superhero stories (like virtually every other concept found in SF or fantasy). The major comic publishers' core lines are already set in what are, in effect, alternate histories similar to our own but with supers. However, some stories take protagonists off to other alternates (usually but not always featuring superbeings) or feature time travel plots in which the heroes struggle to prevent historical divergences. It's often assumed that there are whole multiverses with countless parallel timelines, or at least multiple potential futures, alongside the main setting.

Some “postmodern” superhero stories, such as Alan Moore's *Watchmen*, have taken the “alternate history” concept more seriously, exploring the historical consequences and ramifications of the existence of super-powers, becoming rigorously worked-out alternate-history stories in the process.



## Supers and Infinite Worlds

While *GURPS Infinite Worlds* doesn't specifically describe any worlds where superheroes exist, they're surely out there. Maybe they have yet to be discovered, or maybe Infinity is just keeping them secret.

At the simplest, a timeline similar to Homeline could have a fashion for freelance vigilantism and flamboyant criminal activity. More spectacular "supers worlds" could range from coldly logical settings with "wild talents" who are mostly co-opted by governments and other large organizations, but with the occasional fancy costume showing up on the odd figurehead, to outright "four color" universes with multiple power types, weird science, and an uncanny tendency for costumed heroes to collide with villains of similar power while out on patrol. A "superhero timeline" could even be a *pocket multiverse* (p. B529) or *skerry* (described in *GURPS Infinite Worlds*), with multiple secondary paradimensional realms filled with supernatural beings, and frequent reality quakes causing "continuity errors" and explaining how history could be so jammed full of exotic phenomena without their seemingly changing its course very much.

Infinity Unlimited could take a vigilante supers parallel in its stride (ISWAT might see it as a good recruiting ground). Even a logical/post-modernist super-world would rate as a *relatively* minor worry – unless any empowered beings looked like they might be world-jumpers, in which case they'd be watched very carefully indeed. Four-color worlds would seem more threatening, simply because of their unpredictability; tourism would probably be banned, despite the long queues of impromptu comic fans, because the Infinity Secret wouldn't survive five minutes in the face of telepaths and superscience. Overt contact by Homeline might barely cause a stir in such a setting ("Parallel worlds? Yes, we know about the idea. Can't say much for your costumes, I'm afraid."), but Infinity really doesn't want supervillains loose across the timelines.

A "supers world" could even be built around the results of runaway transdimensional travel, on a timeline with easy access to others (say, lying on a dimensional highway) where Infinity's secrecy had failed. With Cabal members playing their subtle games, supernatural beings slipping in and out, superscience imported from Gernsback and Caliph, Nazis from Reich-5, dragon-servants from Wyvern, renegade gods from Orichalcum, and "super agent" I-Cops desperately attempting damage control, things could get as (four) colorful as any comic.

are the product of meddling by an ancient super-race. While many aliens have powers of some kind, these tend to be relatively minor and common to all members of their species.

Furthermore, Earth may be some kind of "cosmic nexus." Its position may be significant in terms of galactic political borders or hyperspace travel routes; it may also be the location of many gateways to other universes or a weakness in the structure of reality, making it important to many extra-dimensional beings. This in turn

makes it the natural home for sorcerer-guardians of reality and the like.

## TYPES OF SUPERS

Comics writers try to make every superhero and villain unique. They don't always succeed – certain abilities (flight, super-strength, martial arts skill) are commonplace – but anyone creating supers should at least try to make them distinctive. Still, there are a number of stock types:

## Super-Normals

Some supers are, in a broad sense, normal human beings, trained or armed to the limits of plausibility and way beyond. Such super-normals may be very powerful indeed, especially if they make use of advanced technology and weird science. Superheroic power armor (such as Iron Man's suit) may grant powers on a par with many "innate" supers, while alien devices may be so powerful as to resemble mythic magic (as with the Green Lanterns' rings). While such things don't represent *innate* powers, they may be defined using the powers rules and gadget-related limitations (pp. B116-117).

Other super-normals – most famously Batman – don't bother with such things. Most still prove that a highly competent human being, with the right tools and a few cinematic skills, can hold his own among "supers."

## Magicians

In a sense, most magicians are just a type of super-normal, using training and knowledge to raise them beyond humanity. However, the awesome powers and effects that they wield justify a category of their own.

While some comic-book magicians use just their knowledge and training, others – probably the majority – have one or two magical devices, if only to simplify some tasks (as with Dr. Strange's "cloak of levitation") and to save them from having to cast too many spells at once. Some have power-boosting artifacts, while others may be associated with godlike beings (such as the mighty "lord of law" linked to Dr. Fate's helmet).

Most comic-book magicians are "normal" humans aside from their magical training, but some may be mutants or aliens, or, like Merlin in Arthurian myth, have part-supernatural ancestry (explaining their exceptional magical talent). In a few cases, fully supernatural beings rely primarily on trained abilities, meaning that they function much like magicians, although they may also have a few innate supernatural advantages as well.

## Superhumans

Other supers are human enough, but have acquired serious powers. There are, of course, a wide variety.

*Übermenschen* are on the edge of normal humanity, but have been raised one notch beyond by uncanny training, careful breeding, or superscience (such as the serum that produced Captain America). They often have physical attributes at marginally superhuman levels, and minds as well-honed as their bodies. The difference between them and super-normals is small; although they usually lack powers, *übermenschen* may add a gimmick or two to their array of skills, such as superhuman senses (as with Marvel Comics' Daredevil).

*Scientifically changed humans* gain powers from something that comes out of a laboratory (such as the spider that bit Spider-Man) or as a side effect of other scientific research (such as the space incident that created the Fantastic Four). See *Super Origins* (p. 227) for more on this topic.

*Mutants* are similar to scientifically changed humans, but they changed before birth; their powers come from their genes. The success of the *X-Men* comics and spin-offs has made this a popular type. Mutants may simply have been subject to radiation or other mutagens in the womb – making super-mutants a side effect of modern nuclear power or industrial pollution – but to explain why there should be a wide range of mostly beneficial human mutations around, the setting may feature alien genetic manipulators in the distant past, who left a lot of powers latent in the human genome. Comics often depict mutants as a persecuted minority, though their persecutors seem curiously tolerant of aliens or lab-accident victims with otherwise very similar powers.

*Cyborgs* are “scientifically changed” – but on a gross physical level, with mechanical limbs for strength and speed, artificial organs for durability, built-in armor and weapons, special sensors, and so on. This is usually an experimental treatment for someone who has suffered a tragic accident, but a few super-cyborgs are the voluntary products of rare and very advanced (possibly alien) superscience. Cyborg features

may be obvious and disfiguring (in a glossy, high-tech, stylish way) or disguised. Although extensive, high-powered “cyborgization” is needed to produce a true superhuman, some supers combine implants with advanced training or other powers (such as Wolverine, with his metal skeleton).

*Magically changed humans* are again similar to the scientifically changed type, but the boosts they receive are supernatural, such as from ancient artifacts of power or the blessings (or curses) of godlike beings. They differ from magicians in that they don't cast spells or claim much special knowledge (though there's some scope for overlap, if magicians cast permanent spells on themselves or magically changed humans study special techniques). Some are deliberately created as the champions or servants of cosmic entities. *Undead* are a subcategory of this type, and the most traditional altered humans, having been changed by death. Cinematic vampires, for example, have an array of tricks able to challenge most superheroes.

## Nonhumans

Not all heroes are human – some don't even look it.

*Aliens* have featured in supers stories since the very early days, thanks to Superman. They may come to Earth as exiles from dead or dying worlds, researchers or diplomats with no ethical barrier to involving themselves in local affairs, interstellar cops, or renegades from *hostile* alien cultures. Many appear remarkably human, but possess all sorts of exotic abilities (perhaps natural, perhaps thanks to alien superscience); others are more obviously nonhuman. Some have access to advanced technology, ranging from the impressive to the godlike.

*Robots* are usually the product of superscience projects that are even less effective at reproducing their results than those that produce human powers or power armor. They are typically humanoid but weird-looking; heroic types (such as Marvel's Vision) typically look more human than robot villains (such as the Vision's creator, Ultron). Most are stronger than humans; many display a range of other powers. Most claim to have difficulty comprehending human emotions, though they typically display a range of motivations such as anger, loyalty, curiosity, or paranoia.

*Spirits* – intangible supernatural beings – often feature in horror-tinged

## Four-Color Morality

“Classic” comic-book supers are usually bound by a strict code of ethics, ensuring that their comics are seen as suitable for young readers. This primarily means that heroes should be essentially law-abiding (apart from some minor trespasses and assaults – always in a good cause, though), and they absolutely must not kill.

This strict morality can be the baseline assumption in any true four-color campaign, although modern mainstream comics are flexible enough that a cynical, ruthless “outsider” won't look entirely out of place. Likewise, stories can explore subjects such as alternative sexualities without looking too postmodern, although a real Golden Age campaign would avoid them.

The key feature of superheroic morality, though, is *restraint*. Superheroes are powerful, and while they feel obliged to use that power for good, it's generally accepted that if they use it too wildly or self-indulgently, they'll lose contact with their essential humanity and eventually be corrupted. Stories and campaigns where this rule doesn't apply will end up exploring the consequences. Unrestrained supers may spiral into corruption, or factions of supers may become involved in unending wars – or the supers may succeed in building a utopia, at least on their own terms.

stories, especially as many of them are in fact formerly-human ghosts. Others may come from “spirit realms” such as Heaven or Hell or be manifestations of principles or aspects of reality such as the Earth’s vegetation (*Swamp Thing*) or elemental fire. They typically possess traditional “spirit powers” such as limited materialization, the ability to possess and control humans, or cosmic insights.

## SUPER ANTAGONISTS

The sheer variety of powers and personalities in a supers setting is typically reflected in the variety of problems and enemies.

### *Super Criminals*

The generic supervillain is in many ways the counterpart of the generic hero, often complete with costume, mask, code name, origin story, and secret identity. However, he’s not motivated by idealism or morality; he uses his powers for profit, power, or glory.

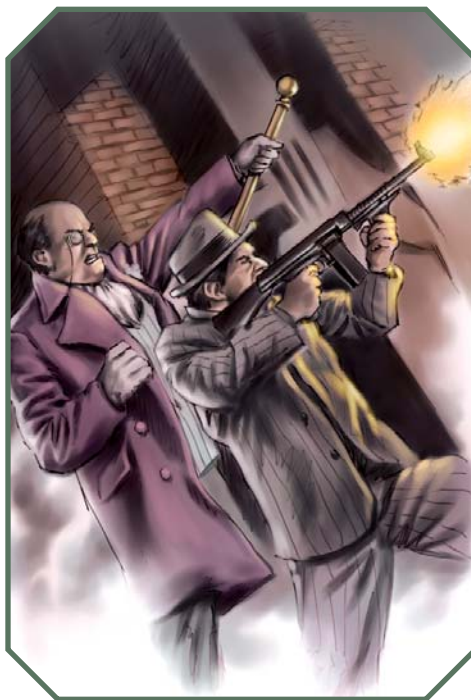
Supervillains vary at least as much as superheroes, from trivial and comic to star-spanning. In classic four-color stories, they do a good job of sounding menacing, but *most* seem more interested in profit and fun than in actually killing people. In grittier subgenres, they can inflict serious casualties, at least on bystanders and minor characters. (Batman’s enemy the Joker, a harmless prankster in some older versions, is depicted committing multiple murders for fun in darker modern comics.) Major villains are notoriously hard to kill (see p. 228), so they can always come back to fight another day if they are interesting enough.

Supervillains often form teams to take on superhero groups, bring down a single very tough hero, or commit bigger crimes. The problems of establishing communications between wanted criminals, then holding a team of egocentric (often crazy) criminals together without their killing each other would logically make this quite hard, but comic-book villains manage – often thanks to the efforts of a strong-willed, charismatic, and wealthy master villain with resources and leadership (or intimidation) skills. The authorities might build “super

prisons” to hold captured supervillains; while entirely logical, this could have the unfortunate side effect of bringing villains together in a situation where they can start plotting.

### *Master Villains*

While almost any supervillain can attempt long-term plots, true master villains are *good* at it. Some have super-powers of their own, and may indeed be formidable in a fight if they bother (raw power helps keep minions in line), but others are normal humans, albeit with considerable intelligence, strategic skill, and perhaps a few tricks up their sleeves. Some don’t even bother with costumes or code names, especially if they’re clever enough to maintain a façade of social respectability.



Fighting a master villain is typically a long-term project, as they may have lots of cover stories, escape systems, and cinematically effective lawyers to get them off every charge. Some are genuinely hard to identify, either because they have costumed secret identities, or because they live as legitimate members of society and keep their illegal activities well concealed. However, in most cases, heroes identify a master villain quickly, even if they can’t actually catch him or prove anything in court.

Master villains also typically employ one or two really good empowered bodyguards or “personal assassins,” especially if they themselves lack powers or dislike dirtying their hands with combat. This makes “showdown” fights, when the villain’s schemes are finally broken (for now), very tough.

### *Organized Crime*

Organized crime – traditionally secretive, well-established, and vicious – can be a worthy opponent for superheroes. While ordinary goons may not be serious opponents for bulletproof supers, even in large quantities, organized criminals can locate and attack a hero’s friends, corrupt society, escape punishment and otherwise abuse the legal system, and hire mercenary supervillains to handle super-powered problems. In supers games, high-ranking crime lords may turn out to be supervillains themselves, having fought their way to the top or employed their organization’s wealth to acquire a personal edge from, say, an amoral technologist. Certainly, many mob bosses qualify as master villains.

But a campaign involving the battle against organized crime is likely to consist more of a steady stream of low-level fights and investigations. It’s an implicit assumption of most superhero stories that there are *always* more low-level gangsters and thugs ready to replace any who the heroes put away, and the supply of competent gang leaders is nearly as reliable. Games focusing on this topic will tend to be gritty, not because it’s terribly hard to win most battles, but because the war never ends.

### *Evil Agencies*

An evil agency is typically distinguished from a mere criminal gang by the use of advanced technology or sometimes supernatural powers, and often by twisted ideologies, strange uniforms, and grandiose plans. Many agencies have large, well-equipped secret bases. They include purely criminal groups whose objectives are wealth and petty power, but also



political radicals (it's traditional to have some of these founded by escaped former Nazis, though crazies from all over the political spectrum sometimes join the fun), ninjas and other assassination sects with uncanny martial arts skills, and fanatical mystical cults.

While the typical agent is a normal human, most agencies have a few more exotic enforcers and "cell leaders," or at least hire the occasional mercenary supervillain. Some employ or are led by brilliant but twisted scientists who build huge super-weapons, or insane mystics who create the magical equivalent. Some supers may turn out to have been empowered or created by an evil agency in the past, giving the fight a personal edge on both sides.

## Monsters

Occasionally, superheroes get to deal with large but relatively straightforward problems straight from monster movies: titans bent on stomping whole cities flat. These creatures are often too big to be stopped even by superhero attacks, and may even seem entirely immune. The heroes must investigate their nature to find their weaknesses. Battles with monsters can thus be complicated by the need to conduct research in the middle of a major disaster, and perhaps by opportunistic villains trying to control the creature or steal genetic material.

## Aliens

"Coming from space" is a classic origin for supers of all kinds, heroes and villains, but relatively low-powered aliens, operating in groups, can also make effective antagonists. They are likely to have access to very advanced technology and the odd innate ability, and can have all the classic alien motives for villainy, such as conquering the Earth (or kidnapping its women, if they're more traditional than logical). Some seek to prevent humanity, with its unnerving ability to produce numerous super-powered beings, from getting out into the galaxy and disturbing the status quo; they may hope to achieve this by conquering the Earth, destroying it, or inducing

humanity to fight apocalyptic global wars. Most comic-book aliens are humanoid, though some are visibly nonhuman; they may have racial powers.

Logically, introducing powerful alien races, with the technology to reach Earth and an inclination to conquer, should make a radical difference to any campaign world – but traditionally, four-color supers just don't work that way. Aliens come to Earth, but even if they're noticed by the general public, they go away again without anybody managing to emulate their technology, or worrying about what this proves about humanity's place in the universe or proven faster-than-light travel's implications for physical science of. There may be some mention of diplomatic relationships or planetary defenses, but not very much. This is a four-color convention; exploring more-logical implications of this tradition could transform a supers game into something more space-operatic or post-modern.

## Natural Disasters

Superheroes may also tackle problems with no active malice behind them, such as earthquakes, aircraft crashes, fires, or floods. Typical heroic responses involve clearing away rubble, rescuing people from burning buildings, or searching out victims using super-senses. This is a good way for heroes to build goodwill, although a misunderstood hero or antihero may have difficulty convincing people of his good intentions.

While disaster relief is a good option for an occasional fairly low-key plot, realistically, heroes who set out to tackle such problems at all systematically could be occupied 24 hours a day. They'd save a *lot* of lives, but not have many real adventures. Hence, as a matter of genre convention as much as anything, natural disasters should only come up occasionally.

## Cosmic Incursions

Supers may also have to deal with bizarre threats from outside their universe, ranging from demonic invasions to attempts to revise the narrative structure of reality. Demons,

transdimensional conquerors, and the PCs' villainous counterparts from worlds where morality is inverted all make dangerous enemies.

Cosmic incursions should usually have a distinctly strange and sinister edge to them. At the very least, demons are traditionally devious, ruthless, and adept at temptation. It's easy to make them rather comic, but really, their presence should make plots distinctly horrific. True cosmic evil is supposed to be eternal – and largely immune to mere physical force.

Other threats from outside reality can be *stranger*. Things Man Was Not Meant To Know may not be evil so much as totally uninterested in humanity, and able to drive the strongest hero insane just by existing. Other "outsiders" can have distinctly nonhuman moral codes of their own. Heroes may find that only one of two universes can ultimately exist, so that defending their own reality means fighting beings who are just doing the same.

## SUPER TEAMS

While some superheroes are essentially solitary, the idea of the team-up goes back a long way, and can be very convenient in RPGs.

### Types of Teams

Teams form for various reasons. In some cases, several heroes share the same origin, and may even be members of the same family or all have been working in the same place when some cosmic accident gave them powers. Relatives or long-time colleagues start with a basis of friendship and trust, and may stick together for mutual protection and moral support in a strange new life.

Other groups simply share a job or obsession (such as crime-fighting), meet in the course of this "work," and recognize that sharing information and having someone to guard one's back are good ideas. The first meeting may require a rather large coincidence, although if the campaign's home city is attacked by a powerful villain or monster, several heroes may well all appear at once. After the group has an established base, other new heroes may apply to join, or perhaps be tracked down and recruited.

A national government or the United Nations may decide to sponsor a group, on the grounds that the heroes will do more good if they're a little more organized. The rather obvious hidden agenda here is that this also lets the authorities keep an eye on them – maybe even learning their secret identities – and send them against problems that worry the authorities more than they do the heroes, but the heroes may decide that this is a risk worth taking. Really skilled agents may penetrate the heroes' secret identities before recruiting them. Ethical agents may keep these secret, but more ruthless groups might apply pressure verging on blackmail to get the heroes on board.

Other teams might be sponsored by corporations (probably for publicity – those who want super-mercenaries aren't going to appeal to many heroes) or even by wealthy individuals. Supporting a team properly could get *very* expensive, especially if halfway realistic legal bills start mounting up, but super-wealth is a feature of supers settings. A variant is the "secret school," dedicated to enabling supers to control and understand their powers more than to using them to fight evil – though that could be a sideline. While the archetypical super-school in four-color comics is an academy for mutants (in the "X-Men" titles), a hidden monastery dedicated to the martial arts or an ancient college of magics could fulfill the same role. In a world where superscience is becoming spectacularly widespread, an initially innocuous technical college for gifted young researchers could find itself becoming a center of superheroism.

Many variants on all these are possible. In a story set in wartime, heroes could easily be organized as a special ops team; this would of course mean government sponsorship, with a bit more direction and discipline. For that matter, if super-powers can be created deliberately, major militaries would doubtless do so – overtly for public relations and as a deterrent, quietly for research purposes, or secretly for deniable missions. Likewise, a team could start out as a supervillain gang and move over to the side of good for some reason. They might be offered pardons in exchange

for working for the government, help fight off an alien invasion and decide that they like the ensuing popularity, or just try to live up to some kind of Robin Hood ideal in a setting where the law is seriously corrupt and "noble outlaws" really are the only heroes.

### *Roles in the Team*

A particular type or style of super-power can determine a member's role in the team. For example, a super-tough hero, able to soak up heavy weapons fire, would make a logical combat "point man," while shadow or invisibility powers could make a very effective scout. While the range of super-powers is vast, and many heroes have abilities that enable them to fill different roles at different times, there are some standard slots.

Well-recognized examples include tough, strong "bricks," who make good point men and who can at least delay most opponents or cover retreats; "blasters" who provide long-range hitting power, and who can often also fly, expanding tactical options further; "speedsters" who provide mobility and a range of subsidiary tricks; telepathic "mentalists" who can subvert or confuse opponents and solve many mysteries; stealth specialists (often martial artists) who can deal with many problems that are not susceptible to raw force; and "gad-geteers" who usually carry an assortment of devices, providing a team with flexibility, although they may be noted for one or two particular tricks. Healers are relatively rare in comics, though not entirely unknown; see p. 194 for more on the problems with this type of power.

## Villain Teams

Supervillain teams are often structured like hero groups, with a brick, a stealth expert, and so on, but the psychological balance is frequently different. In particular, villain leaders are often far more physically powerful than their followers, or at least have very forceful personalities, simply because they have to cow a group of surly super-criminals into obedience.

Other four-color supervillain team members typically fall into one of four categories. *Soldiers* are in the team for money and fun – or for some not-too-strong ideological reason, if the team has a cause. Soldiers don't see themselves as leadership material – leaders have more work and are bigger targets – and may be impressed by the leader's charisma or have a basic sense of mercenary ethics. They'll stick around happily as long as the team is winning, but will probably quit if things go badly.

*Lackeys*, on the other hand, are *very* loyal. They may exhibit cringing inferiority complexes, or they may be devoted to the team's cause. Leaders like lackeys, even if they lack useful powers. Everyone else tends to hold them in contempt, unless their loyalty achieves real nobility. They generally lack initiative. Programmed robots and bound spirits are special types of lackey.

The opposite is the *Rebel*, who covets the leadership. Rebels may be blatant, continually arguing with the leader; or secretive; in some comics, their real attitudes are revealed in frequent thought bubbles. The leader may keep a rebel in line by threats and violence, or the rebel may be prepared to smile and wait. Heroes can exploit rebels, but should never *trust* them; the rebel may be using the heroes to eliminate the leader.

Finally, *Innocents* have probably been tricked into the team by a cunning leader, perhaps after an unusually sheltered upbringing or bad experiences with bigoted "normal" people. Traditionally, they can be reformed, maybe even becoming heroes. However, an innocent who remains a loyal villain despite everything can be very unnerving – a demonstration of the leader's terrible charisma or the power of an ideal, or a challenge to the idealization of loyalty.

Teams also have requirements that aren't directly related to an individual's powers, although the two may be linked by style or personal history. For example, the combat commander may be a super-soldier with tactical and command experience, a telepath with a good grasp of psychology and the ability to send instructions clearly in the heat of battle, or simply a mature, intelligent father figure. Likewise, experts on subjects such as technology or magic are often very helpful. "Face men," useful when conducting investigations or dealing with the press or government, may be subtle psis, martial artists who look a bit less weird and intimidating than their barely-human colleagues, or just whichever team member sank a few points into Charisma and Diplomacy.

### Team Tactics

Once the team has an established membership roster, it can start developing group tactics. This is often presented as an important advantage, though many super-fights seem to come down to each member taking on one opponent individually. Still, at the very least, team members can learn each others' strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to ask for the most appropriate help when necessary and to avoid using area attacks that will hurt their own side more than the opposition. See also *Optional Rule: Coordinated Attacks* (p. 165) and *Combining Powers* (p. 170); super-teams often use such ideas.

Some teams have specific training facilities, and even high-tech "danger rooms" that enable them to prepare for specific situations and enemies. Others simply learn by working together over a period of time. Teams can develop a "flavor" and a sense of unity by agreeing on code words for preplanned tactics and developing tricks such as a fast flyer grabbing a slower colleague and moving him where he's most needed.

If a group trains together intensively, GMs might permit its members to buy Leadership or Tactics skills with optional specialties in "Teamwork." These can only be used in situations where knowing the team and its members provides a significant advantage, such as deploying members to make best use of their particular attacks. If

the group includes members with whom you haven't trained at length, use the nonspecialized version of the skill (which will usually be at -2 from the specialty).

### Headquarters and Vehicles

A team needs an HQ; meeting in public places or hanging out in each others' apartments will cramp the heroes' style. Groups with sponsors will often be given a base (a gritty/postmodern game might feature a military-style installation), and schools and the like may have buildings; otherwise, arrangements will have to be made. Likewise, teams may find a use for a vehicle that can get them anywhere in their chosen area of operations at speed.

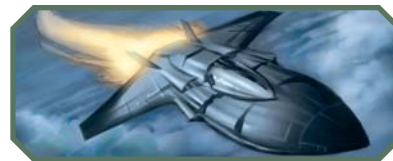
In fact, the team HQ is another rather implausible four-color convention. Such bases come under attack fairly often in the comics, and may even show damage and need repair from issue to issue, but these attacks rarely seem to imperil and terrify the neighbors as often as would seem logical . . . nor do enemies often track heroes in and out of the base in an attempt to assess the team's strength or break someone's secret identity.

An HQ large enough for a multi-member team will be expensive, especially if it's located in a major city and has good security. A multimillionaire sponsor, or a similarly wealthy team member who can access his wealth without imperiling his secret identity, will be extremely useful. The orbital or lunar bases seen in some comics imply *extraordinary* resources. The facilities often depicted in comics (training facilities, high-tech defense systems, vehicle pens) all add to the cost. Then again, some less formal teams manage perfectly well with nothing but one member's larger-than-average house.

## SUPER ADVENTURES

Four-color stories are often about fighting crime, saving the world, and foiling villains – which makes for simple adventures when the GM can't think of anything more complicated. Have the heroes encounter or learn of

a crime in progress, probably involving a supervillain, and let them tackle it. A series of such crimes may imply a master villain at work; a slightly more complex sequence of events may point the PCs toward some globe-spanning menace.



GMs can draw general inspiration from anything from gritty TV cop shows for vigilante games – with a few highly competent heroes taking the plot-role of the entire police department – to James Bond movies for master villain or evil agency operations. Just add enough super-powered opposition to make fight scenes feel serious. High-power supers, especially those of a supernatural bent, can become involved in plots inspired by or based on mythology, battling giant monsters or diabolical tempters bent on subverting humanity.

However, superheroes are also notorious for their soap-operatic personal lives, and many players, familiar with the genre or just eager for more points, will doubtless take plenty of disadvantages. GMs shouldn't be ashamed to exploit these by imperiling dependents, threatening secret identities with exposure, and creating moral quandaries. This shouldn't be carried to the point where players feel unpleasantly harassed by the GM, or that every disadvantage they take is being used to cripple the PC – that's not fun, and it's not in genre – but those disadvantage points should be earned.

Plots can also revolve around the nature of powers, and how the world sees heroes in general. Governments can try to control these "walking arsenals," reporters can harass them, cops can complain that they're loose cannons, members of the public can worry about their attitudes and barely human natures, and supervillains can try to subvert them. Part of the point of the supers genre is that power comes with a price – not just the responsibility of getting into super-fights, but the difficulty of retaining contact with humanity.



# GLOSSARY

*Powers* uses the following vocabulary to discuss superhuman gifts. Several terms found elsewhere in *GURPS* pick up more nuanced definitions here – read carefully!

**ability:** A superhuman gift, such as being able to fly or shoot lightning bolts. It might be a single advantage, perhaps heavily modified. It might instead be *several* advantages, either sitting there like elements of a meta-trait or connected by Follow-Up or Link.

**active ability:** An ability that does nothing until the wielder chooses to use it by taking a maneuver or making a die roll. See p. 153.

**active use:** Any use of an ability that requires a deliberate effort, most often a maneuver. This describes all uses of active abilities and certain uses of passive abilities, notably power defenses and exceptions mandated in advantage descriptions.

**alternative abilities:** A collection of related abilities that behave as a single ability with multiple settings, allowing the wielder to use only one at a time. See p. 11.

**always on:** Describes an ability that operates constantly because the user can't consciously deactivate it. See p. 153.

**anti-power:** A power, superscience technology, or natural phenomenon that specifically blocks or negates a particular power or an entire source. See p. 20.

**attack ability:** Any ability that can injure an opponent or compromise his capabilities – most often Affliction, Binding, Innate Attack, Leech, or Neutralize. Often shortened to “attack.”

**biological power:** A power that originates from the user's body. See p. 26.

**channeled energies:** Any power source external to the power's wielder. See p. 24.

**chi power:** A power that springs from the user's “inner strength” (*chi*). See p. 26.

**combining powers:** A stunt that lets multiple users of related powers combine forces to produce enhanced effects. See p. 170.

**Coordinated Attack:** A combat tactic that lets multiple fighters attack a single target more effectively. See p. 165.

**cosmic power:** A power that emanates from creation itself. Often reserved for deities. See p. 26.



**default ability:** An ability used by someone who lacks it by dint of modifying a similar ability he does have. This stunt costs FP. See p. 173.

**defensive ability:** Any ability that reduces the impact of an attack or environmental hazard. Often shortened to “defense.”

**diverting defense:** A defense that stops an attack by channeling the incoming energy away. See p. 11.

**divine power:** A power granted by a deity. See p. 26.

**elemental power:** A power that originates from an innate affinity with a particular form of matter or energy, like a fire god or fire spirit's control over flame. See p. 27.

**Energy Reserve:** A pool of FP isolated from mundane FP and useful only for paying FP costs associated with powers of a specific source. See p. 119.

**enhancement:** An extra capability added to an advantage. This increases the advantage's point cost by a percentage.

**extra effort:** Spending FP to get increased effect or skill with an ability. See p. 160.

**focus:** The force or substance a power manipulates, or the abstract concept it revolves around. See p. 7.

**gestalt:** A group of psis, usually telepaths, who are combining powers.

**latent power:** A power the possessor can't actively use, whether because his abilities are dormant and as yet unrealized, or because he has Talent but no abilities. See p. 34.

**limitation:** A restriction on the use of an advantage. This reduces the advantage's point cost by a percentage.

**magical power:** A power that draws upon *mana* – the ambient supernatural energy tapped by wizards. See p. 27.

**mental ability:** Any ability based on a mental advantage or that requires an IQ, Will, or Per roll – especially if it helps the user communicate, gather information, or influence others. See p. 154.

**mental-influence ability:** An ability that manipulates or reads others' thoughts, emotions, or perceptions.

**metamorphosis:** A physical transformation that alters the user's size, shape, or physiology. See p. 18.

**modifier:** An enhancement or limitation.

**moral power:** A power that emanates from a grand moral principle – Good, Evil, etc. – in a setting where such things are real, tangible forces. See p. 27.

**mundane countermeasure:** An ordinary item or condition that incidentally blocks or negates a power. See p. 20.

**nature power:** A power that flows from the ambient life-energy field that surrounds all living things. See p. 28.

**negating defense:** A defense that stops an attack by canceling out its source. See p. 11.

**obstructing defense:** A defense that stops an attack by interposing a barrier. See p. 11.

**ongoing effect:** Any effect of an ability that endures after initial activation without requiring a new use of the ability.

**opposed powers:** Powers with inimical foci (fire vs. ice) or sources (Good vs. Evil). They needn't be anti-powers, but often are. See p. 21.

**origin:** The story behind how a power-wielder acquired his power. Not the same as "source." See p. 179.

**passive ability:** An ability that applies constantly or activates in response to a stimulus without any input from the owner. The GM makes all required die rolls. See p. 153.

**physical ability:** Any ability based on a physical advantage or that requires a ST, DX, or HT roll. See p. 154.

**physical transformation:** Any ability that lets the user alter the structure or composition of his body. See p. 17.

**power:** An innate capacity to direct a superhuman energy source – internal or external – to generate different effects related by a *focus*. Each effect corresponds to an *ability*.

**Power Block:** An active defense that concentrates a defensive ability for improved effect, at the risk of having *no* effect on a failure. See p. 168.

**power defense:** Any active attempt to use a power to avoid an attack; see *Power Block*, *Power Dodge*, and *Power Parry*.

**Power Dodge:** An active defense with a movement ability or physical transformation that takes the

defender out of the attack's path. See p. 167.

**power modifier:** A modifier – usually a limitation – shared by every ability of a power. It makes the ability subject to the power's inherent drawbacks and benefits. See p. 20.

**Power Parry:** An active defense with an attack ability that attempts to weaken or stop an attack by deflecting it or shooting it down. See p. 167.

**power skill:** A skill that replaces the attribute roll to use an ability, but only for certain powers in some settings. It defaults to the usual controlling attribute at -6. See p. 162.

**power source:** Same as *source*.

**power technique:** A technique that lets an ability's wielder buy off the penalty for a special feat with that ability. See p. 162.

**psi:** The generic term for psionic powers or one who possesses them.



**psionic power:** A power that springs from the user's mind. See p. 28.

**repeated attempt:** The second or later attempt to use an ability on the same subject or an identical one after an initial failure. For certain powers, this results in a FP cost and a penalty to use the ability. See p. 159.

**required disadvantage:** A disadvantage – usually a self-imposed mental disadvantage – that anyone who possesses a particular power must take. Violating the disadvantage's restrictions costs the user access to his power. See p. 21.

**source:** The driving force or paranormal energy that ultimately makes a power or set of powers work.

Examples include *biological*, *chi*, *cosmic*, *divine*, *elemental*, *magical*, *nature*, *psionic*, *spirit*, and *super*. Not the same as "origin."

**special effect:** Any feature that differentiates an ability from the underlying advantage without affecting point cost – usually because it's cosmetic or because the GM feels it isn't an overall drawback or benefit. See p. 113.

**spirit power:** A power that works by commanding spirits to do one's bidding. See p. 28.

**stunt:** A creative use of an ability, not addressed in the description of the underlying advantage or the normal rules for advantage use. See p. 170.

**super:** A comic-book style hero or villain with superhuman powers (but not necessarily *super-powers*).

**super-power:** A "comic book" power that grants diverse superhuman abilities and has no real connection to magic, spirits, or other traditional sources from myth, folklore, and literature. Common explanations are mutation and weird science. See p. 29.

**superscience:** Technology that violates physical laws. This can be a source of powers, especially powers granted by gadgets. See *Gadget Limitations and Powers* (p. 107).

**switchable:** Describes an ability with ongoing effects that the user can consciously activate and deactivate. See p. 153.

**Talent:** A natural or learned aptitude for a power. Add its level to all success rolls to use that power's abilities. See p. 8.

**temporary enhancement:** A single use of an enhancement, bought with FP as a stunt. See p. 172.

**transient:** Describes an ability with momentary effects that the user can consciously trigger. See p. 153.

**transmutation:** A physical transformation that alters the user's composition. See p. 19.

**variant trait:** A redesigned advantage that works in a radically different situation than the original but shares its game mechanics and point cost. The differences amount to special effects. See p. 113.

**wild ability:** An ability that isn't part of a power and isn't affected by rules that apply specifically to powers.

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*GURPS Powers* requires the *GURPS Basic Set*, Fourth Edition, and replaces the Third Edition books *GURPS Supers* and *GURPS Psionics*. The advice on abilities and powers can be used with any game that features superhuman characters.

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